

So Many Serninsea Secrets



Adrian Worsfold



Marshes
Wilson's

Curate's

Sutton-on-Serninsea

Marshes
Patricia's

Vicarage
St. Sernin's

Sernin Drain
Carr Fen

Serninsea
Magellan's
(Bethel)

Serninsea Cross?

South Drain

Wickenby's

Carr Fen

Carr Fen

Grand
Hotel
Casino

Carr Fen

Caffen
Line

Titansea

Caffen Park

Caffen Park

SMS

Caffenmere

Ingle Park

BDC

CC

Ingle Top
Drain

Ingle Top
Drain

Ingle
Under
Drain

Ingle
Barrow

Bishop's

Inglemire

Chapter 01 A Peculiar Place

Narrator: Linda. *Newsagent* (Ash Wednesday 6th March 2019)

Newsagents and ministers of religion both make judgements about others.

In the Serninsea High Street, inside the newsagent's there, a Mrs. Gertrude Carter, one of the parish congregation, said, "Hello Curate, again, have you seen what's in *The National Lens* this morning? I don't know if you ought to look at it. Page three. See you later I'm sure."

"Thanks Gert," I said, calling her like her friends did, but I felt like I should call her 'Mrs. Carter' instead. She was solid, dignified, upright, and knew me locally when I was a girl.

The mark she had on her head had worn away somewhat. Mine I'd seen intact in the vestry mirror before leaving the church. This shopkeeper, Jagjit Kapoor, laughed whilst his head-covered wife shook her head - not from any marks we displayed but because of the tabloid content. He opened the front cover of the said tabloid on its pile, and, on page three, was a picture of a young brunette woman with a trowel. Below was written:

Today's topless find is holding up her trowel as she continues to celebrate getting an archaeology degree.

When this discovered twenty-two years old digger bends and scrapes in her low-cut trench she gives her one-time rusty old professor above a treasure-chest of her own.

"Oh crumbs," I said. "Hmm. When I was her age..."

Kath Wickenby, a graduate of Cambridge, likes nothing better than to dig herself deep into the wet, sticky mud in her local area of Serninsea on the east Foss coast.

"We've only ever found evidence of old postholes," says Kath. "Roman stuff often rubs out the Saxon."

To celebrate her learning, she will return to Cambridge to view the cleaned-up and now glittering Anglo-Saxon Serninsea Cross brooch found by a lucky metal detectorist two years back.

"That was one exciting unlikely fluke," said Kath. "I wish I'd been on top of it when it came up."

When we at The National Lens heard about the ground-digger we were also overjoyed and went east to put this scraper on display for the inspection of our expert readers.

"That is pathetic," I said, "although I wish I could write my sermons like that. Or perhaps not."

"It tells you everything you need to know about Serninsea, does it not, Mrs. Jupiterus?" the husband shopkeeper added, with his wife nodding.

"Jupitas," I corrected him.

"Very sorry. Not like the comedian. You are 'as' not 'us'."

I thought, yes, I'm an 'ass' and not 'one of us' with this cassock on. (What they

didn't know was that under the cassock was a bare arse, like the rest of my bare body.)

"Does that shock you?" the wife shopkeeper, Gurinder Kapoor, asked me.

"I'd say rather that the writing saddens me," I replied. "But she didn't write this - they did. It's not Serninsea's script."

Gurinder said, "It's a child of Serninsea displaying her wotsits."

For me, it would have been more honest if she were shown naked as a matter of course: not pushing out her breasts along with that cheesy text. I kept this opinion to myself.

I said, "I'll buy a *Daily Cable* instead and see what right-wing nonsense is in it today."

"Very good and God bless you," said the man.

I thought, 'Why bring God into it?'

"Ah yes, em, yes, God blesses you too. I think what your community does with those free meals for anyone is fantastic. I'd copy that, I really would."

"The more the merrier," he said.

Another man behind me said, "Er, vicar, vicarette: I think you'll find Kath Wickenby was also in the local papers last year and with rather more on. So is the town to blame? I'm Councillor Gethin Layne."

"She must be an asset to the community," I said rapidly, thinking then that my response could be a tabloid comment.

"I seem to remember she had a sister, vicarette," said the councillor. "Her sister must have said no. I bet she got well paid for getting them out in *The National Lens*."

"Come to think of it," said the shopkeeper, "Twins. They have been in our humble shop, now I think about it."

"Oh well, small world. Especially on the east coast," I commented. Small, except I never seemed to remember most faces.

Gurinder said, "Oh yes. Distracted by nonsense when a customer wrote this *for you*, anonymously, and I think he doesn't live here:"

*Come in now to the barren land,
Stay in the wilderness;
Focus upon your peace of mind
And depend on less and less.
For strength will come, and only come
When weakness shows your loss,
That in this wilderness you will find
The power of the Cross.*

"This is wonderful. Much more wholesome. Thank you, Gurinder. Is he older than me, younger?"

"He's likely older than forty."

"I'm still thirty-nine. For a little while."

The shopkeeper Jagjit returned to the more deleterious, "By the way, have you seen that advert in the shop window? Some locals - and it must include this lass - are putting on a magic show on in Serninsea's Church Hall in Lent, on Mothers' Day.

"Ah yes. Colin dealt with this and it was the only day he'd allow it in Lent," I replied. "So it is her, or them. Mothering Sunday, actually." I went over to look at the computer-made advert. *The Magic Lantern Show: The Peter and Kath Partnerskip*. With a 'k'. (It said *Mothering Sunday* there.) I said, "That's clever, and taking note of Lent as well."

"Yes, Mothers' Day," he said.

"Mothering Sunday," I stated, for a second time. "It's the day in Lent when domestic workers and others returned to the mother church."

"I sell cards," Jagjit said. "'Mothers' Day' is what they say."

"Oh, I wasn't trying to correct you or anything," I said. Little Nashika, their toddler, came running out from the back of the shop and disappeared again. "We Christians say and do things differently. For example, it's like Christmas, you see, that starts for us on the 25th of December but seems to start early for most."

"What sells when," he responded.

"Christmas?" called Nashika.

"Not for a long time," said her mother.

It was time to move from the diversions of the shop. Once again I'd been clumsy. An analytical, context-based, Social Theology MA, had not improved for me the context of communication.

Now the suffragan bishop wanted local economic partnerships. Of course that's what this Kath was doing: promoting the economy through personal partial exposure and by putting on a magic show. Presumably she would not expose her breasts in the Church Hall. Oh, Colin would *not* like that.

I went in the library, for anything and finding nothing. I wondered if I could do a poem - not something I did usually.

Goosey goosey gander:
At Serninsea does land
An egg - it finds its patch,
What secrets does it hatch?

Perhaps I could bung it in a sermon, or perhaps not. I returned to an empty house. My husband Keith had left for Harwich yesterday, his employer's headquarters. He would be back Tuesday evening. All the locations of the firm, Systematic Measuring Services, were standardising their measurement testing procedures that had tended to diverge over the last two years because of different clientele and this adjusting was ahead of a self-inspection process for internal integrity.

During Lent (Saturday 9th March)

Keith and I were enjoying some naked bed time together rather late on Saturday morning. I heard the letter box at the front door, and so went downstairs. I brought the post upstairs and got back in bed. The envelope contained a letter from our very own suffragan bishop, John Terence Barman, the Bishop of Bolingbroke. It read:

For the Serninsea Ings deanery:

As the adapted Lunar calendar begins, with Lent having truly arrived, it comes upon me to address fellow clergy to enhance our every day contact relationships and set examples for the laity, and how they relate to one another.

I am asking each of you to consider a more intimately sacrificial engagement, one to the other, to meet regularly informally as well as formally, and acquire a more personal understanding of one another including the enjoyments and travails of everyday life. Don't be afraid to then talk about these friendly encounters, with the laity, according to what is appropriate. The Bishop of Scredington, Julian Worsley, agrees with me. Be aware also of the diocesan bishop's concern to develop a more progressive personal theology.

Meanwhile he has decided to go on retreat during Lent, being inspired by God to pray at a time of the examination of the diocese and its management. The Bishop of Scredington, Julian Worsley, and myself will therefore carry out more duties at this busy time as part of our sacrificial calling.

+ John Bolingbroke

I detected some superiority there through the holy smoke. A second letter was included, which seemed to be Bishop Barman's aim at social relevance, headed, *Mission and Learning Activities*.

It is to be my privilege to spend some days among the managers and workers of Systematic Measuring Services (formerly Serninsea Measuring Services), sharing in their important transport monitoring work at Titansea Dock and around the country. I was there in preparation recently, so already have gained an insight into commercial work. This is part of my business outreach so far into the more eastern localities, privileged to learn what makes so much tick in the community. We need to learn so much from business on how to tackle issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. I have also visited various tourist and cultural settings and institutions and have been introduced particularly to the archaeology of the area, especially the wonderful Saxon-style Serninsea Cross. We have so much here that we can promote.

+ John Bolingbroke

Keith made a grumpy sound when I asked him to read it all and give an opinion. I could detect a level of, well, hostility.

"He was organising things with the high-ups up from Harwich. Sir Sanjay Bunker is his man, the Chair of SMS no less, and much else, and the likes of Archie Holborn, our Research and Development Director, and others. I didn't see him myself at SMS and then I went to Harwich."

"He's making an effort."

"But the bullshit meter is registering high with these pastorals. All this about clergy relationships is so 'intimate' that he doesn't even mention the diocesan bishop by name."

I asked him, "What are we supposed to do to carry it out?" I grabbed my old hair brush from my side table and dragged it through my long blonde hair.

"I don't know," said Keith. "That's your job. To be honest, I am less and less

interested in him and the whole institution he represents. I'm glad I *didn't* see him. You want my advice? My advice is to get to know him better."

"Hey?"

"Well, you are supposed to be more interested in him. Don't you think you've brushed that enough? For fuck's sake leave your hair alone."

I put the brush down on my side table. "He does get about in our community and SMS. He probably accepted me having turned you down to show - now here in writing - a progressive outlook. More women. He *is* go-ahead."

"And when you meet him," asked Keith, "What do *you* think?"

"Well, something tells me he is not all there."

"Ah. Yes. Me too. Why?" Keith asked.

"I always smell perfume. I don't know. Why do you think?"

"I don't know either. He is perhaps up in the clouds. A bit like you. These letters have gone out across the Serninsea Ings deanery only, when he is not an area bishop."

I said, "I must not be judgmental."

"Don't be so holy with me. I *shall* be judgmental," he said.

"I'm not holy. Any petrol left in your tank?" I asked him.

"I think it is filling up again."

"Can you fill me up?"

"You must be travelling a lot. Nope, you're still here in the petrol station."

"Low miles per gallon - high usage - a need for more petrol pump. I'll grab your hose, to start. At least a good poke means I won't have to use my dilators today."

"Good idea. Your nozzle's not big but my pump fits it quite neatly with a bit of extra push."

"I do have an alternative tank, developed by you."

"I'll skip the diesel entrance for now, my love. That's a more energetic fill-up."

"Come on, do my petrol. Again."

Thus I was energised for the first Sunday in Lent next day. As a deacon curate, I was busy but supposed to have time to observe and follow.

O Holy Setting (Sunday 10th March, looking back)

Here I was, see, in the vestry, doing some administration and being available as a salaried deacon. (Most home-based deacons would be unpaid.) I became a curate nearly a year ago, which meant this was the year to be priested.

The policy of the National Church in England was to train people residentially in college if they were under forty and intending to be full-time paid priests. I was selected when thirty-five years old and started residential training when thirty-six. I had ended up back here because the suffragan bishop, John Terence Barman, in the diocese from eight years ago, wanted me; the diocesan bishop, appointed a year after Bishop John came on the scene, continued to allow him this sphere of influence and activity especially in the east of Wytham diocese.

The previous diocesan was the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop Daniel Dimpleby. The Right Reverend Derek Imperial had not been selected so far to sit in

the House of Lords and, in any case, someone else made up the twenty-six.

In Catholic theory, the priests of his diocese are basically his hands: they represent him. The suffragans represent him too. The difference is that they also ordain others, unlike priests. Perhaps the suffragans add a bit of mouth and an ear to his extra hands.

As for the reputation for inefficiency in the diocese, the rot started with Daniel Dimpleby. How he ended up as a Lord Bishop when most priests end up as nothing further no one really knew.

Colin Cromer, my training vicar, also a representative of Derek Imperial, told me that he took the pastoral letter from the suffragan bishop very seriously; we should be more than just professionals with one another. It was a matter of Christian ethical behaviour generated from the heart under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It did not matter that he had sent this letter to this Serninsea Ings deanery alone, because he may have identified a need to address this deanery and its relationships.

I did not respond. There are times to listen and learn in silence. Colin was approaching thirty-six years in the job, and the freehold fiefdom was his. I knew that.

The congregation in a town like this was never fantastic in number, at some forty people on a Sunday morning and twenty in its evening (with about ten actually different). That was the average, so basically the pool of the loyal was about double or so this number of unique individuals. This was across the two towns and a village running together, and attendance was worse in most neighbouring parishes, as in the Carrs and Ings. In the next parish north, from the Marshes, Reverend Jim Wilson's evangelical flexibilities of style but hardness of doctrines (a staunch believer in penal substitution) did attract some incoming car drivers, and he wanted young people to gather to bash some instruments. He also neglected ten of his eleven churches north to concentrate on the one good southern one. Here, in Serninsea, we were bog standard.

I should never have been ordained; it should have been my husband, Keith. So this is what had happened. I knew of Keith at school. He went to East Midlands University, in 1996, although I hardly registered the fact when he went. I had closer friends, like Jenny Masters and Adam Magellan and I must add Diana King. I went to university twenty-two years ago, in 1997, while Jenny had a gap year. She then went to Tees University to do Mathematics, Business and Accounting. I was into Social Sciences and Religious Studies - for their ideas. (My A levels were Economics, History and Philosophy.) Keith was an RE man too, but a year above, and yet also applying mathematics.

His family was middle class and Anglican; mine was just alternative and weird to most people. I think some people thought we were dirty and unclean. People likely saw that he conformed to his family and I was rebelling, but, more truthfully, he didn't always conform and I didn't rebel. He rebelled under the radar. I was loyal to family naturism and it mattered. In the warmth of the fields of the arable farm, all my clothes would be off. They were off in the house too, like the rest of the family. But we had a farm shop, with a minimum of clothes on.

I met Keith properly at East Midlands University and, after some trepidation and uncertainty, he accepted me and we had a mutually comforting and vigorous sexual relationship. We also then talked ideas. He did go to the Student Christian Movement Chaplaincy, in the 'moderate wing' of student Christian participation. I did go at times as his respectable partner, but was barely involved. Thus twenty years

back in 1999 Keith graduated but preferred to stay with me, taking a small administration job at the university, banging me like no one else could.

When I left in 2000 we went back to my family's farm, and he lived with his parents. Keith was unemployed, and sometimes was at our farm helping. Daddy didn't like him and mummy was suspicious. I think my older sister, Lucinda, born 3rd February 1978, had enjoyed a sample or two of him before I got the more sustained treatment.

Fifteen years back Keith became a Documentation Assistant in a town museum and a year on took accountancy and computer courses. In 2006, when Keith went into accounts administration, I became an artists' model with my friend Diana. A year later I tried and did not like photographic modelling. I was called Silky. Keith approved, however, so long as I said nothing about it in church circles. He even came along to photograph me using a friend's dark room for my more personal poses.

Why was I called Silky? Because I had smooth, hairless skin below my head. Why did I do it? Easy money. As a student, I dressed loosely and walked about our accommodation naked. I believed in it. I knew the history of naturism and promoted the idealism of it. I connected it to religious ideas: I learnt the hostility to naturism in some religion, but also places of its embrace. I had an appreciation for the Hindu and Pagan relationship with the body.

I carried on as an artists' model for a further year: three years of that was enough, really. Five minutes on one leg became five minutes too many.

In 2010 Keith got work in Marketing Administration. With his believed to be stable work we became engaged. Two years on, to be sure, in 2012, we married and enjoyed a honeymoon in North Norfolk and Walsingham. Yes, the Anglican liked his Catholicism. However, later that year Keith lost his job. So we were struggling and times were difficult. I know that in 2013 he met a certain Cheryl Mould, being an old school flame of sorts (when he had several fires blazing). Despite marrying, we ourselves were a bit off and on, but we did have good friends. Via Diana we came to know older Patricia.

Thus it was in 2014 that Keith applied for and was rejected for ministry. I was still relying on the farm and Keith was still unemployed. Then in 2015 my family chose to go to a very different kind of farm in mid-Wales. Larry my eldest brother (born 12th March, 1977) was already in London, but my two sisters (Leila was born after a long period on 10th January, 2000) went with mummy and daddy. I could have gone; instead, I thought, I'll attempt what Keith attempted, and, bizarrely, I was accepted. I was able to hang on at the farm until it sold and I then went to Bishop Querceto Theological College, close to East Midlands University, in 2016. So Keith started his Masters of Business Administration as I did my MA in Social Theology.

In late 2017 Keith returned to Serninsea for a year of visiting me for many weekends and some holidays. Thus my Sunday was the Eucharist and then intense sex in the college to be followed by Evensong. I used to stand and sing at Evensong often knackered around my knees and legs.

Back in Serninsea he joined Serninsea Measuring Services as was, changing its name to Systematic Measuring Services. Of course he met a number of work colleagues, and Cheryl Mould had left to work with SMS at its new headquarters site at Harwich. Everything he did in Serninsea had to be checked by Yojana Asthana for honesty, integrity and accuracy.

In 2018 I was recommended to go to my home town to be a salaried deacon. I'd have gone to Hartlepool or Felixstowe or Harwich, if he could get a transfer, but in the end I was placed under Colin as curate. My post came with a house and Keith moved in, just as his mother and father separated and left town in different directions. He'd tried to keep them together. The front display of their family was a farce in the end; they had rotted from within. Colin tried to keep things together, but they were loveless. They didn't care for me being with Keith either, and they learnt that he had always been a bit free and easy with the women. I didn't weep over their separation: I thought they were snotty-nosed and contemptible, and the reality of their relationship was no surprise. Being upright Anglicans was a form of public bullshit. The only product of this was nurturing their son, inculturating him into the forms and thought processes seen in the chaplaincy. After all, he was banging me like someone possessed.

So I settled in with limited duties. My first sermon had been during Advent or what others now see as a commercial Christmas. (Christmas is often a good marker of how clergy handle what many regard as legend within the biblical text, yet is often presented as a form of history.)

Colin had rightly reserved the big night, the midnight service at 24th December 2018, for himself, but, for the dedicated few, he asked me to give a pink (Gaudete) Advent evening sermon on, he said, "*How I understand Christmas*."

"Tell this in whatever sense you like. It might give everyone a better sense of who you are. Remember, however, that Anglicans don't give opinions: we are representatives of the Church and are supposed to give its stance. We read the Gospel and preach on it. You are the mouth of the bishop, and the bishop represents proper order."

"Then it is not my opinion."

"I don't mind some personal insight from the fruits of your learning."

Trouble was, the fruits of my learning meant that I didn't really believe in Christmas. We were taught that it was the most mythical of the gospel accounts, in Matthew and Luke, and I took this to mean it never actually happened. Well, it didn't.

Keith had used a strategy of focussing on biblical scripts but, being accurate about their considered origins, he discussed them closely to the text. He liked precision. Of course he was now in the quantity checking business in transport, intended to be mainly shipping. His theological literacy from university onwards had been an interest in sources and content. He rarely mentioned it now, except when I asked.

I thought: could I find a strategy *not* to undermine those who believed in these mythic narratives as true? My supporting husband was perhaps becoming more agnostic regarding the bigger picture. He no longer needed to believe in it, whereas I did need to believe in it, if only for the salary and career, and necessity is the mother of claiming belief.

The orthodoxy, I knew, *isn't* that the incarnation grew on the man as he learnt to be a bloke and did it correctly; it was there from the start. Some icons show an adult-looking baby. He was born not just as the chosen prophet, as the Muslims have it and perhaps the Jews might have, but the very incarnation of God.

Oh, and that is not 'from the off' as a Miguel Servetus once had it, as at a conception from the Holy Spirit into Mary, but in all eternity. That was a college thing: *don't* agree with Miguel Servetus. His trinitarianism was rather original, and a marker

of heresy.

Not only did I know, like the tutors, that the Matthew and Luke accounts cannot be melded into one, because they do different things in different directions, with different genealogies regarding Joseph the father (who isn't, or is); but, also, I did some reading on historiography and I had become aware of the limitations of the historical process and the importance of primary documents. The Gospels are primary documents of the early Churches (if even them), not of Jesus, and were somewhat edited 'after the events', whatever were actually those events.

My husband had known all this too, which was why he stuck to the text. Bury your head in the detail - origins and outcome. In his secular job, he had ended up burying his head in numbers and measurements, and indeed he was one of those who measured the use of measurements.

But I was more 'female', after all: more holistic. So via study I'd come to believe that, well, Jesus most likely did exist, and that he probably had a mission for about a year and not three (an elongating effect of John's gospel), and that he believed that the end was nigh, and enjoyed a quickly-gained populist following (unhealthy folk seeking healing). He took his mission from Galilee, where he was born, to Jerusalem. If the end was nigh, that would mean bye bye to the Romans, supernaturally, so they knocked Jesus off as they did so many in that difficult edge-of-empire territory; he hoped his actions (and those of Judas) would spark the big final God-led showdown. In fact, life continued on with Roman oppression.

History. I liked it. Claudius's descendents perhaps found Britain a much more compliant end-of-empire land than Palestine. Our Celts made money on the roadsides, or in the city, carrying out the Romans' wishes, and repairing and remaking their goods. (The Saxons did similarly, later.) Boudica was the big exception, so she and her environment received the removal treatment, just as was dished out to dissenters in the Near East.

Jesus's cosmic death - so important for the Jim Wilsons of this world - thus relies upon the accident of Roman history and brutality, unless history is some sort of preordained game. As for the resurrection, I tried to believe that God did extend Jesus's personality after his life by a miracle, one that inspired the followers to build on what Jesus had started, and which, cosmically, somehow, Jesus would also complete. But then history can't do miracles or things that go bump in the night or cosmic interventions.

So it was Advent. While people sang the hymn before my sermon, I did a quick pull through my hair with my constant companion hairbrush. This was a more recent bad habit: Colin by his sideways look to me indicated that my tugging behaviour was inappropriate in church. Keith in the pews noticed as well, moving his hand to indicate to me to stop it. I stopped. It was time to climb the pulpit and use the prompts.

"It's Advent still," I said, as an opener, "and we wait before we sing the carols that others get into straight away, including in the DIY centres and other such places pumping out muzak. But I have been asked, with memories of college, to speak of Christmas and what it means, and I, er, include Advent on this Gaudete Sunday - gaudete means 'rejoice'.

"It's the time when we appropriate the narrative of pregnant expectation, of travel, of impending danger, and of reference to ancestors. These are dramatics and metaphors. It's about the body and not just the spirit, and that's important. That is

also the case with resurrection, at the other end of life, with an emphasis too on the body. With the birth comes the element of exposure to danger represented by Herod: Herod who spies, who threatens, and threatens a whole people again and their firstborn. There is the poverty of the final location for the birth, as well as the shepherds that visit - being themselves a despised class. The virginal conception to me is about God's choice and involvement and we must not forget that incarnation is also defined by genealogies of the family in the line of David. There is the reference to liberty by the involvement of Egypt. So it is all part of that Jewish tradition and reality of suffering. The suffering of course goes right through to Christ crucified, and we preach Christ crucified. And then, a little interfaith element perhaps, which is when we come to Epiphany. We have the wise men, perhaps three, perhaps not, who could be astrologers, but come from Persia, and so they are the Gentile element. And let's not forget the animals, who settle around the birth, and represent as if before the Fall in the time of Genesis, when even the land was harmonious before the first sin. So we see how the whole thing wraps up into many vital themes of the incarnation and its connections. It is too early yet, but a Happy Christmas is one that comes with barbs, if only all the celebrators knew it. It is not just tinsel and happiness, but comes with an edge. It is Christ crucified who was being born."

Well, I know this went down well - superficially. Colin Cromer seemed impressed in content but not delivery, and that meant I was in his good books. "Very good. I ought to have said much of that myself on the very night but now I cannot."

Keith himself said, afterwards, to me, "That was an impressive strategy of working the myth, and had everyone nodding. Your: 'We appropriate the narrative of pregnant expectation,' is rather a mouthful for anybody."

"Yes."

"And they probably didn't understand you hedging your bets: it sounded better than it was on the orthodox rating."

It was difficult for me to avoid speech-complexity; I'd been told this before, to try instead to say the most complicated things through the least complicated words possible. I just could not do it. Theology forced complication.

However, as I stood hand-shaking the last of the attenders, Keith said to Colin, within my earshot range at the door, "Em, I'm afraid work is meaning I can attend less. I still support her in all she is doing, and her all important ministry, and that won't diminish, but my own form of truth-work is getting more demanding. Fortunately I have a day off tomorrow. Why I am here really."

Colin said, "Well, it is your ministry to support her how you can of course. Being a deacon is an uncertain time for the future; a bit cocooned in the present."

Actually, I thought Keith was lying: that he was unimpressed, really, with the deception at the heart of what I had said and how I had said it. Much released from his own intended commitment to do the same, he was becoming free. I was not.

At home he started singing *Gaudete* in the manner of Maddy Prior.

Christmas came and generosity was in the thought alone. We had all the services, and they did not make me joyful. At home and mutually naked, my gift from my husband was a kettle-weight (a flat-bottomed weight with a handle above): "They were selling these in the supermarket for six quid each. So here's yours."

I bought him a set of good quality books from the charity shop, on: *Henry V*, *Louis XIV*, *A History of Scotland*, and the first novel of a series of three, mentioned by Diana de Groot on occasions, *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Seumasach Nuadh* by

Gabrijela Daffron, about a time travelling woman from the present day.

The truth was, and he knew it, that I bought these as much for me as for him. We were skinflints like this from our student days, and continued so by ongoing agreement. I gave Diana a CD of handwriting fonts, and she sent me a CD of Sarah Leonard's *A Portrait of English Song*. Maybe she got that from a charity shop as well. Oh, I had copied the CD so that I also had these fonts. Diana approved of me buying *The Jacobite Gap Years* first novel, and was surprised it was in the charity shop because people tended to hang on to them. Oh, she was full of information.

Cheryl Mould had bought him five coloured ties that were SMS marked.

"Why has she bought you a present?" I asked him then.

He said, "Only that she brought them to us from headquarters when she visited, last time, remember. Just sort of tokens. Probably one for each working day."

"Did you buy her anything?"

"Well no: they've got everything down there." He asked me, "Do you remember those diaries that you could lock with a little key? Yojana wanted to give me one that was just for writing in like that. I told her I don't want a Christmas present from her, and I'm not getting presents for her or others. No cards either. But Cheryl had brought these ties up. There isn't a card from her."

He seemed quite open about her. At least she was out of the way in Harwich, at SMS relocated headquarters, but of course she came home at times, in that her parents were still in Serninsea, and he did the odd trip to Harwich (and Felixstowe, another SMS expansion).

Regarding the kettle weight, and reading its leaflet, I said, "It says it's for strengthening my arms. Well, you really need this. Wanker!"

"Ah but there's nothing better for me to sit in bed and you be on the floor on all fours with your bum in the air doing your exercises. As well as dilating."

"Oh right. Definitely a wanker." So, in front of the Christmas tree, on the lounge floor, I gave him a show of my exposed bum while using his kettle-weight.

"Very pleasing. I'll give you a good *advent-ure* here or back upstairs, if you like."

"Advent is gone. It is Christmas, and for some twelve days."

"X-mas the spot," then, he said. "Merry Arsemas."

"Give us one, then," I said. "*On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...*"

The lounge floor was a good a place as any for his insertions, and after I'd stared out of focus at the carpet, we took it in turns looking up at the fairy lights.

Now Lent was upon us. By my calculation, which was never my strong point, there was something like four months to Petertide, when I would become a priest and do more than a deacon does. I'd become the diocesan bishop's ritual hands alongside Colin's hands.

Narrator: Keith. *Enjoying Yojana* (Wednesday 13th March 2019)

I loved my reverend wife so much that I wanted her to go to a good home - once I'd left her. That home would be her Church and parish and also in the form of the Vanguard under the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the English

National Church.

I was at work speaking to my colleague, Yojana Likhsha Asthana in the Independent Inspection Unit. We had to speak to each other from time to time, despite her not being allowed to speak to me over certain tasks.

As well as talking about work matters, I remarked that I had seen this document that Terry Barman had delivered to his clergy, about more intimacy. I said that he was pushing his luck on this one and Yojana agreed. She also thought it could have a perfectly ordinary explanation - at a push.

She questioned me about any longer term repercussions after receiving those company ties in a box from Cheryl back at Christmas. After all, every time I wore one it would remind Linda of Cheryl. I responded that if it raised a puzzlement in Linda's mind, then good. Cheryl had become my love, and my intended personal destination. She reminded me that I needed to display stability on the Linda front for the purposes of our Vanguard.

"How is the sex with Linda?" she asked.

"Pretty good. Recently she's wanted it a bit rougher. I'm happy to provide."

"Good," she responded. "Is she experiencing frustrations as a curate?"

"Could be that. It's up to the Vanguard bishops. It is difficult to make the sex rough enough."

"You're not like that with me."

"I do with you what I am supposed to do, although I hope there is a personal element."

I was Yojana's mentor into the group that included, among some others, SMS employees and National Church people. It was my task to see that she was being absorbed well into the group. She asked why I didn't pursue her to join the group originally.

"We worked too closely together in what can be a conflictual setting. It's why I cannot approach my wife to join."

Once the decision was made to encourage Linda into the Confraternity - still to be actualised - they find appropriate people to do the encouraging. But the bishops of the Confraternity applied different rules to clergy than Christian lay folk, or indeed to a non-Christian like Yojana. Obedience to the bishop by clergy was interpreted as compulsion to join.

Yojana asked about the wider purpose of the group. I said it was to be a model community, of such intimacy that we could not but care for each other. We should listen to the clergy and our Vanguard theologians about bodies, sacrifice, the collective, and cultural expression. We sacrifice ourselves as individuals to the members of the group. As a Hindu she should actively seek to interpret these concepts according to the approaches of Hinduism.

But she wondered about our work roles, about her, say, concealing papers from me when we benefitted each other in the Confraternity.

"As you have been told, you carry on concealing. We work as we do."

She asked about my own one-time mentor, June Holborn, the wife of the SMS executive having responsibility for Research and Development. They had just moved to Harwich. Of course I had slept with her many times. I was initiated by the Reverend Jenny World on one of her trips south.

Yojana had the afternoon off. She told me to go to her parents' bed and breakfast, where she helped out. I took up her offer. I knew what she wanted to hear,

and it was true, so I said more clearly that I had always fancied her personally.

At this northern, coastal large house, we went to her private room - her parents were busy - and again we had sexual pleasure with each other. She was a wonderful shape: not obese but well proportioned. This Asian lady of golden skin was thirty-five years old and so nearly six years younger than me.

We were both happy in our jobs, and I was even happier now that we were both in this group under the Confraternity. But, yes, as a mentor and mentored we were pushing at the Chinese Wall between us. Whilst I hadn't been allowed to pursue her as a talent scout, I had become her mentor. (I did not make the rules: I just enjoyed them.)

I did have a girlfriend, and my girlfriend had not been pursued for the group. In fact Cheryl could not be pursued for acceptance into the group.

The group was for clergy, or decision-taking laity with degrees, or promoted managers, or people of acquired means, or a combination of these. All were pastorally guided by apostolic clergy in support and obedience of the bishops. It was an elite group for elite purposes, including low rungs of aspiring management - as in my case. This also meant that whilst there could be Protestant clergy, and indeed ministers in other faiths, only apostolic bishops and priests could sanctify and therefore initiate membership of the Confraternity. So far we had one diocesan and two suffragans in two dioceses.

A point was envisaged when the group would open out to the Church as a whole, but until then it would stay as an elite vanguard. Those with a contributory theological insight were especially welcomed for consultation, and around Serninsea this included apostolic clergy, a few denominational ministers, the rabbi coming in from Wytham, and myself. But only the bishops took decisions.

We had a particularly effective thinker in the Reverend Deacon Christine Vine, not of the Serninsea Ings deanery, and only recently into the diocese, in that the bishops seemed keen to follow her insight into apostolic succession and hierarchy. As an unpaid clergywoman, she was travelling between Foss, London and Kent. She was particularly interesting in talking about female ejaculate as a form of divine sign and sanctifying liquid.

Christine had lectured and continued to lecture how sacrifice (meaning sacred death) ran alongside orgasmic pleasure (hope demonstrated in the eternal future) as God's body ritual.

I know that Terry Barman, Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke, has since regretted his rejection of me, but he wanted more women to choose from. As priest she could sanctify and Terry would have his woman in place, locally in the group, and not have to rely on the Hartlepool or Margate groups, or indeed a priested Christine coming in when she could. With Linda able to sanctify, the local group could expand better, and she could travel to Hartlepool or the south, or even help set up new groups. There was already the prospect of expansion into Wales, but there was nothing regarding Scotland. Perhaps Linda could go to Inverness, Pitlochry, Perth - somewhere like these places - and mix among Scottish Episcopalians and get a vanguard group going there. It would be amazing if she did.

But, as for my girlfriend, Cheryl, I could not reveal my hand. I loved them both. I loved my wife, with whom I shared a close history, and some secrets, but I knew Cheryl too, and she represented a kind of less sophisticated, simpler way of being, that attracted me. When you fuck women frequently, their lives matter. I knew Cheryl

at school. She was a dirty girl! I met her again some six years ago, and she lit a spark. I enjoyed her then too, but the affair only really kicked off properly two years ago.

I lay in Yojana's double bed with her arm over me.

I told her, "If you ever talk to my wife, you don't know Terry Barman. Well, you know he exists, but he is nothing to you. I am showing a level of hostility about him and already display a distance from the Church."

I had suspected that Linda would understand this given the rejection for ministry and my moving on. But this was cover for my place in the Vanguard to be kept secret.

Yojana asked if Linda would go to bed with her once Linda became a member. She wanted to extend her experience. Of course! She had been seduced by the Reverend Deacon Christine Vine, and by the Reverend Jenny World, and had enjoyed both experiences.

"Oh yes. Linda has a bisexual background. She once had a close female friend, not Diana de Groot but the Reverend Jenny World, then Jenny Masters. They could come back together."

I explained, however, that lesbian or bisexual identity was not necessary for same-sex sex. Before my time in the group I'd never seen, never mind touched, other erect, working penises. But I had since tried one in my mouth, thanks to Stephen McPhail, and he laughed when he ejaculated and caused me to spit and swill out my mouth. I had never tasted my own sperm, and this didn't encourage me.

I said that the Vanguard was not a cult: it is a guiding fellowship, and ecclesia within an ecclesia. It was Darwinian even, in the more complete sense. "By giving up some of our personal sovereignty, we benefit ourselves but with a group outlook. We are an elite group expected to prosper through mutual support and decision-taking, Yojana, so that we can project the Church further towards its Kingdom goal." Statements to her like this had to be reported back to one of the bishops.

Yojana and I were somewhat tied to the future of our employer. Any employee might end up going to Harwich or Felixstowe or Hartlepool; I said both Harwich and Felixstowe represented a problem for active participation in the group, given that there was not a Confraternity group there. Our Suffragan Bishop Jonathan Eyre might relocate from Kent upon his coming retirement, but there were people in Margate and Brighton and Worthing needing to continue to receive his guidance. Yojana did not know about this until my explanation.

There might be a new group in South Wales, based on two bishops known to Terry Barman. Yojana did not know this either. She knew that SMS might itself open in South Wales for the sweep of ports there. I told her that the Suffragan Bishop of Casnewydd (Newport) in the Welsh Church, Niall Ifan, once known as Nigel Evans, had a concealed reputation for a string of affairs with women and men. Bishop Terry would work on him in their meetings.

"Would he have gay sex with him?" Yojana asked.

"I think he might, for the cause. It would be unusual. Terry is not gay. These rumours only arise because Terry has never been married."

There was also the Diocesan Bishop of Mynyw, Afanen Ffrwyth, 55, who was known to have a number of lesbian lovers and there was a rumour of a long-standing incestuous relationship with her niece, now Linda's age.

I said, "Do you know who is most likely to try to recruit Afanen, when she is

ready?"

"No."

"You."

"Me?"

I said that SMS would need people to recruit in Wales, including those inspectors of our own operational integrity, like Yojana herself, and if Yojana set up a work team somewhere near Aberdaugleddau (Milford Haven) she could have some exciting days and nights with Afanen Ffrwyth. "She is fifty five, so if you were to work on her, it would mean sleeping with a much older woman. But she is used to having relationships with younger women, sometimes much younger."

"I'd like that," she said. "Wow."

"Also, Afanen Ffrwyth has a fine collection of Shiva statues big and small. It is rumoured that when she went to India she carried out a ritual to Ganesha. Terry says Louise Deimos, Linda's clergy confessor, has some Ganeshas and Krishnas, so there might be a chance of compromising and recruiting her."

Yojana told me that she had yet to have the pleasure of Bishop Jonathan Eyre. I told her that he would not want to resist her. I said, sweetly, that no one would want to resist her. With that comment, she went down on me, and she was happy to taste my ejaculate in her mouth, as I licked hers.

Narrator: Linda. *The Duty of Visiting* (Thursday 14th March)

I was out visiting through Serninsea and Sutton-on-Serninsea. My year as a deacon was to assist at worship, read the Gospel, carry out pastoral care and engage in community outreach.

So I called in on Tracey Graham, seventy years old and a long-standing active parishioner. Most conversations with parishioners were not ones to remember particularly, especially with bland kindnesses to the new curate, but this one was.

She said, "I remember when I was around forty. I used to go to your family's farm shop regularly. To get good eggs, milk, chickens, a variety of vegetables in season, we went to your farm shop. It was a bit of a journey. And I remember your mum, your dad, your brother and sisters."

"Yes."

"And I remember *you*. Because one day I was in the shop and your mother was serving, and you came in without a stitch on, and your mother did nothing to tell you to go out and back into the house. And a lady beside me, who passed away only last week, Charlotte Stanhope..."

"Mrs Stanhope's funeral is next week."

"...made a big fuss about it. Because you were showing signs of development, let's say. You would not get away with it today. Social services would be crawling all over the place."

"Not necessarily. I know the incident, Mrs. Graham. It wasn't me; it was Lucinda. Lucinda went in the shop. There was a big fuss about it because my mother did not like Mrs. Stanhope's comments. She thought Lucinda should be able to run around naked regardless. But Lucinda was upset, and she made a big issue of it to me, and as a result I stopped going in the shop with nothing on, Mrs. Graham. My

sister was eleven. She is a year older than me - you probably know that."

"Your family was known for being a bit strange. Your mother and father were spotted, sometimes, in the fields, with nothing on. And the children."

"Yes. Well we did."

"I don't suppose you do that now, now that you are a reverend."

"The farm was sold over three years ago."

"You're *respectable* now."

"I am always respectable, Mrs. Graham. May I use your toilet for some minutes I'm afraid?"

No matter how I tried to go to the toilet before and in between visits, I could not control the demands of my back passage.

When I was back and apologising, she asked "And how is your family getting on? Scotland, was it?"

"Wales. Mid-Wales. Their farm is down such a long track that they can indulge themselves. Lucinda has met a very nice man who sells furniture. He is a Welsh speaker, as well. So perhaps she is taking lessons."

"Your eldest brother?"

"London. He was always the most independent. Lucinda lives on the farm and they have the annexe that has also been used for tourists. But not for tourists at the moment."

"Not if your parents are continuing to go around with nothing on; it must be cold up there."

"It is colder, higher up, but the west does get milder weather as well. It is a very different kind of farm, and they have had people in to help them."

"You were seen in the library and the charity shop recently."

"Yes, I was."

The conversation continued.

The visit to Mr James Thorne later on mentioned the fact that we had no choir functioning any more.

"We could have," I said to him, "but with four people left to sing and no one younger willing to give the commitment - we can't even get them to come to the church regularly for services - Colin took the decision to stop it."

Mr Thorne then quoted a line at me: "*If there is no music, there is no mystery. If there is no mystery, there is no God. If there is no God, there is no faith. Have I lived for sixty years on a misunderstanding?*"

"Very good," I said to him. "Septimus Harding," I believe.

"Popular culture," he said. "Not quite so popular."

"I watched a lot of telly when younger. DVDs at university. My dad played DVDs of British wrestling."

"There was a little bit of a scandal around the choir," he said. "Do you know about this?"

"Em, not really." (I knew there was something.)

"I won't give her name. You don't know about it or do you?"

"My husband said there was a rumour of something, but he did not know, and I didn't."

"Am I going to be the first to tell you?"

"If it is the same incident, and everyone was very sensitive about it, then perhaps you shouldn't. When was this?"

"2011 it starts and only finally ended two years ago."

"Indeed, you should not tell me," I said.

"I won't tell you the names. This person was new to the church and joined the choir, so it was hopeful for the future of the choir. And a certain person and her were rumoured to be coming somewhat friendly, let's say."

"Keep it anonymous, Mr. Thorne."

"And then, suddenly, she married someone completely different, in the town as well."

"Oh dear. Oh dear, I bet that caused some difficulty."

"Yes, it did. She left the choir. Too controversial. Five years she was married, here - the wedding was not in church - and then off she went with her daughter, and moved to the South or South West or South Wales or somewhere like that. And the rumour is that they never divorced."

"They had a daughter? It's sad when a mother leaves with a young daughter."

"She was an adult. She came in the church as well, occasionally. I don't think either of them were Anglican. Foreigners! So, really, we lost almost two new people - and they went, yes, as recently as two years ago."

"This is indeed very recent. Should I ask the vicar about this?"

"No. I think it might be better if you didn't."

"You realise that I operate under rules of confidentiality - well, the seal of the confessional."

"Seal the confession, then," he said. This gave me no choice. But it made me aware that gossip and drama were recent.

I had heard last year that, before I arrived, one foreign woman had left the church and the choir collapsed and she had only recently separated from the man she'd gone on to marry. This tale seemed to me to be anti-foreigner sentiment. I'd no idea if it was true, because one person leaving isn't going to collapse the choir; and when I asked him before about the choir ending Colin Cromer had said that the story was all tittle-tattle, but admitted that a foreign woman had been in the choir.

This conversation was adding something to my information, but to be treated carefully in case I stepped on any toes.

Sometimes visiting has a random element. There was a bit of a breeze, outside, and more to come, and there was a female walking and overtaking me on the road one block from the coast. There were some older people still behind me. Her thin dress lifted and it exposed a bare bottom. She (like me) was approaching a set of terraced houses near a double mini-roundabout: one house that seemed empty, a middle one probably some office, and she stopped at the end one.

I ran up to her and asked for her name.

With a German accent she said, "Klärchen Sisse. Hello. You are?"

I said, "The Reverend Linda Jupitas. I'm not being nosey and definitely not moralising but your dress lifted in the breeze and 'people' saw a bare bottom. Unless you have a thong that's..."

"I should have added different a dress."

"Address?"

"Dress. Heavier? Yes?"

"Sorry."

"I live just here. I change my dress."

"Not needed if you are going inside. Sorry to have bothered you."

"Would you like your tea before I go to my Upper Foss Coast College?"

"It's F - U - C - C."

"Fuck?"

"Not... Why *did* they..."

"Would you like your tea?"

"I've eaten and will eat..."

"Maybe coffee?"

"Oh yes. Tea. Thank you."

We went in, and she had a dog, an alsatian (I thought) that became excited on her return. As she sat down, it barged its head between her legs, and she said, "Nicht jetzt, Dieter," pushing it away.

The dog sat staring at her and then looked at me.

"German shepherd," said Klärchen. "He comes with me after our tea."

My visit discovered that she was a nominal Lutheran, in Serninsea to learn English, and she was doing a little bit of lecturing on Europe for the tourism and business based courses at Foss Upper Coast College. In effect, she was travelling around. She'd brought the dog in from Germany, and was worried about the future of Pet Passports after the referendum to leave the European Union.

"Dreadful decision," I said.

"Yah, my belief too."

"Sharing sovereignty and having multi-national elections, liberal and democratic is a good thing," I said.

When I got up the dog seemed to come for me, but stopped when Klärchen called after it. She added, "He's too enthusiastic. Loves people closely."

When at home I told Keith of the strange woman with an over-familiar dog. I started giggling and I managed to say that she was a bit too weird for me. I said I'd left these odd details out of my training pastoral report.

"Perhaps you presume too much."

"I looked up 'Nicht jetzt' afterwards, once the spelling and the meaning became obvious."

"What's her name; where does she live?" he asked.

"You know I can't tell you that."

"Will you visit her again?"

"Well, I don't think she is interested in our church life, and, to be honest, I think she has her own company to keep."

Keith said, "Serninsea is certainly a lonely, distant, isolated place to find all sorts."

I said, "It's not some distant Gaelic-speaking Scottish island, Keith."

"But all sorts come here - all sorts, and even possibly the odd Gaelic speaker. But not your Archbishop. He won't come here."

Seeing Louise Deimos (Tuesday 19th March)

On the Tuesday after the Second Sunday in Lent, I went to see the Reverend Louise Deimos, forty-five, so someone similar, my spiritual confessor, and a collector of religious knick-knacks.

She asked me, "How are you coping with the busy period?"

"I am somewhat protected in my first year but I do plenty of visiting. I meet regular folk and the odd odd person. The problem I have is in being creative with my presentation in sermons and interpretations."

"You mean you are creative? Why is that a problem?"

"I am creative with the words, stretching their meaning."

"You are doing what thousands of clergy do."

"It isn't doing the truth, though, is it?"

"Only because you and I represent the collective position when we are yet individuals. Let's call it having a three-line whip."

"I wasn't suggesting it was a religious form of BDSM."

"Some," said Louise, "think Christianity is exactly that. Salvation through torture and death, yet precisely when love was offered. You are still getting on well with Colin Cromer?"

"Yes."

"You might be swerving to run your journey when he drives down the middle of the road."

"He advocates constraint and restraint, and that I find difficult. It's like you expect this job to mean things will open out, to new vistas and far horizons, and yet, as you do it, the walls come in and the room gets smaller, the windows shuttered."

"I happen to agree. Meanwhile, are you prepared to be more intimate, as the suffragan bishop advises?"

"If I know what that means. Can I use your toilet, please?"

I did.

As I returned, apologising, Louise said, "I was asking the suffragan's question..."

"Yes, what do you think it means?" I asked her.

"I haven't got a clue."

"Loving and more personal, I think. I'm looking into Jeremy Symes' parish tomorrow. He could be your replacement as confessor. I'm missing out on my weekly meeting seeing my friend because of it. He said recently, 'Learn from a nearby parish in the deanery,' but I rejected seeing the evangelical Jim Wilson and his known strong-willed wife Connie."

"Lent means on the job training."

"He's a good guide, Colin, and I hope he gives me more to do, that he trusts me more and offers me more space. My fear is that he becomes rigid and boxes me in. This is because he has certain expectations of what Christianity and ministry should be, based on his own longevity."

"And that he might have preferred Keith. He's not much of a woman's man, Colin, although he's not overtly prejudiced. You do realise this is confidential commentary."

"Yes."

"You show competence and it may be rewarded by space, as you call it, to make your own contribution. Well, right, I'm afraid that's it, and, as you know, not only is that it for today, but for good. I'm going up to near Hartlepool where my sister Sarah is Suffragan Bishop of Hereteu."

"Harry Cockburn retired so conveniently last year and do you think Elizabeth Huett was lined up to replace him?"

"All gossip."

"Sarah became Elizabeth's extended hands. Do you go with Catholic theory, Louise?"

"Not really."

"The Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke is very pro-women; I'm surprised you're not staying."

"Peterlee."

I paused for a second. "You've met someone? I don't know him."

"What?"

"Peter Lee."

"No, Peterlee is my new location for my ministry. It's near Hartlepool, is it not? But, huh, let me leave you as I mean to go on. Can you keep it to yourself?"

"I keep a few secrets."

"I want to become honest. I am not becoming its parish priest in the English National Church as some people assume. There is a vacancy up there but people only have to look it up to stop making assumptions. Sarah found me a small house. They're cheaper there, like here. For money, I'm going into designing, including website designing for a local firm. In my own time, I am going to do the website for a small group called the Free Liberal Church. If you listened to me carefully, you'll know my objections to expectations regarding my ministry now."

"Sarah will be disappointed."

"She might be sympathetic. I'll find out, won't I, nearer my family? The Deimos family are from up there. I don't have a partner, so I'm free to move. I went to Bishop Querceto College, much before you did, and thus hopped over to the supposedly more liberal Wytham diocese. But it's not. *Your* need as a deacon is to get your new confessor."

"Jeremy?"

"If you do find Jeremy Symes is in any way unsuitable then strike him off your list. And I have got one final piece of advice for you."

"Oh?"

"When you visit parishioners, don't ask to use their toilet. Go first, before you go out, especially for that."

"I do! I know. It's embarrassing. I'll alter my behaviour if I can."

"Seek medical advice, possibly. One more thing."

"What?"

"I'm like Columbo! I'm speaking as someone with the freedom of leaving. Jim Wilson, yes, is a man of strategy, but Connie gives him his backbone. I suggest you continue to keep your distance from him and Connie."

"Doesn't she speak highly of the suffragan bishop, John Barman?"

"Go carefully, then."

"Why is that figure on the mantelpiece in light blue?"

"Because it is young Krishna in a holy colour."

"What is he eating?"

"Soil. He opens his mouth and you see the universe."

"Oh. Colin is positive about Bishop Barman."

"Colin Cromer is very generous, who delivers as required. You can learn from Colin about loyalty and the institution functioning properly. I have someone else to see, to whom I shall say much less, and then I am packing the stuff that's mine to

say goodbye to all this."

Jeremy Symes' Parish (Wednesday 20th March)

Early morning I went to see the said Jeremy Symes, the priest in charge of a parish north and west of Jim Wilson's large geographical area. I'd see Diana, my naturist friend, in a week. Wednesday was not an afternoon off, officially, like Monday was, but I treated it as such and usually chatted with her.

Here was an opportunity for comparisons. With the exception of one parishioner, for confidentiality reasons, I joined him on all his visits, to mainly elderly women and one nursing home, where he also carried out a communion service. We also had a late lunch at the vicarage when his wife Emily came in all so briefly before returning to her administration job.

Jeremy said to her, "I've been showing Colin Cromer's curate here the work in our parish, and also some of the openings into the community recommended by the Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke."

So Emily said to me, "He means he's been using that bishop's letter that came for Lent."

"I have read it."

She said, "It was my last piece of editing for him. The bishop now has his own small office staff, with a grant from SMS. You've got your own administration to do, Jeremy, and a sermon to write."

I said, "My husband works for SMS. They must all get on very well, higher up."

"What do you make of the suffragan?" she asked.

"I think he is progressive."

"Really?" she asked, and then said, "Right, sorry, got to go."

Keith hadn't mentioned money going from SMS. Meanwhile, I said, "Pity your neighbour Louise is leaving."

"Ministry at Peterlee," he said. "Her parish will merge with mine. It won't be the first."

"One less clergyperson," I said.

The afternoon involved driving to and walking in a series of villages, one after the other, including one in Louise's parish, and one entered earlier. The purpose of this, he said, was to be seen, and indeed there were some random conversations.

He introduced me carefully in each one, always saying where I was from. He even did it when visiting shops. He was following protocol, probably.

At the third village he asked me, "Did you see that Serninsea Cross, a brooch? Lovely object. Apparently found over your boundary into Jim Wilson's parish."

"Supposed to be Anglo-Saxon."

"There was this Kath Wickenby on *Sea TV* saying it should be subjected to rigorous tests. She was so sceptical in tone that it's as if the bishop is taking a risk promoting it. The bishop is using it to boost the area."

"That archaeology student, I think, is also a model - in the newspaper."

"So she is."

"She's in a Lent show in our church hall that might itself promote Serninsea."

Back at the vicarage, he asked me, "What then *are* we supposed to make of that bishop's pastoral letter, to be more intimate and friendly? Like you and me? What difference would it have made to today?"

"You were perhaps too formal in introducing me?"

"I should change that then, if I can. I mean, you and me as colleagues, to be more friendly. What about personal stuff, say..."

"I don't know. I can see a pile of, I assume, photo albums over there."

"Yes."

"Show me. That makes it more intimate."

"They ought to have gone back upstairs."

I said, "You could tell your laity how we got on looking at your photos."

"No, not if they then wanted to look at them as well."

"Oh sorry. They are obviously private."

"Yes, it has to be something to tell the laity."

So he showed selected pages, and revealing a younger teenage girl and an older teenage boy. Emily and he went back a very long way together. I think they were both fifty.

He took me upstairs (sharing lifting photo albums) to his computer in a room made into an office. My equivalent was the smaller sitting room near the front door. Avoiding emails, he showed how he blogs his sermons. He had theological notes on items that could be used later. He showed his storage folders system.

Then he started typing towards his next sermon, and I sat as he did and he asked for comments. He said that I had not given up reading.

"Look, we haven't had a drink. Have a drink and then I want to discuss with you a theology book I've been reading. I'll bring drinks up. Can you carefully put the albums on those shelves - tight fit."

On my own I could not resist looking in at least the top album. Ah. There were pictures of him and her, and their growing teenage children, all naked on a grassy beach, with a headland far off. They were naked against some wall, naked in a house, naked at the car by a lake. I closed the album and started squeezing them into a space.

He came back with a tray of two coffees. "Our holidays," he said.

"What?"

"You mean, 'Where?' surely."

"How could you see me looking?"

"I didn't. We all succumb to temptation."

I said to him, "Well, I was brought up a naturist. And I still am. We have no children; I can't have children."

"You're not transgender?" he asked. I looked at him, and said nothing. He took and opened the album at the pages I'd seen, "It's a pity that most photos get taken on naturist holidays."

"I'd have seen my friend Diana this afternoon. We strip off, lie down in a conservatory, look at the sky and say sometimes very little." There was a pause. I said to him, "So, if I was to undress, and you were to undress, we would be happy with that and think nothing of it."

"Yes, I suppose so," he said, "so long as no one calls at the door. We could all have our tea, naked, when Emily is back."

And so I started to undress.

Looking at me, he did the same, and said, "You are definitely not transgender."

"Not with these tits," I said at him. "Or that." (I pointed below.)

He said, "They do those very well these days."

"You are clearly male."

So now we were liberated, though I and he sat on pieces of kitchen roll sourced in this upstairs room. He brought over his latest book purchased, by an Alan Lindsey, discussing the dialectic nature of doctrine and the freedom of theological enquiry. "It's like Karl Barth applied to the Holy Spirit," he said. So it is both fully doctrinal and yet has a kind of theological glasnost. What do you make of it?"

"I don't know. I will have to read it."

"I'd like to know your view. Do borrow it."

"I don't know the author."

"Brother of Andrea Lindsey, another priest and general practitioner, both of Dorset, originally, but she has been living in Somerset, and has just married the new Suffragan Bishop of Sumorsæte, Lynton Plimpton."

He selected some more books, one comparing Christian incarnation with Hindu manifestation, and another comparing Christianity and Buddhism as paths. And one on German idealism including naturism.

A pile of books to take home!

Who then in the clergy knew I was an active naturist? The suffragan bishop knew, because I'd discussed it, and Colin Cromer knew. Colin had known my naturist family, even though my family were definitely not churchgoers. Now I had discovered a fellow clergyman who was a naturist like me. I could get to know this guy, I thought.

There was a noise beyond. Then a female voice said, having ascended the stairs, "Why are you naked with another woman doing some sort of book club?" It was Emily's voice.

"Oh er, em, Linda here is a naturist, it turns out, brought up as one as well. Like me, like us. We are being more friendly, more intimate."

"Linda," she said. "Like Lindy."

"Not Lindy," he said. "Nothing like Lindy. This is Linda. She is happily married. We are colleagues..."

"Shut it," Emily said. "Linda. Two years ago this man was having an affair with a Lindy and he lied to me for a year. And she is a naturist too, as it happens, so in his case the flesh is natural but his mind is weak."

I was somewhat taken aback. I had to say, "Er, Lindy Peacock?"

"It is indeed Lindy Peacock," said Emily.

"It was," said Jeremy.

"Small world," I said.

"Did you know about them?" asked Emily. "No one was supposed to know."

"No," I said. "Lindy is an unusual name. Lindy Peacock is in my new naturist club, although it is far away from here. When I became a curate, I moved to Bever Wood away from Saxiclite. She did that too. I met her again. I don't know her that much, but I knew she was having an affair. Oh dear. I had no idea it was with you."

Jeremy said, "Bishop John Barman does not know of the affair, and it has gone no further so please it must be absolutely confidential. So you moved as well."

"Keeping it distant."

"Yes. Well, we as a family don't go to naturist clubs now: not even Saxiclite,

definitely not Bever Wood," added Jeremy.

Emily said, "Linda. I do not want you to stay any longer. Get dressed. Please do not eat with us or stay for the evening. Please don't meet my children because matters are still raw. Sorry. They were badly affected by Lindy Peacock and all that, so I am asking you to leave and not see my husband again."

I was shocked, and his head had dropped. "I see Jeremy in deanery meetings," I responded. "What do you think I should do?"

"Well, don't meet, other than in such formal and many-person circumstances," Emily insisted, quietly and firmly. "No supposed intimacy meetings for sure. And Jeremy: dress too. The family can unclthe later."

"You might have become my new confessor, Jeremy."

"Definitely not," said Emily.

I said, as I dressed, and so did he, "I am very sorry."

Jeremy said, "No, I am sorry. Sorry Emily. This is still very sensitive. I thought, maybe, but..."

I said, "I'll go now. Thank you. It was good to know your work better. Emily, I really didn't know. I'm not the affair type and I am happily married. This secret is safe at my end of things."

She said to me, "We decided to tell no one. Not unless we break up and, hopefully, we won't. And now we are starting to be happy again. But Jeremy cannot do this with you. But why is this photo album out, Jeremy? Did you know Linda here was a naturist?"

"Yes. Bishop John told me. Very recently."

"Oh," I said. "So I was meant to see those photos you were concealing."

"Oh yes," he said. "Bishop John knows we are naturists but does not know about my recent affair."

Emily said to me, "Linda, will you please go downstairs and leave."

"Yes of course."

I drove home, and decided to say nothing to Keith other than about the visits, walks and the first book only. (Obviously I'd not taken his books.) I decided to tell Colin Cromer by telephone that, although it was a useful visit and I had learnt much, I did not get on with him and would prefer to avoid him in future. I would need a confessor.

Colin paused and then said that, perhaps on an evening in Lent, I would do a sermon as spontaneous as possible on the collective position of the Church. He would arrange the date and time.

This day the walls had narrowed a little further.

Chapter 02 The Plan Begins

Narrator: Keith *The Plan Begins Regarding Linda* (Wednesday 20th March)

My wife, I knew, would soon have to cease giving herself to me exclusively, and instead give herself wholly and completely to the group under the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the English National Church.

I was at work, looking at a fleet of lorries in the yard at Titansea, supervising a team. We had to use lasers and mechanical means to check their measurements. It was a contract, and of course this fleet had to come in on rural roads to have their capacities checked and passed. All this could be so better done at Felixstowe, Harwich and Hartlepool. SMS might do well if it could get to South Wales and cover along the coastline. Gwasanaethau Mesur De Cymru, Caerdydd, and Gwasanaethau Arolygu De Cymru, Casnewydd, were already busy and would become competitors; Yojana might go to find site locations and at the same time extend the reach of the Confraternity through two bishops in Casnewydd, or Newport, and Aberdaugleddau or Milford Haven.

Anyway, I took a break at work and received a visit in person from the the National Church's Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke, John Terence Barman.

He had news from a recent Sexual Conference up north with Elizabeth that we were, "good to go with Linda." A Sexual Conference was making a decision whilst having orgasmic sex. This decision was now made and set as divinely guided.

I asked who would be the principal person recruiting, and his reply was the Reverend Ken Osis. He was also to be imposed as Linda's new counsellor and confessor, because she had rejected Jeremy Symes as confessor. Terry was going to investigate why.

I asked whether Ken Osis was not too close as confessor to be a talent scout. The bishop hoped that Ken Osis would "leak" some interesting information gained as confessor. Osis already had other confessor roles. He'd be easier to pressurise than Symes (not in the confraternity).

Ken's mentor into the group had been the fearsome Connie Wilson. And, on that connection, Terry Barman had information for me. Connie had seen the photos taken by Ken of my wife when Linda was a model. Ken had taken three hundred photos of her and hundreds more of other models at the local photographic studio. The bishop thought this was very many of Linda, but I said that with planning this number of shots could be taken in as few as three two-hour nude figure sessions.

Connie stole five photos and passed them on to him. Ken Osis knew Linda at the time by her studio name, and I said 'Silky' before Terry did. I pointed out that I had about thirty good ones, taken when I was in a continuing relationship with her, and thus some of my photos were explicit, assisted by a friend at the time having a dark room.

Terry asked if he could have some. I said they should be less explicit because if Linda was to see the most explicit then she would know they were mine. In those days the studio had a restriction policy around figure photography: the explicitness of her poses was because they were for me. Terry wanted five. Ken had told Connie that Linda had been very popular. She had smooth skin and her pubic area was very

obvious. Loads of men took her pictures even under figure rules. Photos could come from anywhere in Serninsea.

Terry noticed that Linda had an obvious clitoris that must help channel the Divine.

(Ken had wavered regarding initiation at the last minute, and so Connie sorted it out causing him to capitulate immediately. Clergy do not have a choice: their oath of obedience to the bishops extended to the vanguard Confraternity.)

Terry thought Ken had photographed all those women in his past because he was unable to get any women in a relationship himself, and since being a clergyman the situation had been worse. Thus Linda could even marry Ken Osis after our divorce, and Linda coach him so that both would become a fantastic initiating team within the group.

Terry said others under the Confraternity would help recruit Linda. The next best after Ken was likely to be the Reformist Rabbi Maurice Neptune coming over from Wytham when visiting congregants. Maurice was theologically progressive and historical, giving interest to many meetings with Linda. The bishop knew that Maurice also wanted a wife, but this should not be relevant. But it was relevant, I said, if Ken lacks confidence. Maurice came to the group seeking sex, and Linda meeting him could start an affair.

But Terry thought that marrying a rabbi would not work. She might convert when she was needed as a priest to initiate people by the evidence of giving and receiving body fluids. Christine Vine had produced the Body Eucharist or Body Mass to incorporate initiation.

Later on he might use Connie. I said that he could use Connie sooner, as well, say via shopping. Such would ease her use later to make sure Linda signed on the dotted line.

The one person who had not to try and recruit her was me. I was to listen to how she responded to the various strategies, and only report back. I was told to leave it to those who could do it, in the right positions at the right time.

Meanwhile, I told him about the effective ceiling of opportunity in Serninsea for SMS. These trucks Terry could see were all out of their way regarding normal operation.

Then there was something else to mention. Terry told me that he was going to this conference in Margate, and his friend and another Confraternity bishop Jonathan Eyre was hosting it. Jonathan was so capable with women, and Terry wanted him involved in breaking in Linda to become sexually open.

I said, "Don't forget what I have done, in the course of our relationship too." Terry agreed that I hadn't exactly been unsuccessful myself with women. I'd captured virgins and the experienced.

Terry would discuss matters with Jonathan first in Margate and then have Jonathan come up to Serninsea to use his skills on Linda. He had fluidity and flexibility regarding opening up the many roads to the Divine Orgasm.

The other episcopal decision taker to consult was Elizabeth Huett, Diocesan Bishop of Tees, based in Middlesbrough since last year. Terry and 'Tess' met often.

I asked what the conference was about.

He said it was all about coastal town economies and society. "Let's call it, 'Faith in the Seaside,' to be pretentious."

So I suggested that Linda might go. He thought not, because it is his patch -

making the connections.

It was obvious to me that Linda could go with him, and I said so. "After all, you might *both* fuck her - presumably apart."

No! Terry thought that even apart he might cramp Jonathan's style in a conference setting. Instead he'd write his paper and go and present it, and chat with Jonathan about what was possible with Linda and when. The one proviso was Terry would initiate Linda himself and definitely not Ken Osis.

He said, "Bishops should initiate priests."

I suggested that it was regrettable that Louise Deimos escaped recruitment.

But she was not even in the ball park, he said. She was asexual, like her sister. In fact, Terry was glad that she was exiting the Serninsea Ings deanery because she was useless to us. He'd had it from Bishop Elizabeth that she was leaving the Church altogether.

I pointed out that, as far as I knew, and I think I did, Linda had been loyal to me throughout. She had not strayed. Her considerable sexuality had been mine only, I said. I had physically changed her body and her capabilities.

This simply confirmed to Terry again that she must come into the group. Meanwhile, Terry told me not to become too attached to Yojana: that this was always the danger in mentoring. Such was never going to happen between Connie Wilson and Ken Osis. She gave him sex and then brought it to a full stop, adding to his frustrations - making him ripe for sex with Linda.

Narrator: Linda. *Interview For Ministry Training* (Wednesday March 16th 2016)

In a small room in a house near the cathedral in Wytham, the Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke introduced himself and added, "So I replaced David Stoot, who retired. Bishop Derek could have interviewed you, or even Bishop Julian, Suffragan of Screddington, but it's me."

"Yes."

"You have been provisionally accepted for ministry training, by the board, with a little influence from me. We have a file we have consulted, made up from your time so far in your parish and the EMU Chaplaincy and what we know about you, but I want to hear your authentic voice. As a deacon then priest you would give people your authentic voice, subject to being seen to uphold the doctrine of the English National Church and follow the directions of your diocesan bishop, of whom I am one direct representative."

"Yes."

"Are you shy?"

"Not really."

"Am I going to be subjected to one and two-word answers?"

"No."

"Because: if you are a naturist, you cannot really be shy."

"Ah, you know about that. Of course you do."

"You are not really shy."

"Strangely, some naturist teenagers become shy. But I didn't. I come from a family of naturists."

"Gossip exists about you. But do you think there is a kind of protection of their own in and around Serninsea?"

"I don't know. Possibly."

"You are allegedly a convert to Christianity, but not to naturism. You are much deeper into naturism than into Christianity."

"I was converted via my husband when he was my boyfriend."

"Tell me about that."

"He wasn't in the Christian Union side of things; after a slow start I took an interest in the Anglican Chaplaincy."

"That's what I question. Intellectually, maybe, but where is the deep emotional commitment?"

"So RE was rubbish at school, but in History and Philosophy A levels the religious issues interested me. So it became my focus including the Chaplaincy."

"Rubbish? The diocesan is on the SACRE for RE in Foss."

"Perhaps he could improve it."

"Wasn't your Chaplaincy participation for supporting your husband, not for yourself?"

"I read the same material and absorbed it. Educationally it is called 'concept cracking' as Religious Studies has its houses like there are 'houses of history'. I had my own interest. But I don't deny that I did support my husband."

"But, unlike Christianity, your naturism isn't ideas based. I'm beginning to sound like our esteemed Archbishop."

"How?"

"Double negatives. Your naturism is a heart thing; your Christianity is a head thing. You don't base it on ideas in naturism."

"But I do."

"I'm suggesting that your naturism is a participatory commitment, but your religion is ideas."

"No. Naturism is about who we are, which we conceptualise. It has German origins as an ideal. There was the magazine *Vivre* and naturism was linked to heliotherapy. I'm a bit rusty. That's right, the health thing against tuberculosis. Ideas, then."

"Pagan and romanticised," said the bishop interviewer.

"Yes, I know, and it has later very unfortunate associations, not by naturists but how the body was idealised, abused, misrepresented. The seeds of the problem lie with the ancient Greeks."

"Do you have an ideal body?"

"I don't use Platonism regarding the body."

"If I may say so, it looks all right to me."

"My body could even be counted as a surprise."

"Go on."

"Chance."

"Chance?" he asked. "Chaos theory?"

"Could be," I replied. "Biologically combining and iterating and then things not happening quite as expected. Then adjusting, adapting..."

"Hardly God's plan then," said the bishop. "Light the blue touch paper and leave it to chaos?"

"God's creativity, freedom? Who knows?"

"The Church?"

"On biology?" I asked back.

"But chaos theory, systems, evolution, can ignore God."

"Or could be the product of God. You're acting as the Devil's advocate, bishop?" I started smiling. "I'm upholding belief here," I said.

"Really? Like virgin births and things like that."

"How brain death works as well. Biology surely *doesn't* come in to the explanation of Church doctrines."

"You think."

"I think.."

"You are making my point for me. But I like to think we are progressive in this diocese. I am. So to sexuality. You are happily married, I take it. But you were both at the same school: very local people."

"Yes. He was a year above and, actually, largely ignored me. My sister was in his year, and he largely ignored her too. But at the same university we were together, home from home - he comforted me and I hope I did him."

"But you only got married just before he applied to be an ordinand. I suggest you two were a bit on and off in your relationship."

"You're pretty good at this, if I may say."

"I am."

"But you are wrong, Bishop John. It's six years ago in 2010 that we got engaged, and four that we married, Bishop. Two years ago he applied, to be rejected rapidly, and I applied last year, and now you are interviewing me. Yes, my time with Keith has varied in intensity. He stayed with me at university after he'd finished, and that was the start of what he called his 'other kind of clerical' career. He came back to Serninsea only when I did. He did have some unemployment. I was facing unemployment keeping the farm ticking over before it was sold on when my family moved to a farm in Wales last year."

"I've heard that you were a photographic model and an artists' model."

"How do you know that?"

"Gossip? There must be many photographs of you, and many sketches and paintings too."

"A few thousand photographs in one year. Some hundreds or so, perhaps, drawings and paintings over three years."

"They could surface."

"So what?"

"They could undermine your ordained ministry."

"Why?"

"Because they show your body."

"I can't see the problem."

"You really don't care?"

"I do care; I don't see the issue."

"There are clergy who go on holiday and they go to places like Poole and on to Studland Bay. Off it all comes. But they don't carry on back at home."

"Neither will I to answer the door, but if you ask me whether I am worried that photographs of me may circulate? I am not embarrassed, in fact the opposite."

"What is to *stop* you showing all?"

"What is appropriate at the time. I'm covered over *now*. So your whole point

is that my personal deep well is naturism and Christianity is just something in the wind that has the status of a puzzle."

"But you gave up modelling only when your husband was applying to be an ordinand."

"On your account, therefore, I know when to stop doing one thing if it's incompatible with another. But your account is wrong, again. I gave up being an even artists' model seven years ago, whereas my husband applied two years ago. I was a photographic model for the money. I much preferred being an artists' model, but there's no money in it. The same people needed someone else to paint and draw, their lumps and bumps, whereas photographers take thousands of pictures and want more and more of the same. Bishop, this is a strange interview. You speak as if I should be rejected."

"Okay, let's make it a more regular interview. Who is Christ?"

"Good. Christ identifies what God is and ought to be, bishop. It is what becomes transcendent. If that is too passive, I understand the Holy Spirit is effective as motivator as well as receiver."

"Yes, very good. Yes. You've had other boyfriends?"

"Hey? Theology?"

"Should be. You've had other boyfriends?"

"Is this relevant?"

"It is contextual to your ethical outlook."

"Well none like Keith. I've had liaisons and encounters, like any girl or boy does. Did you ask my husband Keith these questions?"

"I didn't interview him. The board rejected him."

"Why did the board reject him? He was a dyed in the wool Anglican. He certainly was heart and head. He had a background of participation within a participating family. I come from a bunch of Pagan-like weirdos, so I get told."

"I don't discuss other people, not even your husband. Was he always faithful to you? Being on and off."

"You are discussing other people! Not on and off: more and less."

"I was pretty good at this some moments ago."

"Pretty good is not excellent. I still don't see the relevance of this."

"Your ideological and practised naturism must have encouraged him at university."

"So I walked around naked a lot. I told him not to misread me at first, but we struck up a relationship."

"There is a woman priest now: she is evangelical and you knew her closely."

"Are you talking about Jenny Masters?"

"The Reverend Jenny, yes. She was a bit stormy. She knew you, several chaps, and had a strong conversion experience."

"You are pretty good at this. I lost touch with her. Are you implying something, bishop? Bishop, what are you asking?"

"I'm asking you to confirm your biography."

"I gather that unlike me she was influenced by the Christian Union side when I think she was troubled. But I don't know that much. Later news of her - when I got it - was all second hand."

"Influenced by her uncle, too."

"Was she? You know more than me!"

"You were close, but how close?"

"What is the relevance of *this*?"

"Personal religious influences?"

"No religious influence on me as I'd gone away, and I didn't hear anything after a time."

"Don't you like to hear about other people?"

"Is that a quality I should want?"

"Yes, you should be interested in people, what happens to them, where they have come from, and where they are going."

"Definitely. I was pastoral towards my friends, towards my customers, even to the few animals. We did try some pigs."

"There are other naturists in this area."

"Are there? The nearest club, Saxiclite, is some distance away; the club is very important."

"Church should be your second home. Again, my very point."

"Well." I turned and looked at the door for a few seconds.

"But, as I have been hinting, I want a rounded person."

"When did you hint this?"

"You have a hinterland. I much prefer it. Confident, broad in sympathy; experimental, realises not everything in the garden is rosy."

"Keith doesn't have a hinterland?"

"Can't discuss him, but he is such a product of his parents as you said."

"So am I."

"But you have an older brother, an older sister, and a much younger sister. He was on his Tod."

"But my dad did prefer my eldest sister, and mum the youngest; it gave me a bit of freedom to make up my own mind."

"My very point, and Bishop Derek will warm to your theological interest. I shall inform him of that because he wants more thinkers. So I want to run with this. Congratulations!"

"Oh! Thank you."

"Can you start in September, as they say? College ends so that you can then get ordained; that's nearly two years later at Petertide. Two years is long enough for a brain like yours. Contextual Social Theology MA will work your brain beyond Church training. When is Petertide? Quiz question."

"End of June."

"Some don't know this."

"I do."

"Quite. Technically the diocesan decides, but he will confirm my decision. Now, I have much to do. I am having a meeting with the Reverend Jim and Mrs. Connie Wilson."

"I only know of them despite them being here about five years."

"Don't be so deliberately modest."

"It's simply true."

"Good wishes for your progress, and keep up and indeed increase your support for the local parish. And give my continued good wishes to Keith, even if he remains disappointed."

He gestured his hand towards the door, so I left and went directly to get a bus

back to Serninsea.

Narrator: Linda. *SMS Regional Gathering* (Friday 22nd March 2019)

Lent was proceeding, ignored by outsiders, including the world of business; the equinox was more noticed. Keith was attending the regional gathering of his employer Systematic Measuring Services, at the Titansea Grand Hotel, and this time I went along as *his* support. Some had been to the Wilkinson Casino, and some would go there later. The suffragan bishop was present somewhere but I represented the absent vicar.

Keith wanted me to meet some of his work colleagues.

Here was Yojana Asthana, of the firm's Independent Inspection Unit. She was of an apparently respectable Hindu Indian family that had a bed and breakfast business north of Sutton and right by the coast. I'd heard about her, but this was the first time I had met her. She was a stunning thirty-five year old. Her skin colour was beautiful, her hair was a deep black, her eyes brown and even towards yellow. As far as I knew, she was single. I could have fallen in love with her.

"My job," she said to me, "is to check that Mr. Jupitas is doing his job properly. I check on him, as he checks on others."

"Trust is important," Keith said.

"I agree," I responded. "Do you work well together?"

Yojana said, "Trust is because there are what we call Chinese walls - thin boundaries in the workplace between different operations - but we must observe them. Mr. Jupitas has an MBA, and I would like to study for an MBA - it is why he was promoted."

"My Contextual Social Theology MA doesn't have quite the same career impact."

I learnt that they would delay their annual checking procedures. They usually included some surprises that tested the internal honesty of the systems and people.

"What do you call it?" I asked. "Is it annual inspections, stress testing, honesty assessment?"

"That's a very good point, Linda," Keith said. "We call it several things: usually the word 'Annual' is involved!"

Yojana said, "So we measure the accuracy of vehicles of all kinds that carry items, but we have to be accurate about the accuracy. Once this was an area tempted by all kinds of corruption. Checking internal honesty and integrity also involves the accidental as well as the intentional."

Keith said to her, "We need to chat about our oncoming procedures."

Then Keith introduced Cheryl Mould.

I said, "Well I know you - knew you. So good to meet you again."

"You good yersen?"

"Yes, thank you."

"You get to do a lot of snecking in this place, like, but I hope I'm right eyeable here. Something for them to sneck at!"

We all knew Mouldy at school and she was bullied a bit in our earlier years. I wasn't a bully, but shame on me, I was thinking, for not having a better opinion of her

and not intervening on her behalf. Like Yojana, Cheryl was wearing something of a plunging neckline, with unsuitable high heels; in fact, of all the women present, my collar made me the most covered up of us all.

She said, "I'm visiting me mam and dad; I'm down at the firm's headquarters in Harwich now, where I'm a bit of a nowter, really..."

No you're not," said Keith.

"Well, Mr. Jupitas, we *are* their gofers, their frim. Okay, I'm doing stuff with central admin, like. I do a lot of record keeping kept down in Harwich."

I said, "You can call him Keith as well!"

"Thank you Mrs. Reverend Jupitas, Linda. It's so posh here; they even have conger in the sarnies."

I said, "Pretty tasteless. I know that his job includes fairly regular visits to your HQ down there, and some visits to other new branches."

Cheryl said, "Yes. They like all the local admins to be - what is it?"

"Consistent," said Keith. "In other words, although the geographical source of the work is identified, the need for consistency should mean it is the same no matter where from. Obviously more and more is online but the argument is whether that makes it easier to centralise or easier to decentralise. Oh, and we consider what the centre is saying about the delays; we need to chat about that, Cheryl. Later on, I think."

Despite formalities both women seemed to have a welcoming body language about them when near Keith, like a sparkle in the face and each having a knowing smile and a bodily charisma. I tried to read people's faces and gestures but was pretty useless at it. Some males seemed a little leering about these women.

I went and found a toilet and thought about matters. Keith was a ladies' man. He was when at school. Nevertheless, work colleagues have to get on and we all have strategies to improve relationships among colleagues. Perhaps they needed a touch of the bishop's call for intimacy!

When back, and drifting about, Chair of SMS Sir Sanjay Bunker, no less, approached me and said, "Hello, Reverend Jupitas. Is Keith telling you anything interesting? It *is* Reverend Jupitas?"

"Technically, *the* Reverend - and then first name, surname. 'Consistency' or something seems to be important.."

He said, "You don't come to many of our events."

"I'm here now," I replied.

"Our further gatherings. Fun and friendly events. Perhaps Keith keeps his work life separate."

"I suppose he does," I said.

"He doesn't bring his owrk home."

"Our house in Sutton-on-Serninsea is owned by the Church and is for church use as well."

"Ah, tied housing."

"Keith!" he said, to bring him over. He said, slowly, "We need to bring to competitor South Wales operations full-on competition. We need to spare one of our people to step up to the plate and organise everything. We have two very good people here - you and Yojana."

"Yes, we need someone to do some location finding. Yojana would be excellent."

"Something to talk about afterwards," Sir Sanjay said. "*The Reverend Linda*, good to have met you at last," said the high boss. "We like our spouses to get involved in the firm, you know. Sometimes they listen and come up with remarkable and creative ideas. One of the best is how we socialise in Serninsea, so we really do relax. Your bishop is particularly welcome. It all adds to our sense of being a family and community, not just a business, and adds to productivity I may say."

"Gemeinschaft as opposed to just gesellschaft," I said.

"Pardon?"

"A sociological insight of community rather than association."

I looked at Keith looking at him and then me.

The boss continued, "You notice I avoided the Welsh names of those businesses. Your family has moved to Wales."

"I think my youngest sister is tackling the language."

"I and my team are always willing to hear from spouses and relatives. Yes. Don't forget our restaurant and casino gathering coming up after the internal inspections. Now, your bishop: where is he?"

The suffragan bishop was the guest speaker. Keith had successfully avoided him so far.

The Right Reverend John Barman gave an interesting presentation: *Where it May Be More Ethical to be a Little Less Precise*. Clever. He was, like, putting a case for the opposition: qualitative flexibility over the firm's quantitative accuracy and even rigorous self-checking.

However, he spoke in favour of clarity and efficiency, also clever in a diocese becoming notorious for ineffective management from the very top. Perhaps Bishop Barman wanted to build his reputation but his role was to assist the troubled diocesan Bishop of Wytham, Derek Imperial.

John Barman said to everyone, as part of the lecture: "The most quantifiable is the in-out model, is it not? What resources go in and what product or service comes out. Quantify everything! And so they need not know about the in-between, as long as they can record the out results. They try and do this in education; I'm resisting doing it for our clergy. It's not what matters; what matters is *relationship*. Well, quality and quantity are not always opposites. You can be efficient and effective, but add warmth. Intimacy might mean measuring small, but it also means relating well and in depth. Now, maths is pure and abstract, so intimacy and relationship might be idealistic, but they are real and concrete, dare I say *incarnate*. I say, let's spread all that emotion by more contact, contact that is real and towards the qualities of relationship."

Was this a development of his pastoral letter? I wondered. He might have mentioned personalist God theology either in the letter, or here, but he didn't.

Keith asked me, as the evening out came to a close, "What do you think of my colleagues?"

I decided to do some mimicking. "Very good, Mr. Jupitas; work well together, Mr. Jupitas; highly professional, Mr. Jupitas."

He said, in response, "Cheryl is local, not Japanese. I try to keep them in good order."

"As Japanese as Kendo Nagasaki, then. So, just the women? 'Queen's Award for Sexism'?"

"Oh no, male subordinates as well. And they all call me Keith when close."

"The Jupitas Empire."

"Eeeexcellent!"

"Are they your subordinates? She works in the Headquarters admin."

"Quite right, she is not."

"And what of the guest speaker from my line of work? What of the qualities of his speech? Don't try and measure it."

"Justifying being two-faced?"

"Well that's a little strong," I reacted.

"He has to be two-faced," Keith said. "He's relating to two constituencies."

"He links to the community. It doesn't mean he is two-faced. Be a little bit more generous, Keith."

"Perhaps he should focus on your rubbish diocese."

"Mouldy looks nice. And the other one."

"They are both exceptional women," Keith said, "and great working with them. Yojana is a Hindu, don't you know: quite rare around here."

"I like the Sikhs. You should tell me more about work and the people there. Actually, anything might be a start."

"You don't."

"I have pastoral confidentiality to consider."

"I have organisational and commercial confidentiality to consider. I work with Yojana now, and because Cheryl has moved she has a key job in Harwich with me co-ordinating things."

"Not a nowter. She's to become some manager perhaps?"

"Definitely not. She sticks with the donkey work."

"I'm pleased you're happy," I said, "Mr. Jupitas."

Meanwhile Keith suggested I made my own way home because, with all these people up from Harwich, he wanted to have meetings with them. He would be home later and indeed he was back over three hours after I had returned indoors.

I managed to say bye to Cheryl, who commented, "Your bishop bloke's cut his mouth on a brocken bottle."

I thought she might have said that about my speech, these days.

Narrator: Keith. *After the SMS Official Gathering* (Friday 22nd March)

The folks were going out of the further steel door, the entrance and exit for the casino, nearer the wheelie bins, and through the first one to get upstairs - the odd person able to use its chair on a rail.

Yojana came to speak to me about Cheryl and said, "She can't go upstairs, so we'll have a basic meeting down here now and then take her away sharpish."

"It would have been better if she was staying at yours, but she is actually going home to her parents again tonight."

I gathered people together and suggested we move to a corner of the casino where there was an unused table.

"It is a very short meeting," I said, "but we'll take the opportunity of Sanjay Bunker and Archie Holborn here being present. This is Cheryl Mould, up from Harwich, one of our heavy lifters, offering a perspective from the ground floor, and

here is Yojana of the Independent Inspection Unit. Call it an extra meeting of an ad hoc group."

Yojana said she would take brief notes. "*Ad Hoc Group Meeting, Wilkinson Casino*. I'd better take names as some are managers and some are offering ground floor expertise."

We did all the formalities, and I then said, "The annual inspections stress testing, coming along, and we expect some delay this time. Why?"

Yojana said that 'ICT' had to tackle an information leak in Titansea. A client had discovered our practices. The owner of the lorry fleet had known our techniques before he brought the vehicles to us.

Sandy Bunker added that delay was because of the need to bring in Information Communications Technology experts, because from last year the systems were not robust. Their expected date for looking at security, with internal walls as well as external, had been delayed. Branches would be getting security upgrades rather than simply patching up. He'd been gaining intelligence from competitor firms in South Wales, given our intention to expand into ports along that coast. They used outside trusted individuals who were unexpected in what they do, with some methods to copy. Thus testing was likely to be tougher this year, with George Wickenby hired again to set some traps for people who were not observing proper space and non-contact.

Archie Holborn asked Cheryl if everything was ready to go among the administrators at Harwich.

"Yeah. We've a stiff row to hoe but we'll be busy. We can cope."

Archie said that it was all hands to the pumps and everyone needs to be focussed.

With the meeting soon over, people headed off quickly and Cheryl asked me where everyone else in there were going.

I didn't know was my barely credible answer. I didn't want her to see them use the second steel door.

"Look," I said, "I told Linda three hours. Let's be together before you can return to your mum and dad's."

"I didn't expect you to stay with me."

She did not need the loo so we left. It meant she was out of the way as other folks came along for a night together.

As we arrived, Cheryl asked, "Where is this?"

"By the coast..."

"I know the fucking sea when I see it. *Whose* is it?"

"Yojana's parents run it. She is very discreet, is Yojana. They will also waive us through at reception."

"You've paid, what, for the night or the hour?"

"I could have it all night, but I'll take you home."

So we went in a spare bedroom in the private area, next to Yojana's, and in there Cheryl and I undressed, and we took the chance to enjoy each other. The sex lasted three quarters of an hour (very long foreplay included) and then, as we dressed, we started a conversation about the future.

I told her that I had made my mind up that I would leave my wife in about four months. I said, "She'll become a priest first and then I will leave her." I hoped there would be a rapid divorce.

Cheryl was delighted. However, she said I did not have a job in Harwich and would have to seek one.

"Linda and I get on well. The Church will not priest someone even if the spouse only has been having an affair. There has to be a breakdown in the relationship long before someone else comes along. But once she is priested, it is too late for them; she has received already the indelible sign."

I drove Cheryl home to her parents', and then returned to go above the casino. Archie Holborn let me in at the nearer now locked steel door. Upstairs, some folks had started their own sex among the beds and sofas present.

There was a dance display going on by flat-chested Helen McPhail, and Stephen her husband was beaming away in admiration. I undressed and put my clothes alongside those of Yojana's and her uncle's, rather than in the cloaks area.

Brunette Helen was very attractive despite her lack of chest. They were exhibitionists and therefore only casually naked at times. Linda didn't know them.

They had each been streakers at sports events. Once, Mousey Stephen caused uproar at Foss Upper Coast College by masturbating under the table in a cafe area late at night. Unknown Helen laughed. He thus met Helen.

Later she spent ten minutes with her naked bottom out of an opened upstairs classroom window with Stephen keeping watch; when there was a commotion below, they both ran for it. They had sex in the college delivery yard with several workers egging them on. They had an irregular Internet life way beyond the limits of the local Goosechat cammers. They appeared on *DisruptSex*, based in France (where some of the sexual acts were staggering), using his own constructed contraptions, one of which seemed to have been reassembled in this area above the casino.

Yojana was enjoying the dance entertainment. She told me that she had been with Archie, and wanted me, but I told her I was somewhat 'spent'.

Then Stephen introduced this large device he had indeed just made. It consisted of a robust frame using pullies. Two chains hung down to each end of a closed-off horizontal drainpipe weighted within so that these not completely sharp spikes always stood upwards. The naked person, male or female, straddled the drainpipe. Helen did this. An operator, in this case Stephen himself, could lift the drainpipe by pulling a chain with attached handle. The victim was able to reach up to two hand-holds, and try to pull himself or herself up but the drainpipe could always be raised higher. The result was pressure and indentation into testicles or labia lips.

Goosechat owner, the Reverend Deacon Christine Vine, especially approved of the device, so much so that I pulled on the lifting chain with her straddling it, rather than Yojana. Christine remarked that the spikes could be sharpened further. Yojana thought I should have a go, and these spikes did press into my testicles. No, it would not be shown on Goosechat, a place where she put prostitutes to work more safely online.

Balding and somewhat podgy Ken Osis declined straddling the pipe.

Bishop Barman spoke and said he would soon meet with Bishop Huett again and they would have a Sexual Conference together to fix decisions, checking with Bishop Eyre first that these met with his approval. Bishop Terry Barman then announced some changes.

"Christine is very good on the theoretical and advisory side, which is why we now have her as an administrator at our Confraternity, taking the minutes. She's at the centre. New member, Ken Osis, ably mentored by Connie here, has been invited

to advise us on confidentiality and secrecy issues." He asked Ken for a few words ahead of Christine.

The Reverend Ken Osis stood up. Connie alongside (her husband Jim the other side) gave Ken some penis tugs as he spoke.

"We already talk about talent scouts and similar metaphors. I will be advising that for secrecy we need a cover identity, and this is to develop a full theatrical metaphor. So even though the reality is the Confraternity of the Bishops, the cover is like a theatre company with actors, talent scouts, a control booth and so on. Bishop Barman can be like a theatre director - something like that."

Bishop Terry said they would decide all this for sure at a Sexual Conference. He thanked Ken for his imaginative contribution to the security of the group under the Confraternity

Christine stood up. "Listen everyone. I wish to begin with a biblical reading. Most important. Jim loudly agreed.

"Awake O north wind; and come, thy south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

That was from *Song of Solomon*, chapter 4 verse 16.

"As you may know, I am a Reverend Deacon, encouraged into becoming this by Bishop Jonathan Eyre and I moved up nearby over a year back. I've been based in Wheaton near Eslaforde in the south of Wytham diocese; I also reside in London. I sell property and bought a lot up here, in this town, and have got a growing number of sex workers in my terraces. I bought *Sexplay* that has just been renamed *Goosechat*. I am a high-end escort myself operating out of my Urania House in Hammersmith, from humble beginnings in Ebbsfleet. I'm from a family of various clergy Catholics and charismatics.

"I have always been interested in the body as an expression of who we are under God. So this is why I have developed, with Bishop Barman, the Body Eucharist as a rite. You see, we rightly say that there has been one divine and sufficient sacrifice, but this should not make our commitment easy and costless ritually. We need to demonstrate costly commitment for participation in the one sacrifice. Material loss means body fluid. It is by oxygenated blood that we have energy, and symbolically we lose fluid, and we lose fluid with energy most beautifully gathered and expressed in the orgasm. Fluid can be anything: semen, female lubrication that is like semen with some of urine's components, urine itself, spittle, and even faeces for that matter. But they should be expressed with the Divine Orgasm."

Bishop Barman said, "This was Liz's and my received revelation, before her rapid elevation to be Tees of the Diocesans. As bishops we orgasm for divine inspiration."

"And," said Christine, "the affair was a divine happening, and properly elitist..."
I asked, "Why elitist? Christainity is supposed..."

"Because bishops are an elite: not in terms of salvation, but working the gift of grace, approved by the Church our Guardian, allowing us to have a Vanguard. The whole point about the Confraternity is that it is voting by bishops only: it is apostolic and it must be. Ken and I are advisors only, even though as a priest he can be in the fluid exchange that makes the ritual valid. We do go on to exchange bread and wine, but the Vanguard involves body fluid. Now, this is Christian, but we have an

openness so that Sir Sanjay here and his niece over there can participate if they want to do so, because grace is generous regarding our vanguard ritual. Bishop."

Bishop Barman said, "She says it better than me. At the moment we have three bishops in the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the English National Church..."

Christine interrupted: "I think we should use the Latin. *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Anglorum Nationalibus*. This is because it is special, a leading order."

"I have trouble remembering it!" Bishop Terry replied. "All three bishops are equal, despite the Church putting a woman straight into a diocesan position. We are the Vanguard in a Confraternity."

He reminded everyone that Liz's suffragan at Hartlepool was not involved. If Sarah Deimos got to know of the group, she would spill the beans and that would be the end of us.

Yojana asked, "Louise is leaving; does she know?"

Terry said, "I think she has a low opinion of me, but that's it. Not everyone loves me!" He continued: "I think our own Suffragan Bishop of Scredington, Julian Worsley, could be involved with us. We get on very well, and he has compatible views on sex, but the person next up for us is Keith's wife, the Reverend Deacon Linda Jupitas."

He said that Ken was to be our principal talent scout here, to approach her via theatrical metaphors, and there was good reason to use the absent (this evening) Rabbi Maurice Neptune of Wytham, with his theological conversation. Terry also wanted his Margate bishop colleague to experience her sexually first hand. There was no limit to the number of talent scouts, but they had not to contradict each other. They had to co-ordinate through Terry. The two people not to talent scout Linda were myself and Terry. However, I could read her reactions and he could create situations for responses.

(It seemed to me that 'creating situations' was a form of talent scouting!)

Jim Wilson said we needed to know her capacity to disobey.

The bishop concluded: "I'd love to have your wife, Keith - and I look forward to it, starting with my initiation of her into membership."

Meanwhile, I said that Cheryl Mould knew nothing about the Confraternity or the group that had formed under it.

The bishop said she was not management, even on the lowest of rungs, and was not going to be invited to join unless and until policy changed.

But I said I intended to apply for a job still in SMS in Harwich and join her, once Linda was priested. I'd hopefully resume sexual relations with Linda on our group basis.

"Oh you will," said Connie, who added that our need was greater than hers, and she would come to understand the responsibility of self-sacrifice in the sacrificial rite of initiation, on men and on lesbians. Christine would be one once priested but may well move away; Liz, Fatima and Jenny are far away even though they visit. "By the way, I've something for you, Keith, for your wife. It's a rabbit vibrator. Give it to her at a suitable moment. It is second hand and I've got loads more."

"Hope you washed it."

"I don't have a virus, you know - my juices are sweet and healthy."

"Oh, something else. My wife told me of pastoral visiting a German woman

who likely has sexual relations with her dog. She wouldn't give me her name and address. If we could find her, we might want to ask her to join us."

Christine said, "We're always interested in a wider variety of practices, but achieving orgasms in mutual intimacy have to be shared and understood."

With that our meeting was over. I kissed Yojana. She spoke to her uncle Sanjay close by.

"Right, dear Yojana, let's get dressed, and go back to my sister, your mother."

"And dad," she said.

Like them, I also didn't fancy having a shower. There were showers and toilets beyond the cloaks area, being outside the main upper doors and to the left and right around those the stairs going directly down. It was a good way to socialise at the end of sex. Some did go, but I'd wanted to get home. Also, our clothes were in the main hall.

I said, also putting my clothes on, "You know, Yojana, Linda loves her dad, and can never understand why her eldest sister got more of his attention than she did."

She replied, "My brothers and sisters and I were always treated equally by dad. Come on Uncle San. Hurry up and come to my home. He still tucks me into bed when visiting."

So I went towards home, to Linda, and I was tired out.

Narrator: Linda *Keith Home from the Gathering* (Friday 22nd March)

I was reading online about the story of Inanna. This was the ancient Sumerian Goddess of the date palm and the communal storehouse. She went into the Underworld and came back as regeneration. So Spring Equinox was a time to achieve balance, like in the scales of justice and leading to compassion, in the process of regeneration.

When Keith arrived back I had moved on to view web pages about the University of Somerset, having looked at theological provision around the country.

"You're not thinking of going there?" he asked.

"They don't have theology but they do have Folk Studies in a School in Glastonbury. It's interesting what they do. It makes me think of the Tavistock-based Bruce Reed."

"I recall the name. I'm shagged out. These meetings are at such a ridiculous hour."

"Long one was it?"

"The meeting?"

"Well, your thing isn't!"

"There are these rumours and more of complications. Something is leaking from Titansea, and it is not a ship! If clients and others can see what we do and how we do it, then it can compromise *what* we do. So this means that this year's internal stress tests are more troublesome."

"And that's what you were talking about?"

"It is worrying that a lot of this came with people up from Harwich. Cheryl knew more than Yojana - that's terrible! If the leaking is discovered from down there,

it makes up here more difficult to develop. People could be covering up here, and it takes down there to see what is happening."

"So you are telling me organisational and commercial things, now."

"You did ask."

"I didn't. I asked about the length of the meeting. By the way, you smell of sweat."

"That's because I had to run down to the office."

"You held your meeting - where?"

"In the casino. In a corner, away from distractions. It is not a noisy place. And *you* never sweat."

"I do sweat but you won't smell it. And you know all about this, unlike me, about what happens throughout SMS. Well, I have a question for you: not just about your colleague you introduced or Mouldy, but about all of the women: why are they all dressed to kill?"

"It's an SMS thing. A while back some did it, and then more. But not at work. It's the usual at work."

"If I'd have known, I'd have stripped off."

"Well, there's something in that," he said, with a smile, "but more glamour than nudity. It can be controversial. It's a bit like Friday and Saturday nights out on the town. That's how I see it." Meanwhile, Keith said, "I've received a letter from an old friend. I knew him at school. He asks, among many other things, if I know what had happened to Geoff Virgo. He believes he moved to South Wales or indeed Somerset, and got some connection with religion. You might answer this question better than me."

"How do I know? He took flight from Adam Magellan, Jenny and me. Magellan may have stayed in touch. Jenny Masters may have stayed in touch; she became an ordained curate but we don't know where. If he can find Jenny, he is more likely to find Geoff."

"There's her uncle he could contact."

"You remember better than me."

"Presumably still local-ish."

He found five Masters in the telephone book. One was a 'Rt. Rev. William', which made no sense to me. But there was an Uncle Bill, by distant memory.

Upstairs, I first used Keith's last Christmas present of the Kettle drum weight as he got into bed. He did some vaginal stretching for me with my dilators, which turned into something more pleasurable by them.

Sermon of Density (3rd Lent Sunday 24th March)

On Sunday I looked up Geoff Virgo on the Internet and discovered Bristol had a Mar Arcturus-Virginis, Bishop Geoffrey Virgo and a Mar Flacillus, Bishop Luis Mariano Callas together. A Church that consisted of two men and a website, I thought. So presumably a William Masters was the same sort of arrangement, and could well be Jenny's uncle.

My first sermon in Lent was given on its third Sunday in the evening. My boss Colin Cromer wanted his sermons to be at the important morning Eucharists. I had

simple bullet points only.

I walked up the steps into the pulpit, with my all-black all-plastic brush concealed in a body belt under my black cassock. What the folks did not know was that the body belt was accompanied by nothing else.

"May my words be acceptable in your sight. Amen." That's the easy bit of any sermon. "Em, it is my task, as your preacher this evening, to uphold the Gospel. We are not supposed to give some sort of neutral, even-handed, investigation of things. Nevertheless, not doing that, I think we can do better than just preach in a one-sided way."

I went on: "The pulpit is not a place for investigation, it is said, but one wonders, like a student should, whether theology is to be that much different from other subjects - even if it *is* supposed to be confessional. Theology can be classified as: natural or dogmatic, within the world or heavenly pure, away from or in the Church. But we know that theology is often up against powerful scientific and social scientific explanations; so is there a purely natural theology any more? If not then this leaves simply the theology of the Church: well this Church and that Church."

I had a cold shiver. It wasn't a draught going up the cassock. Would anyone know what I was even on about? I knew what I was on about - that all theology is, in the end, dogma, or position. But did they even consider the argument and was it even relevant to their lives? I wanted to brush my hair to buy some thinking time, but obviously I didn't.

"We train in theological college," I said, "and I did until recently, but now I am here, and you are listening to a sort of introduction as to how I see things. I'm here as a willing servant of the Church and required to give its message. But then there *is* me and some interpretation. We are the body of the Church, and surely we make it as much as it makes us.

"1 Thessalonians then. If you put the New Testament out as it's given, you'd think there were four books giving a Jesus biography and everything else follows on. But that's not how it is. Paul's influence is throughout, and the first book would actually be this letter going to, we presume, the Gentiles in Thessalonica, where they'd converted from worshipping many gods. I think they were attracted to a one God faith rather as the Jews had it, whereas the Jews were opposed to what was happening there among the Gentiles (allowing for some Jews who were seeking Jesus as Messiah)."

I gave a slight pause for that thought to possibly sink in and then continued. Itchy hair, itchy hair. Not really. It's psychological.

"The disputes, including such differences between Jews and Gentiles, about which Paul makes his views known, come later on in subsequent letters. This letter is quite friendly. The question addressed was about the fate of the people who were dying. Paul transmitted the Jewish belief in resurrection, and they should have faith and wait for the general resurrection when bodies would leave their graves and greet the return of Christ - who'd been resurrected already. It's not about going to heaven, that sort of thing."

I was going cold. This was struggling to get out meaningfully.

"The Church does believe in resurrection, of course. That's the dogmatic theology because natural theology is we all die. I suppose what I'd like to do is derive some natural theology from this, which is a sense of expectation and preparation and have trust, and (say like the Thessalonians letter) be friendly with it. So I suppose the

translation is towards that of our own experience, and what is to come, but to alter experience with an intention that comes from words as these. In other words, be alert. Amen."

Back in the front choir pew I again wanted to give my long hair a brush through. It had become my kind of comforting, irrational, ritualistic habit, but was being prevented - perhaps for my own good. Somehow the Church was shutting me down, not opening me up.

The training vicar, Colin, simply gave a smile. I was trying to avoid mistakes and wasn't stepping out into controversial areas, but I was making a meal of it - really.

After the service I said, "I need to improve, Colin. What shall I do?"

"Next sermon, in a fortnight. Ignore the set reading again, if you want. Keep it biblical. *Effectiveness in Town*. At the most a few prompts and reminders. See how that works. And we'll change the crowd a little, so in the morning at the Eucharist."

"Oh. Thanks."

"Now I have discovered that Jeremy Symes did not get on with you either, as you did not with him, on your parish visit. I am surprised, because I thought you both had compatible natures and interests and he could have become your confessor."

"So, er, we..."

"I don't want to discuss this further. Water under the bridge and we'd better move on."

I needed the toilet and reflected as I emptied my bowels. His sermon demand sounded like cruelty to me. 'Ineffectiveness in Town' more like. 'Me in Serninsea and Jesus in Capernaum, Discuss.'

I felt forced into a kind of preacher's evasion. Some do the Gospel as if in the past and never come out of it. Some make it like a novel, but that's not to come out of it again. Others turn it into unanswered questions. Alan Lindsey bounces one argument off against the other and like Jake Thackray's song it *thereupon goes on again, on again, on again... on*.

I understood that theology is out of kilter with the sociology of knowledge that people use today in all practicalities.

In my Fiesta I wondered if intellectualism does not get dropped as one goes along with the job. In training they said there's a biblical narrative and a personal narrative and one can inform the other. Some hope!

Back at home I locked the door, got the cassock and body belt off and Keith reluctantly agreed to strip and put the central heating up a few notches, and he took the brush from me because he was irritated by my constant attack on my hair.

He had vigorous sex with me as a way of helping me overcome my own frustrations. He wasn't gentle because I wanted him to be rough. He'd built up my pain threshold over time, but he still knew how to hurt me. I felt I needed a sense of pain and exhaustion, and he provided both. Afterwards he gave me a drink, unconcerned, when I was in real agony from his slaps, penetrations and seeming lack of sympathy. I deserved it and he was a good man.

Town and Diana (Monday 25th March)

Next day was a visit to, in fact, a different gynaecologist. The alarm going off, I said quickly, "I have to go into town, to shop, but I'll get up after you've gone." Monday was my day off. I leaned over for my dilators and second hand vibrator but he interrupted my intention.

"You *could* help me," he said. Keith's concern was the inspection delays.

"OK, I'll get your breakfast."

Going into 'town' meant Serninsea itself. Serninsea was also the common name for the wider urban space, Sutton-on-Serninsea to the north, Serninsea and Titansea to the south, all along the flat sandy coast. Sutton wasn't (say) 'Norton' because it was south of the Marshes. Titan was a now unknown likely person of importance. Sernin was a Toulouse bishop (the connection being probably geese).

Nurse Alice Peers was now located in Serninsea; she remembered me twenty-four years earlier in Wytham. I got on all fours on a bench and the visiting gynaecologist, Cyprian Laney, talked with concern about the damage in my rectum.

"How is your evacuation?" he asked.

"Too easy."

(Equally, my swallowing needed care as I'd lost my choking reflex.)

"Then use your bottom for bottom things going out and not for penises and other objects going in."

He had all the notes on screen about my inner vulva but it didn't stop him from having a good look, opening me out with a speculum and using a torch.

I went from there to a beach down Ingle Barrow, beyond some posh houses. I had a naked dip in the sea. It was lovely. I usually preferred the dykes or drains to the beach and sea because I disliked sand. Naturists are supposed to love the beach, but I'm not a sun lover as such. My skin is smooth and hairless: to do the usual naturist thing would threaten it. Going in the sea was one way of putting the examination behind me.

Then I called on my good friend Diana. In fact I rarely went to Diana's house in Serninsea itself, because we liked to take advantage of Patricia's heated conservatory facing her large wood-surrounded garden at her house beyond Carr Wood into the Serninsea Marshes. She also had a garden gazebo. Diana and family only had a small terraced house, and I'm sure they could afford better.

So, despite it being a Monday, we went to Patricia's; she had a key and knew the alarm numbers.

Diana was my long black-haired *eaxl-gestealla*, or shoulder companion, bosom friend, my comrade, really, as it had turned out. However, I didn't know all her love life and she didn't know all my secrets. We both had matters to keep private.

Diana King she had been, now turned 40, known since school, married eleven years before and with two children, Ruben and Luuk, of nine and eight years old respectively. She was underemployed and married to Aardse de Groot, a Business Studies lecturer originally from The Netherlands. He'd worked there with tulips (the boom and bust flower). Because she had spare time I kept good contact. Twelve years back she had worked at Wilkinson's Casino - how she met Aardse the punter - and same year she moved to 'The Playground' (a place of tourist rides) for some administration, and took relevant courses. She left 'The Playground' two years later when it closed for a period and she was pregnant. The latter job helped her get four hours a week of lecturing on an FE Tourism course six years back, never able to increase her hours, so became a colleague of her husband. As with Keith's

experiences, her employment fluctuated with the continuous fall and rise of enterprises locally. She was now considering returning to the casino.

Patricia Rhymes was 39, who was Patricia Berger, but got divorced, and was Patricia Robinson at school. Her children were fifteen, fourteen and thirteen years old, all of them Bergers. She was working at Serninsea Doors and Windows, where husband Arthur Rhymes was a shareholding manager. Unlike Diana, she was increasingly right wing.

We had to be dressed when Patricia came home and before the teenagers returned.

Naked on parallel cushioned benches either side of the conservatory and both of us staring at the sky, I told her of feeling depressed about my sermon and inability to communicate.

"All I think is that you have landed one of the most secure jobs going. You do what you like, your time's your own, have cups of tea with people, and you get a full salary with no chance of ever being sacked."

"Not quite," I said. "It's not a salary but a stipend: the opportunity to be a person for others."

"Good work if you can get it," she said.

"I can never see myself wanting to be a vicar for the money."

We arranged a dinner to include her husband and mine at short notice for Wednesday, and so we wouldn't repeat the lie-down Diana in Patricia's conservatory. We could then review my short existence as a curate, especially as Aardse didn't know so much. It would also bring Keith and him together, both men being reluctant to be naturist.

Back home I looked up advice on the World Wide Web regarding my ongoing damaged backside and how to repair it. Hmm. Pilates? Pelvic floor exercises. No heavy lifting. Avoid some foods and drink less coffee, when I enjoyed elaborate coffee with spray cream and honey.

Dinner Party Chat (Wednesday 27th March)

Bought for the curate in the parish, we had been in the Church's house from just before Trinity Sunday a year ago. A little later I was ordained as deacon at the Petertide morning service.

After after a day of visiting parishioners, we friends relaxed at an evening dinner in this house. It was intended as a means to review the past year.

I'd said beforehand to Keith that he should not keep his clothes on; if Aardse was making an effort to be naturist with us, then he was to do the same.

I had a dressing gown on to open the front door to Diana and Aardse, as they were getting out of their car. (We had CCTV linked to all televisions.) I suggested that they lay their clothes in the front room. With the door shut I dropped my dressing gown in the kitchen where a bollock-naked Keith was monitoring progress. A minestrone soup that I tried to make via a recipe was ready, and a main course of beef and Yorkshire Puddings, boiled potatoes, plus peas, was nearly cooked. As inadequate cooks it was as much as we could manage for a dinner. Apple pie was on its way in the lower oven. I did not make the custard - Keith had opened a packet.

The table was lengthened in the double lounge/ dining area, where I also held meetings using the leather-effect sofa and chairs and more seats.

I said this to them: we'd made the front room our private room rather than as a study. This larger room facilitated gatherings and there was always the church hall.

It was at the main course that Aardse asked, "Hey: when people in your congregation look at you giving a sermon in your clerical garb, do they think there's that girl from the naturist family at Buzzard Farm?"

Keith said quickly, "It's like a local town protects its own."

I said, "I think those in the know accept me in the new situation. Even at school not everyone knew. Back then, when someone found out, they might bully me with words about it, and some thought it was a licence to grab my clothed breast or touch my covered bottom. Even the idiots shut up eventually. You didn't make anything of it, Diana, and you knew."

"I did think a few things at first, and *couldn't* see myself like it," she said, speaking slowly (a habit which she had begun for Aardse's benefit years ago). Aardse doesn't know this: I came to your farmhouse in May 1995 and I went naked there. I walked with your father while you were in the shop. You showed me the yard, the premises, and your father took me to see the fields and outbuildings. I thought it was liberating then but unusual. Aardse has only really heard the positive sell I did of naturism from later on, when you were back from university."

"I was back in June 2000."

"Yes," said Aardse, with his Dutch accent. "You were looking for a new direction - that is what you were saying - to include you and me together. Our children were also our new future, I know. I recall you very anxious before giving birth to the first boy - a lot of monitoring we had - and obsessive yes after the birth."

I said, "You tried naturism again. But it was 2003 when we were twenty-four that you joined me at Saxiclite as a full-on naturist. We became artists' models, in 2006. You stopped being an artists' model with your marriage. I ended it because it was long enough, and it did for me include a year of photographic modelling."

Keith said, "I stopped objecting. You could do it now."

"I'm definitely too old now and I *am* a clergywoman."

Aardse was further ahead with his reference points of time. "Our second boy, it all went smoothly. Hey: Patricia's had three, we've had two, and are there to be any children in the curate's home?"

"No," I said. "

"What I mean is to suggest that no children makes this more of a working place."

"Not for me it isn't," said Keith, who seemed to be adjusting how he was sat regarding his testicles on his towel.

"So," asked Aardse, how do you feel, Keith, being now in a curate's house when they stopped you becoming a curate? Don't you ever act the curate you that wanted to be?"

"Definitely not. Perhaps the panel and the bishop was right. You generate the sense of purpose with all your activities beforehand - I will become a priest - and then they say 'no' and you kind of deflate. So I needed a new direction as well, which I have achieved now. Linda is certainly the one wearing the collar. Well, when she wears something else." Keith smiled at me, and pushed some meat in his gob.

I said, "What made the difference was your Master of Business

Administration. And you do suit management. Keith is more of a bureaucrat from you as a business person, if I may say so, Aardse."

"Lecturer, only," he said. "Joined on and off by Diana."

"We need administrators and they assist business. The NHS would not run without administrators, for example."

"What depresses me now," said Diana, "is that we are all so apparently middle class. You were a rebel and my dad was a labourer."

I said, "Keith was *always* middle class. You were middle class at the Student Christian Movement Chaplaincy. They all were. *Very* Anglican middle class. I'd have preferred the Christian Union, but I couldn't stomach their theology and demands - even though some of them were also Anglican."

Keith said, "The Chaplaincy had the odd Methodist and UPCC."

Diana said, "The contrast, Keith, with your respectable persona, is you were also a ladies man."

"Diana, please," he said.

She continued, "Come on, you had an eye on many a female in our year, never mind your own. Cheryl Mould, right, she was one of ours, Jenny, let's be honest, and me, and you kind of viewed Linda at a distance. You have never said why you viewed Linda only at a distance."

"Lucinda was in my year, but I knew about the family as all hippy, creepy, weird. The truth is, my parents did not like her parents, your parents. Cheryl Mould was a dirty girl at school but her parents were okay," Keith said. "But, although I was not a Lothario..."

"*Keith*," I said. "This is supposed to be about our time in this house and we've said nothing."

He ignored me. "I did want to photograph you, Diana, like I did Linda, but you only did artists' modelling. I'd have liked a painting of you or Linda, for that matter."

Diana said, "Yeah, because on your honeymoon you bought a Blake-like painting by some Christian artist at Walsingham. That had erotic overtones."

"Oh that one," he said. "*Christ Resurrecting in the Dawn Sunlight*."

"What happened to it?" Diana asked.

"Sold it. Rejected for ministry and unemployed, I was skint - we were skint. Two years we had it. But now, here we are, Diana, not a stitch on, and no modelling fee involved I assume, and I have a good camera."

Diana placed down her knife and fork, put her hands behind her head, and cocked her head to one side, pushing out her chest of moderately sized breasts.

I then said, after a wry smile, "*Cheryl* could be a model now. Is she single or married, Keith? Well, she *was* married wasn't she?"

"Briefly. She was Cheryl Little for a little while. I presume she isn't married now, to someone else. I don't know if she has a boyfriend. I go to Harwich to go up to the headquarters administration whereas Cheryl works in the Harwich International Port operational administration."

"I thought you said she worked at HQ, when she was up here."

"Visiting her parents or something. Serninsea has a small operational administration, then Hartlepool is getting bigger, jumps up to Harwich and Felixstowe has a huge operational administration. There's local and national in Harwich. I co-ordinate the operational so she is involved in that. I was inaccurate; I don't know her that well. She said she likes Harwich."

I said, "I can't think why."

"*Au contraire*," Keith said. "Okay, it's the end of the line. Parkeston is dreary. But Harwich's peninsula with the Orwell and Stour has sixteenth to eighteenth century buildings. The old town, around Church Street, King's Head Street, is actually mediaeval, if behind Georgian facades. Dovercourt has avenues and a prom. Great beach. You get your two-hourly ferries to Felixstowe. Or you can get across to Esbjerg. Lots of trains. I sometimes stay at The Pier Hotel and eat mussels and drink beer and watch the sea. There's a Deli and a wine bar. Off Fronks Road you get Edwardian and Victorian semis, detacheds and terraces."

Diana said, "It almost sounds like you've been house-hunting."

"Rather, it is what happens when you go to a hotel or guest house and have time on your hands."

Aardse said, "But you were more miserable perhaps, Keith, with your periods of unemployment."

"I am not miserable in Harwich: I do not work all the time I am there. Work here isn't secure, basically. Yes, it took a while to get going, here, and not smoothly. Your parents would not pay me when I did bits of farm work, Linda."

"No, I know. But it was great having you around. This was after university, and we'd had enough time together by then and my parents just had to accept it. We *still* haven't talked about being here."

Diana said, "Our friendship after your university was different, Linda, because Keith then had your attention. You two kind of stuck together and have ever since, through all the changes. And in this curate's house."

"And mum and dad and Lucinda and Leila moved away. So this, here, is very different."

"You could still have children now," said Diana. "You've never wanted them. Two's enough for us; I gave birth to our youngest when Patricia got divorced. It's amazing that Ruben is nine, Luuk is eight, already. So you are a career girl, and here is your career, in this house and that church, and how long is it here?"

"It will be for two more years. And that creates a difficulty. If I was a curate elsewhere, I might come back here to be the vicar, but only if - in this scenario - Colin retired conveniently. The assumption is to move on. Maybe I'd change diocese and go to Harwich!"

Keith said, "Being a curate and being a vicar are very different, but you're not right. If the vicar retires, then you can move into a new role and the parish would see you differently. You could be here for a long time. This suffragan bishop likes connections into the community. I think he would want you here. I bet he does, Linda."

Diana said, "Is there a difficulty at all that Colin is your training vicar, Linda, and that he had married you before you ever sought ordination?"

"No. There is an adjustment in his pastoral role towards me. But it works. I do like him. A single man all his life, no children either; I think there has been the odd girl friend, but nothing happened."

"Rumours of a foreign woman," said Keith.

"Colin?" I asked.

"Oh yes. There was someone. The choir."

"In the choir - oh, that was tittle-tattle. Some women around with nothing better to do than gossip."

"You think? It's not that long ago. Not quite ten years... Not even nine."

"Colin was hopeful about you and he did sympathise and support you at the rejection. What he feared happened: the rejection affected your parish church life."

"It was the same time as miladdo became Bolingbroke. Well, I was moving on. So you took over."

The first course was over. I demanded we changed the subject. So we talked about favourite films - hardly my subject - and not what but how we watch television these days, when I hardly do. Diana and Aardse had acquired all the new technology. They had started using streaming services, surely to become more popular. Diana liked her fiction, like Scottish time travel and romance. Streaming *The Jacobite Gap Years*, she was also buying the three DVDs as physical objects to match the books and watch them multiple times. Aardse showed (it was obvious to me) only limited interest.

After the meal and with coffee we played whist, naked. Trumps didn't lead to anything. We had wine later

In the end, they put back on their clothes and left to collect their boys from Patricia and Arthur. It wasn't that great of an evening - too middle class. I'd enjoyed our meal and would have savoured the flavours, but instead ended up with his sauce down my throat and had to swallow it carefully. Not exactly a digestif, I thought.

Walking with Friends (Friday 29th March)

Losing my Wednesday afternoon through added visiting, and with Patricia herself on a rare extended lunch from Titensea, we intended a three-person walk starting from her large garden. By necessity, we were clothed!

In the garden Diana said, "Aardse accused me of being like a feral cat towards your husband, and he gave me a severe fucking once at home. It was great. Do you think we can have more dinner parties together?"

"I thought it was a failure."

"That's what Aardse said."

"I got a severe fucking too. I did wonder if Keith was thinking of you."

"Good job we were too tired from work," said Patricia. "Still, if you're going to fantasise naughty things we'd rather wait for a more regular occasion."

I said, "We were no more naughty than when Diana and I stare at the sky in your conservatory talking about very little. We played ordinary whist. I insist on the ordinariness of removing my clothes."

"Look at them," said Patricia to Diana and me. We were approaching people in the field beyond (part of The Marshes) with their metal detectors. "The farmer tolerates them, looking for more, and he could be part-beneficiary of the Serninsea Cross brooch treasure."

Diana said, "That farmer takes a small fee for entry; that's what he does. A student told me. Surely he'd be in line for half the value of the item, but we've heard nothing."

This farmland was in between Patricia's and the Wilsons' vicarage, the home of the evangelical priest for the neighbouring parish to mine.

Patricia said, "They break the fences and the trees, drop litter, and sometimes

stray into our property. And there are so many of them," she moaned. A problem was a small gate into that next field, negotiated by Arthur with the farmer, so a few would use it the other way into the garden.

We walked into the field to get the better view across to the Wilson's house and one person came along with her detector and a golden labrador on an extended lead..

"Found anything?" I asked her.

"Not today," she said with a muted German accent. "The club chair he doubts many are here or too far beyond."

"I'll write to him about people straying on to my land," said Patricia."

"We do not," she said. "Straying you call it."

"We do," said our haughty friend.

"Are you straying?"

"Special permission," said Patricia. "And a gate. Our gate, not your gate."

"Are you a regular over here?" I asked this woman.

"Yah. Regular, but uneven I think. I know Kathryn and Kathleen Wickenby. They did archaeology degrees together. I know they don't like detectorists too many, but they have spoken into the club. They will say we have right to be here."

Patricia said, "I've never heard of them."

Diana added, "I knew them before, four or five years ago. They did Tourism at a higher level than I taught but came into my classes for extra foundation material. Then they went off to East Midlands University, having been at the Further Education College instead of sixth form, both of them always sticking together. Their university second year practical work was back here in Serninsea, in these fields."

I asked this woman, "Do you find a lot in these fields?"

"No. Little is detected, but we do find coins occasionally and bits of metal. It was definitely an area of metalworking near now the Marsh Drain, but was before a natural, boggy river. Yah."

"What about the Serninsea Cross brooch?" I asked.

"Yah? We say it is hoax," she said. "There's some bishop man who promotes it. Like these twins say, he's a dupe or he's in on it."

"I can't imagine he is either of those," I said.

"Ask Kathryn or Kathleen. They say he should stay in his Caffenmere palace and talk about what he knows about."

"He was interested in archaeology. Romans in Britain, I think. And it's not exactly a palace," I suggested. "Large, I grant you; posh location, sure; but, well, you know." I asked her and Diana, "Incidentally, do either of you know a woman called Klärchen Sisse?"

Diana said, "Yes I do. She has a dog called Dieter."

"Ah yes too. She is from the same region of Germany as me - North Rhine Westphalia."

"Do either of you know anything about her? I met her the other day when I was visiting."

Diana said, "She's fond of her dog, an alsatian. She seems to get away with bringing it to classes. I think she's the sort of person who moves on and moves on again. I don't know her that well."

"She brought her dog from Germany. Mine came from Wytham. Hendrik here and her dog gets together very good. We do too," said the German woman.

I asked her for her name, and she said Salome Lichtblau. She said she would tell Klärchen that we met. She said, "Come and visit us. Do you have a dog?"

"No," I said.

"That's a shame," she said. We could have enjoyed time together, walking dogs and so on, going on the beach and coming back. They like going in Klärchen's shower. We have good fun."

"I met Klärchen accidentally, and now you too."

We said goodbye and I kept my thoughts to myself.

Given Patricia's temporary freedom, we went for a long walk to the railway restoration. Bad Dr. Richard Beeching had removed a vital north-south railway connection. (I knew a Beeching once, a 'good' Beeching, at Saxiclite, a year older than me. I never discussed him with anyone.)

Here tracks were being extended, and electric cables were up and ready, but the real excitement was imminently introducing the trams as a regular and local service. Begun as a tourist idea, and instead of restoring steam locomotives, trams were to be a transit system in their own right. The trams would run a winter service as a local facility as well as being a tourist attraction. The new station at the head of the restoration was on the B road from Patricia's rural house.

"Why not restore the east main line?" was Patricia's obvious point to us, and one I shared, and probably most locals did. "Run trains throughout and deliver the tourists." Here the volunteers, prisoners, community order servers and forced workfare among the unemployed had rebuilt a line from Sutton-in-Serninsea all the way south to Inglemire, at a created park, and with a brand new section for Caffenmere.

We approached a leader of these labourers alongside. He'd got acute hearing, because he said to us, "It'll never happen. And even this new service will be limited by the single line lengths."

Here, at the head of the line, a functional open air new station was using an old restored shell of a signal box alongside as a ticket office. He explained, as we looked around, "The main line through Ca'nmere is now too long gone to restore; and there are bypasses and other roads built on where its track used to be south and north. They'd have to rebuild 'longside these roads," he said.

"Ah, but," Patricia asked, "would you give up the trams to be a through line again?"

"Tomorrow," he said. "By the way, it's a great way to get the unemployed to work for their benefits and to keep criminals out of prison. So much could be done like that and at less cost."

"Patricia said, "Oh I agree with that. More projects like this."

This made me feel uneasy, and Diana too by her facial expression. Forcing the unemployed to work for benefits whilst keeping people out of prison on community orders, and prisoners doing this work, effectively criminalised the unemployed.

I said to Patricia, "When you force workfare like you force criminals you ride roughshod over innocent people."

She said, starkly, "Gets them off their backsides. We are still subsidising the workforce with these benefits but we get something back. Prisoners should be made to work," she added.

"I better carry on volunteering," said the leader, who moved sharpish.

I said, "You never used to think like that. Only since you married Arthur, and you only got your job because he was there."

"I had a formal interview," she said.

"I know," I said. "The other candidates from the Job Centre turned up under false pretences."

"No one challenged me being the best qualified."

I left it there. Diana kept quiet, but Patricia and her husband had become ever more Tory and anti-European to boot.

Patricia added, "And don't forget, the Good Samaritan needed a wallet to be effective."

I said, at this point, "I'll stick to the religious interpretations."

"Mrs. Thatcher was correct when she addressed those people."

"Presbyterians in Scotland," I said, "lecturing others from her basis of ignorance."

"She was *right*. And don't forget Arthur has given me a few precious hours off whereas you are both free to meet in the afternoons."

I said, "Not every afternoon. And Diana here tries to get work, but FE and adult education is a terrible employer. People bet in an instant at Wilkinson's Casino what its workers get over many hours."

"Yeah," said Patricia, "but *your* work is like my time off with a hobby thrown in. And if the windows and doors business goes down then we've lost our jobs, whereas you will never lose your job. And on this Diana agrees with me."

Diana said, "Yea..eah."

"And I'm not working fewer hours: I'm going back and will add time later."

Patricia called a taxi from her mobile phone, and went back to work. A visiting cousin was in their house to receive her teenagers. The taxi took us directly via Diana's, where I also got out to walk to my car at Patricia's.

As it drove off I mentioned that Patricia is becoming so right wing that she made me look like a lefty.

We parted with Diana warning me, "Do keep away from Klärchen Sisse. She doesn't wear knickers."

"But neither do I."

"I kept quiet because I bet that Salome Lichtblau is in on it all. Very strange. Do you know what I mean? You know, like..."

"Yes, I think I do."

"This place is full of weidos - and that bishop of yours stinks of perfume when you meet him. I bet dogs won't go near him."

"But he's not a *weirdo*, Diana."

"He's a fraud and keeps a lot to himself."

"Oh I don't know. So do we!"

"Look after yourself, Linda."

She gave me a gentle kiss on the cheek before parting, and I thought this was very nice of her. I was classified as a local weirdo, once, and probably still was.

Narrator: Linda A Secret (Saturday 30th March)

Staying in bed, Keith and I recalled the dinner party. Keith said, "They do not know that you cannot have children. Diana does not know."

"I've never had cause to tell her."

"In Patricia's conservatory, has Diana ever walked about with a string hanging down?"

"Yes. Many times."

"But you never have."

"No. I thought about doing it for effect. But no."

"Jenny knows."

"We were then investigating each other then. Anyway, she's miles away and I don't know where."

"Don't you think Diana should know?"

"How am I going to tell her now? Hey, on our walk, this detectorist said she shared bathing her dog with that woman's dog I met."

"Another one?"

"I think so."

"Isn't this supposed to be pastorally confidential?"

"It was on our walk with Diana and Patricia. Diana thought it is all very dodgy. Keep it to yourself, husband."

"Hmm. You're not coming up with a big number when you add two and two?"

"Forget it."

"Fancy another poke?"

"Yes I do, actually. Good man."

After the poke, Keith started reading some papers from work, sent from Harwich, that, he said, "most likely could delay the internal investigations further. Looks like I'll have to work on a fucking Sunday."

'Hmm. Try it,' I thought.

Chapter 03 Not So Clever as a Curate

Church Hall Show (Laetare Sunday 31st March)

Keith went into work! It was white cassock time and a touch of pink for me all day. Yes. Mothering Sunday, Refreshment Sunday, Rose Sunday, Sunday of the Five Loaves: and so an evening of entertainment was permitted in the church hall.

Keith was back from work. He said he'd join me for *The Magic Lantern Show: The Peter and Kath Partnership* as it would take his mind off the utter stupidity down in Titansea. It would be a young chap with a 'Kath' who'd appeared in *The National Lens*. Trouble was, could the magic work in its own backyard?

The turnout at the Church Hall was pathetic. Perhaps there were thirty-five or nearly forty there to watch in total. Keith and I saw that there were a few laity from the local church but probably more from the Serninsea Ings deanery, and those who were paid like me.

Keith didn't want to sit with the clergy contingent, and as Jeremy and Emily Symes were present I also wanted to keep my distance. We sat a few rows behind Bishop John Barman, the Reverend Jim Wilson and wife Connie all together.

Colin came in and instructed me to see Peter Marshall backstage with a text Colin had written for me to read out.

I went on to the stage and behind it found Peter Marshall. He was going to come out with a pink coloured lantern to introduce the show.

"It's a church hall: Colin wants this reading out," I said to him. So, instead, I would hold the lantern and read the text to then, Peter said, tap the handle with a finger of the holding hand. I went on to the stage in my white cassock and wearing a pink rose.

"Ladies and Gentlemen! I hold this lantern with verses here from Isaiah chapter 66 verses ten to eleven and Psalm 121 verse one:

"Rejoice, O Jerusalem: and come together all you that love her. Rejoice with gladness, you that have been in sorrow: That you may exult, and be filled from the breasts of your consolation. I rejoiced when they said to me: 'We shall go into God's House.'"

As I finished speaking and tapped the handle the flame went into a pink colour itself and then went into a kind of shower of pink sparks. I'd clearly performed a trick without realising it. I went behind the stage wing, handed in the lantern, and went to sit down among the audience.

However, the reading I thought about was this one, from Mark 6 in the *New Revised Standard Version*.

Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

We needed to suspend disbelief, locally, those that knew the twins.

The 'Partnership' was still rather impressive, I thought. As I sat next to Keith, loud music in the form of Kim Wilde's *Cambodia* played (and I wasn't really sure why) and continued. A vertical person-sized wardrobe-like box was wheeled on. He opened the door to the box; Kath, in a simple red dress, came on to the stage, went into the box, he shut the door, and in a couple of seconds opened it again to see Kath in a blue dress. That box was wheeled away, and another one came in, horizontal, and the same clothed Kath got in it, which was divided into two and made nearly apart, and somehow her head was in one half and legs in the other. As it appeared, this was pretty good, if hardly original. When she got out, she was in a white dress.

Part of the show was the music dropping away, and Kath in white gave a short lecture on local archaeology. The Magic man put on a projector to a flat white space at the back of the stage, so we saw the object - Kath had taken the picture when it was shown to people with expertise, last year, including locals.

I noticed that the bishop started taking notes. Kath first explained that the "so-called Serninsea Cross brooch" found last year in the Serninsea Marches would be most likely Anglo-Saxon. Christians didn't leave grave goods for a journey onwards. Being of a cross shape did not make it Christian. Yet, she said, there was something odd about it - and it seemed to appear from nowhere - because it did not seem to be associated with a grave. No originally shallow grave nearby was claimed or found by any visiting metal detectorists, and not from a rapid dig last year. Nevertheless, this land was always in transition, with fresh water streams and ponds meeting up with seawater marshes; the changing coastline had sand moving south and had been affected by rising and falling sea levels. Much was now drained of course and behind sea walls. Graves did exist but were less common than cremations. Cowrie shells and coral had been found in the area, as was once an antler comb. But one would expect to find some evidence of a grave, say a deceased woman in binding clothing that will have rotted away.

"I admit that it gives the area a greater profile today. It was handed to the Anglican Bishop of Bolingbroke for safe-keeping: it needs expert appraisal."

I recalled the detectorist with her labrador stating that the Wickenby twins were sure it was a hoax. Here Kath was hedging her or their bets. Was it because we were on church property? Was I being too cynical?

The bishop stood. "May I? Yes, it is in my safe keeping. In fact, here it is." He held it up and turned it about for everyone to see. "However, I am very happy to send it away for tests. I will send it to a laboratory that you recommend. Would that keep you happy?"

"Yes," she replied back. "Thank you." He sat down. Kath said that it was a large brooch, as a brooch, and contained garnets from India and amber. Amber represented the sun god or light. Its gold content was 75% pure and so was of value whatever its origins.

Kath said that a problem for archaeology was the sheer amount of Roman material of the living, whereas later Saxon findings concentrated on the dead. She said that there are fewer than ten excavated clearly Anglo-Saxon settlements in the UK. The wooden buildings of course rot away, leaving behind postholes that were dated by pottery: so often, what was hoped to be Anglo-Saxon turned out to be Iron Age. The best area for settlements was the rich agricultural land well west of our

area going through to the Midlands. In a past settlement area you would be lucky indeed to find any dwellings, but you might find the communal hall or possibly the grub hut - a grubenhaus - with its pit for disposals, where a lot of archaeological work was done.

Kath, again talking generally, said that the Iron Age people had lived on hill tops for sight and protection, the Romans went down into the valleys for better micro-climates, and then the Anglo-Saxons went back uphill again. Saxon settlements also paid attention to administrative boundaries.

Kath mentioned about the background of the mixed tribes of the area and this mattered because Saxons and Vikings only represented twenty percent at best of the population. With the decline of Roman power: slaves will have run free to get their own back and become thieves with a general decline in law and order, the shortage of currency finally led to its absence of use, records were no longer written down, and therefore it followed that there was the inability to organise labour to maintain buildings. It was a time of a fall in the population as disease was more prevalent and, even if wanted, the diminished numbers of people remaining could not maintain the old Roman fabric. Early Anglo-Saxon pottery was rougher than the Roman equivalent and the food that went in it was poorer. However, Anglo-Saxons liked their festivals and subsistence farming on good soil could still mean times of plenty. Stones from villas and buildings were used to protect graves, and sometimes the best stones were raided. Whilst Saxon life did develop, this area had Viking rule.

She further said that the Christian God will have been blamed for the decline of the fabric of society and so was followed by a period of Paganism among most people with cells existing of Christian belief. Some continuing Celtic cells of Christians might have continued until the eventual baptisms of the elites. The Anglo-Saxons provided not just an invading people but a new culture, albeit one that would later be Christianised from the top, from the kings and lords downwards, in battles between Northumbria and Mercia impacting locally, and then tested by Viking raids and their civilisation - but where Englishness eventually succeeded up to and under the Norman-French sweep of dominant power.

Kath then speculated that today currencies are undermined by excessive supply and basic questions of confidence, that our main world power the United States is in huge debt and, if flexible, more unproductive and unable to maintain its worldwide military footprint; some of its present-day Christian reactionaries were evidence of the decline of Christianity as a general world view once again. Another Empire was being lost now. The Romans at the end were unable to innovate, there was no more land to conquer, and no more people to enslave, and so it was relatively unproductive; more flexible cultures picked it off and forced its retreat into Byzantium. The Celts might have thought that riches from Byzantium would indicate a potential Roman revival, but after say a hundred years the Saxon culture had settled. Today the United States might flood the economy with Mickey Mouse money for infrastructure improvements, but at some point it would retreat into its own real value. Since the financial crash, continuous quantitative easing had suggested a patient on life support.

Keith said, "This has been the best bit. We could have done without the derivative magic."

Nevertheless, Kath left the stage to applause and this Peter Marshall was back, doing a range of tricks. He finished with a final person sized box that had

opened doors front and back and so was 'see-through'. He called it that, and Kath came on in little more than a tiny bikini. He then referred to the tabloid publicity, and that, as she went in, he swiftly removed the bra and she whooped and slapped her hands on her chest, and swinging her back to us closed that back doorway from this side. Mr. Magic then closed the front door. With a shout the topless lass was at the back of the hall, and she screamed for people to turn around and raised her arms up to bare her breasts before running out of the back doors. Cheeky, effective, and daring in a church hall, but it was back to Mark 6 - it was the twin, surely.

Something that stayed with me was from the talk, the part where the Christian God was blamed and thus was dropped from Celtic and Anglo-Saxon belief. And I thought, yes indeed, something of a similar replacement is happening now. Christianity no longer explains anything about cosmic origins or destinations, it is ethically dubious, and a dominant humanist narrative and a variety of beliefs and practices among a diverse population is taking over.

Keith said, "At least it was different. Nice chest."

"Very reasonable for a fiver each," I said.

"A fiver a tit?"

"Keith, don't be silly."

I noticed Bishop John Barman with Connie Wilson talking to Peter and Kath, with a top back on, and someone there older that Kath called 'uncle'. The Symes couple slipped away.

Keith said to me, "I was looking at your *Church News*. Never mind what we do at SMS, these diocesan leaks say the report is going to be a cracker. The investigative team has been uncovering some real fissures in management and its effectiveness, starting with the grand duffer himself, the diocesan Bishop of Wytham, your Right Reverend Derek Imperial."

"I saw it. The poor man has only been here less than seven years."

"The joke is that he hasn't been imperialist enough to command. They'll blame his Lordship Desperate Dan Dimpleby too. Why they gave him an actual lordship when he *ceased* to be the bishop I do not know. You should go and acknowledge the 'Bishop of Boiling Blokes', Linda."

Unfortunately, I was soon shaking hands with Jim Wilson, who said to me some drivel like the Serninsea Marshes were full of Pagans again and he was busy trying to convert them back. Twit.

Keith and I both knew that Bishop Derek let his two suffragans get on with it, with their titles from ancient land names. There was the Bishop of Screddington, whom we hardly ever saw, and the Bishop of Bolingbroke, who was never off the scene.

People would often spot John Terence Barman in some restaurant at the window seat with a different woman, and here was why rumours that he was gay never made much headway. Apparently, he liked the stories that suggested he might marry a woman soon.

I shook his hand (and so did Keith) and he stank of perfume.

Keith said afterwards, "He might just fancy taking you out for a meal and afters."

I said, "I'm quite tired and want to go home and sleep."

"So it is not tonight, Josephine."

"Don't call me Josephine."

"Surely I will not."

"Don't call me Shirley either."

"You should go on the stage. Oh you did! Do the whole hog, daughter, and become an actor Mrs. Worthington. *But don't you think her bust is too developed for her age?*"

"Kath's?"

"It's a line from the song."

"Noel Coward," I responded.

"Her personality is not, in reality, exciting enough, inviting enough, for this particular sphere."

"About whom are we talking?" I asked him.

"You, possibly, my dear."

"As a priest?"

"Well. *And though it's not exactly flat she'll need a little more than that to earn a living wage.*"

"You really are a cunt, supporting husband. Let's go home."

"I'll skip the bit about bandy legs. My dad was mad on this song, including the fourth verse with her bandy legs."

"Awful," I said back.

Dream Sequence and Waking (Monday 1st April)

This is what it was like, in all its detail. I was at the altar rail, with other ordinands, accompanied by those known to me as they looked in the final year of sixth form and beginning of university. To my right, kneeling too, was Jenny, and to my left old long-lost friends Adam and then Geoff. We all had robes on. Here was the current suffragan Bishop John, stood in front. It's the priesting but this was the parish church and not Wytham Cathedral. There was a woman at the side, who was painting the scene with a big canvas and easel - I could not see her face, but she had nothing on and she was accompanied by a passive German Shepherd dog.

I was brushing my long hair and my impossible lush blonde pubic hair too.

The bishop said, "Take my offering from my gloria hole."

Jenny showed that she could absorb him fully. That was my ability! She drooled with her mouth full and turned to look at me as it pressed against the inside of her other cheek. I brushed my head hair more. Suitably plopped out, Jenny licked her lips and smiled at me and showed pointed teeth. The dog came to Jenny and licked her mouth, but a flick of the artist's paint brush caused the dog to go and sit back with its mistress.

Oh no, this thing was getting fatter and longer and stiffer for me. 'Purple headed mountain' sang some unseen choir. The artist was going crazy thrashing her brushstrokes and the dog wagged its tail. The bishop knocked away my hairbrush, pinched my nose and my tongue came out. I was going to choke (I don't). As I took this enormous thing into my throat, the dog came to sniff my backside.

Then the bishop's mobile phone seemed to be bleeping. I raised my arm and put out my hand to answer it for him, and my hand went through his robes as if they were not there. The dog was approaching behind me.

"Oy," said Keith, my husband, behind me, as I lay on my left side. "The alarm is going."

"Oh shit," I said. "Horrible, horrible. Ugh."

"Dreaming?"

"Best left unsaid. I could do with a quick real fuck," I said.

I turned on to my back. He got on top of me to do as I'd requested.

"Crumbs, you're far too wet," he said. "Look I can't get started in there. I can't get any purchase. You'd better pleasure yourself instead. *You* don't have to get up, *Deacon*. Sorry, but I've got lots going on at work and all that we're doing about internal security." He rolled off me. "There's no spare ten minutes for me. Can you make my breakfast?"

"I will."

"Was I in it?"

"No, actually."

"Go on then? Who?"

We were getting up and headed first to the bathroom together.

"Adam Magellan: remember him? Geoff: his gay friend. Jenny. Some woman artist and her dog."

Keith had first go for a piss.

"Ah, those in your sixth form sexual happenings. Other than a woman and her dog."

"I can only think of the painting mentioned at the dinner party, the one you got in Walsingham. Come on."

"Why was Geoff Virgo in your dream? What was he doing - giving Magellan one?"

He finished and flushed. I sat on the seat and pissed.

"No. We were at an altar rail. Geoff is some sort of self-defined bishop, I've discovered. This is too embarrassing. Bishop John Barman was making an offering to us we could not refuse, through a 'gloria hole' in his vestments."

Keith started laughing and then put toothpaste on his brush. Soon I was alongside, doing the same.

After swilling, he said, "I never liked that Adam Magellan. He became a copper and once a copper always a copper. He's George Wickenby's competitor, in town. SMS uses Wickenby. Magellan went private, and interferes with people's private lives. Did you see George Wickenby at the magic show?"

I was swilling out my mouth. "No?"

"That Kath was calling him 'uncle'."

"Oh, I see. She's related to him. *They* are, then. I didn't even know Adam Magellan is in town; I didn't know the twins were nieces of George Wickenby."

"You go around with your eyes and ears shut."

I then said, "Fuck off, I do need a shit."

Sometime later at the breakfast table I said, "Good job I don't preach on my dreams. Petertide is months off."

"Wickenby I mentioned is more involved this time at SMS; computer whizz-kids are coming in. People are laying traps too. It gets more and more elaborate," he said. "But we have to do it. We, who measure others, and their honesty, must be sure of our own."

"Not the only ones being checked," I said. "The diocese."

"By the way, upstairs, under the bed, is a large rabbit vibrator with little balls in it; it does rotation, vibration, and different speeds. More pleasurable than your dilators," he said.

"Where did you get it?"

"It's second hand."

"Second hand? You mean it's been up someone else's..."

"This woman at work said she didn't want it."

"At work. What *do* you talk about?"

"It was a gift from a bloke on a one night stand. She didn't like it. She *has* washed it."

"Give it to a charity shop!"

"Don't be silly. It is perfectly usable. You need to push and stretch, unlike this morning."

"OK. I'll wash it again at breakfast before I use it. Did you pay her for it?"

"No. When I said my wife would have it, she thought it could be a gift."

"You told her I could have it? Who was she?"

"You wouldn't know her. Look, it is a generous gesture from a colleague who was having fun waving this around."

"And you told everyone that *I* would have it?"

"No. There are batteries in it. She could have taken them out but how generous she was, leaving them in. Tell you what. I'll put on instead one of Cheryl Mould's ties she gave me back at Christmas. Company tie; show some authority."

"Well, thank the woman for her gift. Tell her that I am delighted, ecstatic, it is just what I wanted, and I will use it with intense pleasure. I'll be spending more than twenty minutes with this."

Narrator: Keith *At Caffenmere* (Tuesday 2nd April)

I went with Yojana to Caffenmere and the bishop's large house, where we also met the diocesan Bishop of Tees, brunette Elizabeth Huett. She'd arrived yesterday. He called her 'Tess' from recently.

"Tess?" I asked.

As the first woman Bishop of the Diocese of Tees, they were already calling her Tees of the Diocesans, helped by some natural curls. So he went all Thomas Hardy.

He'd known her from 2007 when she was a priest at Wallsend. Then he called her Seg and she called him Tel. It's not clear who took whom to bed, when he was a Midlands priest attending the Roman Economy Conference at Wallsend-on-Tyne that she'd organised. Seen as a talent for organising and communicating, when the Right Reverend Penuel Fairthing retired in 2015 she became Suffragan Bishop of Segedunum (a still-used name for Wallsend at the end of Hadrian's Wall). When the neighbouring diocesan Bishop of Tees Hardwick Cockburn (called Harry Co'burn) retired in 2018, Liz became his successor.

Present at this meeting were these two bishops, the Reverend Christine Vine, the thinning curly scruffy black-haired Reverend Ken Osis, the Reverend Jim Wilson, June Holborn visiting from the south, Helen McPhail, Connie Wilson, Yojana and me.

It wasn't the best turnout because people were busy.

Rarely were all three bishops together. Jonathan Hopkirk Eyre, Bishop of Margate since 2009, was busy on the south coast. Bishop Elizabeth was widely known for being organised, strategic, multi-talented, too busy for relationships, and Bishop Terry was known for being progressive, engaging with the public, and too choosy to stay with dated women. Jonathan Eyre, however, was joked about - a wife was somewhere but he was a clerical 'father' of Sunday School children he'd helped to populate.

The now episcopal couple spent some time showing us around Terry's large house. It had been furnished by the Church, just like in our curate's house. A bit like Linda might, I asked if I could visit the loo, and so was apart from them for over five minutes.

Back with them, I viewed outside a very long and wide back garden stretching to the north, and a gate at the far end. This was the bishop's tied house, his for as long as he had the role. The previous suffragan, David Stoa, used to give garden parties, but this one never had.

We moved through the house to a particular lounge. I sat next to Yojana with the two bishops at ninety degrees from us, with much light coming over them from the bay window facing the front garden and the narrow road beyond it.

Terry said that there were sometimes rumours of relationships between clergy. What few knew, but we did, was that not only did Tel and Tess get it together as priests, and maintained the concealed relationship, but Jon, made bishop in 2009, joined in a sexual threesome in 2010.

"It wasn't the first time that Jonathan and I had sex with one or two women - the first time was at theological college!"

Liz, Terry and Jonathan's three-way was to celebrate John Terence Barman becoming Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke. It was that year, he said, that Liz and himself had a revelation about the Divine Orgasm, and discussed with Jon about organising groups of available people based on promoting this. Liz said that the twosomes then threesome were so excessively enjoyable that these had to be a model for the Kingdom of God, rather as the wine got better and stayed plentiful during the wedding Jesus attended.

Liz continued that the Confraternity might now be considered sempiternal, to the point where the eternal Kingdom breaks in. The first name for the overall group was The Khajuraho Oversight, after the erotic Indian sculptures, but this name was dropped as it was Hindu and over-exotic. Similarly, the concept of *Sigheh* Oversight was introduced, as that of temporary marriage for during sexual encounters, but this was dropped because of its Shia Islamic origins. Terry said that Jonathan Eyre had one lover of many, then laywoman Christine Vine (with us), and she gave the whole thing its Christian theoretical and theological backbone. The four knew this could be scandalous to the outside world, so they decided to set up a bishops-led, secretive, Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the English National Church or *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Anglorum Nationalibus*. This was Christian and as authoritarian as necessary to be secretive.

If I could have the influence of Christine! Liz explained, with Christine nodding, that Christine bedded Jonathan Eyre frequently, and managed his sexual aggression, and she bedded Sir Sanjay Bunker, and managed his sexual divergencies. Christine had thought that Saint Augustine made terrible errors, and

she wanted to be the new saintly guide to the vision of the perfect city.

Greying Jim Wilson however suggested that sin did exist in disobedience, such as when refusing the gift of salvation.

Terry said that the Confraternity claims that orgasmic sex is the highest expression of the divine. New to us here was his explanation of the divine economy. The three bishops learnt recently from the Reverend Deacon Christine that the Middle East once had mass sexual ceremonies in order to increase productivity.

Thus Christine Vine spoke. The four had discussed recently that back in the ancient days it was about eliciting a response from the fertility Gods. In modern society, gathered leading sexual athletes could perform mutual masturbation, with the goal of simultaneous orgasms, to aid commercial productivity. In addition Christine said she wrote the Body Eucharist as combining sacrifice, thanksgiving and orgasmic connection.

Reading the Bible, she said, God had always had a body. It might be unseen, but there was still a body. For example, Jesus had sat at the right hand of God. The body was continuous from God afar to humans near.

Thus the two brunette bishops present explained to us (again) the concept of sexual conferencing. This is for when they meet, either as two or as three. Liz said they will pray on a matter, have sex, enjoy Divine Orgasms - everyone present must have at least one - and then make a significant decision. It is rather like some have used collectively-encouraged but individually-experienced dreams to decide something. It takes some skill to consider something complex and contentious during sex, but it increases the bond between the decision makers. Others might watch the bishops in conference having sex, or have their own sexual encounters at the same time. But only the bishops could decide after orgasms.

Blonde Christine commented that there was something equivalent here to the Business Meeting of the Quaker Movement prompted by the Spirit, in a condition of waiting, ministry and active consideration leading to decisions. Here there was consideration, sexual encounter, the divine sign of the Orgasm, and thus a decision under divine guidance.

Tess and Tel therefore decided in this place to do some sexual conferencing. We could touch each other if we wanted, but they stripped off in front of us and engaged in mutual masturbation. As this began, Tess, or Liz, asked Yojana if any of what Christine Vine had said about sacrifice made any sense.

Christine stayed silent, to listen as Tel pushed by hands his very long still semi-stiff penis somewhat into Tess's vagina.

I put my hand down between Yojana's legs under her knickers to stroke her dampness. Yojana then referred to the Sakta in Hinduism who still practise animal sacrifice. The two bishops slowed their effort to listen. The female-like emphasis of energy or power in Shakti Hinduism refers to human sacrifice, but it isn't actual, said Yojana. People know about the wife throwing themselves on the man's funeral pyre. All kinds of animals have been sacrificed, she said; the Jhatka method tries to avoid animal pain. But she didn't know that much. It seemed quite a lot to me. I slipped my finger up into her wetter vagina.

Yojana pointed out that sacrifice is in order to obtain salvation. The *spirit* of the Vedic sacrifices is what is followed now. There are the Vedas, philosophical Vedanta and Mimamsa ritual theology of Ramanuja. Fasting is the obvious self-sacrifice towards devotion. She thought we were all about having pleasure, although she

understood that Terry's ejaculation into her mouth at her initiation was a kind of giving. This seemed to be a cue for Elizabeth to take his well endowed energised member out of her vagina and into her mouth.

I thought that Linda would surely energise the whole group at her very induction.

We were, I recalled in public, first and foremost 'theosexuals' - our sexual orientation was towards God. Pleasure could be seen as a by-product for bonding together as a fellowship under God. (I felt that I had to say something.) Christine's eyes went up. Liz was indeed bonding with Terry under God.

With everyone quiet and touching one another, the two worked themselves into their orgasms: back in her vagina, Tel came inside Tess and then masturbated her to her own orgasm.

Here came a divinely based instruction. The Bolingbroke bishop declared a decision for theatrical metaphors as divinely instituted. Ken Osis had shown him how Wilkinson Casino and above used to be a theatre. It was so in the 1960s and on two floors. The theatre was upstairs and service rooms were downstairs, with also a hall below. Once you could get up to the first floor at the far end, and it went up behind the actual stage upstairs. Thus Terry said that this legacy would disguise our group as it started to really expand. Therefore, we were going to be called *The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatre Players*, and use this rather than refer to 'the group' under the Confraternity. We would still refer to talent scouts as before, but now add actors, the control booth, and front of house. Terry would be the assistant director.

I said, "Actors as a concept instead of *sigheh*, then - but only the assistant? Is that because you are a suffragan bishop only?"

Apparently, he or she is the one in the control booth. As for the other groups, they would adopt the theatrical metaphors only if they worked for them.

We would all continue to use the white plastic badges as items targeted people could notice and ask about. We, the Bolingbroke Geese and Ganders showed a white B on a black Goose. The white W for Wippedsfleott on a black elephant that Christine sometimes wore was from Christine's original location of Ebbsfleet, even though the nearest bishop's area was at Margate. Her locals came from far and wide. The white H on a black stag was for Hereteu - the gathering in Hartlepool and abouts - although Sarah Deimos as bishop with this name knew nothing.

Bishop Terry asked if there was any news.

Bishop Liz pointed out that Jenny wanted to keep her distance from Linda. We had to respect that.

I pointed out that after encountering Linda in the sixth form Jenny feared homosexuality, once she was told this was sin by these charismatics.

However, Liz said that this was not true today with Fatima Tamuz as her vicar. "Fatima gives close guidance as well, as sex as Jenny's mental condition varies."

I told them that Linda had met a second person who shared her dog with the woman with the excitable dog.

"Listen. I discussed that," said Christine.

"*Dogging* then?" I asked in a throwaway fashion. Ha ha.

Helen McPhail looked uncomfortable. "Stephen and I do... go fucking - dogging - at times," she said.

"Could be tricky," said Terry. "All sex is good but we must protect the Confraternity, now also The Worshipful Company."

"A small number obviously know us but not this connection."

Bishop Terry pointed to developments in the plan to recruit Linda. My less explicit photos plus Ken's five had been sent anonymously to Linda's training vicar. "Can't make an omlette without cracking eggs." Terry had posted them in Sweynburgh on his diocesan travels. Also he had "chatted closely" with Emily Symes on Linda's parish experience visit.

June Holborn had a promotion idea for Terry. "Perhaps Serninsea could have an attraction like in Amsterdam." She described this cinema owned by a Natalie - '5D Porn' - with one show a time for eighteen customers only giving 3D vision, motion seats, air jets and water cannons to give additional sensations to the sex.

I said it would need more than eighteen seats to make a profit, or very short videos.

Time now was to relax. Yojana undressed completely, and so did I. On the carpet, as she wanked me, she drew attention by saying, "Keith, Christianity stresses the body whereas Hinduism is more spiritual and literary-mythical. There is a difference between being 'Christosexual' and 'Krishnosexual', and honourably so, but both are 'theosexual'."

"Oh that is brilliant," said Terry.

Christine was nodding.

But Yojana went on: "Be careful though because people cannot summarise Hinduism easily." Yojana mounted herself on to me.

Christine said that the Jewish approach from Rabbi Maurice would be 'Abramsexual' and she'd speak to him soon.

When we later rested, and Yojana was rather doting on me afterwards, Elizabeth came over above us with her damp pubes and pointed out that our groups do not break pastoral and commercial confidentiality. Linda should not know Jenny's whereabouts. Her uncle knew, which mattered. She'd changed her name to keep away from Linda.

I agreed in that if the Confraternity broke SMS commercial confidentiality, then SMS wouldn't work.

So as the afternoon faded, Terry above with his rainbow of a todger told us that this day marked the end of my mentoring Yojana. We could continue to meet but should not make an affair of it. He wanted Yojana's orientation towards the group.

Thus Elizabeth asked Yojana to accompany her for female to female seduction. Yojana seemed excited. I knew that this might be preparation for going to South Wales.

Ken, dressing like me, told me that he was delighted his metaphor ideas were taken on at the centre of decision taking. Connie looked forward to dealing with Linda, she told me.

I then left the house, as did others, leaving Yojana with Tess and Tel, and drove back to work to finish off a few papers.

Narrator: Linda *Photos from the Past* (Tuesday 2nd April)

Reverend Colin Cromer rang me and asked me to come in again after Morning Prayer for a matter that was "disturbing", as he put it. (He usually understated things.)

I went to his vicarage, rather larger than my place, with more rooms downstairs, and more bedrooms upstairs. He had a separate toilet, shower room and bathroom downstairs and the same upstairs. It was laid out for home, work and visitors. So I went into his study, a work area.

"Happy birthday," he said to me, giving me a card to add to those from my family and close friends. "Life begins."

"You have mail for me?"

"Not for you but about you. It is a package, as you can see, and contains photographs. Ten of them. Look."

"Right."

I looked at them, ten nudes, one from the back with arse prominent, one on my arms and legs from the side, and eight showing my bald pubes, including one lying on my side with legs pulled up and my anus clearly visible. In one nude one I was in a tin bath, and in another holding a towel. They were from my modelling days in the photographic studio.

"The implication here is blackmail," he said, as I looked at them and he looked at me.

I said, "I can't be blackmailed; I'm a naturist - as you well know."

"I know your background; I presume now you still practise this - if it is a practice - elsewhere at other times. It's the fact that someone has taken it upon themselves to send these pictures to me clearly taken in some studio. You are a little younger, but you do keep your looks."

"Twenty-seven and my birthday would be the twenty-eighth. Quite old for a model."

"The worry is that this package was posted quite far away in Sweynburgh. You don't seem embarrassed?"

"No, I'm not. Feel free to look at them. Is there an attempt at blackmail?"

"All it says is, 'Here are some pictures of Silky that might interest you vicar.' Well, they do but for all the wrong reasons. Who is 'Silky' by the way? I mean, I know it is you."

"At the photographic studio my model name was 'Silky' because of my skin. At art class in college and other venues, I was just Linda. This is the trouble," I said, "of having a past when you don't know what you are going to be in the future. Avoiding most bikini and topless sessions I still did many repetitive poses."

"Someone who took these photographs has decided now to send them to me. You've haven't even been in ministry for a year. Presumably, if you'd been recognised earlier, they would have sent these earlier."

At this point, I asked to be excused. My guts were churning - and it wasn't from embarrassment.

When I returned I said, "Someone has seen me with a cassock on, and collar, walking up and down and recognised my face? Actually, it is not that easy to recognise faces in different situations. The phrase, 'I didn't recognise you with your clothes on,' is a joke with some truth."

He asked me: "Have you recognised anyone in the congregation as one of your former photographers?"

"Photographers are difficult to remember and recognise."

"*They* had their clothes on. You'd recognise *them*."

"They can keep them on."

"One has to see the funny side, although this could be serious."

"There were one or two group events I was in, and I couldn't possibly remember all of those blokes. That's when I met most other models, doing the same thing at the same time. It was good camaraderie. Sometimes we hung about in the office, clothed, or not, and chatted to punters to get work. Some liked to show me their photos but most didn't. One chap painted me from photos but wouldn't give me or even sell me one. I looked good painted inside a frame."

"Could it be him?"

"No, not him. Too nice."

"Sometimes it is the nice ones we worry about. How many of these photographs are floating around the local area then?"

I said, "There will be thousands."

"*Thousands?*"

"But the collections will be in tens and maybe a few hundred in some cases."

"Ten, twenty photographers?"

"Fifty, ninety?"

"Hmm. You see, had you just been an artists' model, then you might have been recognised in the street but drawings and paintings are hardly going to identify you. They might even be considered a bit more respectable."

"One or two of them in art class took photos. Some models wouldn't allow it but I didn't mind. I mean, I was often naked on the farm, if out of the way: this photographic side was good money, and fast, but even then I stopped this modelling. Here is a point, Colin: every one of those models I knew only removed their clothes for money. I would do it at a drop of a hat. It was money for nothing."

I gave him the photographs back.

"The chicks weren't free, were they?" he commented. "And did you ever wear a hat?," he asked, with a growing smile, and started looking more closely at the pictures again. "If you didn't care, showing yourself to all and sundry, and me now, why did you stop?"

"I'm not showing you now. I am clothed."

"I mean you're not bothered as I look at these. So why did you stop?"

"The studio owners thought I was too old, even though they considered including the mature. I don't wear hats. Being naked and wearing a hat rather defeats the point."

"Have you upset anyone lately?"

"Er... Actually, yes. Emily Symes doesn't like me."

"Why not?"

"Because he is a naturist and she came in when we were both naked."

"What?"

"She came in when Jeremy and I were together naked."

"What on earth were you doing? No wonder she was upset! You told me that you and him didn't get on. Now I hear it is something else. When the bishop said to us, 'be intimate,' he didn't mean get your clothes off."

"She does it as well! The problem is that he had been having an affair until recently and she was..."

"What? Jeremy? Am I supposed to know this? Is this even true?"

"Yes. I know the woman who was involved with him; I knew she was having an affair but not with whom."

"Good grief. Is she another one? Is she local?"

"Not local, but she is a member of one of our clubs. By the way, I changed my membership to a different one further away a year ago. So did she, maybe a year before me."

"I'm getting seriously worried about this part of the world," said Colin. "How would Emily Symes have any photos of you?"

"I don't know. I rather doubt it."

"Next thing you'll tell me is that he posed like you did."

(I noticed he did not question whether Jeremy or Emily were naturists. I'd assumed he knew.)

"Jeremy never came even to the college to pose, as far as I can remember. It's possible. Artists often draw and paint naturists."

"Life used to be so simple. The question is what to do about this."

I said, "I suppose someone in his parish could have given them to Emily to use against me. Yet, I can't imagine Emily Symes sending them to you, rather because she wouldn't find them embarrassing."

"Did she lay down any conditions regarding you meeting him?"

"Only to keep away from him."

"And have you kept away from him, one of your work colleagues?"

"Yes. I went nowhere near them at the Church Hall show."

"Where the assistant to the magician, an intelligent archaeologist, bared her breasts."

"At the back of the hall."

"Did you know she was going to do that? Did you encourage her to do that?"

"It's 'no' to both questions, Colin."

"Hmm. I am thinking, could we just keep a lid on this here? I don't *want* to tell the diocesan bishop, but given that the suffragan seems to be 'hands on' I ought to tell him. It is a question of avoiding blackmail, and he needs to be in the know."

"I can't see how I can be blackmailed."

"What happens if next week posters of you naked start appearing all over the town?"

"In an ideal world I'd just walk through the town naked."

"Have you noticed the temperature today?"

"Dad taught me to be robust."

"Your dad? The image this creates!"

"Don't be so surprised. Does Bishop Barman need to be told?"

"I think so. But what I will do is tell him that we ought to protect you and us from blackmail. When should I ring him?"

I said, "Do it now."

"He is often not available and may have to ring me back. But let's see."

So the desk phone was used, on the speakerphone, via a predial.

"Bishop of Bolingbroke, John Terence Barman here. I see it is your number, the Reverend Colin."

"It is."

"Greetings, greetings: always doing the work of the Lord. Echoey! Is someone

there?"

"Yes. Linda Jupitas, Bishop. There is something delicate I have to inform you about. Your deacon is a victim here. She used to be a photographic model a dozen years ago. Some pictures of her from then have been sent to me and they arrived today. The photographs are naked and quite explicit."

"Oh dear. But let me wish her a happy birthday. Life begins at forty, Linda."

I said, "Thank you. The photographs aren't naked."

"What?" Colin asked. "What would you call them?"

"I was naked, in the photos."

Bishop John said, "She's something of a pedant, our deacon."

Colin said, "Bishop John, I'm worried about blackmail - against Linda but also against the Church."

"Yes indeed."

I said, "You already know it was something I did long before I even thought of being ordained."

"Are you upset about it?"

"No. I'm not bothered. Why now is a puzzle."

"You're not *bothered*?"

"No! I've said that to Colin. I don't care. I don't flaunt it, but I really do not care."

"Somebody may have recognised you, and perhaps thought Colin ought to know. Have you upset anyone lately?"

"Colin asked me this and I said Emily Symes. I went to shadow Jeremy's ministry and..."

"Ah yes, he is a naturist and he has been having an affair. I can guess what happened. You and he indulged in your shared ideology, got undressed and his wife is *very* sensitive at the moment."

"You are well informed, Bishop," I said. "Or very good at putting things together."

"It is my job to be well informed - and to put things together. Now there is a chap in Titansea who is called George Wickenby and he does investigating. I often ask him to look into things for me, especially when there is a risk to our beloved Church. So I might ask him if he can work out who may have sent these. Can you tell Colin to put them back as he received them in the post and I'll be in town a little later and will call in and collect them. You don't mind me seeing them, Linda?"

"Not at all. Colin, bishop: looking at them, some have a different hue. So I think there are five taken on one occasion and five taken on another. It could be a photographer who came back again - perhaps with different cameras involved."

With this insight the suffragan bishop ended the call. So the bishop would be oggling over my pictures. 'Enjoy,' I thought.

Colin said to me, "With any luck this will be an end to it. And, by the way, you do look very attractive, and I don't doubt you could still do it - but I would advise that clothes off is strictly private."

"There's what I do do. Thanks Colin."

"And the other thing is: no matter how we try to serve, we all have enemies. I think there is a Gospel message there. In fact it is *the* Gospel message."

"It is the very narrative," I said.

I went home and told Keith, once he came in. "Oh dear," he said, "the past

can catch up with us. You didn't tell me the real reason you and Jeremy now have to stay at a distance but Emily helps the bishop at times."

"She was keeping the affair private."

"Someone else could be out to frustrate your ministry. Perhaps someone envious wanting to hold you in check, limit your potential. I think the same is happening to me at work. There is nothing but delay, delay, delay to getting this checking ourselves done. We need to be robust internally, but I can't see how they can handle every eventuality."

Keith's mind was elsewhere, obviously, than to worry about some photos. Yet, to be honest, the only person I could think who was envious of me in ministry and handled such photos of me was Keith himself!

He produced, for my birthday, a clingy, flesh-coloured dress. He knew all my measurements. I could wear it at those SMS gatherings.

Later in the evening there was a call from Colin Cromer. He said, "The bishop tells me that George Wickenby tells him that it is almost impossible to tell who sent the photos, not without the resources of the police. You could go to the police claiming harassment, although at the moment they are just photos. The sender may just be informing me, because one has to ask what kind of blackmail would an ordinary punter want regarding a parish church. So forget about it,' seems to be the advice."

Keith gave me a birthday fuck, which I really quite enjoyed. In my post-orgasmic state he took some photographs of me. Well, he was my husband. He then told me about a so-called 5D Porn cinema in Amsterdam with I think one film a time for eighteen customers only providing 3D vision, moving seats, air jets and water cannons to give more sensation to the sex scenes.

"What *do* you talk about at work?" I asked him, to no answer other than a grump.

Dogging and Electioneering (Saturday 6th April)

Nothing further happened regarding the photographs as the next few days passed. 'Who sent them?' I was wondering. Surely not Keith; hardly Emily Symes - she wanted a quiet life. Perhaps it was a one-time studio client, or even an envious fellow cleric. Jim Wilson, he was a forthright evangelical with forthright views about the blood of Christ and sin. How would he, an outsider, get hold of these photos? Presumably this George Wickenby had taken various possibilities into account, but he did not contact me over the matter.

In the dark I saw a host of cameras. On my back I raised my backside and lowered the window of my ageing car in the woods. One parishioner among the gathered cried out, "Get the film in to the vicar."

Film? I woke up. Saturday it was, and I picked up my dilators and worked myself under the duvet.

He said, "Fuck it. Saturday. I suppose I should enjoy it. It's just that next week investigating the investigations will finally begin. Do you want to go anywhere special, Linda?"

"What? I've already arranged for us to go away after your investigations.

Might have to cancel if it gets delayed again or extended."

"What about something local, now?"

I said, "Yes, I would like to go dogging in the woods."

He said, "You once said that having a dog or two would be an excuse to go for a walk."

"What?"

"We could take the neighbours'. Hmm, a dog-walking business. Some do that, you know."

Keith's knew what I'd meant. "Come on, I was joking." I then sniggered.

"Good because I don't want any pets. It takes responsibility and you get attached if it's your own, and you never know what is going to happen."

"What *are* you on about?"

"Animals are dependent on human longevity and long term commitment."

"You're hardly in line for an early death," I said. "You always were the dull pessimist. Dogging is a euphemism," I asserted.

"For what: special breeds, mongrels?"

"Keith, will you cut the bullshit? I've had a dream..."

"Please explain, now is the time."

"Phew. Keith, my dear: 'dogging' is humans having sex viewed by human strangers, located in the woods. Go in those copses and woods they replanted on Serninsea Marshes when we were born and you'll find people dogging."

"They celebrated our births by planting trees?"

"Fuck off."

"What do passers-by think, like, er, people walking their dogs?"

"Passers by are strangers in the night."

"Exchanging glances, then. At night, you say. How do you know?"

"I know. So do you. Pack it in."

"Not bestiality, then. Hey, where does that woman live? And she's got a friend with a dog."

"Fuck off again. If you know about bestiality, you know about dogging. They tend to leave their dogs at home."

"My father used to say he'd go and see a man about a dog and then he went to the pub or the betting shop."

"Yeah, quite. Respectable parents my arse."

"Do clergy walk in the woods?"

"No, I walk on pavements - into the library and other public spaces. Into the charity shop."

"At night?"

"Cheeses! The library is now only open during the day, and then not much. Volunteers now, you know. Same as at the charity shop."

"How do people see each other?"

"Through the empty bookshelves."

He said, "You're reading some informative books."

"You can't get them. I'm fed up with this dilating. Push, push, push."

"What's that woman called?"

"I've already said I'm not telling you."

Do they wind the window down like when a dog is left in the car?"

"Listen Cock: you wind the window down to stick your head out for some cock,

Cock, or stick your arse out for some cock, Cock. Why are you playing the innocent, Cock? Perhaps you can't see the wood for the trees. If you had any wood, for that matter."

"Don't the police investigate cars with their windows wound all the way down, Cunt?"

"It's not illegal, winding your window down. It's the rest of it. At times the police go down in the woods."

He sang, "*If you go down in the woods today, you're sure of a big surprise...*"

"Not teddies having picnics. Poor old Henry Hall." I started laughing. "Meet me half way and stop this silliness."

"What on a dyke? Struth, not on a dyke, like a lezzy."

"Dykes have grassy mounds, you know. In a dyke's watercourse you're not seen, unless your viewer looks down from the mound. Come on, let's do something *different*," I said. "Even if it's indoors on the kitchen table."

"I seem to remember we went under the Christmas tree, on Christmas Day."

"We are more than half way through Lent," I pointed out.

"You're supposed to give things up in Lent."

"I'm not giving up fucking."

"On the kitchen table or under it?" he asked.

"We'll not do dogging, we'll do cerealing."

Unfortunately, the subsequent sexual exercise with me on my front across the kitchen table over spread out corn flakes was interrupted, and not by the need for breakfast. The doorbell rang.

I said, "Oh shit, a fucking parishioner and on a Saturday as well. Wipe the fucking table."

With some corn flakes knocked off I put a dressing gown on rather than a cassock.

At the door was a short stature man with a Liberal Democrat rosette on. Councillor Rhys Allen. Oh, and a dog. I was furious.

He said, merrily, "Local elections."

"Well over a month away."

"You folk here are down as supporters. Em, Reverend Keith Jupitus and Mrs. Jupitus."

Bending to pat his dog and giving the man a very good view of my cleavage and breasts, and then standing up and looking down into his face, I said, "I am the reverend here and my husband is Mr. Jupitas, thank you."

"'As' not 'us'. Sorry. And can we rely on your lack of support again? Your support?"

I lost my cool. "Right first time! I still remember when you lot stole my vote. For years you were even to the left of a right wing Labour party and look what happened: you became the wooden leg for the nastiest Tory government ever seen, and so allowing in the anti-European one that followed. I will never forget what you did, and people were forced to work in any shitty job going. You attacked the poor. You demonised those without work."

I patted the dog again as it looked a bit worried.

"So your support is swinging? We did stop a lot of Tory movement back in that time."

"Look at the jobs people do now, how they add jobs together and try to

struggle on, how so much now is linked to gambling and sex. You're a student and it's debt, you want to live somewhere and you get debt, people are in credit card debt. Benefits are frozen and life is shit. The economy is an illusion - debt. So goodbye and take your lovely dog with you."

"Well, have a pleasant day, Reverend Mrs. Jupitits - as... Oh."

So after I slammed the door I told Keith still in the kitchen to make me a drink.

"A long time ago," he said. "I've cleaned the table."

"It has framed the economy ever since, and distorted the local economy." I took the gown off and sat down. He sat with nothing on like me, until it dawned on him to dress and do some preparatory work and open a message from the SMS Chair, Sir Sanjay Bunker.

"Oh no," he said. "They are delaying things even more. They are going to investigate everyone; they really are looking for new and innovative ideas about how to investigate more thoroughly."

"You look barking mad, ha ha."

Extempore Sermon (Fifth Lent Sunday 7th April)

After the main morning service Colin told me that the Suffragan Bishop Barman had informed Colin after "mutually informative conversations" on someone suitable to be my confessor. Well, no conversation with me. Apparently this new chap was already doing the confessor role with a number of priests and deacons. Colin said, "Short notice is always best - keeps us on our toes. Extempore sermon tonight: no notes. Twelfth of April you can be creative with a Lent discussion evening when they can gather in your house."

I then took myself to the corner of the road nearest Ingle Under Drain, a narrow dyke that went up to Ingle Top Drain and then out to the sea. I walked down the footpath with a towel to the bridge, sat down on its bank, in that its arch offered a modicum of privacy. I left my clothes and towel actually under the footbridge and went for a swim south west against the drain's managed flow.

Within seconds of swimming beyond the bridge, there was a woman my age on the bank. "Sorry," I said, because she could obviously see my arse. I swam on.

After ten minutes I turned and went back.

In the car, dried and clothed, I fell asleep. When I woke the clock in the car showed that I had to rush directly to the church for Evensong.

As I drove I was talking to myself. I said to myself that I just can't communicate. I liked the pastoral side, but what was it trying to achieve? I hardly believed it, the dogma. I checked some biblical references; I didn't need to make those biblical references. On top of this was the fear that people I met might report me for activities incompatible with maintaining propriety.

I went to the Evensong, because it was my job. Outside the church I attacked my hair with my longstanding favourite brush. I went in and prepared, quickly. My need for the toilet meant I was ready and present only at the moment the service started. This was an Evensong with, as ever now, no choir support. Colin led it well enough, but low numbers suggested little future.

My moment arrived to go up into the pulpit for the supposedly unscripted

sermon.

"I pray my words are acceptable. Amen." I reckoned I was nervous.

"I've been asked to take this sermon without any notes. I ought to base it on the Gospels. So I am reflecting on a reading Mark 6, sometimes called 'The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth' in some titled versions. The one where he's no good at home. I'm also reflecting on John's Gospel that offers a number of challenges, on the face of it. That's, er, chapter 6 verses 51 to 57. Jesus is saying, apparently, if you eat his flesh and blood you live forever, as it comes from heaven, whereas in previous eating you died. The location for Mark 6 there is Capernaum, which I think is significant, if he was born and raised there, and the teaching is complex, difficult, and Jesus wonders about this, even if it offends. The spirit gives life, he says, and the material doesn't, in John. He sort of said that before, didn't he, in some Bible passage I forget now where someone asks him if he's an idiot: you know: you don't get back into the womb so how are you going to be born again, ha ha, and he says you're born again in the Spirit. Ooh, sounds a bit Gnostic perhaps - where the spiritual becomes predominant. Anyway, in this passage about eating his flesh and blood there's a strange reversal of the usual 'no one gets to the father except through him' moment, as now, here, we have: no one gets to Jesus except via the Father. The disciples wobble but have no one else to associate with who is the holy one.

"Hmm. Well. I *don't* think this is Jesus talking at the time in his thoroughly Jewish context. It is indeed John's gospel going off in that Gnostic direction and resisting that at the same time. We should see that resistance side as important. So the material world is being rejected, and though these people are eating a material Eucharist, it comes from heaven, rather as ours was blessed this morning, as it always is. The Gnostics favoured the real heavenly over the material sinful. But on the Mark 6, a clue I think is Capernaum, which is home territory and where Jesus's message is little accepted, being among those who think he's a bit off his trolley for a local lad. That's the Mark 6 bit. And the spiritual Jesus is approached through the Father, the Father being God and of the Spirit. Something like that. They didn't believe in the Trinity then, and I mean the early Christians who were writing this stuff.

"Erm, let's face it. we are often rejected in our own localities. It's a risk for me being here, because this is my locality. Some of you know about my past but keep quiet. I appreciate that. Then there are secrets from others. There always are. A chap once told me you don't have to tell all in order to be whole - with a 'W'. I'm not breaking any confidences. If I was elsewhere my baggage would be more securely locked away. Even then, none of us are wholly known. I bet Jesus had a few surprises even for his locals there in Capernaum.

"There is something odd that the big Roman city of Sepphoris about four miles from Nazareth never gets a mention in the New Testament, and yet Jesus as a builder like his dad must have worked there. Secrets, eh? Oh I think it means Birdy, or rather the original Jewish name of Zippori for the place, so beautiful Sepphoris was like a Bird on the Hill or perhaps people did their kind of *Birdie Song*. The regional capital it was, for official business, and not a mention."

When I looked at people, I realised I'd gone locally muddled. I was being ineffective. Carry on!

"So what do we take from this, assuming I am about right on this? And I am open to challenge. Oh, er, this passage in John follows on from the feeding of the

five thousand, which is itself a Eucharistic reference given as a miracle. That's a stumbling block for many, on its own. Understanding this is complex, and even more complex when you realise the Gnostic is being resisted. You are bound to wonder what's the point and is it too difficult and difficulty can well be another block to belief. Well it might be, and that is the wobble, but the argument is there's nowhere else to go. You have to tackle the difficult part. On the other hand, you can just eat and drink the spiritual food, and that is not too difficult. The praxis, the doing, is open to everyone. So those of us who like a challenge can have that challenge, but those who prefer it just as it is are included too. But it is worth tackling the difficult stuff because that is about understanding and we ought to try. Amen."

Colin said to me when I sat down, "What I understood I *didn't* like. At least we now say the creed."

I went home and took hold of the gifted second hand vibrator, in the lounge. I'd been apart from Keith all day, and this use maintained the separation a while longer.

Anglo-Saxon Village (Monday Afternoon 8th April)

After visiting around this ancient village I was in, I found myself sewing with course thread outside the door of a wattle and daub house with a fire inside it being used for cooking. It became dark, rapidly, but with strong moonlight coming down. I could smell the aroma and smoke going through the thatch behind me. Some people in the woods beyond were audibly having sex - where my man and I had copulated while the wolves howled nearby. He returned home and I went on home visits. I found one fertile woman indoors mounted by a wolf and promptly walked out.

Sat outside the door of my home, it was warm and I had nothing on. After a diversion of combing my hair with an antler comb, I resumed sewing by the moonlight. My man was inside, doing the cooking.

A naked woman in the distance finished drawing me on some sackcloth using burnt wood. She approached me and it was very good. She was busty and broad hipped and long haired, and I could feel my sex producing liquid as before with my man. Then she was gone and I wondered where I might find her.

Three farming men in rough, brownish clothing approached me. I recognised one as young Adam Magellan, one as young Geoff Virgo and one as Colin Cromer. Colin asked me, "Madam, how will the harvest be?"

"The sun," I said, "is best responding when it is half way round. I cannot tell you now. Send me the Serninsea Wizard and the twins after I've set out my altar on the ground as the sunlight returns."

He continued, "But madam, you are the chosen one for naked, priestly, witchery, acts."

The naked artist suddenly appeared at my side, looked at these people, and was gone again in a flash of purple. The men could see that my vagina was oozing liquid on to the ground.

I said to them, "When the sun is over that tree, I will be ready."

So these three farmers went away, and I put down my sewing, and next coming were two twins with the Wizard - Bishop Barman - and it was now light, being

the next day and the altar was ready.

"Are these two women here within your control?" I asked the wizard.

"Yes. And I have these drawings of them naked to prove this. They were by an artist in purple and, after all, you are a model and a witch."

"And when will you take both of the twins on to you to have your babies so that I may drink these twins' milk of magic and power?"

"You may borrow their breasts now; I will give you my power through them."

I said, in response, "This is acceptable, as the universe began borrowing - for which it has never been repaid until the dark takes its revenge."

He left, taking his drawings, and both young women stood before me, and took off their loose animal skin tops to reveal their breasts.

I said to them, "These are not milk filled but I can borrow now to drink what you do not have. In return, I will treat your Wizard to the pleasures."

"He killed our first wizard," said one of them, "and took his place."

I sucked on each of the four breasts, and milkiness dribbled from my mouth - my own vagina turned into a clay pot and caught the dribbles. Now I knew I could make my altar offering.

After feeding me plenty, the women moved to the side. The three farmers of before returned and I explained that if my six amber beads and six garnets thrown into the air landed in majority to a position earlier than the sun's path, then the harvest would be in hot and wet conditions; the worst position being opposite to that (our north east) which would mean a cold, dry and unproductive harvest. It would be drier more east, wetter more west, colder more north. The amber, I said, was the sun with us, and the garnets represented the distance travelled.

"Til death us do part," said the farmer like Adam Magellan.

I told these farmers that a gift of the future was useless for me without a material sacrifice, and I expected to receive the produce of part of a pig. This was promised to me, on pain otherwise of terrible suffering to their bodies and souls. The animal would take on their sin and prevent their suffering, so they simply had to bring it later.

After a blessing I threw my valuable indicators up and they landed in a general eleven o'clock or north-north westerly position.

"The sun is happy with us," I told them, "and the water will come. All shall be well and all manner of things shall be well. Look after your crops especially carefully; the sun will have pity upon you."

The farmers each thanked me and left.

I could smell the smoke behind me this time, and my man was shouting, "I can smell burning. Can you smell burning?"

He was, I realised, calling from the front room where his papers were all over the floor. I rose from the sofa near the large lounge door and ran into the kitchen to see that toasting slices containing cheese were smoking heavily and beyond scraping. The imitation vegetarian bacon I was trying in the cooker was burnt to a crisp, not unlike real bacon.

Turning it all off, I realised I needed to go and dived into the nearby loo.

Once back in the kitchen, hands washed of course, I made some sandwiches. Real bacon I'd use next time. Being ethical is a bit of an effort, even in these food manufactured times.

"Bugger it," I said in a loud voice. "I've not got long before I meet this new

confessor this evening. See, Keith, you can come home and switch off. I often have to work in the evening as well."

"What do you think I've been doing? You were the one falling asleep, dreaming away again I take it. Was I in it?"

"Yes. You were inside an Anglo-Saxon hut."

"Sexy?"

"No. I was outside our hut. I sucked on breasts on yet to be pregnant women - those archaeology twins - and collected milk in my vagina for the altar table. I was the witchery, priestly woman."

"I think you should see your new confessor," Keith said. "This evening would be a very good time."

"It *is* this evening. It's supposed to be my day off."

"I came home to work this afternoon and they know I'll carry on past my hours until it's all done."

"A woman was drawing me, but I think these pictures were really photographs."

"They definitely didn't have cameras in the Anglo-Saxon era," he said.

"Not sure what I am going to say. Did I even tell you I had a new confessor?"

"Well, I can't see from where else I could have got the information."

"I told you about the photos."

"You did. Stress must be affecting your memory as well as providing dreams."

"Well, I'll eat, dress a bit formally and go and see this man."

Confessor Meeting (Monday Evening 8th April)

Confessors are rarely psychotherapists or counselling professionals. Colin Cromer, my training incumbent, didn't have one when he was a curate, but found one as vicar from one of his college tutors, and he remained as his confessor until he died some years ago. He was not replaced. It's best if they are not a friend or previously well known. This expected one I knew of vaguely, with a parish some twenty-five miles away.

My clerical collar was on, but I was in a light blue clerical blouse and darker blue trousers. This 'ordinariness' for the evening was a bit unusual in church, as often I just threw on a black or white cassock. There was no bra on underneath, of course.

I was waiting in the vestry when he breezed in, and I put down my hairbrush. The vestry gave us privacy.

"Jupiter, Linda. Yes. Wow."

"No."

"I don't think we've met before; I have a rural parish away west driving east. I went to look at the beach, you know."

"Jupitas. My surname is Jupitas."

"Ah, not a good start if yer get yer name wrong," he said, being a small, roundish man, balding with curly rising hair, all in black and clerical collar. His accent was between estuary something and proper Anglican. (From college onwards we clergy start to acquire an Anglican accent. However, this chap seemed to muddle his

accents.)

"I'm the Reverend Kenneth Osis, and I do a number of these counsellings as asked by Bishop Terry. Some of you call him Bishop John but some of us use his middle name. You call him..."

"Bishop John Barman."

"Sorry this is the evening. So busy these days, day times. And in a cramped vestry."

"It's fine by me; it is a workplace."

"The point is, I suppose, around our proscenium, I'm close to the control room, to yer working centre of things, where the deputy stage manager goes, and decisions are made - and I hear the decisions early. You know, like. Have yer a drink?"

"Coffee is available."

"Alcoholic I'd prefer."

"There's only the communion wine here. *Proscenium?*"

"It's not a drink, it's a stage."

"I know that much."

"I'll do without," he said, not making eye contact with my eyes but with my chest. "Yes. No. I've some juices. Want one?"

He'd gone! I waited. He came back and gave me a small carton with straw attached.

Straws detached and pierced in, we started sucking and saying nothing.

I asked, "So is anything I say here likely to reach the bishop?" not expecting anything other than a denial.

He said, instead, "We're starting so I'd like to pray. Please, you pray with me. Father God, descend your Holy Spirit and so bring to this our first meeting the honesty that our hearts can be opened, in Christ's name. Amen. It's not the business of yer bishop."

I hate it when there is no gap between a prayer and the following sentence. He was leaning over, his jacket had come forward, and behind to the side on his clerical shirt was a white plastic badge with a black goose centred and a white B over it. He seemed to have a lot of paper folded and stuffed in an internal jacket pocket.

He went on, "*What* I would urge you to do, however, is get close to him. The control booth he's in directs the stagecraft. Yer proscenium is where the action takes place."

I said, a little puzzled, "One's representative promise is to the diocesan, I think."

My chest obviously fascinated him. "That's right but the stage manager is at the wings, unseen, so in yer control room Bishop Terry has his finger on the pulse. He knows where so many are, to know the difference between the house beyond the front of house, what's the actuality." Removing these papers from inside his jacket, and unfolding them to read, revealing the badge again, he said, "Hey, your husband called Keith was promoted inside SMS."

Yeah. So you are his representative here?"

"Your husband's?"

"No, Bishop Barman." (This guy was nuts.)

"Yes, Bishop Terry. Well, no - I'm just saying. To give the ground-rules, then,

what I say, what we say, goes no further than this room and the two of us. I mean, you can expect a curate to leak a little of what is said - that's only obvious if ye're beginning - but yer must, quickly, get into the practice of being able to say nothink at all from confidential meetings. Now, first of all, someone has sent your training incumbent compromising photos of you."

I looked at him directly and he did look up to see me stare. "How do you know about them?"

He said, "A source."

"You read it in those papers."

"To inform me."

"I don't even know if who sent them is a Church type."

"I suppose it is all under investigation."

"Is it? I thought it wasn't."

"All I want to know is, like the journalist's no-no question, 'How do you feel?' I'm talking about the photos."

"I feel all right."

"Really? Shouldn't you be concerned?"

"I really don't care. Seriously."

"You're not worried that someone is trying to undermine your ministry, or take away your confidence to do it, or even try to blackmail you?"

"If your source is Colin Cromer, then you'll know I'm unconcerned. My concern is my preaching, my communicating."

"Oh, you and hundreds of others. Look, you can call me Ken. It could simply be someone who took yer photos and said to the vicar, like, *you* should know this."

"I've just said..."

"It's actually advantageous I don't know you, and all I have is these papers as a report."

"Can I see them?"

"Can't show you. But, er, let me find... Hang on. Well, they liked your early sermons, but perhaps yer built a tension wi' yer congregation. Doubt is important - no growth without doubt - but is doubt a problem?"

I said, "It can be, if I think my views are not Church views when I'm representing the diocesan bishop and the Church."

He was looking at my chest again.

He said, "By a long chalk Wytham is no fundy-mentalist but he is theologically well-read, an' in fact Bolingbroke and Scredington are moderate men. Bolingbroke has a progressive edge: he wants more women clergy. He wants you to come into the control booth, where it's at."

"Some of my friends don't like him, often after very brief encounters. Keith, you mentioned, is becoming even dismissive."

"Keith? Is he?"

"I think so."

"Well... He's forthright, you see."

"Who is forthright? My husband or the suffragan bishop?"

"The bishop. But in any case we're here to discuss you, not him. Idealist, naturist, liberal - is that unfair? You don't match Church expectations. Like yer reaction to them photos."

I responded: "Naturists are naturists in appropriate circumstances, such as on

holiday, or with particular friends; I'm an idealist, yes, but I don't flaunt it."

"Some know, some don't."

"There are those who need to know, those I like to know, those who used to know, and those I do it with: they obviously do know."

He really was staring at my chest rather than my eyes.

I asked, "Could you look at my eyes, please?"

"What's wrong with them?"

"When you talk to me."

"Oh. Ah! So you would be happy if, say, and I'm not proposing it, we both were undressed and were in conversation, like, in the nuddy?"

"Do you want me to take my top off? Hello!"

"Like, this would be normal, would it, for you? I'm not asking. Like them photos were normal. Our Bishop of Bolingbroke may even approve of your confidence."

"Hang on. Have you seen them?"

"I mean in actually being photographed all confident like. Hmm. It's what you're saying. Yer naturism, like naturism among clergy, like."

"Among clergy?"

"You didn't get on with Jeremy Symes. He's one of your lot izzen he?"

"What do you mean, 'my lot'?"

"Gettin' yer clothes off like."

"Naturists *do it naked*."

"Things went wrong there when you got yer togs off."

"Can't discuss that. How do you know? Oh it's in that report on me. How does it know?"

"Can't discuss that. So it's a point to ask about your family. They're in Wales, I see. Do they still do it?"

"Do what?"

"Go around naked? Bit cold."

"Yes, of course."

"Can't imagine you seeing your own dad's, em..."

"Penis."

"Yer Mother's, you know..."

"Vulva, and lots of pubic hair."

"You haven't got..."

"I what?"

"Forget that then."

"Well, your report *must* be detailed - even down to me having a hairless fanny? Assuming that is correct, is a hairless fanny important for a clergywoman?"

He looked further down at my crotch area.

He said, "About your family. Em, families imprint."

"What about your family? Hang on, the source for your notes must have seen the sent photos. That narrows it."

"I'll tell you: I've had difficult family deaths to deal with, last year."

"I'm sorry to hear it."

"No, I won't discuss it."

"Conversation is two-way, Ken."

"Um, my brother committed suicide; my father died. But we go on, as we can."

Now what else is in here?"

"Do you have advice for me regarding preaching?"

"It says there are commercial secrets, pastoral secrets and personal secrets and we are entitled to these even when close to the control booth. Just a minute. There's the strong bias these days to be evangelical."

"Are you?"

"I have a Baptist colleague, very nearby, the nearest I have to someone to socialise with, and he keeps me sharp. Does Colin keep you sharp?"

"He instructs me."

"Colin knows the ropes, he's been in the central crossover, gone around the wings."

I was beginning to think he was stark raving mad, and he was looking at my chest again.

"Ken, again: my brain is in my head, my ears are lower either side and my mouth is on my face. Thank you. The parish has grown around him. It's his. He's seen those photos, and he'll have passed them on."

"I'd put liberals in evangelical colleges, and I think I'd put the odd evangelical into a liberal college too, although I don't want to undermine them."

"Okay."

He was shuffling through these papers again.

"Now the wider suggestion is that your marriage isn't as good as it seems to be, that your husband is not as supportive as he was."

"From a hairless fanny to a crap marriage? I'd like to read those papers."

"Only that having a good marriage can be a solid basis for a ministry."

"You don't."

"Good if you have one, but not if it's going luke-warm."

"He still supports me; it's the Church he is more luke-warm about. There is nothing wrong with our marriage."

"But is he not giving comfort then about yer faith and works?"

"Faith and what?"

"Sex, I suppose. If it's not too personal a question."

"How much more personal can it get? Our sex life is *terrific*."

"What do you detect?"

"Look, Ken, he is faithful and loyal to me. But he has his own busy job and concerns, especially now. He's pragmatic, practical and also mathematically minded."

"See, I'd say, if you have stress, it's better to relieve it in sex than in alcohol. Saint Paul said..."

"Oh, come on!"

"I mean, there's several options like yer pan o' water's going cold, or it's simmering, or yer kettle's on and off, or yer boilin' away almost all the time, like - and the water disperses as steam."

"It's like an express steam train with water scooped in. Perhaps we should have a dialogue *here*."

"No. Not being single."

"Why not?"

"People think this and that."

I said, "There's a single woman minister for the UPCC here, since the 1980s."

No one thinks anything odd about her other than she's a good, faithful, serving minister."

"Okay, what's good for the goose... So I'm single and the job doesn't help. You can't meet people in your own congregations easily because yer have yer professional relationship, and it's hard to find outsiders 'cause the role is like 'you're weird' these days. And then we clergy have to observe them rules about marriage being the only place for sex. Or at least show discretion. But, again, this bishop understands, truly understands, showing appearances that need to be shown. He wants you into the stagecraft, sees your potential."

(We were back to that again.)

"Marriage as appearance. I think that *is* acting and stagecraft!"

"But I met this woman and, boy she's been strong, and was a new relief, new fun even, stagecraft if yer like. But she is into the control booth..."

"She is into the control booth? What, the same one as Bishop Barman? He's single too. He's often seen with a lady. Are we going to get an announcement?"

"It's not about me, or her, or him," the confessor stated. "You must have made impressions in the past."

"I've never made any impressions of my sex life. My sex life is in there? How does anyone know anything about my sex life?"

"It doesn't *know*... It is confidential."

"Who sees this paper? You, obviously. Where's it all come from?"

Now he was looking down at these gripped loose papers. "Yeah, yer have to be careful where this report goes."

"Try me as a destination."

"It gives me a starting point."

"Well, I wouldn't start from here."

"Where from? Your married life?"

"Well, for your information, about my sex life: he bangs me every night until I'm exhausted. Photos, my hairless fanny, my married life, my sex life?"

"Yer sex life is different from yer married life?"

"No it is not. This is just so wrong."

"It's always updated."

"Update it then. Actually: bin it."

"I can't update it because what we've said is confidential. And... Oh, yes, doing evening work. Do you sleep well?"

"I sleep very well because Keith knackers me with sex. I don't know how I get my energy back because he's like an animal. This little drink might help. Finished. Louise Deimos never showed or indicated any 'papers' on me. This is our supposedly progressive bishop, then. I bet he viewed those photos over and over again. No wonder people dislike him."

"So you are front of house now, with the public, but check out with Bishop Terry the areas people only see when they're involved in the stagecraft."

I *still* couldn't get quite what this bonkers individual was on about. "So, what is your role then? You're on the inside but you don't report back?"

"That's right. I have information and I ask you, but I don't report back."

"You are in the control booth."

"No. The Assistant Director controls access."

"Who's that?"

"Bishop Terry, as I'm saying."

"The director being Derek Imperial?"

"Well..."

"But if you can't contribute, how does this report get updated?"

"It sort of all gets there eventually."

"It's nowhere near now."

"Nor should you approach yer training incumbent or bishop directly to have it changed. All ye're then doing is breaking the meeting's confidentiality."

"This is ridiculous. Hello, I'm up here! Suppose I was in imminent danger. Suppose, say, I knew who sent those photos and he was out to damage me publically."

"Do you? Is he?" he asked.

"No. Just supposing. Status Quo."

"What? It wouldn't be status quo would it?"

"Can't I puzzle you for a change?"

"I suppose I can raise the alarm, but I won't say where the fire has started."

"Not much point, then."

"But you and I can try and put it out."

"Hey, look, how does one get into the control booth, as you call it?"

"Submit to the bishop, keep all confidences; realise the need for keeping up appearances."

"Mrs. Bucket."

"What?"

"Never mind."

"Enjoy what happens and realise the important connections. Accept the invitations when they come."

I asked, "Do you not realise that Serninsea is a backwater and that we no longer have a theatre? Wytham is for that."

"Time's up," he said, like some paid counsellor, and tried his straw in the carton one last time.

I asked him. "Before you go. What are the negatives regarding this control booth? Would one want to stay outside?"

"Good question, if you *can* stay outside. There are no negative consequences because it's like: controlling the lights, the sound, the scenery, the technical stuff. It's exciting, pleasurable, with the actors and staff. Must go."

"There's a bin there for your carton, straw, and those papers."

"I'll keep the papers." He then got up and went away like a rocket!

I was just gobsmacked. This little man was a raving nigmenog. A cabbage head at counselling, he was yet the suffragan bishop's choice and I needed to know why. And I'd meant to ask him about the goose badge with a B instead of a G.

I locked up and went home. I had a new view of Bishop Barman as a scamp and a rascal.

Shopping and Near Ingle Barrow (Tuesday 9th April)

It was never a burden to visit the library, and to say hello to the staff. Yet again there

was nothing to read. In any case, to borrow a book created the burden of taking it back before forgetting. I was still going over the nutter confessor session.

Sometimes shopping is a burden and sometimes a pleasure. Compared with that confessor session, today's was a pleasure. Serninsea had a couple of near-hypermarkets, one off Carr Fen about the old Sutton-on-Serninsea station (a new tram stop) and one not far from George Wickenby's place. There were also the usual discount stores. I was at a discount store at Titansea in my white cassock.

Coming back to my car with a trolley full, the car next to me - a four by four, a changed vehicle since my arrival - had its boot open and shopping visible inside. A youngish woman was sat sideways at her steering wheel with her smooth legs sticking out from her scissors-cut shorts. She was 'dialling' on her mobile phone.

"Fuck this," she said. "Oh, sorry, lady vicar."

I said, "Hello. I'm Linda."

"Linda... Jupitas?"

"Yes, indeed. Well done."

"Stephen!"

I said, "I'll leave you to it."

"Stephen. The car won't start. There's fucking frozen food here."

"Look," I said, "I can give you a lift if you need it. Or give me an address and I'll take your shopping."

"Oh, Stevie, there's the reverend woman here, Linda Jupitas herself... What?"

"I'm not that well known."

"Look, the car needs sorting out. The fucker won't start. Yes! Linda *Jupitas* - Linda Jupitas is right here offering to give me or my fucking shopping a lift."

"Both together," I said.

"You coming here then? A couple of hours? Well, fucking make sure you do, because there is a one and a half hour limit here - though they won't check it that often. So you'll arrange it all? Hey, I'm taking up her offer. She'll be coming to ours."

Thus the simple t-shirt and shorts wearing shopper transferred her food into my car.

"Sorry, I need a piss from all that worry."

So she went in front of her own vehicle, blocking the view from the shop, with only a little hedge behind her before the road, and she relieved herself very noisily. I couldn't see her, but also looked away.

She said to me, standing up, "You could have shielded me from that road."

"Sorry," I said. "I'll try and remember to be more helpful in future. Do you know me? I mean, I suppose my name was added to the church noticeboard."

"You're famous."

(Now I needed to go, but sitting in the car offered resistance.)

So I drove off with my acquired passenger and extra goods towards the car park exit. "Why am I famous?"

"You're the curate with attitude."

"What attitude? Have I got a reputation?"

"People talk about you."

"What do they talk about? Hang on, let me get on this busy road."

"I don't know why. Anyway, what's a person like you doing at a place like that?" she asked.

"Making my money go further."

Helen told me that she went there for the basics, and got choice from one of the larger supermarkets. I said I went there for everything.

She was telling me that she lived just north of Ingle Barrow, on the road west of the dyke, where a number of rather posh houses were built with six double bedrooms each. She said that sand got everywhere in winter or when windy.

My apparent fame and reputation was even more puzzling, because this was outside Serninsea and she did not seem to be a local who would know my past. But when I pressed her on what she knew about me, she just repeated that I was famous. I had to let it go.

Instead, to make general conversation while driving along, I told her the history of women coming late into all the ministries within our branch of the Universal Church, starting in 1994.

Back on the phone she said to her husband, "Stop your wanking and get to the car. Well, it's as wasteful as wanking."

Arriving at her driveway, she offered me hospitality once inside her large house. She told me to bring my shopping in for now, for the reason that this rather exclusive house had a cold room - a large larder indeed - set up like a fridge, so it actually had heat removal that went (using a switch) either outside or elsewhere within the house for energy efficiency. Her husband had constructed this room: he was a plumber, a trained blacksmith and even a jeweller. She was a designer. Helen had no cleavage and her nipples were obvious through her t-shirt, possibly responding to the instant cold. Her legs were long, bare and unprotected. Inside the cold room she poured me an orange juice and, finding our way to her warmer lounge, she found a whisky for herself. The house drew most of its energy from roof solar panels and a small wind turbine.

I asked her, "Could you please tell me where I can find a toilet? I'm so sorry to have to ask. They don't have them in discount stores."

After the personal business, we two progressed to the back of the house, and very visible was a large brick shed-like building on the right hand side half-way down the long garden. There was no view beyond the garden because of the dyke banking.

There was a drain right by the sea, she told me. Residents could get directly on to the public beach. Each had a back gate, steps up, a simple footbridge over the dyke, and more steps down to the sand. "The banks were made high, but they don't stop rough seas and their waves crashing into our gardens."

So, Helen grabbing a key from one of some hooks of keys, led the way out of the house and into this long back garden. I looked back and could see, yes, this was definitely a very roomy house. She said it had a sauna room, and Stephen made that as well, but better for on a colder day. Down the garden, she unlocked and opened the doors of this out-house: it was a forge.

I said, "I guess he can even make his own pipes!"

More than this. He could make sculptures. He could also do the very small and high value: metal objects with ornamentation. I thought those Wickenby twins might be interested in such a place for experimental archaeology.

"He's called Stephen. He doesn't do kilter and rammel. Talented in every department."

"What's your surname?" I asked.

"McPhail. I help him out with a bit of craft, but mainly I have ideas of what he

can produce. Look at my rings: I designed them but they were all crafted by Stevie."

"So is this talent, what, an interest or a business?"

"Plumbing is his main job, but he makes big things, small things. I like to design small and big. Rings, brooches, sculptures, and some things to spice up personal enjoyment. We have rings in private places."

"Oh aye."

"Not that you'd be into that I don't suppose."

"You think?" I asked. (I thought of that supposed report!)

Helen shut the doors and locked them. I said, "Thanks for showing me." We wandered further down the garden.

"Well, there are some randy clergy, I've heard, Linda. What's your speciality, Linda?"

"What, in sex?"

"If you like. You have a lovely body. Ideas, 'ologies'?"

I thought, she *does* know more than she is letting on.

"Phuh. Just a curate. At university I did some Sociology, Religious Studies. Met my husband Keith at university."

"Ah yeah."

"Do you know him?"

"SMS isn't he?" she asked.

"How do you know?"

"Stevie does the plumbing - and he does your Bishop Barman."

"Two connections," I said.

"So what was your maiden name?"

"Bode."

"Bodylicious?"

"Er, meaning?"

"Full of body, I think."

"Am I 'full of body?'"

"In places. I was Helen Hall who married Stephen McPhail. I'm really like a 1950s housewife. Bore his children. Lie on the beach beyond this garden. Lie in the garden. Get a tan. Design is a hobby only. Sorry, Reverend Linda, but it's fuck my husband and do the shopping.

I first met him at FUCC..." (It sounded like 'fuck'.) "...and we had fun. I met him again like in one of those crappy films. He was a plumber's mate and called with his boss to fix my parents' boiler. It wasn't quite on top of the washing machine - he rang the number he had seen on our phone and I went out with him."

"Why didn't he do jewellery, high value items for a job?"

"Were not like them Romans, Celts, Saxons or Vikings," she said. "There's no Hatton Gardens in our county of Foss. The forge is his interest."

At the bottom of the garden we went through the gate, to hold the rail and go up these steps on the banking. Next was the narrow wooden slats footbridge across a deeper water channel. We then went down the steps without a handrail, with much more sand on them. We arrived on the beach.

I said, "I swim in dykes. Wild swimming."

"Like that Alice Roberts? Can't really swim in that one. And why would you, when there's all that sea?"

The beach was broad, with seawater through in several muddy channels. To

the south was vehicle and pedestrian access on to the beach, and further to the south pedestrian only access. There were no buildings at Ingle Barrow itself, except the further inland but sandy grassy mound with a small church on top. South of that was more sand, both sides of the continuing dyke flowing north.

"People come down here because it is secluded, but we've got a security camera now as the garden is too accessible."

I said in response, "My family did come down here when these houses weren't here. We didn't come as much as we might. The sand isn't the best."

"It can be muddy just underneath. You mean naked as well?"

"Er... The family. Yes."

"Let's get them off, then. Up for it? It's sheltered here. Some sun."

She was undressing, but, in my case, the collar removed and he cassock off and over my head meant instant nakedness.

Both of us stood, she said, "Well, you fucking exhibitionist."

"No, I'm not," I said. "Until I removed this, you didn't know."

"But *you* know," she said, removing her shoes and speeding off her clothes. "Nice body. Bodylicious."

"Thank you. I don't care for the sand but I'll do it," I replied.

"Never mind that: my tits are so flat in comparison! And your cunt is so clear."

"You're neat. But it's all irrelevant. I'll lie on the sand, but try and place much of my hair on my cassock. There is the mud below this sand." I removed my shoes and looked south down the beach.

"If you get mucky and I do we can have a shower together," she said. She didn't seem backwards in coming forwards. "You can stay while I wash your cassock, if necessary."

I said, "Secluded we are but I can see, just about, down there, a person with a red costume on and long red hair."

"*You've* got good eyesight. Like an elongated red blob? We can walk if you like."

"Like this?" I asked.

"Don't be a chicken, Linda."

"I can assure you I am not a chicken. If you want to walk down there, I will as well, and like this. But I'd prefer to rest and appreciate what we have here."

"Of course."

We lay down. I shut my eyes. Within a few minutes, her mobile was ringing again and it was pressed against her ear.

"He's on his way back. He was teasing me. He went straight to the car. We'd better wait for him."

"I'm not going anywhere. My dad taught me: 'Be naked in the wind, in the cold, in the rain,' so I learnt to resist wind and rain. I didn't quite manage the cold. You know, you've only just met me, and whilst I'd like to attract you to my church..."

"No chance," she said.

She said, "I need a pee. It is only sand." And she moved on to her side and the pee just came out on to the sand.

"You're like my father."

"In what way?"

"Just pissing."

"I need to go, so I go."

"I could, again."

"Do it then."

"Just a little one." So I got up, moved nearer the grass bank, squatted and relieved myself. She watched me do it. Oh, well. I went back to lie down again, placing much of my hair back on cloth. All she'd done was roll back, so her piss on the sand was drying alongside her.

Without further conversation, I got dreamy lying there, and she was as silent. After perhaps twenty minutes, I heard a noise. I opened my eyes. A man was looking down on us.

"Fuck me, is this our clergywoman, Helen?"

"Yep," she said. "Join us, Stevie."

"Hello. I'm Linda," I said, closing my eyes again. "This is a nice spot."

At first she asked him, "You were making me think you would be ages."

"Nah. Simple repair; I left the Fiesta at work and brought yours back."

Stephen was undressing. I opened my eyes, seeing him bend and place his shoes down, and closed my eyes again.

I asked him, "Do you know me?"

"I know your husband and your bishop."

"I'm the curate."

Stephen lay down to the right of his wife. He then said, "If you don't mind me saying: I thought nuns and vicars and curates were all bushy bushy, let it all grow, not shaven completely like you."

"I thought my hairless appearance was becoming common knowledge."

Helen asked, "How come, Linda?"

"I'm not supposed to say."

"You've done a fantastic job. I don't shave because when I do you still see it. Blondes are lucky."

"So," said Stephen, "I'd like to relax too."

After a time of silence two people, an elderly man and woman, came walking along the beach from the north.

Helen said, "The best way to react is: don't, Linda."

"Thanks. Stephen, tell me about the John Barman you know who tries to be a public figure."

"I'm only his plumber, or I organise plumbers to go to his luxurious home at Caffenmere."

As the two passed, Helen said, "Good afternoon."

I opened my eyes. I didn't recognise them.

"Good afternoon," said the maybe seventy year old man only. They carried on, and he looked back.

Picking up the language of my new idiot counsellor, Ken Osis, I said, "So you went to the control room then."

"The control room?" he asked, as if this was significant. "Like in, well, what?"

"I was using a theatrical metaphor for the bishop's house," I said. I asked, "How does he strike you?"

Stephen was looking at Helen. He replied, "We don't think we... actually like him. When he gets involved in things, he becomes overbearing."

So I said, "Yes. I understand that some people don't like him."

"And you?" he asked.

I thought I'd hide my developing opinion. "He tries to be progressive; perhaps he must be if he tolerates me."

Stephen got up and walked a few steps to piss a bucket load.

So I said, to show I was unshocked, "I said to Helen about my daddy. I'd be walking along with him on our farm and he would just piss away."

"What about your mum?" Helen asked, as Stephen sat and lay beside her again.

"Pendulous breasts, bushy pubes," I chuckled, as Stephen started to handle Helen's plumbing. Oh dear.

I stayed on my back but noticed two coming along from the south. They were younger than the first pair.

"Afternoon," said Helen, as Stephen paused his fiddling, but looked somewhat more erect.

"Hi," said the woman. "Might get warmer later in the week."

Stephen said, "The wind deviates just here. Linda, you do religious ceremonies then?"

"Cunt," Helen said. "Two people within hearing range and you're using her name!"

I said, picking up their choice of language, "No shit. I didn't recognise them."

He asked further, "Is what you do in church sort of theatrical?"

"Some say that about ritual. There is a bit of an act involved."

His hand was on his wife's crotch again when I glanced their way. "That's what I mean: ritual as stage directions and so on."

There were echoes here of Ken Osis.

Then Stephen said, "Your husband, Keith, works with Yojana Asthana at SMS. Beautiful woman."

"You really are a fucking nasty cunt," said Helen, like a sewer into the sea.

I said, "She checks on their checking of transport. Do you do her plumbing, Stephen?"

"I'd like to do her plumbing," he said.

"I can imagine," I said, with neutrality.

Helen said, "He fucking does SMS, and meets her, and dribbles down his chin when he talks to her."

Matters of their own plumbing started becoming very intentional, as Helen's mouth tried to get some liquid come up Stephen's pipe and possibly cause a burst.

At this point I decided to get up, and the cassock was not muddy. I put on my shoes. My two hosts realised my intention and thus stopped the fellatio. They put their footwear back on too and picked up their clothes. I carried my cassock and they took me through the garden to the house, his erection reducing away.

"She's seen it," was a reference to the forge.

Inside the house, shoes on but naked, they showed me a play room definitely not for children. There was a metal and wood contraption that he had made - like a gynaecology seat with metal tube leg stirrups. There was an X contraption on the wall as well, with chains and handcuffs.

"All from the forge."

I put my cassock back on, to try and prevent Helen demonstrating anything, and retrieved my shopping. I made my excuses and left.

I had enjoyed the fact that they didn't care but not the sand. The sun was low

out the front as I drove off, pausing mid-journey to brush my hair vigorously.

Unlike after the counselling session, I mentioned this encounter to Keith, starting with Helen at the supermarket. He seemed to be surprised.

I asked him, "What's the matter? I thought they were a bit of fun."

"A bit careless."

"No one recognised us. Obviously we didn't piss in the sand when people walked by, and only four people walked past us. And if they want to fiddle with each other, that's up to them."

"Wasn't it a bit chilly? I know your skin comes with insulation."

"It was strangely sheltered and warmth came off the gardens."

"Gosh. How did they know you?"

"Because he's the plumber to the bishop *and* he deals with SMS plumbing with Yojana Asthana. But Helen knew me too: I didn't know I was so famous. Mission through recognition must be more widespread than I thought."

"Clearly," said my husband. "You really ought to be more careful."

"They were liberating."

Out with Diana then Keith (Wednesday 10th April)

I was on a beach, naked, with two people next to me having sex. People kept passing by and actually commenting about me and not them. Every time I spoke back I said gibberish. These passers by were telling me to get up and leave.

Keith was saying, "Get up. I have to leave soon. Look, I could do with some assistance."

It was Wednesday. We got up and he went to work. Beyond going in for Morning Prayer, I stayed away from the church.

In town after some visiting I met up with friend Diana at Café Albert on the promenade. We then drove out to the Serninsea Marshes, where Diana as usual had the key to Patricia's large house.

So we went in and stripped off, to lie down on the parallel settees in the heated conservatory. We saw the detectorists, like pins, far off at the garden boundary, so they wouldn't have been able to see us with any detail.

We talked about going away - like Diana joining Keith and me at the naturist centre. It was supposed to let him relax after about a week of investigatory tension at work, but that's not how it was working out.

Diana and I were the sort of friends who could criticise each other readily and yet not fall out. "I've had a return to bad dreams."

"Around any topic?"

"Ministry and sex, and ministry with sex."

"Why worry? You're not tied to the workplace, there are no performance tests, and you're being paid just to talk to people and the 'invisible bloke'. You didn't actually *try* to get this job so why worry?"

I wanted to change the well-worn subject. "Do you believe it that Keith doesn't know what dogging is?"

"Dogging? You're joking. I know about dogging. I mean, I've heard about it."

"Saturday he was asking what we could do, and I said, 'Go dogging in the

woods,' and he didn't know what dogging meant. That followed on from a bad dream, with my arse out of a car window for photographs."

"Did you really want to go dogging?" asked Diana. "Seeing Keith's wood among the trees?"

"He doesn't want to keep a dog, either, because he says you never know the future."

Diana replied, "It's a long term commitment. I couldn't afford a dog if I wanted one. Vets bills and the like. Dogs are expensive but dogging is quite cheap if you fancy it. But you do have to buy batteries for the torches, petrol to leave the engine running so you don't let your car battery run down."

"I do not want to go dogging at all!"

"Do I detect mutual neglect?"

I said, "No! Sex life is still good but his attention is elsewhere. He's become very vigorous lately. He thrusts harder."

"Too much information."

"I come home frustrated; he comes home frustrated. He works with some feisty women, including Mouldy being some sort of liaison down in Harwich. He then gives me what for."

"Violence?"

"No. I can say that as a husband he is not neglecting his duties. How's Aardse?"

"Don't repeat the old joke."

"I wasn't going to. But... Oh, never mind."

Diana then said, "I see that Julie Vaughan is the latest of our lot to go down to Harwich."

"She worked near Keith, or obviously did. What's he doing wrong? They're all leaving him!"

"Her hubby worked at Arthur's windows and doors firm but got himself a job in Harwich in SMS. So she went ahead of him, on a quick transfer, while he works his notice, and she's been there for about a month at least, Patricia tells me. I liked her and him, you know. Arthur insisted he serve his notice because they find it hard to replace people so, yeah, she's gone and he can go from about now."

"I think they had a dog," I said.

"They have. The dog went with Julie."

"SMS can offer higher wages down south. I knew Julie well enough. We're all from the same era, getting older. I must ring her."

I also told Diana about Jeremy Symes, the priest-in-charge whom I'd visited, because like us we'd both stripped off.

"Keep away from this Symes bloke."

"I'm not having the affair!"

"No, but Emily will be delicate. Affairs are nothing but destructive," said Diana. "Patricia - right - and her divorce. His affair, it was, so she went off to hunt herself and Arthur was a catch."

Patricia returned ahead of her children arriving back. It was the cue to get dressed. She said, "Colin Vaughan is or was one of our best people. We are losing all our best people, and end up recruiting. It costs so much to recruit but we can't compete with SMS in Harwich."

After that, I went directly home and a slightly late and a haggard Keith

suggested we went out for some fresh air. So he drove via a shop for prepared sandwiches and we went into Carr Fen woods and at listened to its sounds as it got dark. Chilly, the windows were closed. Then the windows steamed up.

As a passenger I fumbled in my bag for my hairbrush and started using it. I said to Keith, "Do you know. That sad little councillor man on Saturday called me Reverend Mrs. Jupitits. Fancy doing anything?"

He said, "Nah. Not really. It's nice to come out and sit."

He wound the window down a little again for air. I heard a car engine, I thought, so I wiped the windscreen inside. Then I saw headlights in the distance, through the darkness of silhouetted trees. I sort of paused and considered the possibilities.

"Starts early," I said. "Anyway, if we're all right here I need to go behind a tree."

He said, "I think we'd better go - as in move the car back to the road."

"I need to go. Sorry." I put the brush down and found the nearest tree to go behind.

When back inside I said. "Shit, I nearly sat on that brush. If that went into my flesh I wouldn't know what I'd do." I picked it up, sat and put the brush away. The engine fired up. And so he drove back.

"Keith, just slow down a bit. Keith, it's started over there. I lowered my window. That face lit up. Looks like - hey it could be Stevie McPhail and she's Helen!"

"You really are imagining things."

"No?"

"You're right. It's him. They are with others. Wow."

"Wow what?"

"People actually at it."

We continued on the track out. On reaching a tarmac road we were passed by a police car.

"Shit," said Keith.

"Why shit, Keith?"

He stopped and got out of the car and took to his mobile phone, walking some distance away.

Keith when back said, "That's interesting. Friend said police are doing patrols. We should never have come. I should have checked earlier."

"Your call."

"Yes, my call."

"Obviously the rozzers have got nothing else to do tonight," I said to him. "Neither have I and I'm feeling horny now."

"Linda. Have you got a weevil in you or something?"

"Why?"

"Your sex drive."

"We haven't had a sex drive; we've come away from it."

"The weevil is busy. We need a different way to satisfy you."

"Your usual way will do," I said.

Narrator: Keith *Christine's Concerns* (Thursday Lunch 11th April)

Tuesday evening had I texted Terry Barman.

On what happened Tuesday. Part of a plan? A coincidence?

We did not send electronic messages usually and so that was as much as I could send. A received a reply:

No worries. Know all about it. .Lnqqvz Gn Xenc Enp Aerugeba Xenc Arssnp ,Ravgfveup Grrz

The latter part meant, 'Meet Christine, Caffin Park northern car park at midday.' As a result I was eating sandwiches when Christine drove up in her car, and walked over, and sat in my passenger seat. She gave me a kiss, and put her hand down the front of my trousers, found my testicles and squeezed quite hard.

Her hand removed, and me recovering my breath, I said that I knew of no decision to use Stephen and Helen McPhail. Terry Barman usually informed me of strategies over Linda because she was, after all, my wife. Both McPhails had been exhibitionist with her, I said, which was surely risky. I thought Terry Barman was going to use Jonathan Eyre to test out Linda's flexibility and, indeed, resistance.

She said that we have to allow for the work of the Holy Spirit. I responded that this was as bad as the evangelical who thinks God arranges available parking spaces for Christian evangelicals when he can't be bothered to deal with the holocaust."

"The equivalent is within evolution, the argument that within the workings of evolution, collective altruistic organising can be more successful than individual survival of the fittest. Listen. Within the workings of a seemingly cruel and indifferent world, there are points of interaction where, understanding the mathematics, there is a complex relationship of chaos and system that shows a constructive Holy Spirit to be at work. Therefore, through the coincidences of an engine breakdown, shopping at the same time, and parking alongside each other, the Holy Spirit was able to show us Linda's flexibility, through Helen's actions, and then Stephen's, as guided by the bishop."

"That borders on the meaningless," I said.

When the McPhails started masturbating each other, Linda just shut her eyes and continued to talk with them. This was big evidence, Christine told me, that Linda was a very good prospect for the group. Christine hoped that Linda would respond to understanding sacrificial theology.

"Another thing," she said. "They were freezing. It was only twelve degrees. Some sacrifice there! It didn't bother her."

I said that this was the influence of her naturist father in particular, taking the youngster into the fields and toughening her up. "Rain, shine, and a bit cold at times. Bare feet too, sometimes."

I asked how she knew what had happened on Tuesday in such detail.

Stephen, in some excitement after Linda had left, contacted Christine directly. Stephen told her the happenings so that Terry Barman could not control the story. Interesting, I thought. Having rung her, Stephen said he'd ring Terry Barman to give a

report.

"On another point," I said, "when is someone going to tell those silly sods to stop dogging in the woods?"

"I know," she said. "What is the point of nurturing group discipline when some individuals take risks of exposure? Good job you rang Stephen and everyone scarpered before the police could intervene. And what were you doing there with Linda?"

"I wanted to find a private spot and have some fun."

"People will gather around, Keith; don't do it again. The bishops are going to crack down on this because it risks the group. Dogging is superficial and grubby; our orgasms are supposed to be achievements of beauty."

Christine then said that Terry Barman wanted to mentor Linda. I wondered if it would be better if Jim Wilson was her mentor instead. Jim would apply discipline and she might fear him. It would be good for her development.

Christine said there are problems of mentoring when there are theological contrasts. Linda's ethos and Jim's were too different. Yes, he had a sacrificial theology outlook, but his was evangelical and Christine's was more Catholic. Christine said she might suit Linda. Christine could mentor her from a more lesbian standpoint, given her bisexual tendencies, and Christine would promote sevice and sacrifice.

She said, "Listen. Jim Wilson is an extremist. He is pathologically attached, even psychopathically attached, to the principle of released blood to atone for sins - particularly sins against authority." Christine said she had no qualms over any extreme sexual practice, but she rejected mechanical religious stances like Jim Wilson's. She said the difference between her and Jim Wilson is that she took it on her own body whereas he dished it out to others. Christine shocked me a little when she said that she had herself been whipped, caned and pierced with needles a lot. Not by Jim. Sir Sanjay had done it, paying a fee, and a bishop did it regularly, who didn't pay. (I could only think of Jonathan Eyre.) Jim Wilson could be cruel and feel nothing about what he did to others. She was prepared to take a lot of pain to emphasise the submission of her own obedience.

The whole purpose of the Confraternity was authoritarian, the Vanguard of Church order that demanded everything of the individual for the cause of the collective Church.

I concluded she was a Radical Orthodox in theology, so that she understood postmodern diversities and yet lived within the bosom of the Platonist Church.

Then Christine said, "I need to tell you that Bishop Terry has asked George Wickenby to arrange a complaint as if from the two older passers-by to the vicar. It's to disturb Linda some more. I don't like it but I suppose it has to be done. And I don't like it that he *does* like it. This is not a matter for enjoyment in itself."

"So taking risks has its uses, then," I said back to her. "Had they not sunbathed in public then we would have missed this opportunity. The Holy Spirit takes advantage of risk, Christine. Perhaps our bishop has insight."

"Listen to me: the real need is to preserve the Vanguard from opposition, and for it to be secretive, and therefore to recruit slowly and carefully." She told me that she had no objection to the 'Theatrical' cover to our operations, as suggested by Ken Osis in some detail, based on the former use of the building where we met. However, Ken's approach to Linda was to be based on her likely success to come in, her future

ability to take important decisions. This was entirely the wrong angle, Christine claimed.

She said, "John Barman does not seem to get this. We are not attracting Linda to the decision making centre, which is reserved for the bishops: we are asking her to give her body for initiation and for the divinity of the Holy Orgasm."

"What have you heard about how it went between Ken and Linda?"

"He hasn't said a dicky bird. What has Linda said to you?"

"Zero. Told me about the McPhails but sweet F A on the confessional."

"They are entitled to confidentiality," she said.

I claimed that no one was being more sacrificial than me. I was losing my wife.

"Only because you prefer Cheryl."

"I'd have both of them. I want Yojana as well."

This was the point I retrieved my camera and showed Christine some post-orgasmic pictures of Linda.

"Greedy," Christine declared. "Linda, Yojana, Cheryl. Listen: it should be to a purpose, a worthy purpose."

"Should I sent these to Terry?"

"No. She'd recognise them. She's all wet and oozy."

"I realise he couldn't exactly *use* them."

"They should not be used to entertain him."

"What about your escorting?"

"I decided to give up my body." Yes, it made her a living, but she had used her body to acquire capital to buy and improve properties for prostitutes. She'd just bought some more from Ann Dromeghda and Labhaoise Vlahos, both ex-teachers who gave up after a short number of years teaching (including me). She took prostitutes off the street and put them online on Goosechat. She liked prostitutes because they were often driven by desperation to give up what was precious in order to feed themselves. She was once like them, and had moved up market. She had no problem extracting huge sums of money from the wealthy for their indifferent pleasures, and Sir Sanjay Bunker - my top boss - was one such person with whom she wanted a commercial relationship. She also hoped to convert him to Christianity. I said I had not worked on his niece, Yojana, at all, regarding a Christian confession.

She had told Barman that we should be the mirror opposite of the nuns who are married to the Church, living the virginal life. We marry the Church to give over our bodies. The Body Eucharist was her idea, and she was pleased that the bishops had adopted it, but disappointed that it was basically initiation by another name.

I could see a conflict in her thought. She was producing her own thought against that of the apostolic order.

"You cannot defy the bishops' judgment with your own independent thinking," I said.

"But they have accepted the basis of what I said, and adopted it. They should then follow it through."

"I also thought that you were trying to be inclusive of others."

She wanted to accommodate Sanjay, or San Bandyopadhyay as she knew him (his original Indian name), unless he converted. She tolerated his niece Yojana and the Rabbi Maurice Neptune. She could be inclusive, so long as the absolute superiority of the Christian vision on sacrificial giving and renewal was in the possession of the Church. Jim Wilson, for example, had no such generous

understanding of grace. He thought conversion the only option, and would indeed apply discipline for their disobedience.

"Yojana must never be isolated with Jim Wilson," she said.

Thus from her mouth we'd had something like Milbank on Radical Orthodoxy, Coakley on mathematics understanding evolution and the working of the Holy Spirit, and Rahner on anonymous Christianity. She did not say this: I knew this; my wife assumed too easily my lack of interest in theology after going into minor management in a quantitative job.

I asked her, "Can I have sex with you?"

She said that I had asked from a stance of wanting pleasure. She still regarded me as a potential ordinand. Well, I could have sex with her, but it would cost me more than I could ever afford on my wages. She was very expensive these days. However, I would have sex with her in the context of one of the group's bonding orgies, and in the context of adopting the group's theo-ethos.

She knew how I had altered Linda's body for our purpose as a couple, and she admired that sacrifice by Linda. (However, like everyone else, she did not know all of the facts.) In a parallel with Linda's learnt and assured use of her throat and anus, Christine had learnt to endure whipping and caning without, any longer, needing to cry out, even when subjected to remorseless pain.

What then did she think of Connie Wilson, who had mentored Ken Osis? She said that Connie had been in awe of Jim's sadistic outlook to get his way. She always wanted to push matters forward. Both of them could well have been serving a long prison sentences by now, but John Barman knew them and changed their direction to a more purposeful one. Christine said that she could stand up to Jim Wilson, and take everything he could throw at her, save of course him killing her. But then she believed in resurrection. I was beginning to feel cold inside with this conversation.

Christine would be ordained into the priesthood at the same time as Linda. Linda needed to get away from her woolly theology. She would have sex with Linda if necessary in the cause of getting Linda ordained and getting her into the Confraternity's theatrical group. Oh, and we should use the Latin name of the Confraternity, because it is both special and sacred. This was the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Anglorum Nationalibus*.

So, to finish, she asked me if I would support her view in her argument with John Barman? I said I agreed with her, although she should see that pleasure is a gift and we should accept the gift. Christine said that she would consider this. She suspected that John Barman was far too humanist for his own good. Decision taking was not a goal but a responsibility.

She put her hand down my trousers again and did start masturbating me.

"I'll leave it there and leave you potentially frustrated. Get a better attitude."

We left the park in our respective cars. On the way, I received a call from Terry Barman himself through the speakers. He assured me that the McPhail incident was unplanned, but it had been very useful indeed. He would use it to cause disturbance but, as a result of Linda's positive responses, Terry had just decided that he would accept my suggestion and Linda could go to the conference at Margate alone. She would have a room opposite Jonathan Eyre's, and alongside the pregnant Reverend Julie Manns' room. This way we could see how Linda would respond to Jonathan's teases and possibly Julie Manns' evident fertility with Jonathan.

Narrator: Linda *Telephone Julie Vaughan* (Thursday 11th April)

Free at lunchtime, I risked a telephone call to Julie Vaughan, an actual and old friend down in Harwich.

"Are you free to chat? Is it your lunch now or later or you've had it?"

"I'm in my car overlooking Cliff Park just about to have me pack-up. So pleased to hear you."

"Still got stuff to open?"

"Only one box of baps, apple..."

"I meant moving-in boxes."

"Well and truly in. It's over a month now for me - don't you realise? I came slightly early, on Pancake Day. 5th of March. Suspicious packages were found at Heathrow, Waterloo and London City Airport - I went in and out of London. Bob will bring more stuff tomorrow! I've met a few new people here already, as well as the old crew."

"You know, there's even a possibility we might move down there," I said. "I'd get priested first, and hopefully finish this curacy. I'd rather stay here though - as I know the place. Keith was promoted up here but..."

She said, "It's weird, you in that role now. I once thought Keith suited it."

"Well that was then. He's lost so much interest now."

"I've something to say as a friend - and that's because I've heard so much about it and from one of the horse's mouths. I was trying to summon up the courage to ring you. But I have to tell you."

"What, in case we move down there?" I asked.

"Actually, yes. I asked myself, what would you see? It's the fact that you haven't come down here, ever. You'd better sit down if you're not."

"Sounds strange. Go on," said I. "I am sat."

"It is about Keith. Well, there's like the Serninsea gang down here - the old crew - and, em, Cheryl Mould. Do you remember her?"

"Saw her recently at a short SMS gathering. Keith knew her. I'd not seen her for ages."

"Well she is, let's say, well-associated with Keith down here when he visits. Do you twig?"

"They work together."

"No. Don't be a nincompoop."

"She's at HQ."

"She's at Harwich as a local centre. She might occasionally be given HQ work: they can all get that. I'm so sorry to tell you but you are my friend and it's been like this. What I've heard and what I'm told. He doesn't stay in a hotel; he stays with her. Have you ever rung his hotel?"

"Guest house. Very rarely, actually."

"Direct line?"

"Usually his mobile."

"You don't see his location?"

"No, we don't track one another. You'd better tell me."

"See, the last time they were, well, together, they were together openly among

the staff. They were the talk of the office, people gawping at them, sneaking about them."

"Oh. Oh shit. You sure?"

"Definitely sure, sure as sure. Arm around his waist, kisses, affection, and back. But she twitters like a bird even when he is more careful."

"Kisses? She was introduced up here on a business basis and visiting her parents. Mouldy?"

"She had no reason to go north recently," said Julie. "She's not management or direct support. She did though."

"What about her parents?"

"A place to stay. You think she took them her washing?"

"I know he often has to liaise up here with a Yojana Asthana. Down there, Cheryl Mould is... I suppose she's not, is she?"

"He has no work reason to see her."

"You really so sure?"

"Yojana is a very efficient colleague. She lays it on a bit, possibly, but she's not where his heart is. Yojana was promoted a year ago. Cheryl is nothing like that; as a clack-box she comes over as all hat and no cattle."

"But there *is* cattle?"

"Yes. Do find out for yourself."

"How?"

"I could think of several things: asking others, ultimately asking him."

"And what if he says it is not true?"

"Then he's definitely a wrinkler. So what are you going to do? I mean, think about the possibilities."

"I don't really know. Gosh. Hell! There's my priesting coming up in some three months. We ought to be happy families and all that. Mouldy? Actually, she looks quite glamorous these days."

"Honestly, Linda. She talks away like they have a future together. They say she wants a nipper before it's too late - with him."

"But... My ordination cannot be derailed - not at all. Gosh."

"You don't want to confront him? It may be best not to confront him if it could affect your own long-term employment life," Julie said.

"I'm thinking ahead, perhaps too far," I said. "Are you *sure*?"

"Look, I had to tell you. I mean you *could* keep it under your own hat."

"I could do that. Yes. I'm shocked but I'm thinking. I'm not sure I believe it - I do believe you."

"No doubt at all."

"Are you HQ or local?"

"Local. The writing is on the wall for Serninsea, I'm afraid. So I see her all day and she is dreamy about him. Dreamy because it is real."

"I believe you but is there someone else there to confirm it?"

"They've seen it. I can hear you're far welter'd. Why not think about hiring an investigator down here? Follow them around. Or use someone up your end. Do you remember Adam Magellan?" Julie asked.

"Yeah, rather."

"I remember that he knocked around with Geoff Virgo. I seem to remember something was up possibly involving your mate Jenny Masters but we never found

out. Her uncle was into religion."

"I don't see the relevance."

"I heard she got ordained. You're all at it. "

"I still don't get it."

"The point is Adam Magellan now runs a private detective agency."

"Keith once said he became a policeman, and then left and went private."

"You could go to him. Don't go to George Wickenby, because George Wickenby helps SMS check up on itself."

"So Adam Magellan doesn't?"

"All the more reason to use him. You could pay Adam Magellan to travel to Harwich, or he could hire a local."

"I bet that's expensive. I need a plan."

"You've a stiff row to hoe, I'll say that. Something based on SMS perhaps: after all, Cheryl and Keith are both employees."

"Keith, Cheryl... Yojana... "I think I do have an idea. Keith is a manager looking at ship transportations and their measurements."

"And at other means of transporting measured supplies," she said.

"And this Yojana in this unit checks up. Their kind of self-examination is fast coming up: somehow I could get into the investigations."

Julie asked, "But it is not about Yojana up there but Cheryl down here."

I said, "So Magellan could do what Wickenby does and he investigates what?"

"No. Wickenby is on the books and facilitates the investigating of the investigating of the investigators."

"What?"

"George Wickenby has the contract for assisting the stress testing of the effectiveness of Yojana's team investigating Keith's."

"Still haven't got it, Julie."

"In other words, Keith in Compliance investigates the honesty of transport measurement, Yojana in the IIS makes sure Keith and company do it right and are uncorrupted, and they have these annual tests on the IIS and Compliance, actually, that it all works properly. This happens in every locality."

I said, "I have discovered that George Wickenby is also used by one of our bishops!"

"Why?"

"Well, we're vulnerable to all sorts of accusations. So this Bishop of Bolingbroke uses Wickenby to check out, I suppose, trouble-causers."

"What's Wickenby been doing?"

"It was about something in my past life. Do you remember that I became a model?"

"I do."

"Yes. Well, someone has just sent naked pictures of me to my training vicar from when I was modelling."

She said, "Oh, gosh. How can you be a goody goody minister in your own home town?"

"Someone suggested something similar about a prophetic figure within the New Testament," I said to her. "Small coastal towns can be like that anyway. Especially one with crap road connections, like this place."

Julie then said, "Anyway, I'm sorry about Keith and I didn't want to write or

email - who'd see them? - but I was thinking of how to ring you."

"Well thanks for telling me, now that I have rung you. You'd better finish your sandwiches."

"Keith being married to you is a surprise to some down here because Keith *never* mentions you."

"Oh. Really."

What she said was starting to have an effect inside. I wanted some space, at this point.

"I'll ring off now," I said to Julie. "There is much to, well, think about."

"Look, let me know how things go," she said. "I'd really hope Keith and you can stay together. I won't be friendly with this Cheryl; I have to get on with her, like a colleague, but that's about it."

"No, don't do that. Better not to make any fuss. Keep it quiet," I said. "I'll handle it."

I went and sat on the toilet. I was reacting to the news physically. And how on earth could he criticise me for lying with a couple of weidos who only touched themselves, and yet he was apparently staying with and banging Cheryl Mould every time he went down to Harwich?

Doing the Will of One

My one attempt at holding a Lent group was carried out in my house lounge in the evening with Julie Vaughan's words still resonating. How could I concentrate with her revelation swirling in my mind? It wasn't helped by Keith being a host. Some sat on the leather-effect sofa and chairs, and others had seats.

Colin gave me free rein, and so I decided to have the ten mainly elderly parishioners and Colin meditate on the Genesis track *One for the Vine* from the *Wind and Wuthering* album published in 1976.

First I played a live recording of it from the Lyceum way back in 1980. I said it was written by Tony Banks, who played keyboards, and had since tried classical music composing. This was a good example of progressive rock, but I was interested in the words. Genesis words were often obscure, I pointed out, but there was something inspiring here. "Take the first three lines."

*Fifty thousand men were sent to do the will of one.
His claim was phrased quite simply, though he never voiced it loud,
I am he, the chosen one.*

"In Lent then, we are interested in the messianic claim. And here we have this, and this is a messianic figure, and what?"

One elderly woman, Barbara Legge, suggested an army, perhaps.

"Yes, or followers, perhaps," I replied. "They are like a mass of people that emphasises his will to action," I said. However, the next three lines suggested a certain ambiguity.

In his name they could slaughter, for his name they could die.

*Though many there were believed in him, still more were sure he lied,
But they'll fight the battle on.*

Thickly white haired Douglas Cole criticised the grammar, but I wanted them to consider the message.

"Well, it's not Jesus," said another older woman, Dorothea Wood-Watt.

I wondered aloud if the point was that those who believed in him could slaughter, and so many who follow charismatic figures would. "Think of the zealots then, think of terrorist leaders now."

I went on about the one who loses his belief, strays from the prepared path, and ends in any icy wilderness.

"It looks like they were coming down the mountainside. Mountains feature in many a messianic striving," I suggested. "The 'Hill of Difficulty' leads to the 'Beautiful'."

"Bunyan," said Keith, hovering just outside the room.

"It is they who have the vision, perhaps of the straying man, but the vision suggests something like the Transfiguration, perhaps."

I got the sense that I was starting to lose people, although Keith was concentrating.

"I think the next bit is a bit confusing," I said, "whether he plays their game or they follow him. Nevertheless, he'll give them strength, and to do it walks into a valley."

Keith at the doorway said, "I think you are straining some freer flowing lyrics for something more precise."

"Oh, I agree," I said, "but the lyrics give a kind of essence of what being messianic is all about."

Then Tom Bowler asked, "Is this Christian?"

I looked at Reverend Colin, who was looking down. So I carried on with the lyrics:

*He walked into a valley,
All alone.
There he talked with water, and then with the vine.
They leave me no choice.
I must lead them to glory or most likely to death.*

A man said, "This is like the wilderness, then, trying to draw strength."

"Sorry. You are?"

"Ralph. Ralph Thickett."

"Yes. Consults what is around, and then resolves."

Then Colin said, "But Jesus was tested by the wilderness; he did not consult." People nodded.

I said, "We're in the mountains and a final plain. The plain also features, often as a gathering place. It is level. The messianic figure must encourage, and then another individual has lost hope and is going back up the mountain - walking, falling, and vanishes. It is the *unbeliever* who vanishes."

Colin said, "I really don't understand this. What on earth is it on about? When I heard it, I thought it was the messianic figure who vanished in the air."

"Well, there are echoes of the Ascension," I said. "They are free-floating lyrics - as Keith said: themes, loose, imprecise, but they suggest how religious ideas resonate."

Mrs. Carter asked, "How do they resonate, curate?"

"Christian ideas, Jewish ideas, even Zoroastrian ideas, Gert."

"What are Zorro...astrian? Are they outer space?"

"No, the religion of Persia before Islam: they gave resurrection ideas down the Silk Road to the pharisees in the Jewish land that indeed influenced how Christians understood resurrection."

"No they did not," said Colin, "the resurrection of Christ was quite different and attested."

"Only, Colin, that he was the first of the resurrected and the model was inter-Testament last days thinking."

Keith said, "I think this is a little over-sophisticated."

"Why?" I asked. "The ideas for resurrection came from Persia. You know that. Nietzsche, when he wrote about the superman, wrote *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, which is his messianic figure giving due reference to Persia."

"Linda," said Colin. "We are not some interfaith discussion society. We are witnesses to Christ and Lent is our preparation. Nietzsche may even be a source in the Genesis lyrics, because he lied. Nietzsche has followers, and he said God is dead and we are fools to believe otherwise."

I said, "Shia Islam picks up on the whole messianic claim."

"No, Linda!" Colin asserted. "Everyone: we in the ministry must learn about all kinds of claims and influences on our faith, and to this extent our curate Linda is correct to let us know that they exist. But as ministers we guide the received claim to uniqueness. Our Christ is divine; our Christ intervenes in human history; history prepares but he fulfils."

I said, "I am not denying the uniqueness of the Christian claim. Indeed, I am saying something like this: that in other religion, in art, in philosophy (as from Friedrich Nietzsche), these ideas swirl around which are preparatory and show the impact of the Christian vision."

"So what you are saying," said a younger chap, Mohammad, I think, "is that Christianity has it all, and they have some of it. I didn't convert on that basis."

I said, "That's like saying they're anonymous Christians, and I don't want to say that about others. I would want to say that these ideas are theirs as well. But Christianity has a coherence of these ideas in its own package," I said. I saw Keith smile.

The session struggled on, and came soon to refreshments, Keith becoming busy again.

Doug was telling people that, as a miner in the Midlands coalfield, he used to holiday in Serninsea, and now he'd moved for retirement. He'd more time for church things now, and all the chapels here were either dead or dying and here was a fresh start.

Colin said to me, privately, that he gave me free rein and for my angle on things, but he was worried that I would have to listen more and say less. He also told me to learn the names of parishioners, and to use them every time immediately.

I told Keith this advice at this bedtime. He said he agreed. And I thought I *had* listened: listened to my friend that Keith was having it off with Cheryl Mould on his

visits to Harwich. Her mother, Catherine Mould, hadn't been present. I knew *her* name.

Chapter 04 On to Margate

Narrator: Linda *Different Viewpoint* (Palm Sunday 14th April; Most of Holy Week)

I kept quiet about my telephone call. I wanted to think strategy.

Palm Sunday evening we had a visitor to the pulpit. I would "learn a lot" from what the Reverend Alfred Dove would say, Colin asserted.

The Gospel reading he chose freely was about six days before the Passover, giving a dinner to the raised Lazarus. Mary wiped Jesus's feet with her perfumed hair. (John 12). Then there was Paul apparently losing everything to gain Christ, sharing in his sufferings, and drawing on the power of Christ's resurrection for Paul to attain resurrection. (Philippians, chapter 3, verse 8)

"This is our role and relevant, and we join with women in the task of giving up and serving," said the Reverend Alfred Dove. "But the other texts of St. Paul must be taken into consideration. There are important statements about women in leadership that were not just cultural. To suggest otherwise is to disparage the faith and praxis of the Church for two millennia and seriously imply that the Gospel has not been preached until now."

Here we go, I thought. Here was a sermon where the texts were about one thing but he was interested in another subject. I looked at Colin, who smiled again.

"Its also to deny the respective complementarity of the sexes and even of our relationship to the Godhead. The creation of Eve from Adam through to the letter of Timothy is an all-time statement of difference and working together, and that is so within the Trinity, and also Christ to his Church and man to his wife."

I could see where this was leading. Colin nodded his head, turned to me and smiled yet again.

"I tell you this," said the preacher. "Reduce sin, evil, truth and especially salvation to a mingled mush and you have nothing left but 'everyone's own truth'. This is subjective and not external, and so, therefore, not eternal, timeless and objective as God is and must be. Now, certainly, our personal relationship with God is indeed subjective, but what we believe about God must be objective if we are to have a real faith in common, such as when we say, corporately, *Credo in unum Deum*.

"We are richly resourced already because tradition and scripture provide the basis for common belief, and of course present-day relativism and subjectivity do not."

I was now tapping my fingers and Colin's hand came over the top of mine for me to desist.

"The present day folly encourages egoism, or, as Joan Armatrading's song has it, *Me, Myself, I*."

I mumbled, "*I wanna be by myself*."

"Linda!" mouthed Colin.

"Egoism puts the self before everything else, and this is obviously contrary to the essence of the Gospel.

"To be clear, then: that which binds the body of Christ is more than the summation of collective individual subjective experiences, but is a gift of the shared

appreciation and realisation of the objective Divine that transcends all of us irrespectively."

I had a contrary thought. I liked this guy. He was as uncommunicative as me. But then he was preaching, and I was not.

"Yes, we are subjective, but sharing the appreciation is a gift, a gift from Objectivity Himself. Indeed, we 'decrease so that He may increase' through us all; and for this very increase Our Lord prayed: *ut unum sint*. It means that the Father through Christ and the Holy Spirit is in us and so through Christ and in the unity of the Holy Spirit we may be one under the Father. The Lord Your God is the One God of all, for all, and seen by all who care to join in the vision. He is the one 'through whom, with whom and in whom' we have our being,' irrespective of the subjectivity of our senses."

Why were people nodding? Did they even understand this?

"Woman was born after Adam and Timothy says that women will be saved through the bearing of children. Although in our Church women do, women do not need to preach because the preaching already takes place. Virginity is indeed very good, but beyond the deliberately sacrificial denies complementary potential; contraception is denial and abortion is criminal. Sexuality in the Christian religion today has become a muddle."

I thought, what about when the plumbing means that one can't have children? Presumably we must embrace virginity and a life of prayer. Bollocks to that! He hadn't finished.

"There are no subjective human rights. Theo-rights come from the objective order of God-laid humanity. What we have today is relativising sin, as shown by apparent prayers for gay partnerships and, goodness me, in the distortion represented by gay marriage. Surely the Universal Church can stand and oppose the decline of civilisation?"

I couldn't get my hairbrush. It was trapped in a belt under the black cassock.

On he went. "I don't know if any of you were there, but we learnt this week, from a relativist and sexualised performing sister appearing in the media, that after the Romans left a few cells of isolated Christians continued until the elites were baptised and the populace could once again obey proper authority. Perhaps we are in that situation now. Civilisation has gone and the Barbarians are rampaging around."

I thought, no archaeologist would think this now about Romans and Barbarians.

"We must now defend the objective truth of our faith, in our small communities; we must do this until God sees fit to return us, under his renewed authority, to mass baptisms again. 'Stand firm!' Yes, 'Stand firm.' The Gospel says this. I pray that my words were indeed acceptable in thy sight. Amen."

Colin said to me quietly: "There you go. Put that in your female pipe and smoke it." Than he gave a little chuckle. The preacher was coming down to the pulpit to sit nearby.

As there was noise within the congregation, I was able to say, "Colin, you can't possibly agree with that."

"Well, it's all part of the mix. But I am working with a woman in authority and she's about to tell everyone to stand and say the Creed. Well, I hope so."

"Why is Kath Wickenby a sexualised sister then?"

"I send my friend local newspapers. The *Creed*?"

"Oh yeah. If we stand now and everyone say the Nicene Creed. *We believe in God...*"

The preacher and I met briefly afterwards, when he said, "It's nothing personal, but a call to witness."

"The texts don't say what you say they appear to say," I told him.

"Oh, but they do because the consistency of objective tradition underlines the consistency of the biblical narrative. I know this is not fashionable these days but the language of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not accidental nor replaceable. The Church's role is to guard and maintain such revelation."

"You say so," I said. "I don't."

"We part disagreeing," he said, "but don't misunderstand what that means: disagreeing is not neutral; someone must be wrong and it is not me."

He was staying with Colin. Colin told me that he also knows his sister, who was inside the vicarage. Alfred Dove returned to his sister Eibhilin.

At this point I asked Colin if the parish church here ever had anything to do with Harwich.

"No. Why would it?" He answered. Then he asked, "Is your husband moving down there - are you going to have to go there?"

"No no. He goes there and comes back for best practice and aligning but his job is up here."

Colin said, "There is, though, a conference on coastal towns: on economic disadvantage. Not Harwich but Kent. Bishop John wanted to go, but he can't go, being really busy around the diocese and not just next week. He first mentioned it a while back to me. He rang me this afternoon. He had thought I could go but it would be better if you went - to indeed enhance your training. Margate. The week after Holy Week. Tuesday for two nights and home Thursday. Fancy it?"

"Yes. Sounds interesting. Are you going?"

"Nope. And it would do you no harm to have Bishop John's evaluation of you. Do you know why?"

"No, I don't."

"Because he said so. Because of the suffragan Bishop of Margate. Do you know about him?"

"Of course not."

"From the Midlands. Same stable as Bishop John. They're theology college and since pals."

"Oh, it's like that is it."

"No, it is not like that. They are both talents in our Church. The Suffragan Bishop of Margate is called the Right Reverend Jonathan Eyre. Of course there is gossip against each of them, but gossip is sin. Good. You're going. You will need to report back afterwards. An essay, Bishop John says, or a report. Jonathan Eyre can tell his friend, but you can give your own impression of the conference in writing."

"Yes. Good training," I said. "So what are the details?"

"I will send them as an email attachment."

"After this evening's bias, can I preach some time Colin?"

"When I am ready. You will be lecturing at this conference. Once."

When home I told Keith about this preacher, but he was not interested at all. And I wondered if his lack of interest in this and me was actually due to having

another woman in his emotional life. Perhaps I was being a bit paranoid. I removed my textiles.

After shitting for three, I took myself to my bedroom, took hold of the second hand vibrator, and imagined I might seduce that Reverend Osis, my nincompoop rounded counsellor, in confidence, to get my own back on Keith. Ken Osis might first take some photos of me, seeing as he'd mentioned them. Instructing him as in a waking dream narrative to photograph and fuck me was enough to bring me to an orgasm. I lay on the bed, and Keith came into the bedroom.

"Oh aye," he said.

Later, on Tuesday of Holy Week, I was sat in the vestry with Colin Cromer when the Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke, John Barman came in. He said, hurriedly, "Right: train tickets, summary of information that you can speak on as you wish, hotel's all paid for, and by the way you'll be in the room opposite the Bishop of Margate, Jonathan Eyre. He is soon to retire by the way. Although I know him well, since college days, he is quite a bit older than me."

I said, "I contemplated driving, but rail would be more comfortable."

The bishop said, "I bought them a long time back. Look, the diocese has paid for these return tickets from Rasa Market. It is a lot easier to park at Rasa Market than in Wytham. The diocese will pay for anything featuring the Boss, even if he turns up for five minutes."

"The Most Reverend William Blair Rothach." I said, "Very Scottish."

"He is a Gael, by upbringing, and was a Scottish Episcopalian. You could do with some intellectual background on him. Have you heard that some call him 'the Right Reverend Capitalist Intellectual' at all?"

"No." I was looking at the hotel leaflet.

"That's because he is a palaeoliberal, a sort of Scottish Enlightenment Hayek plus nation state for cultural glue. Make sense?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Monetarist, free market, cultural reference points to connect people together and specifically Anglican and Anglian forms."

"But, on acquiring the top job, he has moderated his public views. See if Archbishop Rothach talks about theological education. He is dedicated to it."

"The market would dismiss it."

"It is cultural glue, my Reverend Linda. We mention it and we get brownie points. Go and get some brownie points yourself, Linda. But focus on the seaside. When you talk about education at the seaside, you'll be on a ladder that appears out of a magician's basket."

"For what purpose?"

"Climbing heavenward."

"As in *Carry On Up the Khyber*?"

"Oh yes, they Bungdit Din beforehand."

Colin laughed but I didn't because I was staring at this information: "Robert Court Hotel. Who's Robert Court?"

"I don't think 'Court' is the surname. Robert might be a surname. Somebody brought up in the imperial mould," the bishop said.

"Like Princess Jelhi?" I asked.

"I worry for you," the bishop responded. "It's a sort of half-modern half-

Edwardian hotel. Your Room 302 is third floor, and the Apple Room ground floor is where the meetings are held. About eighty that room can hold, and there'll be about fifty attending. Quite a few, that. Tuesday night, Wednesday, Thursday morning. So the big Boss is the diocesan of Jonathan."

For the rest of Holy Week up to Easter Saturday I did what was expected of me. I did not preach. Not once. Fancy being a deacon and not preaching at all through Holy Week! It was as if I was useless. And Maundy Thursday and Good Friday arrived, with their patterns and the Watch to do. I felt like an untrusted fraud.

However, being otherwise focussed meant that any strategy regarding my husband had to wait. Then he had news from his secular workplace that he was going to Harwich Thursday after Easter to discuss the delays to the stress testing of their honesty and truth systems and to talk about necessary computer network changes.

Prostitute Murder (Saturday April 20th)

By telephone, Colin Cromer asked me to represent the Church at the tragic murder scene, as it would be good experience to see if anyone wanted ministry. He asked me to come to the vicarage immediately afterwards. Anyhow, when I arrived at the police cordon, a clergywoman was present with her back to me.

"I don't know you," I said, approaching.

"I'd rather be anonymous," she said, facing away from me, "due to the nature of my work. I am an Anglican unknown to your Vicar of Serninsea."

"So why are you here?" She with to neck blonde hair moved further forward.

"I knew her," she said. "We have to reduce the risk for sex workers in this town. Ah, they are taking the body now. They need space - move back."

"Yes. So you have some specialist ministry?"

"I'm a reverend deacon."

"Oh. Like me."

A female police sergeant Layla Jenkins approached her. "If you could present yourself in two hours for a formal identification at the station. At the reception you'll be taken to the morgue."

"It is Alice Morgan?" asked that reverend deacon.

"Yes," said the sergeant. "Clear the way!"

"And you have the suspect?"

"Please move back both of you."

Two men wheeled out the body to a waiting van.

"I knew him too. James Inglis. He was a client of hers and a bit more."

"What happened?" I asked her, respecting her wish for anonymity.

"Well, I've been told by another woman, Mollie Johnson, in the same premises, that yesterday James Inglis walked out on his job. He'd found Alice, and they'd been drinking in various pubs. They'd had sex and she wanted money. Mollie could hear him saying it wasn't business but friendship - and Mollie said they all say that. There was a lot of noise and it went quiet. He'd gone into a rage and then strangled her with a silk stocking. When the police went to his accommodation, they found his live-in landlady Amy Gray with bruises. He's been arrested, is in custody.

Mollie stopped talking to me to give formal evidence, but apparently he is admitting everything - according to a policeman here I know."

"Are you providing any pastoral assistance, then?"

"I'm going to see Amy Gray," said the clergywoman.

"So there is nothing I can do, nothing we can do here."

"I'll further assist Mollie. She is a fine contralto singer, but has ended up on the streets. She can surely do better."

"There seem to be many prostitutes in Serninsea," I suggested to this person avoiding me.

"It's the economy, and also students do it to get through college. The dock used to be a source but it hardly functions now - but there is a legacy from it. The Titansea Grand is busy with sex workers. Cheap housing helps, and I own some and more."

"You do?"

"Yes. Best place. Secure them in done up accommodation, and let's get them off the streets. James Inglis is a one-off, but reminds everyone of the danger."

"I'll report back to Colin Cromer."

"I'd rather you didn't."

"Why? You're avoiding..."

"Because it would affect my ministry. Just give the bare details. She's dead, he's in custody, and there is nothing further to do."

"Should I not take up a ministry to prostitutes?"

"No. It's too dangerous. Please stop trying to look round at my face. You'd need to know what you are doing. The police know me, and that's all that matters. They do not consult with the vicar, the Reverend Colin Cromer, or anyone else. They know my work. The police assure me they'll leave Mollie alone regarding her work. Now I need to visit some women."

"Yes. Right. Well, I'll leave this ministry to you."

"Listen. I'm not against sex workers meeting clients. It's how we manage sex when people put themselves at risk. It's just that the computer online goes some way to letting them get to know a client first. I'm going that way; please don't follow me."

I wished her the best.

After popping into Jagjit and Gurinder Kapoor's newsagency, telling them the basic news, I returned to the vicarage.

"What happened. Did you give ministry to anyone?"

"No. No one asked."

"But you were a witness by your presence, and this is what matters. It is why we wear our clerical clothing. And on the subject of presence and clothing, I have received a complaint."

"Oh. About me?"

"It could only be about you. I've received a reliable report that you were cavorting on the beach with Stephen and Helen McPhail."

"Ah, I met her by accident, and saw their home. I'd love to talk, Colin, but I need ten minutes in the vestry toilet."

When I came out and faced him again, I'd hoped he might have forgotten, or something like that, but he continued from where he left off. "People do not meet the McPhails by accident. They are notorious exhibitionists, with police cautions and petty fines as their personal trophies. They were churchgoers once, here, but I

regard them as having become obedient to Lucifer. Their jokes about vibrators and toys and feeling fuzzy lower down were an embarrassment in inappropriate meetings. They came here knowing that some religious people are quite lonely and easy fruit. I did not want them in my church. Keep away."

"Seriously, I did not know who she was. Her car had broken down. I took her home shopping."

"You might believe that, but they target people into their sordid world. We don't want photos of you naked aged forty. Two elderly people known to church people walked by, saw your cassock folded up and you naked with them. These days younger people whip out their mobile phones and take snaps. You have been utterly careless and put your ministry at serious risk. Next time I get a report like this, I'll inform the bishop. Aha! No. You say no more. I warn you again. Keep away from the McPhails, and keep your clothes on in public. For goodness sake! No, Linda, I am telling you to be quiet. Now come with me because we have some boring stuff to do. Administration. No, you will not say any more."

Easter According to Colin Cromer (Sunday 21st April)

Easter Day and up early. A bonfire early on, a Eucharist to follow, the big Eucharist mid morning, the Evensong later, and all of this and still no preaching for me. I read the readings, like I did through all of the Passion, and even then did not read the Gospel. I hoped that Colin was going to say, at some point, let's start again.

So what was his main sermon? Perhaps he wanted me to listen and listen to catch his style and content, and get away from what was mine. I saw no notes.

"Most definitely: in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. Joy to the world!" he began. "And this is sung at Christmas, but the resurrection is the very time of enormous joy. This event turns all that brings the world and ourselves in a downwards direction into an upward direction. Doubt is ended, sickness is removed, death is overcome. Christ, in the most dramatic way, has responded with obedience to the will of God, and this is because this will is within his body. Such a body died, but could not be kept dead. With the will of God, with God present himself, and with Christ's obedience, the body had to resurrect in victory. Jesus had died; Jesus lived. John's Gospel lays this out: this was coming. From the suffering came the glorious upturning of all that had gone wrong. What can we do other than respond with thanksgiving?"

"In this combination of divine will and divine obedience, heaven touched earth. Of course, heaven touched earth as Jesus walked from Galilee to Jerusalem as well as in all that happened in Jerusalem itself. But here was the supreme heaven-meets-earth in the defeat of death. The chains that take us from birth to death had been overturned and nothing was the same again. Joy indeed.

"Christ took on the sins of the world, the sins gathered in hell. He went down into hell, and came up, and as he came up he was then resurrected. Yes, this is metaphorical, but no less true for that. We are not doing geology: we are doing Christ."

I wanted to ask obvious, dummy questions.

"Let us be clear. Jesus may well have smiled before he met his disciples in his

new transformed reality. But he did not smile for himself. He did not pick up some prize or trophy for a mantelpiece at Emmaus! Imagine if he was at an awards ceremony afterwards. He would stand there, thank everybody, but most of all thank God, and yet hand the prize away to us, we who least deserve it! But we should say, back, 'Christ, we must thank you; we must thank God; we must thank the Holy Spirit. Yes I know he calls on the Holy Spirit at his later farewell sermon. We'll get to that soon enough. But the Holy Spirit is a personality of God that acts then as he acts now. God in three persons is eternal. So we thank God for Christ through the Holy Spirit."

I thought, no, this *is* a muddle, and yet the correct muddle. This celebratory sermon simply was not working for me.

"And the thanks we give is for the resurrection, but includes the descent into hell. Because descending into hell is when he brings us up with him. We then enter, with him, upwardly into this heavenly burst of joy. We are all invited to be rescued: rescued by Christ.

"We share in the resurrection as we are its beneficiaries. This is true for those martyrs of faith who serve and sacrifice in the faith of Christ, who sacrificed, descended and ascended. Christ says to the martyrs: 'Your sins leading to death are banished, and you are eternal in my glory.'

"What does this mean for the world? From Eve's very sinful beginning, and the inescapable evil ever since, the world seemed forever condemned: but the creatures that proceeded eating one another in a chain of evolution by advantage through death is now changed, redeemed. Yes, redeemed. After Eve, it was women who first saw him restored, and then the Christ presented himself to his disciples for the work to continue."

By his account, I thought, misogyny is built in to the very basis of Christianity.

"It is not complete yet, however. To get ahead of ourselves, Christ, after heavenly ascension, will complete his work upon his return, that which was realised in the resurrection."

I was momentarily baffled, and I'm supposed to know this stuff.

"And so, yes, ours is to say this: 'As you responded, Lord, so we respond; as you obeyed, Lord, so we obey, as you would say all therefore will be well, so we thank God for your resurrection. And when we come to our Eucharist - which means 'thanksgiving' - we participate in his one life, death and resurrection with a huge participatory thank you. Thank you our God the Father, thank you Christ our God the Son, thank you our God the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Sat on the bog afterwards, I wondered how any of this actually happened? What did happen beyond the metaphors to a man evolved like the rest of us? I just could not see the mechanics of this at all. It did not relate to any other form of knowledge. And would I ever solve the problem of my backside?

In the evening Colin said that we would have something different. "You like a bit of heresy."

"Do I? It should be fascinating then."

It was not. It was a Methodist Minister called the Reverend David Scott, of the large Serninsea circuit. He tried to be clever and claimed that Mark's gospel would have finished with the transfiguration, celebrated actually on August 6th, but for later interference. This claims that the transfiguration in Mark is awkwardly placed, and should be after the tomb, which would then tie in with reference to Elijah on the

cross.

First of all, this seemed like an abuse by a visiting preacher because he should have said all this in his own church and apparently he hadn't. But it was also a load of crap, because the transfiguration is precisely the turn of the mission into a more realised and eschatological frame - where there is this reference to Moses and Elijah, particularly Elijah coming again. So it *is* in the proper place. Plus he was making the error that something had actually happened, whereas Mount Heron being snowy white is the only 'happening'. It's like those who think that there was a big Palm Sunday procession with crowds in the Autumn for the palm leaves to be available, or finding out which star or comet was the Star of Bethlehem.

Colin said I should be generous. His Lake District friend previously had one view, and this person had another. Colin said he wasn't against faithful debate. So I said to Colin that I found his own sermons very instructive and that I had a lot to learn. He definitely preached the Gospel, I said, but what I did not say was that the price in terms of the sociology of knowledge was not just too high but unreachable. Indeed the currency required was like a set of coins in a museum that was no longer legal tender.

Colin said that I would be able to preach on Trinity Sunday. Oh great. Interestingly, I reflected, Elijah was taken up to heaven, and was chosen, and coming again, and he wasn't divine, so why was Jesus? I kept that thought to myself, brushing my hair as I thought it.

"What about the supposed murder?" he asked.

"I had nothing to do. He is in custody, and she was killed, I was told, by strangulation with a silk stocking."

"Too many prostitutes," said Colin. "It can only lead to tragedies." (I just wasn't in the mood to argue.) Meanwhile, he turned to my immediate future. "All the best regarding next week. Make it as substantive as possible; try and avoid saying that Serninsea is full of prostitutes."

Yes, next week I would theologise a little on a seaside economy and I now knew that Keith would go down to Harwich on Thursday to discuss delays and hear about ICT upgrades imminent in some SMS sites. These concerns were for his working times; in the evenings he'd be living with and screwing Cheryl Mould. Yet I had got on with him at home, simply because home life was ostensibly just the same.

Before Margate (Monday 22nd April)

Any strategy regarding Keith had to wait beyond attending the Margate conference. Indeed, my intention in the meantime was to act normally. Thus on this day off for both of us, Keith entered me that morning, and I acted as normal, and then he and I went to Caffin Park. He drove and left his car at the northern car park there, and we did quite a bit of very pleasant walking through to Ingle Park. There was plenty of bird life to view. It was colder than of late.

Even if he admitted to an affair, I might still have to live with him and put on a public show until my ordination as priest was secured. After that he could sod off. Indeed, in the evening I lay in the bath and he got in. For someone having an affair,

he was paying me a lot of attention. I enjoyed him there, as he leaned forward to clean me.

After he had used the soapy sponge on me, I said, "If you went tomorrow, I could drive you to Harwich for a change."

"I have seen your train tickets downstairs. Rasa Market. Sensible."

"Wouldn't you like me to drive you to Harwich?"

"It doesn't arise, does it?"

"If you went tomorrow, it would arise. It might arise now - oh, it has."

"I'm not going tomorrow. I have things to do here. Are you going to do me with the sponge? Put some gel on it and whip up a foam."

I did this, and leaning forward, doing his neck and chest first, avoiding the up periscope, and I said, "I fancied seeing your hotel."

"Guest house. They pay."

"So instead, I could leave Margate on Thursday and come over to your guest house. I could indulge you in lovemaking."

"You have return rail tickets."

"But, seeing as I didn't pay for them, it doesn't matter." I moved down his body, under the water and to his thighs, now his penis and legs.

"You'd have to drive there tomorrow, Linda, and you'd be knackered for the first evening session. Another time."

"Okay," I said, and decided to leave it and continued down to his feet at each side of my bottom.

"Have you written your speech?" he asked, taking the sponge off me and doing my breasts again.

"It's virtually done for me. I'll make it mine on the train."

"There you are, then." He lowered the sponge right down between my thighs. "Do you know about the Right Reverend Jonathan Eyre, the Suffragan Bishop of Margate? He'll be the hosting bishop."

"No. You know this?"

He balanced the sponge on the side of the bath, and lowered his hand to my vulva. "I've seen your literature."

"I haven't shown it to you."

"I saw the information elsewhere. It is about coastal towns and business; ideas about improvement. The literature is circulating in SMS and no doubt many other places locally."

"What about Eyre? Are you masturbating me?"

"Yes. And he's a *right* reverend!"

"A suffragan bishop. Er... Ooh. Let me grab your knob."

"Yes... And..." Keith stalled.

"What?"

"Never mind."

"What are you getting at?"

"Hmm. This then. He's more than ten years older than Barman, but he's from the same stable theologically; so it follows that if you impress Eyre you then impress Barman."

"I'm not going in order to impress Eyre or Barman. I'm trying to impress your knob."

"He might impress you."

"Not like you are. Is he a good speaker then?"

"You know, your attraction to me was always your innocence. Come on, let's see if you can orgasm."

"Fuck off - about my innocence. I am loyal and faithful in my religion, and loyal and faithful in my relationship. With you, Keith. *You*. I wanted time with you in your guest house. It could have been like, I don't know, Walsingham all over again."

I became more vigorous; he stroked me the same.

He said, "Harwich is very pretty in parts but it does not have religious shrines. There is the Shell Grotto in Margate."

"How do you know about that?"

"Some say it has dark origins from the Knights Templar or even Freemasonry. Whoo!"

"I'd rather see the Tate."

"How do you know about that?" Keith asked, as if to get one back.

"Stop being silly. Everyone knows about the Tate Contemporary at Margate. And Joseph Mallord William Turner."

"*Sugar! Ah, honey, honey!* Not everyone," he said. "Including you: it's the Turner Contemporary. It's on the site where Turner bonked his landlady."

"Thank you, Keith." Now I concentrated on him, and his sperm added to the floating foam on the water. He then focussed on me, so that I tensed and gasped and finally lay back in the bath.

I wondered if he'd go Wednesday instead of Thursday for more time with Cheryl Mould. I would try to find out. What he was trying to say about Jonathan Eyre had passed me by.

When we had dried, we went naked into the kitchen downstairs for a drink. I produced the papers he had not seen, and he looked with interest. The tickets were concealed in my bag.

In bed he said, oddly, "Tomorrow and until Thursday, you should enjoy yourself in any way you care to do."

"Thank you," I said, and realised that this is precisely what he would be doing from Thursday or Wednesday until back on Sunday.

Margate - Arrival (Tuesday 23rd April)

I took the Fiesta to Rasa Market Station. So much easier than parking in Wytham, even if the train then went through Wytham. I was informally dressed in the mufti of blouse, top and trousers, had my bag with documents and valuables in it and a soft large bag with carrying handles of clothes and some necessities including a laptop computer.

I hated train toilets but had to use them. On the journey down I used the laptop to make Barman's speech mine using a split screen and some additional notes. It meant the journey went much more quickly. In London I had half an hour for connecting between termini, to then spend one and a quarter hours getting to Margate. Free of writing, I was able to look out of the window more when travelling through Kent. I walked from the magnificent station to the Robert Court Hotel.

When registering I was told that only months ago the hotel had an old

fashioned lift with outer and inner see-through expanding scissor-like caged doors, and similar sides, but now it was all enclosed with centre opening doors. A loss of charm, said the female receptionist. So, in this old hotel, I went up the modernised lift to my floor and room 302.

As I unlocked room 302, a tall and lean man, silver-haired to his shoulders, clean-shaven, with an open necked white shirt and tight jeans, opened the door opposite and peered out. "You must be the Reverend Linda Jupitas from the Wytham diocese, Foss."

"Yes. You are?"

"Jonathan Eyre. Bishop, for my sins."

"Ah, that makes you the Bishop of Margate."

"It does. At your service, ma'am. Good to see you. About fifty are here. You are speaking tomorrow."

A heavily pregnant woman came out of the door next to mine. She seemed to keep herself to herself and walked past us.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello," she said, glancing back towards me. "See you later downstairs."

"Yes," I said, and looked at Jonathan with curiosity and caught his light blue eyes.

"I'll let you freshen up; see you *later*."

"Yes. It is this evening, a session?"

"A session. Yeah, but food comes first. Could be a problem if people doze off afterwards. *Later!*"

Time for the old hairbrush. I kind of fancied him with those eyes, despite him being older and yet not looking older. I freshened up and sort of 'made space' for dinner in the khasi.

Arriving at dinner, the pregnant woman was sat across the same table as Jonathan, who had not changed his casual clothes, and so, after queueing for the food, I sat alongside her. The three of us were having the beef stew. Then opposite me and alongside Jonathan sat a ginger long-haired woman in red leather throughout. She had cauliflower cheese.

Unlike me, the pregnant woman was wearing a clerical collar. Jonathan seemed to look at the red woman a number of times.

I paid attention to my pregnant neighbour. "Hello. Good to meet you again. I'm Linda Jupitas."

"Julie Manns."

The woman opposite said to me, "You a skoi pilot too?"

"A what?" I asked.

"Sorry. Reverend type. Don't wanna be got wrong."

"You're not wrong. A 'sky pilot'. I like that. Are you West Country? Your accent."

"Well, Oi'm from University of Somerzet but am bred and born in Norfolk."

Jonathan Eyre said to her, "*She* comes from the wicked wilds of eastern Foss. I'm Jonathan, and I am a sky pilot too, possibly where the atmosphere thins."

"I am, obviously," said Julie Manns. "Warm in here."

The Norfolk woman said, "My professor says I *must* lessen it," she said, reducing it. "Cause you're all a bit high-learned round here."

"You shouldn't," said Julie. "It's lovely."

"Think of Alice Rogers," I said. "She doesn't."

"Roberts," this woman said.

"I'm crap with names," I admitted. "What's yours?"

"Allie. You two related, Linda and Jonathan? You're both all casual."

"No. I've only heard about him."

The bishop said, "Only good things, I hope. I knew she was coming here. My brother bishop was coming here, but this good sky pilot is here instead."

"Your brother's a bishop as well?" asked Allie.

"It's an expression," he said. "Linda. How was your journey from Rasa Market today?"

"How do you know that?"

"My brother bishop told me. And you, lady in red?"

"I came Yestidee," said she. "Mundee. Cun't come today. Going Furzdee loike the rest. Linda, let me ask you," she said in her thick accent. "What yar want in loife?"

"Gosh. What a question to kick off! Well, yes, to be authentic. Use my job to be free. A profound question so early! You?"

"Other than a bit o' kewter, an' lolloping along, I wanna be artistic and free and with the right rounded person."

Jonathan said, "Allie, look up that good man Harold Davidson who in 1906 became rector of the rural Norfolk parish of Stiffkey. I bet you are a researcher."

"I'm a Ph.D student looking for a research project. Something like within this conference, perhaps. Linda, before the first session, can I droi you?"

"As in *draw* me?" I asked back.

"That'll larn me," she said. "I meant that. Try and do a good un."

"Yes, if you want." So when she finished her food, she brought out a pad from her bag, and drew me with a pen. I thought her line was good. "Could I have one?"

"I'll photocopy," she said. "There's an office here. Now I'll do yow, Jonathan."

"Are you a professional artist?" I asked.

"I had a book out recently, and have a second if possible."

She'd get him a photocopy too. Julie Manns shook her head.

I said, "I was an artist's model, once. Would you like me to pose again? I could do privately, if you are serious."

"Hold you hard," she said, "in a jiffy."

Jonathan said, "We start in half an hour. Well, add ten minutes."

So when I had finished my food and drink, and she had finished, I went off with her, saying bye to the other two. We went directly to her room on floor two at 205. "If you're professional, I can undress," I said, after the door was closed.

"Perhaps you shun't, you being a vicar."

"I can. Happy to do so."

"Go bare if it's roight."

So I went bare, correcting her labelling of me to a curate, and she drew one picture and then another, and looking between them, gave me the first one. It had 'A S' on it.

I said, "This is beautiful. 'A S'?"

She responded, "Allie Shrimpton. I don't identify my models, when I paint and publish."

"No, and do you need a photograph? For the future?"

"Oh no. Good on yer for posing. Thank you."

I dressed and got up to leave. "See you anon."

She said, "Mind how you go."

Wow. I went directly to the Apple Room on the ground floor with my drawing rolled up. When I entered the Apple Room, Jonathan Eyre was ready to begin. He had this charisma simply standing up. He seemed to command his space and draw attention. He was introducing the conference and welcoming people, after which he paused. I sat next to Julie Manns, curious about her.

"How long?" I looked at her bulge.

"Hopefully a month to go. It'll be my first."

"Oh, all the best for that. From?"

"Having sex."

"No, where are you from?"

"Worthing. I'm a Methodist. Rhythm Methodist, probably. Sorry. Bad joke from a pregnant minister. You got any kids?"

"None. I *am* married. Anglican. I'm from the east edge of Foss."

"He said."

"Your husband and you must be thrilled about the future."

"Actually, I'm not married."

"Oh. I apologise."

"The apology may be mine. What's that you're holding?"

"It's the drawing she did of me. Would you like to see it?"

She nodded so I unrolled it.

"Ah. She's good, isn't she. I hope she wasn't offended. I didn't want to draw any more attention to myself."

So, here was a minister, pregnant and unmarried, who'd said nothing about my nudity. I could be friends with her.

"She's just coming in," I said, as I curled the paper again. The red leather-clad redhead artist sat near the door, and she had a drawing pad with her. Julie and I were on the third row of seats in semi-circles and we two seemed to be in Jonathan Eyre's direct and frequent view.

He was about to kick off properly. I glanced across at the artist, who noticed me and smiled back. She was like dynamite. Jonathan's stance had all his weight on his left leg, like a trendy modernist.

"We need to start at the beginning, and define a coastal community - to get to the *tes odou* of the seaside settlement. We don't really do that often enough. One way is to have a distinct area, a town, or set of villages; not an add-on to somewhere else, or somewhere strung out with few features of a coastal community.

"But when you do definition work, such seaside settlements constitute some of the worst levels of economic and social deprivation with a widening gap between coastal communities and the rest of the country. People earn less and are more likely to be unemployed and less qualified, more unhealthy and fall into disability benefits. Economic output and productivity are less. But these settlements are not dead places, and there is growth and vitality."

Julie whispered to me, "Brighton is distinct and not distinct. Worthing: so genteel. Margate is rougher, like parts of Brighton."

"What's happening?" Jonathan asked, looking at us. "Seaside towns record the highest rates of net in-migration, beyond a wider urban-rural shift in population.

There is growth in net in-commuting to seaside towns. There is a slight declining labour force participation among men and a big increase among women compared with the rest of the country. But seaside towns also record the largest increase in numbers in male employment, female employment rising just behind the rapid growth in rural areas - and yet they also have the largest increases in recorded unemployment. Complicated.

"So there is economic growth. Much of it is related to tourism and services. Think of Margate. At one time it was run down. Then came the *Turner Contemporary*, with local scepticism. Now look at Margate. The funfair reopened, and there are lots of art-related shops and businesses. Turner Contemporary is both national and local. The model trains went, and the headquarters came back.

"In general, then, and for specific reasons, people still do visit our seaside towns. But something isn't quite right. Perhaps so many people move into these places, and do so by choice, and often without work. What does this represent: a wish for a better life in a more pleasant setting, but without the means to support this? Do people escape to the coast?

"So many people are in poverty and this includes children. A lot of people take drugs: not just illegal use but have a dependency on antidepressants.

"But many settlers are retired. So why shouldn't they settle in a preferable area? Those who move in and hope to work experience how difficult it is to find sustainable employment at a decent wage. And this is because many move for reasons of seeking accommodation: the housing stock still available at the coast. The closure and re-use of some small hotels and boarding houses has created a stock of small privately-rented flats.

"It's not just the availability of accommodation to attract those on benefits, but actually the policy in many affluent local authorities with property shortages is to send people away to these settlements. One minute we need three bedroom properties for families, and then they grow up so we need more one-bedroomed places, and then they have families - so property is a moving issue and it isn't simply about the surplus. Recent policies are tough on those at the bottom, and they are being 'economically cleansed' from places of high property values. A lot of this is a failure to build social housing. Surely, the economy was made for us, not us for the economy.

"We look at unemployment figures and no one really believes them any more. The tougher benefits regime means fewer on the books not more in work. There is extensive joblessness in seaside towns beyond recorded, claimant unemployment. The dole office pursues people on benefits to do more work and yet they are never counted as unemployed. This matter isn't different from the rest of the country, of course. Many claim sickness benefits (and are not recorded as unemployed) who want a job. Women at home would like paid employment. There is an excess of early retired. Seaside unemployment is more like 10 per cent than the 4 per cent recorded presently, about 1% higher than elsewhere. Home Internet work is rising. The Church really ought to challenge the government on this, but we have become silenced by statistics.

"The temptation is to see coastal resorts as 'one industry towns', but unlike industrial ones that have declined, *Settlement-by-the Sea* has shown more resilience and growth with different migration population trends. Less resilient coastal places still need job creation efforts. Austerity sure does not help.

"The traditional tourist base has declined with foreign holidays rising but there has been growth in day-tripping and short breaks, thanks to the car. So labour market imbalances owe more to rapid population growth than to a slump in local employment.

"We all know of the problem of seasonal unemployment in seaside towns. So late autumn, winter and early spring is tougher than late spring, summer and early autumn. We all know how Blackpool extends its season with its lights, and all do with price offers.

"In terms of age-range, seaside towns are relatively old age, including older workers. In terms of sex, men who have withdrawn from the labour market have been well out-numbered by women who have entered it.

"What we need is a *Trust in the Seaside* report just as we once had a *Trust in the City* report.

"I mention the locality here, briefly, for which I have the name for Suffragan Bishop. We call the region Thanet, here in East Kent, a tourist area that is the three settlements of Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs. These make up a more or less continuous built-up area along the Isle of Thanet peninsular. Margate in particular became the mass market resort of London. Ramsgate was a port as well and so more socially mixed. Broadstairs is up the age-range and more passive. Well, the tourist trade has declined across all of these towns, excepting the influence of the *Turner*, with buildings converted from hotels and boarding houses. Still, people live in the peninsular to commute, and live here to retire. Population makes a market and waits for work. Plus, anyone who watches the BBC *Money for Nothing* with Sarah Moore or Jay Blades knows that Margate has a little bit of a recycling or upcycling industry - remaking via small crafts. This is what we call resilience. I said that we used to make model trains and railways.

"As for churches and faith places, there's no evidence that as people get older they join churches, but nevertheless the churches contain older people, and they form strong communal functions for the gathered. Here the *sensus fidei fidelium* is active. We need to perform more in the way of community services as government makes it tough at the bottom, but we in the churches are *not* here to substitute for reduced welfare. Plus, while work is important for identity and dignity, it is not the be-all and end-all of a worthwhile life. Lifelong education helps. Churches could offer this. However, we must agitate not substitute.

Is any of this different from the rest of the country? Well, a *Trust in the Seaside* report would agitate for the incoming population, for improving accommodation, against underemployment and unemployment, and offer resilience.

"That's it. Thank you."

Everyone clapped, and then we were invited in small groups to consider resilience and economic diversity and what churches could do. Julie talked about churches being more inclusive: they are not so enough, even in Brighton. I referred to possible projects to link economy and culture, but wasn't sure how. Rather weak of me, really. Fiery Allie said she thought a seaside church might have unique aspects, but we did not know what these might be.

My turn at the microphone would be the next day. Jonathan in his conference-wise conclusion mentioned my coming contribution as a specific example of a place, in a more isolated and east coast setting. Then he looked at me with those penetrating light blue eyes.

What was the matter with me? I'd whipped my clothes off in front of an unknown female and here I was having visions of moving to Margate and climbing up a fit older body to stare into this bloke's ecclesiastical eyes. This, mixed with anger about Keith's second half of the week, was potent. I didn't expect anything to happen, of course, but we all fantasise the possibilities.

The Lift and After (Tuesday 23rd April)

Quickly outside the Apple Room, I decided to ring the landline telephone at home. Keith should have been at home. He was not. Two attempts I made. I rang his mobile. He answered.

"It's me. Just finished the first session. The Bishop of Margate."

"Ah, good old Jonathan Eyre on a G string."

"What?"

"Met anyone else interesting?"

"A single pregnant Methodist minister and a Norfolk artist trying to reduce her dialect."

"Any more happening tonight?"

"Might look at my speech. You at home, then, watching the telly?"

"Yeah."

"If I listen any more to that Norfolk woman, I might start recovering my own accent."

"You don't want to do that. Don't do anything you wouldn't do."

"No. Bye."

Lying sod, I thought. I reckoned he'd gone straight to Harwich and was there with Cheryl.

I went into the lift with others. After one floor up, the renewed lift jammed.

There were six of us in this lift: the Reverend Julie and me to her right nearest the doors; behind us were a Reverend Malcolm Webberley, bald and fat, and to his right, behind me, Jonathan the bishop; and behind them were Michael White, a lay man, of neck length hair and smart in a suit, talking even then of the coast and economics, and a lay woman, Claire Bruce, to his right, behind the bishop, engaging with his expressions, of short brunette hair and herself in a suit.

After five minutes of waiting, the Reverend Julie was starting to panic. "I was going to go to the loo in my room. I need the loo."

I said, "It's not illegal for a pregnant woman to pee in public. Go."

"I can't. Not in front of... But..."

These people around, except Jonathan, said she could; then, after a pause, Jonathan said it separately: "You can, like Linda said. Well said, Linda."

So I added, "Well, I need to go too; we'll do it together. So I lowered my trousers right down to my ankles and squatted; and then she squatted, raising up her dress and parting her knickers. Turning my head, I nodded at Jonathan and said, "Hold under her shoulders, Malcolm, and you can hold me, Jonathan."

As we both peed with force over the lift floor, Jonathan's hands into my armpits, he looked down my front, and he could see that I'd worn no knickers. I was aware of my arse widening. I was getting worried: I *had* to control this. So I altered

pose and jutted out forwards that made my piss go against the doors. My trousers got splashed.

Then I thought, charitably, that he wasn't looking at me deliberately but avoiding Julie's own partly exposed bottom. Mine was hard clamped by widening my legs completely.

The bishop said, to agreement among everyone, "Well done, our *Reverend* Linda; well done both. I think we need to be discreet about this: like being in an old-fashioned confessional, you know, everyone. And anyone else needing to go, just go."

No one did. Thirty minutes on of clamping my arse and it getting much hotter in there, the lights failed as the inner doors were pushed open from below. Cooler air rushed in. Two engineers seemed to be on ladders leaning either side of the lift. Combined urine spilled out, including over a lower down engineer's head holding a box and wires going to the wall. They could see all our legs.

Stroking piss through his hair with his hand, this lower engineer said, "I'm George Boyd and your assistants are Geoff and Jason. Stay where you are. I will electronically lower the lift." They did all look alike. He said, "Don't worry: we've had this before - and worse."

Geoff told us to keep back and keep still. "We're the Gee Bees," he said, as he whistled.

The lift lowered itself in jolts, to a point where my pregnant colleague could sit in our remaining piss with her legs out and get down with assistance from Jason. So I followed her down and the rest followed on.

So with wet arses, but my dry shoulder bag, I proceeded with Julie up the stairs to our neighbouring rooms. Unlocking and just going into my room, I dumped the bag on the bed and ran to the ensuite and got my shoes and trousers off in the nick of time.

Relieved that I'd survived, and having used toilet paper to partly rinse and dry my wet arse, I returned to the bedroom and got out my hairbrush before getting fresh clothing from the chest of drawers. But I looked at the outer open door, and this fully clothed bishop was staring into my room, holding in front of him a fresh pair of underpants and a fresh pair of trousers.

I realised that I was, of course, naked below. I needed to say something. "I need to change if you don't mind."

"My backside is wet too," he said, "from sitting to get out of that lift, and my shoes are wet. I wanted to say again, 'Well done,' so, *well done*."

I bent down to open the drawer. I realised that had not moved. He received a side view.

I asked, "What do you want?"

"Nothing. I'm, er, saying I'm impressed."

I couldn't give a sod at this point. I assumed his maturity.

I said, looking at him, "Either go or come in and shut the door for goodness sake." He came in. I said, "That lift was brand new. If it had been the caged one, it would have been less claustrophobic and the piss would have run out more immediately."

"Yes," he said, as if he was short of words. "And I know, from coming here before, that the old one was reliable."

"Get your gear off, go in the en suite and rinse your arse, if you want. If you

give me your shoes, I've a small brush and black polish. I can rinse them first. I've got mine to do."

Then I thought of my husband having his end away, I could have some fun in a mature way.

I said, "Come. We'll both have a shower in my ensuite. You were sweating in that lift. There's space for two and you can do my back and arse and I'll do yours."

He undressed, willingly of course, and said to me, "You're... You're not yet forty, is that right?"

"No. Just had my birthday."

"I'm sixty-six by the way."

"Really? I wasn't told *that*. You're very good for sixty-six. Come on." My upper stuff came off.

So we went in the shower, and thus there was some mutual washing. I quite enjoyed myself. I hadn't really done this before with someone so relatively anonymous, especially a bishop after all. Ah, but he was close to retirement. It didn't matter.

Afterwards there was some drying, and I could see him physically responding to all this naked attention. I looked at his light blue eyes, and he pierced mine. His left hand held his stiffening member out. It was an invitation. I accepted it, by dropping down by squatting over the hard floor and taking it into my mouth. This was a new beginning. If Keith could do it, so could I.

It turned out that, when it was my turn to receive, he was a very wonderful and persistent user of his tongue between my legs. My back on the ensuite's hard floor, this chap knew when to speed up, slow down, press hard, just do the faintest of touches. His knees were hurting, so I suggested the bed, laying down a towel.

He continued as before. And I did shudder and let out a moan too, and he said, "Wonderful to have another heavenly vision!"

"The first?"

"You peeing against the lift doors, of course. Fantastic."

"Julie peed."

"Only on the lift floor. Yes, okay."

He carried on. He could stay out or go in with his tongue; the flat of his tongue applied pressure. He moistened his finger; he inserted lower down, and tapped higher up; he could also insert a little further and curled his finger to press upwards. Two fingers he tried, but found me tight.

At this point he tried to push his one finger in deeper and couldn't navigate and he started thrashing his finger about.

"You can't. You're in my urethra, Jon. If you do that I'll end up peeing again."

"Oh. Trying to find your G spot - to pulsate it. Take you to divine ecstasy."

I had to talk to his penetrating eyes. "All you are doing is pushing behind my clitoris. You may as well do what you did before."

I did orgasm. I wasn't acting.

"*Bungdit Din*," I said with a smile, but he now looked at me curiously. He clearly had a problem, in that he wasn't going very far in.

A little time on, I said, "You can come inside me if you want; there is no risk of anything."

Now at sixty six it was taking him some time, and he wasn't yet ready, but that was all to the good, because he worked at it, and he tried to go side to side with his

stiff exploration if not very far. And when he came, saying, "For the Glory of God!" it all rather dribbled out, so he quickly went to get some toilet paper and absorbed what presented itself. I indicated that he should lay alongside me, so he did.

When it came to my suggestion I might sleep with him overnight, he said he could not, and I realised of course this was just too public. So he dressed and actually thanked me.

"Well, thank *you*," I said.

I reflected that at least I had resisted successfully my need to evacuate earlier in the lift. It felt like progress.

Before the Lecture (Wednesday 24th April)

Next morning, as when one hears water running in nearby sinks, showers and flushing toilets, I got a distinct sense that two people were moving about in the next room. I brushed my hair rather more vigorously than I normally did in the morning.

So at breakfast there were knowing looks and no more, and Jonathan's talk to me was friendly but formal and he went elsewhere. So I welcomed Julie, who was into the breakfast room after he was. She told me that she'd come down the stairs despite being heavily pregnant; staff had offered her a downstairs room for the night but she had refused. She sat with me.

Also at breakfast the young artist dithered near my table with her long red hair falling over a stretchy black top, no bra (like me!), pink trousers and high boots. She was looking around.

"Alice!" I guessed, and she immediately turned and looked to me. I was so hopeless with names. 'A S' did not prompt me her first name. "You're not like an official artist, surely?"

"I'm *Allie*. No. I'm discussing with my professor some Ph.D possibilities. 'Religion in a Seaside Town' is possible. But I'm not sure. This conference is useful background because the school does small scale qualitative research."

"Oh, I see." There was a smell. Someone had let off, near or far.

"I'm from The *Glastonbury School of Folk and Ethnographic Studies* at the University of Somerset. Professor Roland Mitton."

"Sit down here," I said. She sat at our table.

Julie asked, "Allie, what's your professor's speciality?"

"Here, I have a photocopy of the first drawing I did for you."

"Oh, I'll put it with the other one. Your professor?"

"He was once a Post-Gramscian structuralist Marxist interested in cultural hegemony and how ideology is negotiated through institutions of power and resistance. But now he's gone to the micro-level with interests in communication theory and people, generating identity through communicating with others."

"Not sure my speech is as deep as that," I said to her. "So his communicating theory is that you should get a more regular accent. Isn't that cultural hegemony?"

"My cousin and I tried to moderate our accents together to be more like our teachers. When we were kids, you wouldn't have understood us."

"I don't now," said Julie causing me to smile.

I supposed that Jonathon had to mix with other people.

Narrator: Keith *At Home in Harwich* (Wednesday 24th April)

Administrative Professionals Day! It took me nearly four hours to go from north of Serninsea to Harwich by car, setting off from Yojana's and her warm embrace, with much single carriageway and intensive driving and an option to go west to the M11. That was a gamble, because you might get a good run on the M11 but then you could also be trapped in queues. I wasn't. (Bizarrely, Hartlepool was quicker yet much further.)

At 1 pm I arrived at Cheryl's small house, in Lime Avenue, to be greeted by a hug and her taking my luggage. She had a snack for me in her adjusted lunch hour and then we were off to work.

Thus I arrived with a smiling Cheryl at the regional office in Harwich. I did meet George Petty there and it was a good time to confer on co-ordination issues. The business wanted this: the same practices in Titansea and Harwich. In this office were a number of ex-Serninsea people, and Cheryl and I met again the likes of Sarah Carver, Colin Sheen, Henry Ward and Julie Vaughan, with Cheryl on my left and her right arm around me. She was grinning and happy and released herself to sit down at her place. I kissed the top of her head.

George Petty, Manager of Compliance mumbled that he should be going to the head office as well as me. I left for HQ in Harwich to receive papers he'd already encountered and addressed. Felixstowe had the capacity to offer inspection of our processes throughout the localities (affecting Yojana's future).

In the course of the afternoon I received a summons from Sir Sanjay Bunker himself. He referred to me by my full name throughout. I called him Sir Sanjay. He advised me that the workload in Harwich would be going up, and there would be far more work than George Petty could do. Much would overflow from Felixstowe. I would probably have to work together with George Petty more.

He asked how I was getting on with Cheryl, and I said I would divorce Linda immediately Linda's ordination was done to marry Cheryl. So, yes, I did want to move down to Harwich.

"I'm to tell you about your present wife in Margate," he said. "Barman rang me. Eyre rang me. She's a *star*. She showed the Reverend Julie Manns a drawing done by some redhead woman. Linda had her clothes off in minutes to this complete stranger. But it got even better. They were in a lift and it broke down. Linda was with Julie and Jonathan and three others. When Julie said she needed to pee, Linda joined in to give Julie courage. Julie didn't need any courage; she might even have lasted. Linda joined in, so both were squatting and pissing hard. Jonathan thought Linda was going to do a dump on the lift floor."

"She didn't, I hope."

"No, but the engineers got wet when those doors were opened!"

"Gosh. Eventful and revealing."

"And it got even better still. Jonathan took the opportunity presented by wet clothes to go in her room and they showered together and fucked. How about that?"

"Really?"

"A lot of his sperm flowed out afterwards." Sanjay Bunker ended by saying

that he would very much like to sleep with her himself.

I said, "When she's under the Confraternity, there'll be a queue!"

I was so puzzled. I had been sure that Linda would have stayed loyal to me. Julie had played a blinder in the lift, showing Linda's happy exposure in a demanding situation. I knew that Jonathan Eyre had this reputation for persuading women into his various beds, or theirs, but he only expected to tease Linda and get some information. I knew it meant nothing to her if a man was naked alongside her but how had that translated into sex?

I said to Sanjay, "That means they are surely, now, going to have sex several times. They might even be at it as we speak."

"Barman has told Eyre to go carefully, and Manns to play the innocent. She should not now join in. Jonathan had wanted Linda to play with Julie's body."

"But we don't know how Linda will react to sexual contact with a heavily pregnant woman."

Then Sir Sanjay said, "Overdo it and she'll smell a rat. Don't look so dolorous. This is a very good development."

I said I was just so surprised. The softening up of Linda and the monitoring of her responses had been so fast. Barman was also notifying Connie Wilson, because initiation into the group might come much sooner than we expected.

When I emerged from my one to one, and went to the local office, Cheryl could see that something was on my mind. I sat down and stared into space. In full view of everyone, she squatted down and put her arm around my shoulder and asked what was wrong. I said that nothing was wrong, but I had much to think about. Was it bad news? No, it was good news. More than this, we would be together, her and me, very soon.

When Cheryl squatted she did at least close her knees, and she had tights on. Again, Linda never wore tights - wearing tights was like putting Linda into netting.

"Are you getting a job here?"

"No, not yet. I cannot tell you, Cheryl; it's all confidential." This led to ears flapping, so I needed to get on with some work, and so did she.

Thus it was at five o'clock that Cheryl put her arm around mine to walk out together. At home she pulled me into the kitchen to see her prepare some home cooking. She was a much better cook than Linda: basically, Linda could not cook for toffee and definitely not toffee. Cheryl wanted me to have a Lancashire Hotpot, which she said was not that difficult to cook and if Linda could not manage this then she needed to go to college for basic home economics and cookery training.

It was a very good meal and followed by soap operas television. Linda never watched soap operas, and I had no idea what was going on.

Later on, Cheryl came into the room wearing a new nightie. She'd bought this especially for me coming down this time. Linda would not be seen *dead* wearing a nightie. This one came down to Cheryl's thighs. I could see her breasts within, and the dark area where her legs met. She had a present for me as well: pyjamas. Pyjamas! If Linda ever had found me wearing pyjamas, she would have taken them straight into the garden and burnt them. She might have burnt me at the stake as well for naturist heresy.

I asked Cheryl, "What ever happened to that dirty girl we all knew and loved at school?"

"I'll tell you what happened. I'm thirty nine and long since grown up. And that

means something else. The clock is ticking, Keith. I want us together and I want us to have a family. You'd be over sixty when the child is twenty, at this rate, and I'd be a year under. Come on. We are trying from tonight."

This night I realised that my future must be in Harwich. At her home - it would become my home - I told her that the boss had said there was more work building up in Harwich and there would be enough for me. The complication, I said, was that George Petty had my job in Harwich.

As regards leaving Linda, Cheryl knew the timetable. "Petertide, they call it."

She said the rumours were rife, now, that Serninsea was doomed, and I had better get applying for something.

As for the end of tests celebration, Cheryl would be at the Serninsea event and not the one combined in Harwich and Felixstowe. It was again imperative that Linda should not have a clue that there was anything between us. Cheryl was to make the most of seeing her parents.

I loved Cheryl's devotion to me, but I did not want her to become uxorious. We were fucking for a baby, no less, and family life together. She made it clear that she wanted fucking as often as possible before I went back home.

Well, I wanted to raise a child as well. With Linda I could never be a father but now I had this life opportunity with Cheryl. The daft thing was to wear the pyjamas and then to take them off, and take off Cheryl's nightie, in order to make love. Her soft pubic hair was a welcome change to Linda's baldness.

I'd first fucked Cheryl six years ago, when she seemed a bit washed out with life. The affair proper started two years back, and at first it was understood that I would remain as the curate's husband.

Whilst the prospect of having a son or daughter was exciting, it was also exciting that Linda should take her body into the Worshipful Company under the Confraternity, and lose herself in her service to the collective.

Narrator: Linda *Margate* - *Speech and After* (Wednesday 24th April)

After breakfast I had my speech ready, based on what I had received from Bishop John, but I had stripped out his statistics for a handout, and decided against any computer projection, as indeed had this Bishop Jonathan the day before - who was looking at me intently. His eyes again. I started with a comment on method.

I said, "Using penetration software tends to take a talk into bullet point land and becomes stilted..."

"What's penetration software?" some bloke asked.

"I meant *presentation* software. I'm, er, trying to penetrate the issues."

So I started with the substance of the matter.

"I am very grateful for Bishop Jonathan Eyre's lecture yesterday setting out some economic and social matters regarding coastal communities. *My purpose here is to continue with what, er, Jonathan said and refer to the challenges in a place like Serninsea. Deepest Foss, east coast: I was born and brought up there and, after university and theological college in the East Midlands, I am back as a curate, first year going on second year. Can I just say I appreciate some pointers here, and some research too, from my own suffragan bishop, John Terence Barman. I*

understand you know each other well, Bishop Jonathan."

"We do, yeah. Terry and I share some background in training. I was one of the oldest in residential training. That luxury was stopping then. I'm enjoying your talk already: you speak very well. I agree; it's best without penetration software."

There were some giggles and a bloke said, "Penetration hardware is better."

"I suppose I will never live that down. *County reports and statistics suggest that for the most part we are like many a seaside community, and ours starts with Sutton-on-Serninsea to the north, Serninsea itself in the centre, and Titansea to the south. Titansea does have a dock as a later Victorian dredging effort into the sea, and maintained ever since - but shipping is limited. There is, for example, wood importing supporting a windows and doors business, and some grain importing. So we are agriculture plus tourism plus coastal industry. The biggest hotel is on the boundary of Serninsea and Titansea, so it gets tourists and business users.*

"My husband works in Titansea, which measures measurements in shipping and other transport. It was originally called Serninsea Measuring Services but now is Systematic Measuring Services, or SMS. It put a second base out to Hartlepool and then added Harwich, but Felixstowe is now dominant operationally. Harwich became the headquarters. Serninsea as a whole does have a necessary second hand car sales business, although there is a luxury car showroom that seems to do no business at all. There is some agricultural processing.

"As for tourism, attractions include an entertainment park called The Playground, sandy beaches and dunes (but mud in some places), and likely developments include a seal sanctuary. Poor roads work against day trips, but the trend towards day trips releases more residential accommodation.

"Serninsea is beyond the very extended London commuting belt. To get to the the county capital Wytham, we have nothing but single carriageway roads over moderate hills. The bus service takes two hours to get to Wytham. By car, Wytham is an hour away at best, except by flashing blue lights. We lost all our outward rail links locally thanks to the short-sighted Doctor 'B'.

"However, a group of volunteers, unemployed and community service order people have rebuilt rails and created a heritage line and tram service as both an attraction and directly useful for the locals. But we also need an east of England M11 extension - not near Wytham but up the east side of its county.

"The isolated local health service is busy, but these services are all better covered at Wytham. We do have a walk-in clinic as well as a mini-hospital. It's essential, given the number of retired and those on sickness benefits.

"Retailing is more essential than elaborate: we have two large stores and the discounters.

"We have an Further Education college. Foss Upper Coast College emphasises training. And qualifications are low. We need more training for health and technology. It has only a tiny Higher Education section. Wytham has a university: I went further west to the East Midlands University for a time. Again, my husband and I with degrees represent the smaller than usual top-end educationally. The early retired are the most educated. Labour force participation by men has fallen and women risen by just above national averages. That's typical."

"Who the hell thought up F U C C?" asked someone.

"Better than South Hollow Institute of Technology. They put one word under the other on the side of the main building!

"Migration-in has included those from abroad to make up the agricultural workforce and in our food processing plants in Titansea. It's created tensions, anti-European attitudes too - not between workers but between the elderly retired and foreign workers. We know all about the referendum. Suggestions once that we might have gas pipelines coming in faded away. We also missed out, oddly, on caravan parks and holiday camps.

"We have lots of terraced houses, mainly in Serninsea itself. Sutton-on-Serninsea is a bit posher. Where I live in Sutton are mainly bungalows and then houses like mine built since the 1970s and 1980s. The question is whether, at any one time, even with a surplus, the right kind of properties are available. The biggest and richest properties are beyond Titansea well to the south. Most are the well-off retired there, although I met a plumber recently with his wife with a six bedroom house and a long garden to the sandy beach just over the back gate. Very nice. They have their own, er, play room, sauna and forge as well."

(I thought I would write this despite Colin Cromer's hostility. I liked them!)

"Residents. Many are generation to generation. My own family, however, were migrators-in from just inside Nottinghamshire, after my eldest brother was born, for more farmland. The unemployed and seriously underemployed are less rooted; about a third have been resident for less than five years. My family recently migrated-out to Wales. We've received benefits-receiving people from the capital into our vacant properties, and these people feel rootless. Another lost group are the small but significant number of asylum seekers. The European population have suffered a political fiasco. So the local Council is less able to make more systematic use of property.

"Now, most want to live in Serninsea and would stay. Some move back in with parents. Some move in with a new partner. Some arrive having got a job, often better trained and educated than annoyed locals. The tribal hostility against Europeans is a long-standing mental construct among a more white English than usual population. Having more than the national average retired leads to older traditional tribal attitudes.

"What does wanting to live in Serninsea mean? It means returning to one's ancestral home town, or once having lived there as a child to be near friends, or as a healthier place to be, or once holidayed there why not stay, or a cheaper place to live, or for a lifestyle (as with my mum and dad), or to get away from another place. I know people who come to the isolated settlements to escape domestic violence or even become a little more anonymous.

"And housing reasons to move in are availability, to reuse what was a holiday home, to live ten months of the year and find somewhere else for two months, to find a bungalow, or live by the sea, or it is colder inland in winter even compared with the east coast.

"We get both ends: the underemployed, the long-term sick and carers, a working age sector has people struggling to make ends meet in low-paid tourist or service jobs, and the well-off retired who can afford a good location.

"Actually the young often leave - older workers seem to prefer the attractions of the seaside. You see them running bed and breakfasts. In-migration nevertheless is outstripping job growth that does exist, as Jonathan said.

At this point, I looked across at Jonathan, and then I looked across at the artist, drawing me speaking. 'Concentrate,' I told myself in my head.

"I was interested in the bishop's reference to upcycling. *Archaeologically we have evidence of Iron Age and Roman recycling and repairing of existing materials. We throw away so much now, but they did not.*

"And so - in my hopefully, hmm, penetrating description and analysis - *I want to come to Serninsea's secretive underbelly. We have a drugs problem and an alcohol problem - we know that from the hospital and clinic activity. And then there is more than a rumour of prostitution. We seem to have a lot of it in Serninsea, and the underbelly of a sex industry. I recently met a reverend doing confidential work among sex workers. It is not impossible for a woman and even a man on the checkout during a day to be a prostitute at night, and I include people prostituting online. Massages are a front for more. In my past I was a photographic model and an artists' model, and that's because of the family's naturism: although I discovered that photographic studios are the thin end of the sex industry. Some of those who modelled went on to sell themselves more intimately, and some did not - like me.*"

I looked at this Allie, who seemed to be staring at me intently despite having put down her drawing pad.

"*The Christian ethos ought to be compassion, service, even sacrifice, and building community.*

"*I've painted a portrait here.*" (I looked at Allie again.) "*All we can do, as clergy, as Christians, is serve the locals. One of our terraced houses is a small mosque, one detached house is a gurdwara. That gurdwara does put on meals for anyone: 'Well done,' I say.*

"*Thank you.*"

Afterwards, the reference to prostitution skewed at least our table conversation, and from others' feedback too. Suggestions ranged from the frankly silly 'convert them' by a Reverend Peter Grimwade to developing a kind of faiths' social services. Some people, like Christabel Alberty, said they'd like to visit Serninsea, but it wasn't an easily-reached place on the national tourist trail.

We had lunch, and I suppose the question for me was whether yesterday's penetration plus was a one-off. I know these things happen at conferences. So we had a free afternoon, and I asked Jonathan if he wanted to, say, come out for a walk, see the sea front and more, perhaps join me and visit the Turner Contemporary.

"I'm afraid I have matters that need attention."

"Oh, of course. It's not as if you don't know the area."

Allie said, "I was expecting more theology from you. But I'd never have understood it."

Beach Walk (Wednesday 24th April)

In my room I wondered what the suffragan bishop and training vicar would think of my presentation. There was nothing that remarkable in it. Anyway, Wednesday afternoon was free time. I fancied a walk and dragged my brush through my hair.

As I arrived at reception the man who was in the lift called Michael White was sat. He'd join me, he decided there and then.

He was a lay person from Worthing. So when arriving at the beach I said, "You'll know the Reverend Julie then."

"I know them all at Worthing; she's new there. I hadn't seen much of her until I saw rather a lot of her in the lift."

"And me," I added for good measure.

"I saw rather more of you, unfortunately," he observed.

"Oh, don't say that."

"I mean unfortunate circumstances. Your, er, *rosebud*?"

"I'm Linda."

"I could see you were struggling from behind you."

To avoid my utter embarrassment, I just had to 'keep calm and carry on'.

"Shall we walk to the Turner?" I asked. "Go along the beach?"

"By then I will need the toilets," he said. "I think we have had enough of urinating in public."

Actually, walking on sand proved to be a bit of an effort so we returned to the paved area in parallel to the beach.

"Your surname on that paper; it's not quite the comedian's name."

"Indeed. I am Jupitas and the name comes from Jupitz, which my husband's family changed four generations up."

"My wife works in London, commuting from Worthing every sodding day. She uses her own surname. Guess!"

"Not unlike the late Cilla?"

"Or draughts. And I am like a house-husband, let out for a few days a year like at this conference. With some imagination Ms Black could work a lot from home."

"Like I said my husband works in Titansea, although at present I think he has gone already to see his mistress. Peculiar word, 'mistress'."

"Not exactly 'Jupitus' type funny, screwing..."

"She lived in Serninsea and moved to what has become his headquarters at Harwich."

"Ah. So he plays away. Oh dear. You might be reverting to *your* maiden name. You sure of this affair?"

"Oh yes. A name is just a name. Bode."

"Bodelicious." He turned his head to look at me with a smile.

"Ah, thank you. And I need to confront him, somehow. But I'm a deacon, and I don't want a separation to bugger up the priesting."

"Not to bugger up the priesting. No."

"I mean, I don't see why his playing away should upset *my* timetable."

"Quite. And, as far as I can tell, your sister urinator is single."

"She told me that."

"So I don't know how that worked out. Do they take on single pregnant women, or alternatively ask how a single woman gets pregnant in the job?" he wondered. "She probably moved to Worthing before the bump was visible."

"Ask her."

"You have children?"

"Nope, and will not."

"Well, not now," he said, "if he's playing away."

We walked nearly all the way to the Turner Contemporary. Then, I said to him. "That car over there."

"What?"

"Who's in it?" (I could tell.)

He said, "Ah. I think it is our conference bishop and indeed the very woman we were talking about."

"He told me he had matters needing attention. Don't look."

"He was looking at her."

She was in the driving seat, and they were talking to each other quite intensely.

My accompanier said, "Let's proceed directly to the gallery."

"What if they go in?"

"Perhaps they have been in," he said.

"Would have to have been a quick visit."

We arrived at the gallery, went in, looked around and appreciated some items, and then when we were outside again that car had gone.

I said, "Joseph Mallord William Turner is in a line to that modernity - his Romanticism, history painting, interiors, landscapes and seascapes including marinas. That ginger haired lass could be a bit romanticist in her sweeps of line."

"She's a bit sexy in those leathers. Would you contemplate having an affair now your husband has strayed?"

"No, not at all. Thanks for asking."

"I wasn't. Ms Black gives me my pocket money."

We walked into the streets and passed many shops - a number with artistic content - and boarding houses, guest houses and hotels, including some large ones.

Then Michael said, "It's her car again."

"Could well be."

"I made a mental note of the plate before," he said. "She's still in the driving seat."

"Oh. You do that, usually?" I asked.

"It's come in useful. If your husband is having an affair, it might be useful to you."

"Has your wife had an affair?" I asked.

"She just travels to work, comes home, and let's say pleasures me at home to clear her head."

"Treasure *that*," I said. "Aye. Detective work. I need to do detective work. Or find a detective."

So we were back for the evening meal, with Michael some more. The bishop and the pregnant cleric were separate again.

Bishop Jonathan came over. "Sorry I couldn't be with you this afternoon. I had some work to do, and then Julie Manns asked for my assistance, so I ended up going out after all."

"Oh."

"Can I see you later?" he asked. "After the evening meal?"

"Yes, of course. My room?"

"That would be best."

Later (Wednesday 24th April)

Before Jonathan did see me, I opened up my laptop on my knees on the loo, and did an online search and there was Julie Manns, Minister, Hollow Road Methodist Church, Brighton, and Good Shepherd Methodist Church, Hove. She'd had a four year stretch, her first own ministry. She was all of thirty two years old. She had been a lay preacher. She was not pregnant in the pictures.

I closed the laptop and placed it on the cupboard with drawers, and sat nervously on the foot of the bed.

When the sixty six year old knocked and simply marched into my room, I was like jelly. He was holding a book of some sort.

"What do you want?" he asked me, standing above me and close.

"I thought you wanted me," I replied, confused.

"I do. But I'm asking you. You see, you're not yet a priest and I am a bishop."

"I know that."

"You."

"Me?"

"I don't just give myself to anybody. I'm a bishop and I expect obedience."

"Doesn't consent come into it? Oh, I give my consent freely."

"Perversely, a Reverend Deacon has more leeway than a priest. You know why, in Catholic understanding?"

"Because priests do the Eucharist?"

"Yes, exactly. Priests are the arms of the bishop. In a way, the deacon is a glorified preacher with pastoral outreach. Your obedience is, let's say, less critical."

"You asked to see me," I said.

"Actually, to tell you that."

"I already know it. Tell me what you want and I will obey."

"Obedience."

"Look, Jonathan, don't play around with me."

"Do you want anything?"

"What do you mean?"

"From me. Now. Anything, everything?"

"Yes! You do know that. My body wants you."

"Good. It is about the body. It's about words too, translating to the body. Lie back on the bed, hold this up and read from the page I have selected, at chapter 5, verse 2, and wait for further instruction."

I laid back and held the book with both hands, and raised my arms vertically to read from the verse as instructed.

"I slept, but my heart was awake. Listen! my beloved is knocking. 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one; for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night."

"Go on to read verse 4, while I get your shoes off and then take your trousers and knickers off."

"My beloved thrust his hand into the opening, and my inmost being yearned for him."

"No knickers," he said. "Means no blood, too. Pity. Sometimes we are

blessed. We'll do what the scripture says."

"Jonathan, you can't. You cannot get your hand in."

In fact I became naked and so did he. He was in good shape.

He prised me open, and started to look.

I closed my legs somewhat, asking, "What are you looking at?"

"You. You were so tight before and I want to open you up. You've given your consent, now take my authority."

"You can't. That's why I was so tight. Look, if you want to go deep, use my mouth. The words of my mouth come from my body! I'll get on the floor, on my knees."

I did this to protect myself and take the initiative. I rapidly demonstrated something that fascinated him. I could lick his balls with him readily erect and completely inside my mouth.

"I have never, ever, crumbs, had this done to me before. Struth."

I couldn't reply, of course.

After some of this treatment he then asked, "What else can you do?"

When I released him, I said, "You could fuck me deep in my arse but I haven't brought any lubricant and I'm not prepared."

"So what you just did, I'll go again?"

"Yeah. You can fuck my mouth. Try it."

So now he was thrusting into my face, ever more and more, soon holding the back of my head with both hands. Gosh, I'd never been so horribly fucked in the head like this before. (Keith gave me the technique to absorb length, but he was never aggressive.) And I did not flinch. I think Jonathan was trying to force me to pull away, but I was not going anywhere. I would prove to be his sexual equal. For the first time in many years I was producing some gunge down in my throat, responding to this form of sex. But I was never going to throw up, like I did in the early days with Keith.

He climaxed, deep in my throat and gave out a groan, saying, "For the love of God!" If I hadn't learnt how to breathe through my nose with discipline I'd have been suffocated. When he stopped, he was bent over me and out of breath, and out of my throat he held me to his lower stomach. I took a deep breath.

I said to him, "I wand du day wiv you overnight'."

I realised he had caused me some pain inside, somehow.

He didn't answer for a while but then he said, quietly, "Might be tricky."

Two naked bodies clambered up on to my bed and we lay side by side.

Changing position on to his knees, he used his tongue on my clitoris, pointing out it was large and he did at times try to open me, and insert a digit a little, and repeated about it being tight. He brought me to orgasm by his tongue and said again, "Our Holy Spirit descended!"

After five minutes or so I got up to go the sink and rinsed out my mouth. When I looked in the mirror, my eyes were red and I had some gunge on my face and also gunge and sperm still emerging from my left nostril. Perhaps my body was trying to protect me. I also moved my jaw about.

From the small bathroom, having spat into the sink with water several times, I called out to him with a towards a croaky voice, "That chap Michael and I saw you this afternoon."

"Like I said, I was with Julie Manns, the pregnant woman."

I swilled out my mouth for a final cleanse and returned to the bed. He was sat up and no longer in a state of excitement. I said, "Yes, you were in her car, and you were deep in conversation."

"She has issues. She is a single woman."

"Methodist minister."

"Shame about that really. We could do with her talent."

"I'd like to stay with you overnight," I said to him. "I really would. Come on. I want you close and fuck me several times overnight. Jonathan, I want you. I'm already aching between my legs in anticipation. I can be fucked in the usual place; I can't be fisted."

"It wasn't exactly *obedience*."

"I wasn't refusing you; I was informing you. You know that from yesterday. Stay with me later tonight."

"I can't. I just can't. It's the risk."

"Were you with Julie last night?"

"You're twisting things. Don't do that. She has issues. I spoke to her early morning, yes. The afternoon off allowed her more of my pastoral attention. I do have a public face, and I'm taking a risk now in your room. Your obedience is also to my answer 'no'."

"So by obedience you mean preserving your public face."

"Part of it."

"I'd move to Margate."

"Linda. I am in a marriage that is a shell. It carries on, but it is defunct. But this is what people see - the surface. You are, I know, married. You are now effectively having an affair during a conference. It happens. You have your public face to preserve as well."

"Really?"

"Are you going to report back to your vicar that you slept with me? Let me know how that goes."

"I *want* to sleep with you!"

"We might well meet again in a different setting. I'm only really doing this because retirement is around the corner. If your marriage is in trouble then perhaps it needs sorting out."

"I want fucking," I told him. "By you. Let me comfort you."

"There's an apostolic order," he said to me. "Obey it."

I looked at him with a strange, skewed face, at such a comment, as if his bishop life determines his sex life directly, but he got himself dressed and left the room.

"Huh," I said alone. "Those blue eyes. Sod it. I'd have fucked that Michael tonight."

In the evening session, the Reverend Peter Grimwade gave a stupid presentation about winning seaside people for Christ, in which he said little that could not have been said about any other kind of town. I did listen but I wasn't concentrating. He did say that perhaps seaside towns have church visitor services and services for the older folk, and reach out to the transient homeless. The point is they are not particularly homeless!

We have different ecclesiologies, he later exclaimed in discussion. I'd wanted to be on Allie's table but was not. My voice was slightly affected but I looked rough.

Michael Crozier and Betty Willingdale (both from the coastal town Hornsea in Yorkshire) said plenty. Their town lost its railway and did drift somewhat.

Later I was angry. I went and stood outside Michael White's door but returned to my room to sleep.

Margate - Intellectual Indigestion (Thursday 25th April)

I was a bit annoyed waking up and getting my dilators out for a ten minute session. If only he could have fisted me: I felt so violent towards myself. I was angry for being so shallow: I'd spent a lifetime affirming my body and now I felt negative. Good job I wasn't speaking today, I thought.

We weren't sure if he was going to turn up or not. If he didn't, we'd have had open discussions. But, here he was: for Thursday morning, the Archbishop of All England, the (Scottish) Most Reverend William Blair Rothach, sometimes called *William Kantos Albion* (contrast with *David Eoforwic Albion* for York). Breakfast had finished, when I had deliberately sat alone, and he was meeting Bishop Jonathan.

Why was I sat alone? Because, within hours, this would all be all over. I'd not see Jonathan again, nor the redhead female now in complete black leather and boots with steel at the front - like safety boots.

From the microphone the Archbishop said, "I gather that you have had a most productive conference and hope it has produced a process of *anakephalaiôsis*."

Yes, he was speaking in his own incomprehensible style.

"To discuss the seaside residence as a community with a distinctive character does draw on images of local adaptation and diversity, in dynamic relationship with comparative and contrasting communities, the muscles and sinews of which do not fail to hold us together especially when theologically we detect a hermeneutic of Christian trust. This action of the Holy Spirit is not, I believe, unlike the pattern of the trochoid wave. It suggests a pattern of a dynamic God, almost hidden, even misinterpreted as people think of the sine wave. And then as the ground becomes shallower, the wave breaks: as the land comes, action takes place towards some sort of end point.

"I understand that the papers given in the past three days have suggested that seaside communities have problems almost by the choice of migrating in, except this pattern of activity is not, perhaps, a market information choice: it is seeking a better environment by those with few resources. And yet there is that wave that breaks presently. So seaside communities may consider that they have to take their own liberation in hand. Being a people of God suggests a conflictual tone, for which there is biblical foundation, whereas being a family of God is more functional. We are a family, in that hermeneutic of trust, if the actual families are often not there: the retired move in and their families only visit, and younger individuals enter in a fragmented form. So these people should build communities as substitute families and functional units to better themselves with what resources are available and can be developed."

He seemed to me to be wanting to say something theologically, and something practically, or, more likely, the practical was being mystified or garbled by a gloss of theological terminology.

"In this sense God assists those who set up assisting themselves: not in an aggressive way, but each looking out after the other. And the seaside community is all about hospitality, so not just in a commercial sense, but in the sense of joining together from all these individual properties in which people attempt to live. Let's improve a street; let's help one another with repairs and decoration; let's learn practical skills and raise one another up; let education and training be truly local; let the all-important health services have to relate to the populations and be accountable to them; let us build up a local culture of binding potential, one that gives rise to the identity of a seaside community. Let's have communities in churches.

"And, incidentally, out of localities grow a nation, from the nation we gain shape.

"I am not suggesting some left wing collectivist solution here, even if co-operatives have their place. I am being quite centrist: making use of not-for-profit social enterprises, for example, as established in legislation from 2005. These are not charities, but businesses, although businesses with a clear social agenda and purpose, and I am myself on the boards of a number of them, and I believe you are, Bishop Jon, as well. They can be involved in health, lifelong learning, skills and simply doing things that people need.

"And if I mention lifelong learning, can I make a plug for the purpose of theological education? A theologically educated person is capable of sometimes risky and innovative interpretation, and sees any life that is fruitful in this sense. If we are going to develop the *sensus fidei fidelium*, it is needs receptivity enhanced by education, so that the mystical reality nurtured by the Holy Spirit can be discerned.

"We have social sciences, for example: economics, sociology, and politics, and these, no doubt, have much featured at this conference. But even our bodily God is not some object lying around for examination, nor for acquiring qualitative and certainly, impossibly, quantitative data: because the approach to God is about seeking transformation at a social or individual level. Not just recording qualitative data, either, but making a difference. I am not a Barthian, so that I do not identify with a work I read only yesterday by Alan Lindsey. Perhaps I am closer to his sister, Andrea. Nevertheless, I appreciate the debate; I appreciate the contribution to theological literacy. But, unlike with the dialectitians, there is a role for religion as culture, culture as identity, culture so that we function into a kind of knowing who we are and can become, a counterbalance to the necessity of the market and its information, and all thus under God."

Dialectitians? Ah, 'dialectical', opposites made to argue it out.

"Christian theology itself begins with events of transformation. There is, of course, the Jewish revelatory background, but we are bound to see fulfilment in what we can tell of the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the core, I think, of a culture that says we can be renewed, can gain life from death.

"It's beyond these social sciences and beyond history: it presses our language to the maximum, when the world is not just as observed and analysed, but challenged for what it can become.

"This is our potential to achieve in educating us in theology: to get attuned to what everything can become, to see it, absorb it, and pass it on in no little sense that others may participate in this quest. Learners teach; teachers learn. *Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari debet*. Can we educate seaside communities to become

theological communities? We can then tell the Christian story as embedded into the seaside communities' possessions of stories, none of us then failing to learn one with another as we go on to be led by God within those combined stories towards transformation.

"Preachers: think of your sermons like this, and your study groups, and those you meet pastorally and whom you inform, with the people bounded by the coast. And of course there is the all-important unexpected encounter with another: a believer's vision or someone we cannot categorise.

"Yes! We call this discipleship, that follows on from discernment. It is actually a skill for living. It employs a whole heritage of narratives, perspectives, images and metaphors.

"The Bible uses these in telling us what makes the difference: the transformative difference. It's about the fullness of Being, and the Being of God is always fullness. God, as seen in Christ, as witnessed in the Bible, as worked through with further difficulty in tradition, turns over the conventions, as we see in the Christ-life lived and death faced and death overcome. The Pauline witness is a struggle to realise. He does nothing but realise. It is uncomfortable, and tells you what you don't want to know and feel - more often than not.

"As we move through tradition, we see that doctrine is like a guidance towards transformation. It's like doorways: beliefs and practices, orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Such is not a comfort blanket: fundamental to Christian understanding is that it comes at a cost.

"It is not about things far away and long ago: not like *Waiting for Godot*. 'Do you remember how lovely the Gospels were?' No. It is always about now and the coming future. If it isn't, it's not doing its job. The holy lives are to be formed and come, and these within communities. Yes! Companions they are, in the past, now, and into the future: folk of faith and trust. And trust means obedience, obedience in faithfulness.

"This, after all, is the make up of the body of Christ, and what it does is provide a different means of transformation beyond that of the market economy, that other invisible hand. Not just that, but providing values that glue and give identity, so that we can inform what we call the nation. This is why I am in the National Church, and what it means. The nation is a Gospel Nation: this without diminishing the work of different denominations and different faiths. Seaside communities are self-understanding and often with values, beyond just grabbing and grasping; and such beginnings of identity form the basis for a transformative identity in the promotion of a more complete freedom.

"I hope I have been sufficiently on-topic. I hope this has been to *anakephalaiôsasthai* even further. God bless you all."

To my table, I said (with a slightly croaky voice) that these social businesses facilitated privatisation by the back door. Julie Manns said she was completely puzzled and hadn't a clue what he was on about. Allie said she would investigate the role of Latin in producing theological gloss. Michael of our walk said there was a conflict between the implied market solution and the need for cultural glue: a dangerous nationalism and a bad use of religion.

Then the Archbishop spoke to us all. "I know because you told me, Bishop Jon, and I had a chat, that we are not without a special intelligence in this room and a student here who hopes to do a Ph.D possibly on religion and coastal

communities. Am b 'urrainn dhut innse dhuinn mu dheidhinn? Allie Shrimpton."

I said to my table, "That wasn't Latin."

"Mi?" said Allie close by.

The Archbishop looked at the Bishop of Margate, who nodded.

I thought, suddenly, has Jonathan Eyre fucked the one in black leather and steel-tipped boots as well? Couldn't he just have stayed with me?

William Blair Rothach said, "Thig agus thoir seachad do òraid."

Allie said to us, as she got up from her seat: "He said then, 'Come and give your speech,' in Gaelic."

Gaelic, to a woman from *Norfolk*? I know that William Rothach hailed from West Scotland but *she* didn't. What a lovely backside she had, in that reflective leather.

Allie went to the microphone. There was that intense pong again; I'm sure it came from her rear, escaping even such tight leather. "Chan eil òraid agam, Uilliam. I haven't prepared anything, ah bor! Tha madainn bhrèagh ann. Everyone, I'm Allie. *Namaste*. Moy hart alive! Twenty-nine, nearly thirty. It's a fair scolder here."

People looked blank, including me.

"Oh. I was saying, 'I haven't got a speech' and 'Lovely morning,' I think, to the Archbishop William. Bishop Jonathan told me that Gaelic is your first language. Don't press me too far on it! And then, everyone, I lapsed into some of my own local speech. Sorry. Well, *anyzing* I say derives from moi work at The Glastonbury School of Folk and Ethnographic Studies at The University of Somerset. I am myself looking for his sort of micro-sociology in a symbolic interaction study.

"I know... There's a rum academic called Bruce Reed. He made studies of liturgy and symbolism, and these were from a standpoint o' psychological dependence. Nineteen..."

"Seventy eight," said the Archbishop. "Died in 2003."

"Yeah. Ah. People: they do oscillate from dependence to healthy independence, from self to the world. So the Christian liturgy is supposed to pick people up and transform them..."

"Go *out* into the world and live and work to his praise and glory!" said the Archbishop, interrupting again.

Allie continued again: "As derived from the Christian myth of loss and resurrection. Liturgy gives that strength to do this, transforming. Sins are forgiven, renewal takes place. But Reed says that people get hooked on them symbols themselves. Symbols in Christian worship are supposed to point through themselves to the transformative revelation they represent, he says. But, as in rates o' passage, people become attached to the rate itself, and that it goes nowhere else.

"This is supposed to be so in communal, area churches, loike where folk religion predominates. Folk religion is: superstition, fetishness - I *loike* fetish clothing and it is symbolic! - and misplaced understandings.

Hmm. To me, Reed represents arrogance: privileging official interpretations, 'eld by clergy, for example. Symbols still point outwards, but to meanings of significance among the people themselves. And, when ya think abou' it, these symbols were often pinched from the Pagans anyway and these do give sustenance and project one into loife itself. So baptism ain't just 'being done' with water but points to the universal baby, the life of generations, the family as it is now, the importance of the name in the family line. And in ordinary services, let's not forget

the collective fellowship of coffee and biscuits a'terwards!

"Bruce Reed is basically arrogant. I'd hull a lot of 'is crap. Why is this important? Because many coastal places, probably not seashores, are places of risk, and risk encourages superstition, so-called, and therefore ya religious practice, where provided, will be used by people who'll interpret available symbols their way with some intensity.

"Probably moi research will be no more than researching a church from within, or perhaps an industry where superstitions exist. Perhaps there are behaviours far from official expectations - who knows. This is all I want to say. Ya can all have a mardle."

The Archbishop said, "That was not unchallenging. Churches are like authors, and who knows how the authored texts are read? Yes. Of course *symbolic* interpretation connects narrative events with meaning, popular after the Reformation, whereas *figural* interpretation connects narrative events with God's promises and his relationship with us. But to what you say: Pagans surely would make their symbolism precise to their claims; our symbols do closely interlock on our narrative and the rootedness of the early Church launching in relationship with the risen and ascended Christ, guaranteed further through the Church's apostolicity through to this time, symbols therefore essentially of Christ's *tria munera*."

"What?" I wondered to myself. Talk about intellectual indigestion. When Allie sat, I said, "Hey! Come to Serninsea. We could use you." (She did not reply.)

And that was it. The conference was done. But before we broke up, and after I packed, in my room, I gave the Margate sixty-six year old a good snog, and he gave my forty year old body a good grope. I wanted more.

"You *have* used birth control," he said, so late on.

"I told you. I won't get pregnant," I replied in a still affected voice. "Can't we just now..."

"Linda, people are leaving. We can't. Obey me. Learn to obey your bishop. One day I may see you again." So I decided to leave it to a memory with a further snog. "God bless you," said Jonathan. "See your affected throat as an offering. Seriously."

At the station on the curved platform was Julie Manns, who offered me a fruit drop. I thanked her. Also nearby was Allie Shrimpton, who I thought was stunning, still in leather and those boots. Allie gave me a broad smile. Julie said it's all right being a lay preacher around a circuit, but a minister has so much more to do. Anyway, she'd soon be having a maternity break. She hoped to sit on Worthing sea front with her new-born in better weather. She baffled me by saying that the Archbishop could do with learning some Zen Buddhism and face a wall in silence.

"One more thing," said Julie. "Thank you for what you did in the lift."

"Sure."

"You proved yourself worthy. God will bless you." She took me by both shoulders, pressed her bulge into me a little, and kissed me on the mouth with some passion. "Thank you," she said. I didn't have a reply because I was somewhat taken aback.

Allie, with a hefty bag by her side, was looking very directly at this. Julie's train departed before mine. Allie got on mine, but elsewhere. Was that distance deliberate, after seeing Julie kiss me?

At London St. Pancras, walking off the platform lugging my bag and with

shoulder bag, I looked forward and saw a familiar face. It was Allie and bag, looking at me and waiting. She gestured for me to go forwards to her. I stopped and stood. She now put her hands to my shoulders and kissed me on the lips, directly and sweetly. "Bye," she said, quietly. She gave me one last direct look, then she picked up her bag, turned and walked off, not looking back.

I melted on the spot. I just did not move. Her lips were so sweet. People walked around me. She had seen Julie do it, and clearly decided she had to do it. For that obvious consideration, it had meant more, a lot more, than Julie's kiss. I went on the underground to Kings Cross in a semi-daze. Perhaps I should have followed her to Paddington, I thought. (I assumed Paddington.) The direct train stopping at Rasa Market went by in a dream: a dream of Jonathan thrusting in my throat in a way that I wanted more, peeing with pregnant Julie and her direct kiss, and the gorgeous body and beautiful kiss of Allie.

I was left to reflect at home on my own. *He* was fucking Cheryl in Harwich with frequency while I was taking a lemon drink with vinegar. She was there for him, but no one was here for me.

I had an essay to write, but not to include Allie's kiss, Julie's kiss and Jonathan's sessions.

A Strategy to Investigate Keith (Friday 26th April)

I was naked, sat, and two women came into my focus. One was a woman with no face and very long red hair, like a curtain spreading across the ground. The bare feet and naked body of another woman was alongside her, with unkempt pubic hair. It was the short haired face of Mouldy, Cheryl Mould, like when she was at school.

Cheryl said to me, "If you want to see the colour of her pubic hair, you are going to have to give your blessing to Keith and me."

I said, "I don't want to see the colour of her pubic hair. I can guess the colour. Try red."

"What if it isn't red? What if it is pink? Pinky poos, like the inside of your mouth? Down your throat! Down your throat!"

"My throat? Her hair? Pinky poos?"

"If you see the colour of her pubic hair, she is going to have lots of babies, because she kissed you. Pink is where you want to be. Pink and drippy and wet, like your gob, and like *he* has been in my pink and drippy and wet..."

I saw the bedroom and neither of these women were there. Friday morning. I was awake and then the alarm went off.

So I needed a plan. I wanted to investigate Keith, but not to be known investigating him. I needed to disguise an investigation, run it within something else, somehow, so that if it went wrong it would not come back to me. And the opportunity was indeed presenting itself imminently: the annual stress testing of inspecting the inspecting at his work setting. Merge it with that - so becoming of that and not me - and shift the focus to create a sleight of hand.

I thought, given the delays already, let's see if Keith's boss is really interested in a proposal from a wife for adding to the quality of the investigations, or if it is all talk. I had observed the stress a year back and therefore knew something of what I

could offer.

I left my mobile phone at home. After Morning Prayer and with Colin first talking to a parishioner elsewhere, I rang SMS from the vestry with a proposal in confidence for Sir Sanjay Bunker.

"Tracy de Tracey, speaking, PA to Sir Sanjay Bunker. Sir Sanjay is not available now so perhaps I could take a message."

"Yes. Linda Jupitas. Well it is this: I can assist in the internal annual checking. Keith Jupitas works with Yojana Asthana; he's in Compliance and she is in the Independent Assessment Unit."

"Interdependent Investigations Unit," said the PA. "We've just renamed it and merged with Harwich and other outstations. Compliance investigated; the IIA is supposed to see that Compliance works without fear or favour. Please continue."

"Yes, well perhaps they are too friendly to be working on checking for integrity. My message is that as a wife I could set up a different private detective from George Wickenby to examine whether their friendly relationship is too close to be fit for purpose - in that she is not able to check him without preference or prejudice."

"Well, I've got that. Sir Sanjay should see this on his screen very soon. He is, in fact, in Harwich at the moment."

"Anyone could see that screen," I said.

"No, it is secure. His screen only. If he doesn't get to see it I will let him know of your message. You've not got marital troubles have you?"

"No. Yojana is a good friend. I'm responding to your boss welcoming input, and also my husband said I should be positively involved. He will actually like this; but, obviously, for the time being, neither he nor my friend Yojana can know about this."

"No, I suppose not. Thank you. Anything else?"

"Thank you. Please contact me by this line, not my mobile phone. There is an answer machine; use it only to tell me to ring back confidentially. I'm a minister of religion so that's the basis of confidentiality here."

I sat back for a few minutes and got hold of my hairbrush for a tug through my long hair. Colin Cromer came into the vestry, and said, "I thought your voice was a little bit croaky this morning. You must have been speaking a lot in Margate."

"Not sure."

"I can look, if you like?" I opened my mouth. "To the light, Linda, please. Say 'ah'..."

"Ah."

"I hope you're not going to get a temperature and come down with a cold."

"Nothing as yet," I said.

"Leave your hair alone, Linda. Now: Margate. Was it good?"

"Better than good." The telephone started ringing. I was expecting Sir Sanjay Bunker or a representative. "Excuse me, Colin, it should be for me. The Reverend Linda Jupitas speaking."

"Ah, at the workplace. Good! Bishop John here. It's you I want to speak to."

"It's Bishop John," I said to Colin.

"For me?"

"For *me*."

"Oh."

"Very briefly, Linda. I just want to say that my distant colleague was more than impressed with you. You made a big impact. You gave a very well-crafted speech to the various representatives and contributed fantastically to the discussions afterwards. Your speech dovetailed with Jonathan Eyre's very well. I think he mentioned you to William Blair Rothach, our Most Reverend, along with, em, a fascinating, er..."

"Bishop Jonathan spread the word about a talented Ph.D student, a real talent."

"Social anthropologist or something." I was going 'grrr' inside. He *must* have had her as well. Calm down! "Linda?"

"Sorry. Thanks for providing most of the information, Bishop. I stripped off the statistical data for a handout and then went through the issues; I put some of my own history in to it as well."

"You were also warm and friendly throughout and the bishop heard about you from others. You showed a strong pastoral side to the needs of a pregnant woman. You also showed a capacity to obey instructions. So, well, I will let Colin Cromer know that you made such a positive impact and it can only do you good in the Church."

"He's here now."

"Put me on, then. All the best and God's love to you."

"And to you, Bishop John. Thank you."

Colin listened. When he put the phone down he said, "Well done, Linda. You made a good impression on Bishop Jonathan and helped a woman in need as well. Things are looking up. I'm going now."

"I'd like to stay and consider my report or essay I am expected to write."

"Leave you to it then. Here is a good a place as any for thinking time."

I saw Bishop Jonathan in the vestry smiling at me, and undoing his trousers. My mouth was going hot in anticipation. It was after an hour of sleep that I was jolted awake by the telephone ringing. It was Sir Sanjay Bunker, the man himself, who indeed was contacting me from Harwich.

He said, "What a privilege to hear from you. This is a very good idea. It needs to be done pretty much immediately. Too many delays already. I have a budget for these matters. So tell me. It's like, well not quite them having an affair; I don't think you were saying that: just too close to be effective. What do you suggest you do?"

I said to him, "Well I can go to the other detective agency in town, which is run by an Adam Magellan, I understand. I like Yojana and I have no suspicions. But Yojana could be too close to be effective. They obviously like each other so I'd make the investigation look like, on the surface, about the relationship between Keith in Compliance and Yojana Asthana in the renamed unit she is in. Too close and too unreliable in the same building. It might be a bit like investigating if they are having an affair, but I have no concerns myself on that."

He said, "I'm always happy for partners to take an interest in our business activities. Coming from you it means matters can be ever so secret, being a priest too, and so outside the normal approach. Yes, we can investigate a closeness between them that could be compromising professionally."

"Specifically that angle. Say, if they spend time together outside the office. Even time she spent with me! Just to help."

"We don't mind a closeness but nothing can undermine the wall that must be

between them. But, if at any point this starts to go wrong between Keith and you then we must stop it - I mean, we don't want personal casualties."

I told him, "I'd said to your PA that Keith will be pleased that I've shown such an interest in his work. I do want to show an interest. He supports me in my ministry, I support him in his work, and all this comes from an excellent marriage, Sir Sanjay."

"Very good. Obviously we cannot tell your husband or Ms Asthana until well afterwards - at the debriefs."

"Quite," I said, "and yet we can analyse things and clear up potential misconceptions as part of any assessment and evaluation."

"On the other hand, I hope Keith hasn't been discussing too much of his work with you. You seem to be on the ball with this."

"I'm drawing on his general frustration with all the delays."

"Yes. This is behind merging the local units into one Interdependent Investigations Unit. We want people down here, across the water from Harwich, to build facilities of our own monitoring of our own investigating. Felixstowe is the new centre."

Partly I was wondering if this executive knew anything about Keith and Cheryl Mould down there. If he did, surely he would have been giving signals, like: this accepted proposal might be too sensitive a strategy, if he knew something.

"So I'll make the approach," I said, "to Mr. Magellan."

"Wait for instructions, first. But yes, do it then, because she is checking Keith's integrity so we also must check hers and the his-and-her angle. Yes indeed. We changed the name of the unit to integrate the inspecting process across the country; to effectively use Felixstowe in the future - a sort of horizontal checking. Obviously, Serninsea matters now. I will consult my senior management team."

"Yes. Perhaps have them travel around a bit: email things to her home or ours deliberately," I suggested.

Sir Sanjay said, "Obviously, we do this sort of thing anyway: as in, what he does see, what she does see, when are they together. And of course, in this case, if you do the arrangements for private investigating then it's not the firm doing it: not until the evaluation."

"Yes."

He said, "Wait for a signal from one of the senior team to proceed. By the way, if Keith gets wind of this then we must know, Reverend Jupitas, because we will have a very leaky system and that is no good at all. Thank you so very much."

So I looked up the website of Adam Magellan and, it turned out that the local webmaker was Peter Marshall - Peter, the young magician himself. He was described online as being in an apprenticeship. So that meant he was otherwise unemployed and working for free.

And then the address. Crumbs. He worked in the terraced house next door to Klärchen Sisse, the woman with Dieter the dog - someone to avoid.

Then, before leaving, I received another call, from Tracy de Tracey. "Sir Sanjay's management team for the internal checking likes your suggestion and wants it properly incorporated. Due to start next week, the internal investigations have been put on hold so that everything can be incorporated properly. Please wait for instructions and do nothing until you receive them from a member of the senior management team, who will call himself 'Martin Haralambos'."

"Yes of course. I'm intrigued and not a little excited. Martin Haralambos."

"Sir Sanjay sends his best wishes."

Whatever Colin had said, I was back attacking my hair again but had no need to clamp my bottom with the toilet nearby.

Narrator: Keith *Decisions & An Initiation* (Friday 26th to Sunday 28th April)

On Friday afternoon some of us were summonsed to the Red Diamond Club in Felixstowe. When I arrived, there was a purple helicopter parked on flat concreted land down the road from the club. It was attracting some attention, and a man in uniform was speaking to people around it.

I went in and a receptionist nodded me through. I could see Yojana herself going in ahead of me.

"You've come down here, Yojana!"

"Consultations. Hush hush. Travelled this morning."

Inside this large room there was a stage, and Bishop Terry Barman, Sir Sanjay Bunker, Bishop Jonathan Eyre and the Reverend Julie Manns were looking at two women wearing thongs only going through some sort of interactive dance rehearsal with each other. The thongs came off, and each leg went high on to the other person in this spiral of a dance. The music was loud but not as loud as it could be.

I asked Sir Sanjay if that was his helicopter but he said it had been purchased by Christine - she could afford this plus hiring a pilot. She'd given Yojana, Helen McPhail, Connie Wilson and one other from the Serninsea area a lift, and Leon Agnew her pilot went on and had brought in Jonathan and Julie from Margate. The Reverend Christine Vine came out of the toilets.

"I needed a shit," she said to one and all.

We were expecting Bishop Liz (Tess), the Reverend Jenny World and the Reverend Fatima Tamuuz all the way from Hartlepool.

This meant all three bishops would be together.

In the meantime Sir Sanjay commented that the dancers were rather good - employed a week ago. Ken Osis (spending time in Wytham) and Rabbi Maurice Neptune were also expected, driven by Maurice's own chauffeur.

Ken arriving said to me, "Professional driving makes such a difference."

The rehearsing stopped and our people were sitting around a long table. I gave Jenny a hug as she arrived, as she had initiated me. I stroked a bare bottom cheek under her dress, and she gave me an open-mouthed kiss.

Bishop Terry Barman said that this was an important extra meeting in which the three bishops would vote according to their own decisions but taking any advice from the rest.

We were asked to go and find rooms, and take a chosen partner. Because I was not supposed to be with Yojana too often, I asked Jenny if I could go with her. Fatima decided she'd come too, receiving some grumbling from Jenny. I didn't mind. I ended up entering both women, licking them both to orgasm and having them both bring me to orgasm by hand.

At each orgasm we said, "God bless us all."

Jenny said to me, "I don't think Linda is going to join us without a struggle."

I said that it would need a careful strategy but that recent events surely suggested that she would come to enjoy the group. But Jenny said that we could end up having to use Connie and Jim Wilson. Ken Osis caved in straight away, with their actions, but Linda might not cave in, and then what?

"Then it will be severe," I said, "but I know she can take it."

"She'll resist."

"She will submit. Look, I taught her that deep throat she did with Jonathan. Now she would not be without these skills."

I asked after Fatima's young daughter, Akemi. She was being looked after by a parishioner.

And so we all returned to the room with its table, and the three bishops came in together able to take binding decisions.

A decision already taken was using the language of theatre. Ken said we should become fluent and confident about its terminology and he had a handout of terms. We should now speak as if there was an amateur dramatics group in Serninsea, but it was only set up recently and unknown because they had not become ready yet to put any plays on. So Terry said the name of *The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players* had no negative impact on the Confraternity and its vanguard rule. Nevertheless even this new theatrical identifier should be used carefully and rarely. The badges would still be used in talent scouting, so to create a puzzle about what the badges meant, each version in their location.

Terry Barman asked for feedback on Ken's meeting with Linda.

"I'm claiming full pastoral confidentiality on that."

"You can tell us nothing at all?"

"Nothing, I'm afraid."

"I'm disappointed. Keith, what did she intimate at home?"

I added that she hadn't said a word about it. "Probably too intimate."

Sir Sanjay had news of an electronics firm in Serninsea where he knew some managers would receive rewards for their work in the way of our relaxation and pleasures. He would tell more later.

Bishop Elizabeth told us that the first divine decision was taken to extend the worshipful company and theatrical terminology to all locations.

The second divine decision was to go to South Wales in setting up a new Worshipful Company. Bishop Tess said it was a matter of obedience for Yojana to go with her, but as a lay woman she could decline. Yojana agreed and said she was enthusiastic. They would meet Niall Ifan, Bishop of Casnewydd, and Afanen Ffrwyth, Bishop of Mynyw. These meetings, Yojana had to understand, were to be conducted in secrecy.

Sir Sanjay said that Yojana could think about where to locate SMS's business on the south Welsh coast given the locations of the opposition.

"And now we turn to Reverend Linda Jupitas," said Bishop Tess. "The decision is already made to recruit her, and strategy comes under that decision. Bishop Terry.

He explained that Helen discovered by sheer accident Linda's flexibility in a public space, and thus he decided that she ought to go alone to Margate. She made a speech and participated, but what was a surprise was just how responsive she was to Jonathan here. "This is a very significant development."

Jonathan told us not just what had happened, as Sir Sanjay had told me in Harwich, but indeed what had further happened on the second full day. He had sex with her a second time.

"I spoke about obedience, and she understood that. I had to test her out. You see, she'd swalled my penis to the extent that she licked my testicles. So I let rip fucking her throat more strongly than I have ever done with anyone ever. I have to tell you: she nearly gave me a heart attack. My cum had gone in her throat and up through her nose and she did not flinch.

And then Julie mentioned the drawing, and a woman artist with whom Linda posed had nude. Neither he nor Julie had worn their W badges, as this would have raised unwanted suspicions.

Given the nude posing with this Ms Shrimpton, Julie said Jonathan tried it on with her to gain information. A researcher as well as artist, she told Jonathan in a corridor that she would crush his testicles if he didn't move away.

I commented, "So you don't possess magical powers concerning women. You're not 'Supersex Man,' I said.

"Soup only, I'm afraid," Jonathan said to laughs. "Oh, Linda made us laugh. She talked of penetration software instead of presentation software. Easy mistake."

Julie said she kissed Linda with intent at Margate station, and thought that Linda was a bit taken aback. Linda had suspected correctly that Jonathan and she were together overnight. Jonathan made their relationship visibly pastoral by being in Julie's car near the Turner Contemporary art gallery.

I gave my reaction of bafflement at Linda's behaviour, because she'd always been loyal to me.

Bishop Elizabeth asked if I could think of anything that might have prompted a change in her. I had no idea.

Then Jonathan came back with an astonishing question for me. "She's not a tranny, is she?"

"Hey?" I answered.

"Well, I opened her up for a moment and wasn't sure what I was looking at. She didn't want me to look, and feared being fisted."

I said, "You saw and felt her breasts, didn't you? No one could manufacture those."

He said, "Some transgenders have natural-looking breasts."

"She's female," I said. "And I cannot fist her either. You can do her arse, but she's being trying to tighten it up lately."

Helen said that on meeting her accidentally she was astonished at Linda's ease of manner, even when people walked past her naked on the beach. She urinated into the sand with her, and showed not the slightest embarrassment when Stephen did the same after he arrived.

"Well," said Jonathan, "she pissed on the lift doors with incredible force. Is that part of her tightness then?"

"Not really," I said. I confirmed that her naked father indeed used to just pee whenever he fancied it. Rabbi Neptune then said, that if indeed Linda and I separated and divorced - I said I absolutely would, and rapidly, there was no doubt about it - then his wanting Linda for his wife would inevitably introduce personal confidentialities.

Jenny then said that she wanted to maintain her distance from Linda. She

loved the group and loved sex, but she didn't want to encounter Linda sexually one to one, even after all this time. She might change her mind once seeing Linda, but wanted some space. Yes, she would be at the ordinations, but that was a formal event in which she would be with others.

Given what Jenny had said, I said I also expected to be at the ordinations to support Linda, but that immediately afterwards I would announce my intended divorce. I would try and do it after the cathedral, possibly after a celebratory party. It might come as a shock to Linda.

We were reminded that some of us would be at the SMS party at the restaurant and then go on to the casino for the annual awards and afterwards our people under the Confraternity and guests could go above the casino for our indulgences. It was a fixed date that should have happened after the annual inspections stress testing, but now would be before.

I said I might have difficulties with participation. Cheryl should be at the restaurant and my wife too. Meanwhile, Cheryl had understood that my departure from Linda was assured, on a timetable, and therefore she agreed with keeping her distance until the separation happened.

Meanwhile, Bishop Elizabeth Huett told us that a queer and radical theologian, Bishop Gretta Cox-Jenkins, was coming to the UK from Canada, first visiting Scotland, calling in at Elizabeth's at Middlesbrough, and going on to do a theological gig for the Bishop of Wytham, Derek Imperial. Although not herself in the Confraternity, being Canadian, she knew about us and she was highly sympathetic. The bishops had long decided to include her ministry in our company. Liz, during their own get-together, would encourage Gretta to connect with Linda after the lecture. The venue was the University of Wytham, not the Cathedral. Liz knew Lutheran Gretta when she was a wandering bishop with her distinctive theology and behaviour to match. Her move to the Lutherans had simply given her a salary; her life of experimental relationships had become more private. Gretta also believed that to orgasm was to touch and taste the Kingdom of God, and had adopted the term 'theosexual. There were some parallels between Gretta's practices and those of the Buddhist Anong, Sheila Patterson.

Bishop Tess reminded us that the decision on Linda had already been taken; and once a priest Linda was not free to turn down their decision for her to come under the Confraternity. Her life in the Church would become extremely difficult if she did not succumb. However, her recruitment had to be done in a way to secure the anonymity of the Worshipful Company of the Serninsea Theatrical Players and the Confraternity. It could be tricky. The decision was further made that she would be initiated by Bishop Barman.

Rabbi Neptune was asked to assist early on, engaging her on theology. He said he would arrange something using the secondary school. Ken was to continue.

Terry said, "Try and tell us at least something next time."

I said there was one thing, not mentioned. "What of the Serninsea Cross brooch?"

Terry looked at Helen and then Connie and then at me. "It's not a Worshipful Company thing." He did not wish to reveal its donor in the sense of it being put in his hands for safekeeping. He realised it would have to be tested to pass the scrutiny of the archaeological community. He kept it on his person, so we had a look at it and it was impressive.

"Tess," said Bishop Terry, "I believe we have someone to initiate today in a Body Eucharist."

"He's been waiting outside," said the Reverend Deacon Christine. Christine left the room and returned with an Andrew Walter, using a walking stick. She introduced him as a highly intelligent individual with a talent for both philosophy and psychotherapy. An ex-fireman, he had been in an accident from which he had recovered but moved to administration. He was forty seven. She could imagine him being very useful from a pastoral point of view.

I'd known all about intentions to recruit him. As a lay person he had the chance to refuse to be a member. And here was a chance again to walk away.

Christine asked him, "Do you wish to join The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players under the discipline of the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Anglorum Nationalabus*? And do you agree to abide by its collective decisions under the bishops and its rules of secrecy in all your guided representations of the group?"

"I do."

"You will be initiated after a confirmatory vote of the bishops," she told him, and kissed him on the mouth.

In this case the bishops immediately voted again to accept this lay person. (They did not vote a second time for a clergyperson, because the decision was compulsory upon that person: they could, however, vote to reject such a person in extreme circumstances followed by efforts to discredit the person in their clerical office.)

A naked female in high heels came in with a white cloth and placed it over the table. Two naked females, the ones some of us saw earlier, also in high heels, then came in with one unlit candle in a candlestick each. Rubbing them over their pubes, they were placed either end of the table. We got up as these three rearranged the chairs to face the table in rows. The three went out and returned with cushions, laying them in front of the table and white gowns. Finally the two dancers went out and came in with wine in a large glass and bread on a plate.

We all undressed to nudity and we as laity put on the open-fronted white gowns. The three women went out and brought in simplified clergy gear all folded up and some wrapped in plastic. These three then sat among us and did not wear gowns. Christine as a deacon added a collar and green stole on her open white gown. Priested clergy - Fatima and Jenny - each put on a green gown, collar and a green stole, and the three bishops each wore a purple gown, collar, and a purple stole. All the collars needed went on.

Christine as the deacon lit the candles, and withdrew to us as a congregation. The priests stood at the sides, and the bishops went behind the table. All the Eucharistic preparatory liturgical stages were followed, to the point where we took the elements with bodily contact.

"The Body of Christ," said Liz or Tel, giving the disc and touching the person's sex.

"The blood of Christ," said the Jonathan without touching anyone.

The final consumer was Andrew Walter leaning on his stick in front of the altar table. At this point of consumption, female clergy came to him one by one (Deacon Christine included). Each sucked him off for a few minutes and they otherwise stroked his flesh. Jenny was last to have him in her mouth, at which point Liz Huett

came around. He lowered himself on to the cushions, laying his stick to one side, she squatted on to his vertical erect penis, and with her gown opening from the neck she demonstrated a skillful sexual intercourse.

Eventually we could see Andrew's twitches inside Liz with some moaning from him and strokes of support from Jenny and Fatima, and then Liz raised herself with sperm dripping from her cleft. She gathered it in her fingers for him to suck on them.

In other words, they had done what was essential in the Body Eucharist initiation, which was an exchange of fluids. He had given a material offering to receive a spiritual gift. Andrew had been initiated.

The service ended with a notice. Having been his talent scout, Christine would now mentor him, but he was himself going to talent scout Laura Kingswood, a friend. Although it was unusual to talent scout a friend, Laura had delicate issues that needed his knowledge and sympathy. Christine would help.

Christine then said to me that she didn't like her own liturgy! The body initiation seemed too cut off from the Eucharist and there could be, among the dedicated, a more participatory expressive exchange of body fluids than just seeing and feeling bodies.

When all this was over, we went upstairs to a suite of rooms in the Red Diamond club. Yojana went with Elizabeth for exploratory sex and talk about their future work together. Fatima insisted on being present wherever Jenny went, and I think the rabbi went with those two. I went with Helen McPhail and she was full of approval for Linda.

I was fucking her when I indicated that Jenny thought Linda would resist joining.

"Then Connie and Jim will sort her out regardless. Christine is often too busy so Linda will be the local initiating linchpin of the Serninsea Worshipful Company.

I brought Helen to orgasm but she understood why I did not ejaculate into her, because Cheryl expected my performance to be the usual in her quest for pregnancy.

The crowd stayed overnight, but I didn't. Incidentally, this was the first time I had been in the RDC, the sister of the Blue Diamond Club in Serninsea.

I went back to Cheryl, and said that the meeting in Felixstowe had gone very well, but she understood that I could not talk about it.

I had contacted Linda on Friday and Saturday for general messages. She said she had enjoyed Margate very much and learnt a lot. Yes, the Archbishop was as incommunicable as ever. Nevertheless, Saturday was a time to enjoy with my future wife and I did seed her a number of times. I drove back Sunday, after one more morning session with Cheryl.

My balls, required to be in super-manufacturing mode, were left with the sensation of being completely out of stock. And nothing going into Cheryl had ever dribbled out.

Chapter 05 Keeping Quiet with Keith

Narrator: Linda *Quizzing Keith* (Sunday 28th April)

Keith returned Sunday. I was already back from Evensong on Easter 2, completely unclothed, and he said nothing at all about Cheryl Mould. He said, "You didn't ring me the second night and since then I've done all the ringing just to see you were all right. So how did it go down there in Margate, beyond enjoying yourself?"

"I did enjoy myself. It was great. Conferences become intense and you're inside their world. My talk was well-received."

"You got on well with the Suffragan Bishop of Margate?"

"He gave the first speech. Lots of talking with him and others and my voice became a little croaky."

"You know what they say about him visiting local schools on the south coast and all those kids with no fathers?"

"Is this some sort of a joke?"

"He tells them to pray to the Father but forgets to tell them that this means him."

"I don't think that's very funny."

"Well, I didn't tell you before because you were at no risk from him."

"Or anyone else - not very funny either."

"Yes but he goes for younger women than you, and obviously fertile ones."

"Keith. This is quite nasty towards me. My body no longer entices you?"

"Mind you, he is about to retire so his personal solution towards evangelism is probably over."

"I found him to be a very considerate man. Yes, Jonathan Eyre is retiring very shortly."

"Well he loves the ladies, that's all. He definitely loves the ladies."

"By the way, when did you go to Harwich?"

"Wednesday. They let me go a day early."

"Not Tuesday."

"No, I had late work with Yojana Asthana before going to Harwich. But I got home first in time to relax, sleep, and drive down. Four hours with a fifteen minute stop."

"Hmm. You like it in Harwich: the people down there, the place, the headquarters..."

"I think I like them all down there. I get a lot done and it was good advice received. It gets this office here in full alignment with local offices Harwich and Felixstowe and indeed Hartlepool. I will have to work more with a bloke called Geoff Petty there. Tomorrow I put matters into action up here. Beneficial. Yeah. And they're merging these checking units, so Yojana herself was in Felixstowe on Friday."

"Talking about coastal communities can have beneficial effects."

"If you say so. Wrong people doing the talking, that's all. And did you see the Archbishop of All England? You didn't say."

"Yes, he did call in. Gave a contribution."

"The one-time paleoliberal. The market does everything, but religion

provides identity. He supports education but thinks it should all be marketised. He hasn't thought it through: if theological education was marketised, no one would do it."

"I think he thinks everything through. I think you have become very cynical since you moved on."

"I think I was *during*, if truth be told."

"If you say so, Keith. I'm going to the kitchen."

Keith called out, "If truth be told, did you understand a word he said?"

"Yes!" I shouted back.

I told him that I wasn't going to prepare anything, was going out, and would return with hot food. I got dressed and put a coat on and went over to Diana's. Parked outside, I used my mobile to ask for fish and chips to be ready for my collection in a short while.

At her front door Diana let me in and asked what I wanted, and so I said I wanted to make a national private telephone call and did not trust to use the house phone or even my own mobile phone. She said I did not have to pay her, even for a call to Harwich.

Julie Vaughan was in. "It's Linda. I'm asking about my husband and Cheryl." My first question was about the day of his arrival, but she answered far more.

In summary: Keith and Cheryl turned up on Wednesday afternoon after her lunch time, and they were very much together; he obviously stayed at her house; he spent one working afternoon without her over at Felixstowe, but she was quite open that he was staying until Sunday morning.

I said I would employ a detective.

I thanked Diana and said I was going to collect some fish and chips. This I did swiftly, and drove home.

This did raise a question as to why he did not answer the house telephone on Tuesday evening. Well, Julie knew only when he appeared on Wednesday. I assumed they'd have gone out somewhere together. So, as far as I cared, at least Wednesday night to this Sunday morning he was banging Cheryl Mould.

Frankly, eating the fish and chips, Keith was being super cool about everything, the sort of person who could beat a polygraph lie detector. I wasn't telling, either. I could not allow a divorce at this time.

In bed he read while I tried a larger dilator for late Sunday evening. I thought of Jonathan yet again and then Allie at London Victoria. I wondered how she felt. Probably she kissed the next woman to come along in her life. She looked younger than me.

He Must Wait (Tuesday April 30th to Wednesday May 1st)

I faced a naked woman with ginger pubic hair that was long and flowing. It was *her* again. Then I realised with the alarm clock going that I had Tuesday Morning Prayer to attend. It would allow me to clear my head.

After Morning Prayer, Colin Cromer handed me the telephone. "Sir Sanjay Bunker, no less. For you, apparently." Colin left the vestry. No, my head would not be cleared: there were things to do.

Sir Sanjay said to me, "After our conversation on Friday morning, everyone involved is planning your additional exciting method for investigating alongside our usual methods, and we've also made some changes elsewhere. We have been working with the George Wickenby agency as well."

"Keith is getting agitated," I told him.

"I think we should allow him the time off that would have come afterwards. There is a lot happening, including with your idea. We must get this right because we have some evidence elsewhere - in fact your husband has been finding it - that not all parts of our business are secure. Here is the problem. The fact that he has found problems elsewhere means all the more that we have to investigate *him*. This is why your contribution could be invaluable."

"It's like being a company wife," I said.

"This is how we like it. Some wondered about the angle of attack: Yojana and your husband, coming from you, but it makes sense regarding friendliness and documents."

"It needs handling properly," I said.

"If you are uncomfortable with this we might have to operate differently."

"On which point, you mentioned George Wickenby. I'm sure he's good but it is best for me to go with someone else," I said.

"Yes, I see. So it must be like you doing it, indeed only you doing it."

"Until afterwards," I said. "It still needs strong company evaluation afterwards. Yes?"

"Yes, of course. Well your role doesn't have to be revealed even afterwards, but that might be unethical."

"I think we could all have a really good debrief afterwards," I said. "It won't be a problem because, as I've said, I'll have taken an interest in his work. Keith will appreciate that - once it is done."

Sir Sanjay said, "Good. I'll inform those in the need to know, and from now on I'd appreciate it if you keep away from phoning or contacting the managers. Tracy de Tracey or someone will contact you."

"Can I ask you a question about Keith?"

"If it is ethical, if I can answer and it's not a company-confidential matter. Refusal may annoy."

"Do you think he is likely to be promoted further and move up - or is it down - to Harwich?"

"If he applies, I think it is quite a possibility. There is a rising amount of operational work in Harwich and especially Felixstowe. But would you want to be a priest in Harwich or Felixstowe? Is there a vacancy?"

"I rather prefer it around here; it's where I was brought up. But you never know."

"He could be senior level management in Titansea too; but it is limited for openings there and we don't know the future with your one dock and poor roads. Originally, Titansea allowed low cost entry into the business, but now we are in position to manage the debt and build our sites. Anyway, look, let's do this and hopefully there'll be a big debriefing get-together before too long. And before anything there is the firm's socialising, the dinner. It should have come afterwards, but it is a fixed booking."

"Yeah, it's on the calendar at home. Managers and spouses. And at the

Titantsea Wilkinson's Casino. Sometimes I don't bother with these socials. I never know which he prefers - me not there, or me there."

"Do go," he said. "Wives and husbands matter. Hope this all helps. Bye then. We'll be in touch on this."

"Indeed. Good talking to you and good for the firm. Bye then."

When Colin saw me he asked why Sir Sanjay Bunker would want to ring me at the church. So I said it's because I attend Morning Prayer and it was a morning call. The answer was good enough.

Keith said, when he returned home in the evening, "The point about the socialising and our going away is to do it *after* everything has happened, *after* all the stress - not before. Yojana told me she is furious. All she is doing is checking on all I am doing, as normal. No one yet is checking on her. There is a leak: a shipping firm has got hold of some of our procedures, and our systems are not robust. So maybe the senior management have a new method or two to introduce. Obviously, no one can tell me or Yojana."

"I don't know," I said. "I don't know anything about it."

Next day I was back at the church again, of course, and at Morning Prayer Colin Cromer asked me if I was impressed by the Archbishop and I replied that I was indeed.

"Get noticed by him and they'll make you a bishop!"

"Colin, you are getting into the realms of fantasy."

That evening Keith said, "You left around these conference papers, and, inside them, your speech. These are drawings of you and, well, it is definitely you and I recognise all your features clothed and nude."

"Do you normally go through my things?"

"You don't have a study. Perhaps you should use the vestry at the church. So, who is 'A S' then? Adrian Smith, er... Adam Simpson, hmm... Andrew Shithole?"

"Allie Shrimpton. A woman. Ph.D student. University of Somerset."

"So have theologians dismissed the camera? Perhaps theology has not caught up with the camera yet. A bit recent for theology. I know, let's employ my mobile phone."

"As a former user of theology, you would know that the light of the world is focussed through the lens that is Christ. She was called upon to give a talk by the Archbishop no less, based on information received from the suffragan. He was also impressed by me."

"Alfia... Shrimpton. She's at the University of Somerset but comes from Norfolk."

"Alfia," I repeated.

Keith said, "'A S' is not the same as 'A R' - that painting we bought from a local artist from Walsingham. Close, though."

"No. The painting was all gothic and surreal and mystical. But I detect a similarity."

"Pity I sold it: we could have done some detective work. Can't see anything online," he said. "Not really for social media, I suppose. And did your nudity impress her to go beyond drawing?"

"No it did not. Have you heard of being professional, Keith? She did a second drawing of me nude, and she gave me one. The clothed one is a photocopy."

"She gave you one."

"That means she gave me a drawing, Keith. And it is rather good, and if I find an A4 frame I might just hang this drawing up. Would you like that?"

"Well, not where your parishioners might see it.."

"No."

"After all, you don't want to mix nudity, sexuality and religion."

"Well, I do, but not in this setting, and not with this drawing as sexuality was not involved. Sex was not involved, sexuality might have been. I don't know."

"She might have a married sister, or something like that: both artists: 'A R' and 'A S'. So you posed, made your excuses, and left."

"I had no excuses, Keith."

"Well, yes, it *is* very good and would be nice in the bedroom."

"I will get a frame from a photo shop if there isn't one in a charity shop. And how was work today?"

"Hmm. Half of what is going on is supposed to be about efficiency and this is now becoming inefficiency through on-high imposed brakes. Something is stupid. The boss is at Harwich and the management team members there are treating us up here like idiots but Yojana and I have decided not to protest."

"This is well outside my competence, Keith," I said. "You are alone on this one, I'm afraid. I have nothing to offer or say."

"I'm aware of this," he said. "I apologise for some of my recent comments. It is getting very frustrating lately."

"I understand," I said. "As your receptive, compassionate, loving wife: I understand."

Restaurant and Casino (Saturday 4th May)

It was the Saturday after which all the SMS internal investigations should have been ended. They had not even started. The social was, however, still on. I was also still waiting to hear about my investigating role. Still, it was time to be visible to senior management. I needed to make an impact, and against my competitor Cheryl Mould and even his colleague over the Chinese wall, Yojana Asthana.

World Naked Gardening Day, it was, but being overlooked we could not celebrate it properly.

Prior to getting ready to go out, I rang Patricia at home in the Serninsea Marshes. I went round by car and told her about the twice reported affair from Julie Vaughan. She recalled her own divorce - which was why I went to see her: I should try to avoid acrimony, and either stay together or get a clean break uncontested divorce. Plus I said there was my problem of a divorce when intending to be ordained.

"All the more reason to tread carefully," she thought aloud.

I was telling Patricia that I'd said nothing to Keith to even hint of knowing about his affair. He gave no clue either, including back home. So, with the further SMS delay, my planned holiday away was now to be before the work investigations, and so I said I might just monitor how he deals with me in the naturist setting. Patricia mentioned that Diana had some time off shortly.

I mentioned going to Margate, but only to say about the talks.

Obviously I went to see if Diana was in. She was. Whilst the art encounter was mentionable, so I said about some naturist drawing fun, the bishop encounters were buried deep. If she had some suitable time off she might join Keith and me at the Bever Wood Naturist Club.

She said she would come, but could not afford a whole week away. So we arranged the last two days when Keith and I would be there. She was surprised that Keith might be so attracted to someone like "Mouldy", as she remembered her. She might help me detect if Keith was concealing anything.

I said to her, " The SMS get-together at the Dok Dak Restaurant is followed by the nearby Wilkinson's Casino for an awards ceremony. It's open to the public. Would you want to come along to the casino?"

"No, not when I used to work there."

I went home and started to prepare for the restaurant.

"You coming on the holiday we had planned?"

Keith replied, "I cannot possibly do the whole week, with stuff to prepare."

"Three days? Three days and then come back for two and the weekend for your work preparation."

"Yes. All right."

So elsewhere in the house I rang Diana and asked her if she would like to go the other two days. I'd pay her petrol and she could share my room. She liked the idea. This did mean that she was only likely to see Keith briefly, if at all.

To make an impact at the restaurant I put on Keith's birthday bought flesh coloured dress which, frankly, hardly held anything in. I had no knickers on and no bra, obvious by viewing the slits and my breasts. He approved. I accompanied Keith to the restaurant and casino as his dutiful wife.

I was sat with Keith and everyone was along this restaurant wall or opposite. I thought I was 'daring' in context, but I was out dared. Bare middles in diamonds and circles, dresses with nothing on their shoulders to keep them up, slits as gaps to the armpits with ties across.

In the distance I could not be sure if I had seen Cheryl Mould again. If it was her, she was wearing a fantastically revealing similar fleshy outfit except that it stopped at her thighs. Crumbs, I think it was her. The duckling was definitely a swan. Yojana had this bare middle as a circle around her navel. The back of her translucent white dress showed her bronze brown skin as it plunged to the start of her arse crack. Her breasts moved freely. Gosh, I was fancying *her*.

After the food - Keith and I had scampi and salad and then ice cream - it was over to that nearby Wilkinson's Casino. For all my time growing up and being an adult in Serninsea, I'd not been in the casino before. Keith had, on a few occasions after work.

We went into a sealed at one end side walkway containing two opened steel doors, going through the second one of them into the casino downstairs. The first door, apparently, led into a staircase going up.

Cheryl Mould and Yojana arrived separately from us. Keith and Cheryl never even looked at each other. I even mouthed and received at a distance a brief hello from her. Yojana said a direct hello, and her non-slim body was fantastic. Keith talked shop a lot, with various men, and with Yojana a few times. Missing was Julie Vaughan; I'd so hoped she might be there. I did meet George Petty, Keith's equivalent at Harwich. The way he looked at me - not at my figure but at my eyes -

made me wonder if he had seen what Julie Vaughan had seen.

"I wish you the best for the future," he said.

"Thanks. You too," I replied. I should have asked why he wished this, in particular.

Hmm. Keith and I moved to the roulette wheel where Keith tried a system. If he won, on any 1-1 (like black or red, odd or even), he would bet the lowest one pound chip again. But, if he lost he would double up. Clever, as he started to build quite a pile of low value chips, though he'd dug into eight quid to get this going. Trouble is, he had a string of losing outcomes, and he bet at one point £32 to win again. At this point, Yojana appeared alongside us and watched and randomly played as his pile shrunk and grew again, and then after a run of gains had a long run of losses including a zero that left him at a £64 bet and he lost that too. It was a controlled loss for someone on his earnings. Yojana then tapped him on the shoulder and smiled at me. I had no system and spent just a few pounds, like Yojana did. I stared at her smooth shimmering brown legs that, in their breadth, met at her dress.

What was it with these SMS women? They really were sexy, even the larger ones. So here was me, the naturist, who was still among the most covered over and yet in a flesh-coloured dress. Being at an SMS do was like watching those films giving a warning about attitudes and appearances from a previous era.

When the roulette was done, who should appear but the Reverend Ken Osis, my selected spiritual counsellor. He was not in a clerical collar, and had a sort of cravat around his neck. He gave me a good look, down and up.

He asked me, "How's it going?"

"Keith just lost a lot and me a little."

"Good to see you," he said. "I heard that Margate was a big success for you. I won't talk about work here."

"Yes, I enjoyed it. All about seaside town life." Obviously someone had told him. Later on when I looked around for him, I didn't see him. In fact a number of people (those not at the restaurant) seemed to have disappeared.

At the Blackjack I recognised Peter the magician, and the two identical archaeology women. He was quite focussed and they were watching. Then I thought, 'Who's that he's talking to?' and did a double take. Peter seemed to be informing - yes - a podgier Adam Magellan of something throughout. Also present there were Stephen and Helen McPhail. Hello to them, and I said to her I enjoyed my time with them. I recognised, also the now grey-haired retiring headteacher Kay Parker, a Helen Mirren lookalike now (she had black hair when my headteacher), along with a younger cleaved female saying something about webcams.

All Sir Sanjay Bunker did regarding me was smile. He asked for order and started handing out a few prizes for employees.

He said, "This symbolic measuring rod of precisely thirty centimetres is for Mr Keith Jupitas, a wonderful find for our business only two years ago, and he gets our Administration Prize for this year. I should say that this trained talent has worked efficiently and diligently at times of difficulty in the Compliance Department; in fact it is his work that has demonstrated a leak in confidential information and reason for further delay in our inspections. Keith, please."

"Yes. Thank you Sir Sanjay. This is very much appreciated. However, I cannot deny," said Keith, "that - as you've mentioned it - it's sad that we are not quite letting our hair down here this year."

"Well, we *have* had to delay matters," said Sir Sanjay.

"I fully understand that. I want to thank my link colleagues in Harwich locality and visiting: Geoff Petty, my equivalent, and one of the staff, Ms Cheryl Mould, ah, over there, for her administrative support. I hope your mother here in Serninsea gets better, as well, but it is good to see you here if perhaps for the wrong reasons."

I'd have to visit Catherine Mould.

"Can I thank also Yojana Asthana there for her patience? She checks me *and* the department out during the year, and I'm sure I'll be checking her, and others checking both of us, very soon, regarding all our procedures, just as vigorously as last year. And also my clergy wife..."

'Clergy wife'? The *cheek* of it, I thought.

"...Linda there, for putting up with my stress and comparative misery at this time. Linda, I'm going to have to take advantage of my colleagues here to have a meeting afterwards; Yojana, it is relevant for you as well. But Linda and I will be off on a nice break on Monday, which unfortunately is now *before* and not *after* our difficult work. Still, let's get everything right, shall we, and plug the gaps in our offices, and hope for a good future here in Titansea, and in Harwich, Felixstowe, and Hartlepool, and for our expansion plans."

Sir Sanjay said, "Your coming back earlier is typical of your dedication. The reason you have won this prize and recognition is indeed because of your commitment. As for everyone else - I include Mrs. Jupitas, Mr. Petty, Ms Mould and Ms Asthana - please enjoy the rest of our evening together. It is a mark of your dedication, Keith Jupitas, that you are having even a brief meeting with colleagues after this socialising and before your trip away."

Keith received a round of applause and, well, the upshot was that I went home alone, even as some were arriving.

So what was he doing? Why did these meetings take so long? He'd really had no contact with Cheryl at all; Yojana was around him a number of times, but I expected that.

I went to bed. I'd commandeered Keith's novel, *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Seumasach Nuadh*, about Mary Douglas travelling in time into Jacobite Scotland from the present day. She encountered a redhead bloke, Malcolm MacKenzie or Maol Choluim MacCoinnich. The clans were divided publically and religiously between Presbyterians and Episcopalians. I didn't care for this writing. Diana read this stuff too - a reimagined landscape and community. I was more interested in a real redhead woman, or had been, who learnt Gaelic as a 'folk' language, for whom religion was likely no more than a research interest. The Archbishop of All England had come from the Scottish Episcopalians, once considered Jacobite but in the 1740s they were becoming more loyal institutionally. These were of the Gaelic speaking ethnicity and therefore spoke a good English, not Scots.

On the world wide web, I wondered if there was any more about this artist... University of Somerset. I'd seen these pages. Although Alfia was an unusual name, Shrimpton wasn't. I looked up about the Bishop of Margate. Boring boring boring. I cleared my Internet search history.

It was three hours before Keith surfaced at home and seemed fit for no more than sleep. Three hours seemed to be a pattern: it had been that length before.

I said to Keith, coming into bed, putting his book to one side, "You need to relax and let's at least have a good time away. Stay the whole time, because you

can; don't use Diana coming later as an excuse to leave us."

He said, "I'll see. I'll try and stay, but the Bever Wood Club suits you two nature lovers the best."

"I wish Aardse would come, but he won't; at least you do. Diana suits herself - she always has done."

He said, "I need some sleep. I'm knackered."

"Well, recover tomorrow," I said. "Nothing will happen at SMS before you go back. We'll go on Monday like we planned."

Naturist Centre (Sunday 5th to Wednesday 8th May)

Third Sunday of Easter (Europe Day, too) and Keith accompanied me to the church in the morning as a means to keep his mind off work. Afterwards, we sat by the lake at Caffin Park for a picnic, and he was just fidgety.

"You're coming," I told him.

So, next day, Bank Holiday, also the first day of Ramadan, with last minute packing and a snack done, off we went. The two of us went well beyond the west of Wytham's Saxiclite Naturist Club that I used to attend from childhood. We went into the East Midlands via the East Markham bypass but then avoiding the A1 itself. We arrived at the wooded area familiar to us naturists about the Rivers Meden and Maun, to turn into the Bever Wood Naturist Centre. I was a member and it gave privileges of access (like priority for a room) and policy voting.

Saxiclite was the only nearby club before the family moved to Serninsea. Clite means 'strange people', even weird. Suits us, we thought! Bever Wood started in 1995 after the nearby colliery had closed. There isn't actually a Bever Wood, but there are plenty of trees on the converted farm and beyond. People think Bever Wood has sexual connotations; some called Saxiclite 'Sexyclite'.

Keith had been supportive with my changed naturist club destination, because it would be more anonymous for him too. He had become more uncomfortable about going to Saxiclite when he wanted to seek ordination. I should have moved further out then.

Was he embarrassed? (Part 1) Years back at university he'd asked me about my bald pubic area among naturists. He wondered if it bothered me. Not at all. The fact is that much hair does offer a little bit of divergent modesty when lying in the sun or by the pool when your leg goes up, but the true naturist doesn't care about that. He once said he likes thick pubic hair, but second to that preferred none at all.

Was he embarrassed? (Part 2) There are two reasons to carry a towel. One is Keith's, to cover up for extra modesty. The other is to keep your bottom off surfaces others use. To that extent, if you are a couple, once the gear comes off in the changing room, you should check each other's arse that it is clean. Use two mirrors if you are single. At each club, you undress on entry, and the clothes go in your baggage as you find your room.

As I left my bag in my room and took my towel; I also had my hairbrush in my hand! This hairbrush was surely nearly twenty five years old. It would have no value on a collectables television programme but it was priceless to me.

Day one Monday was for simply lounging around. Many bodies were visibly

older, fatter and lumpier than ours.

I liked to have a shallow dip in the River Meden, and while we were there along came my sixty year old second cousin. Stanley Otter was with thirty-eight year old and very pregnant mix-race Denny Pipe. He met her at the Liberal Democrats. I called him 'uncle' because this podgy man had married thin Paula Lavender, my mother's sister. Paula, another Lib Dem, died last year, 16th August, and now these two were marrying on Denny's 39th birthday on Friday 31st. His wife was younger than his son (David, forty-two in October) and daughter (Karen, thirty-nine, soon forty on 19th. Her large breasts sitting on her bulge and their big dark areolas and nipples were fabulous.

Stanley said Bever Wood offered less gossip. He noted that Saxiclite had more lawns and hedges, whereas this place had trees and the river.

"Meghan's gone into labour," said Denny.

"Who's Meghan?" I asked. "Has she left the Lib Dems?"

"Duchess. Pregnant labour."

"Oh, fairy nuff," I replied.

"Not a royalist," Keith told Denny.

Stanley looked at his phone. "She's had it." My randy uncle then said, "We've delayed our wedding by a month."

It had been scheduled for 28th June, a Friday, then at the Saxiclite club. I could not attend then because this was the week of my retreat immediately prior to ordination; in any case I didn't want to go.

He could be uncle and second cousin because John Lavender was my grandfather, now in old age and unwell. His father, who died in 1997, Kelvin, married Amy Bode, my great grandmother, and I'm a Bode. This is village life down the generations, in east Nottinghamshire.

I said to Keith later, "Something I'll never have - stretch marks like hers"

"She must take up their double bed alone. Never happen in our house."

Both Saxiclite and Bever Wood had indoor squash. Keith and I had a game. It chucked the bits around! It was followed by a great sauna session, with a plunge pool afterwards. And Bever Wood, also like Saxiclite, had an indoor swimming pool - so in we went.

On day two, Tuesday, both of were us lying naked by that glass-roofed indoor pool, both on our fronts (I was in sympathy with him). I was still reading, as much as I could be bothered, the first book of *The Jacobite Gap Years* again. I thought that perhaps Keith might try a timeslip method as a way to hide his affair.

Suddenly he said, "I bet there aren't many other clergy here, like you."

Book raised, I rolled a bit and faced him, my breasts both hanging down in the same direction. "Wrong, so wrong. You'd be surprised just how many there are. I know of them in some other clubs and I'll learn who's here. You don't know the scene like I do, and if you'd have been ordained you'd have found out. Slowly."

"Wouldn't you Adam and Eve it?" he said, as a joke. "Clergy as naturists."

"It's another idealism," said I, trying to be realistic and serious.

"Your suffragan bishop knew that you were and are a naturist."

"Yes. They have this ongoing report on us. I don't like that. It is all in there."

"That's interesting. How do you know that?"

"I can't really say."

"Well, you saw a new confessor. Ken Osis does a number. He's a tosser. He'll

have let you see there is a report. I bet Louise Deimos showed you nothing."

"You seem well informed," I said.

Keith added: "Something else. When that team publishes the inefficiency report into the whole diocese, you know, the central authorities will take the whole circus apart."

"You delude yourself. There is no central authority to take it apart. The Archbishop of All England doesn't have that sort of power."

"He does: by using moral authority: demanding resignations, calling for the office to be reformed root and branch."

"Moral authority is easily ignored in the Church," I said, then realising that this was a devastating statement.

"The latest diocesan, Derek the cleric, is another complete duffer, and the two under him only parade comparative efficiency. They just appear to be better. This Barman chap is as ridiculous as the rest. I tell you what," he went on, "since I've been with SMS I've learnt what proper management is about, and they wouldn't last our internal checking for one second."

I said, "Maybe. There is management theory in the Church. Systemic authority, like a dispersed form of expertise, away from Weber's depressing capitalist bureaucracy, is supposed to be consistent with Saint Paul and the diversity of the organism. John Barman represents systemic authority."

"What claptrap," Keith said. "Basic stuff at best. If you want to do management theory then do it properly and not some sociological gloss dressed up into theology. Charismatic, then traditional, then bureaucratic, ooh: better make it systemic, ooh: empower the workers with the human relations... I do know all this stuff. Keep it in the college."

I reverted to the hairbrush and then lay on my back, breasts to each side. After some silence, I said, "It's a form of thinking. Human relations is too secular or uber-liberal."

Silence resumed.

I thought I saw my sixth form tutor, Mr. Grosvenor. Was it? He looked at me, I think.

"Show me that book," Keith said.

"*The Jacobite Gap Years: An Seumasach Nuadh*, Gabrijela Daffron. It was your present - ha ha."

"Oh God, this one, Cheryl is nuts about this. She has all three books, several of each one."

"Cheryl?"

"Cheryl Mould at Harwich. You saw her among the crowd at the restaurant, and mentioned. She parades them around the office in Harwich. In a dream world, she is. This is an old copy: the American one bugged up some of the geography and was replaced."

"So she has three books that come in two variations?"

"No: it's a series. The middle book may as well be two."

"You seem to have gone into this in some detail."

"The woman is in a dream world: contrasting doing tedious admin every day with wishing she was under some Scotsman's kilt in the dangerous romantic past. They swoon over this Malcolm MacKenzie."

"Diana could be the same," I said. But I realised that this never happened in

the office. All this had happened *in Cheryl's house*. Far from hiding or disguising the affair, *The Jacobite Gap Years* was revealing it. And then I thought again of the Norfolk woman who spoke in that language to the Archbishop. "Well, I've read chunks but I won't read it further," I said. "It will allow me to respond to Diana when she comes."

Monday night we had been perhaps tired, and this second night I wanted sex but Keith was reluctant. And why, I wondered, was he so reluctant, especially after viewing nudity all day? Perhaps that was it - nudity all day had dulled his senses. Even a before-bed session with a kettle-weight and my bum in his eyes, and ten minutes pushing these dildo-like tools into my vagina, did nothing to excite him. Of course I might have tempted him with my inner arse, as once he was, but now my concern was repairing the long term consequence of his actions. Nevertheless, he did his duty for his wife. He fucked me.

He did have a general explanation for his dullness, on Wednesday evening: "I've been trying to relax, but we have just so much to do when back at work. It's all the monitoring. What if we find our own dishonesty as a business? We check the honesty of measurements all year, and Yojana checks that no one or thing has corrupted us - or made us less inefficient. But what if we are the dishonest corrupted ones? With the leak, I'm not sure that our own internal walls of security hold up. And then there is the penetration testing."

"That could be pleasurable," I said.

"It means *hacking* not fucking: all the data is on computers and so we employ outside hackers to break in and then tell us how they got through - but they don't discuss their own trade secrets - and then tell us what to do about it. So it's like the whole atmosphere turns," he said. "The social we've just had was supposed to act as a release afterwards."

"Use penetration software," I said, thinking of Margate.

"Some do," he said, not getting the joke (obviously).

"But you know they are monitoring you and the Independent Unit," I asserted. "Like the inspectors come to schools and the teachers put on much better lessons."

"Interdependent. There are traps. We get documents from senior management that could be false, leave trails and give ways in. And hackers are clever."

"A fire alarm going off in a fire drill," I said. "Surely."

"Yes, Shirley, it's like fire drills," he said. "Walk don't run. Along with many other jumps and hoops. And don't forget this testing is followed not so long after by a business conference: *Seminsea Tomorrow*. So we all have to be as one again, if any of us fall out."

"Colin might be speaking in that," I said. "Or perhaps me, after Margate."

"Or your suffragan bishop."

"The organisers have asked for a talk on *Attracting Ethical Business*."

"Margate all over again for you," he suggested.

"If I'm asked to do it. Different emphasis."

"I'm sure," he said. "Invite Jonathan Eyre."

I said nothing.

In the end we went back to our room and on to the dining hall, opening a door because of some noise inside - music and laughter. A bunch of teenagers were bent over and back showing arses, willies and tits over a game of Twister. We continued.

After dinner and back at our room I told Keith to strengthen his tongue contact on my clitoris. Remembering Margate, I fancied some male insertion oral sex. After all, I'd perfected the technique with Keith himself, but the fact that I'd even stopped drooling meant some soreness in my throat with Jonathan before I generated necessary gunge.

I didn't tell Keith to be rougher than usual, but he was. So I repeated this sort of lube generation while Keith got faster and more furious. Jumping back my head and shoulders to remove his erection, I said, "Oy, slow down! Don't be so rough. I don't know why you are acting like this."

He surprised me by then saying, "I do like bald pubes. Sometimes you think I don't. I like to see clarity; nothing is hidden; they are the truth."

His mind really was on his job. His violence to my throat must have been his frustration at work.

Yet I knew that all the time he was being dishonest. Mouldy was very hairy at school, in the showers; she'd be deep to her cervix too. Keith would have to adapt to her as he had perfected a shallow technique into my rabbit hole.

His comment about Cheryl's fantasy world in novels was the nearest he came in giving his affair away.

It was time to sleep. Both laid in bed he said, "I bet this place is one big knocking shop, including among those teenagers."

So I replied, "We are cultured bonobos."

"Subject title for a sermon," he suggested, unhelpfully.

"I was a good girl for too long. As you well know, when playing Twister at Saxiclite, I had reason not to fuck afterwards. Bodies so accessible, but I knew that I was different."

"You hid yourself."

"Yes. Naturists know the plumbing so I didn't open the tap."

Change the Accompaniment (Thursday to Saturday 11th May)

Uncle Stan and fiancé Denny had left early Thursday. Keith's break had come to its end too.

We were inside the reception area cloakroom on Thursday mid-morning, and he was about to drop the towel and resume textiles after these three nights away. And here was Diana, facing us, having already become as naked as the day, and lovely and hairy like I imagined Mouldy, underarms somewhat too (for a change - was this deliberate?), and he stared at her body. She stared at him too and he removed his towel from his front to his side. She ran her hand down her stomach, and he noticed this. She seemed momentarily distressed as he dressed and picked up his luggage.

Diana and I went with him out of the reception area through the main doors and outside. This area and the car park was the only place where clothes on were permitted as policy.

He made a remark. He said to me, "You're coming and going a lot lately. Margate, now here. Holiday, holiday..."

"It was a conference. You go to Harwich."

"Work! Coming up."

"Paul McCartney," I said.

"What?"

We clothesless two waved him off as he drove home.

I asked Diana, "Is something the matter?"

"Nothing. I was thinking about something else in the car. Come on. Let's go in."

"Nothing to do with Keith? Me? Aardse?"

"You know when you're driving and you suddenly ask, 'How did I get here?'"

"Something you can share?"

"Day dreaming."

So like a substitution at football, Diana joined me under the glass roof for swimming, and then played tennis (including doubles with others) outside, and had a shallow dip with me in the River Maun, and a man tried to teach us (indoor) chess to no lasting effect. Also, she wanted to learn how to do pivot tables in spreadsheets. Keith could have shown her but I sat alongside her unable to get it, bums on towels on seats, as you also do when naked in front of a computer. So I played screen card games. A nice chap came along and helped her with formulas in cells, whose wotsit at mouth level was smaller than a computer mouse.

Then, all of a sudden, with him gone, she said, "You didn't mention about going to Margate. You went to Margate."

"Oh, it was a conference. Like I told Patricia."

"There's only one reason not to mention things, and that's to hide them."

"Well I did mention Margate, to Patricia. She could have told you. Diana."

"She did."

"I didn't mention it because, frankly, one boring speech by me, a few table discussions, tedious speeches. It was nothing to remember even soon afterwards. I simply forgot to mention it. Keith went to Harwich, I went to Margate. He had the more *interesting* time."

"Quite. Didn't you take revenge?"

"Against whom, exactly?"

My screen went blank.

"With whom," she said. "We know against whom, it's *with* whom, in a bedroom, using your broom. Oh you don't have a brush."

Her screen went blank.

I said, "Shut up! I'm not a witch. I don't operate like that; I'd have to have found someone - to take revenge."

"You know what conferences are like."

"Yes. Boring."

"Hotel was it?"

"Yes. One where the bloody lift broke down. That's how crap the hotel was. Robert Court."

"Robert caught what?"

"Look it up."

"You could have given Keith a lift to Harwich."

"I went by train. The suffragan bishop had bought the train tickets. He was going to go; I went instead. So I was the stand-in."

"He'll approve of *you*."

"He has said as much. Yes. So I forgot to mention it. All right?"

"I believe you. Many wouldn't."

"Good. I'm concerned though about what's really going on with Keith. So he went to Harwich, and earlier than necessary."

"What Patricia says," she said, "is that eventually they give it away."

And, here, later, was something different. Diana was now in my rented room and double bed. Diana's body was highly desirable, but I'd seen it often.

However, I was horny and thinking of Cheryl. Perhaps I did want some further sort of retribution against Keith. But via Diana, my mate?

I thought I'd try the kettle-weight approach on my knees so that she got a really good view of all of my bum. Just to see. Then I used the dilators, sat on the carpet.

Diana was reading a paperback. Looking at me being busy, she asked, "Why do you have a set of smaller to larger dildos and why are you doing this now?"

"They are dilators. I use them ten minutes a day, or supposed so."

"Why?"

"Because I am one of those unfortunate women with a shallow vagina."

"I've known you a very long time and that's the first time you have told me."

"I probably have, you know."

"Not that I remember. Not so I would remember. So it is not sexual pleasure, then?"

"No. It is physical pushing."

"Have you got vaginismus?"

"No."

"Do you have difficulty inserting a tampon? Come to think of it, I have never heard you mention periods; you've never had one when we meet at Patricia's. You know that I have, walking in or out with the string hanging down."

"I'm just shallow, small - okay?"

"You are a tall woman. You've got big hands, big feet, strong legs, big breasts, but a shallow vagina with a wopping clit?"

"You missed out my narrow hips and arse."

"A bloke with big feet has a big cock."

"I haven't got a big cock and my clitoris should be the opposite."

"Should it?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"It goes with the collection."

"I don't know what that means. So, if you had a baby, and you haven't at 40, love, it would be stuck in there? It's a Julius Caesar or nothing?"

"Don't be silly. Can we get off the subject?"

She said, "I know it doesn't need saying, but I am here sleeping alongside you, not with you. For me, to have sex is like my husband grasping my ankles, to put them as close to my ears as he can, and putting that really angry force into me as far as it will go. Deep deep. *Him*, you see. *Him*."

"Good for you, Diana. You're so fortunate."

"Sorry, I didn't mean it that way. But I didn't know. What I mean is I like a bloke, Linda, to give me one. Here's the difference. You giving me a hefty kiss - which you will not - is only to slobber all over my mouth, but Aardse can stick his

dripping tongue down my throat and it is good."

"But in the past I've laid down with you on a bed and we've both masturbated. It wasn't that long ago - hardly - when you warned me about a woman with a dog and gave me a kiss."

"You misinterpreted it, then. We masturbated together as teenagers and again when we were twenty-one. I remember it and enjoyed it. And there's an interesting thing about those occasions: I wanked me off, and you wanked you off. We could because we were proper friends, really good friends, and we are now. So you masturbate yourself with pleasure. Especially with pleasure."

"Give it a rest, Diana. I'm quite safe. I won't slobber all over you. I've a few minutes of this regular dilating left."

"What's come over you all of a sudden? We meet at Patricia's and strip off, but you don't go all funny then. When I have sex, I end up losing a lot of liquid over the place, like sometimes loads; and I can't control myself when I orgasm, because a certain Aardse is like his name and is doing me rotten."

"Hang on a minute," I said, "You're saying all this deliberately."

"You are masturbating yourself. Only trying to help in a 'keep off' kind of way."

"Like I said, I am pushing not masturbating."

"Liar."

"Fuck off, Diana. I've done this ever since I was fifteen." I changed the subject. "Talking of 'back then', I'm also thinking about investigating Keith by going to Adam Magellan's. I wonder if he'll recognise me?"

"Ugh."

"Why 'ugh'?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

Diana said, "You and Jenny Masters had some fun with him, you said long after. So imagine him fucking you, if that helps with what you're doing."

"You asked for it. I'm going to have a wank." I found Keith's present of a rabbit vibrator and got on to the bed. Now she had something to look at. A thought struck me as I masturbated: had this vibrator come from Cheryl? It was second hand! Soon I was jerking about a bit, all while Diana read her book alongside me.

She said, "Finished. A bit like you should have. Have you got any book?"

"*The Jacobite Gap Years*."

"I could tell you *all* about it."

"Keith told me Mouldy reads it. He had many details to tell about it. She takes it to the office."

"Reads it in bed more like," Diana said. "I discuss the books and the television series, online; I have a good friend called Glenda McKay who knows them all inside out."

"I thought she was in Emmerdale."

"Long ago. Share's that actor's name."

"I'm getting into bed now. I've had enough agitating down there."

"Linda," she now said, "I just want to add that you do have a lovely slim and revealing bottom."

Oh, what a bitch. As I stood she leaned across and kissed me on my right bottom cheek. As I turned she put her index finger up in case I had the wrong idea.

She said, "I'm pleased you weren't imagining the creep who comes into

Serninsea."

"Who?"

"Your bishop bloke."

"Hardly," I said.

She sniggered some more. I wanted to snigger with her, but could not. I could have done with some cuddling body to body, lacking an orgasm. But I decided to behave and slept alongside my pal.

Narrator: Keith *Arrive at Hartlepool* (Thursday 10th May)

"What the fuck is going on?" I asked Charles Whyne, the Compliance Manager at Hartlepool (my equivalent there) late Thursday.

His reply was that in his office they had just completed a "quiet" full Information Communications Technology upgrade. He said that as delays went on, the upgrade was able to fit in. The system was now, also, much more secure.

"Keep up, Keith, Felixstowe is just about to do the same. We've been the test-bed."

I said I did not know this, and Charles Petty had not ordered this upgrade in Harwich. But he would do so, I was told, and the one place that was not upgrading was Serninsea.

"Last time I met Sir Sanjay he never even mentioned this."

"Work it out," this Charles said.

I thus tried to contact the bosses located in Harwich, but they were all incommunicado because of the imminence of the annual inspections stress testing. Charles told me that if the known leak was from Felixstowe the new system would plug it.

Felixstowe leaking was partly a function of size: all events were more likely to appear at Felixstowe. Of course we had this outside firm that was going to hack away to get to the documents and codes.

I confirmed, "There's a leak in Serninsea. Somehow."

"Serninsea is deemed unreliable. Work it out."

So I received a prize at the front and was stabbed in the back. Serninsea was never going to be as efficient as well as lacking the work.

Charles Whyne was not in the Hereteu Group under the Confraternity, but within Hartlepool two of SMS were. One was Rory Jackson, it's Interdependent Inspection Unit Manager, and another was his deputy Philip Shrimpton. (Yojana did not have a deputy, there was one in Harwich and two deputies in Felixstowe.) So I met these two, and they said as far as they could tell SMS had not decided to close Serninsea. The problem was that this came under commercial confidentiality and so the Hereteu Group had no privilege. They were also doing *the Worshipful Company of Hasland Theatrical Players*, on the model of Serninsea. Hereteu was too weird a name to use, so they chose Hasland. A complication was that it did not have its 'plays' in a deceased theatre and there was in fact an amateur dramatics group in Hartlepool. What suited Serninsea might not suit elsewhere as well.

Philip Shrimpton was to look first hand at operations in Titansea. I said he might be asked to chat up my wife. We needed to see, if possible, whether Jonathan

Eyre was a one-off regarding her sudden openness to other sexual relationships.

Meanwhile, what I did not realise was that selected managers of Electronic Keys Limited were going to come into the Confraternity, meaning up and coming initiations.

I'd never intended to go up to Hartlepool at all. What happened was I got in my car and set off for home, and immediately put my messages on through the car speakers. The first one was an instruction to go to Hartlepool and make sure they were singing from the same hymn sheet as Serninsea and Harwich; Yojana had gone to Felixstowe and Harwich. So, rather than go on, on the circuitous route out, I stopped the car, turned it around, and took the shorter exit, on to the faster and straighter northern route to the A1. I didn't bother to phone Linda because I thought she was in Diana's good hands, and she didn't phone me either.

Feeling somewhat uninformed up north, I met the Reverend Fatima and the Reverend Jenny World at Fatima's on Thursday evening.

I stayed at the vicarage. Long term curate Jenny did not live in the curate's house but with Fatima Tamuuz, her second vicar. Her first curacy was under Judith Short in Marske-by-the-Sea, thirteen years back, lasting three years. Jenny was not acting as a mother to Fatima's briefly glimpsed five year old daughter, Akemi. Fatima was Akemi's only mother. Jenny was treated almost like a daughter herself, but one that Fatima had sex with very frequently. As for the father of her daughter, Fatima refused to tell anyone who he was, but Elizabeth did know, and Jenny did, and so did I.

Fatima had wanted a child. She was not interested in men, but she was interested in doing her duty through initiating men. She had become what I wanted for Linda. Sex with Philip Shrimpton wasn't that frequent under the Confraternity but she became pregnant by him, with his agreement, subject to his non-involvement afterwards.

The only question first night was whether I'd have my own room or squeeze in with them. I told them not to be silly, and I squeezed in with them. And very nice they were too. Fatima got out several times to attend to Akemi in the next room. Jenny just got out for the toilet. Jenny received both my sexual attention and Fatima's, but Fatima did not want mine. Doing her duty did not mean having intercourse with me, but Jenny did.

Fatima, 50, subscribed to our view that the orgasm was a supreme sign from the Kingdom of God. This is what Jenny provided for Fatima and received back regularly. Jenny was something of a puzzle to me. After Linda and Adam Magellan she tried a relationship with Adam alone; I met her intimately, twice getting her knickers off, and then she moved away and signed on to the evangelical, charismatic and moralistic dotted line. She became ordained, but had a series of mental events, let's just say, declared that she loved sex, and now seemed utterly ordinary in daily expression but still (I was told) evangelical in her preaching.

Narrator: Linda *Diana Wakes With Linda* (Friday 10th May)

Friday morning, same place, I was sat upright, and as Diana woke she asked me what was the matter.

"I keep having terrible dreams."
"It looks like you've been crying."
"A bit. It was terrible."
"Tell me about it. Can you tell me about it? I didn't involve me, I hope."
"It was so realistic. You were stood at the foot of the bed holding a lobster and a crab."
"A what and a what? As in food or alive?"
"They were alive."
"What was I doing with them?"
"I thought I was fully pregnant, with a huge belly, and you were telling me that the lobster had to live in my vagina and the crab in my mouth." Diana let out her breath preventing laughter. I insisted that it was not funny.
"You *do* report some dreams. Was that it? Are you pregnant?"
"No I am not. You'd taken the lobster from the vagina of this redhead, and the crab from her mouth, so that she could be fucked by the Bishop of Margate."
"Here we go."
"Both lobster and crab came from Scotland."
"Of course," Diana said. "Where else?"
"I said to you that the lobster cannot fit in my vagina and my mouth blocked would take away the only chance I could have of a really good fucking - down my throat."
"Ugh. I mean, talk about lost opportunities."
"You said that the lobster was designed to get inside me and make a home there, and when it came out later I would have a full-sized vagina, with a proper cervix and everything. Then I could be fucked properly. And as for the crab in my mouth, you said it would be for my own good."
"Have you got a problem cervix, Linda?"
"Forget it."
"You've never told me, Linda."
"*I do not have a problem cervix.*"
"All right! Go on. Did I place the crab in your mouth, the lobster in...?"
"First you said I wasn't pregnant. You said it was all air, and you would let it out and then place the lobster inside me. So you went behind me and put your fist in my arse."
"Bloody hell."
"You manipulated my sphincter, and this huge continuous fart went out of my backside..."
She instantly howled with high-pitched laughter.
"You got out of the way. My stomach flattened."
"Oh, gawd. Linda, the fart of the century? This is horrific! What's going on? It's also very funny."
"I protested to you: Jonathan was waiting and the lobster and the crab were taking away my chance to be fucked again by Jonathan."
"Jonathan?"
"The Bishop of Margate."
"You imagined..."
I shook my head slightly.
"Shit, Linda... Linda? Did the Bishop of Margate *fuck* you, Linda?"

To try and deflect her if too late I said, "No, you put the lobster in my cunt and the crab in my gob."

"In real life. Linda. *Linda*?"

I was silent. She turned and stared at my face, close up.

"*Linda*?"

"You tell *no one*."

"Jesus."

"Not quite. Diana, I was bowled over by him. He fucked me in the throat, Diana. I've never had anything like it."

"You once said long ago about Keith..."

"Quite. I don't gag up, Diana; I put my head forward, my mouth is wide, my tongue out..."

"Wow. The Bishop of *Margate*."

"He fucked me so hard, Diana. I was his object. I can't explain it."

"Did he hurt you?"

"I learnt it with Keith. First, I'd have gob all over the place. I perfected the technique, and I now do it nearly dry. So in Margate my throat went red and my voice somewhat croaky. I produced some gob to help. I wanted him, like all the time."

"And you are on about Keith having an affair?"

"It was after I found out. But I am going to investigate properly. Look, I'm cold, sweaty and you could hug me."

"I could. Who was the woman? You saw her naked?"

"No. I imagined her like that. She was attractive."

"So nothing happened with her?"

"She saw me naked."

"Oh my, you don't do things by halves. Or it seems you do: half of him, half of her."

"Nothing happened with her. She's an artist and from Norfolk and speaks Scottish Gaelic."

Diana was laughing again. "In the dream."

"No, she spoke Gaelic with that Archbishop."

"Oh, that Scots academic who no one can understand. And not because of his accent."

"Yes."

"And she had a Norfolk accent with Scots Gaelic? In reality?"

"Yes."

"*He* didn't fuck her, then."

"I think the Bishop of Margate did."

"He gets around. Real and not a dream?"

"Diana. In the dream you put the lobster in my vagina and the crab in my mouth. When I woke up my mouth was very dry. It was terrifying."

"I'll give you a hug. But if this is cock and bull to get a hug off me... Linda, you are crying."

"You just don't understand! I am so frustrated with everything - with everything."

Diana hugged me. She was lovely. I know she found so much of it so funny, but she became serious when she realised that I was really in distress.

After a while hugging she said, "Linda. I think you should take a pregnancy

test."

"I am not pregnant. I am definitely not pregnant. I've told you before, I cannot get pregnant."

"Linda: there is: 'I cannot get pregnant from what I have done,' and: 'I cannot get pregnant.' There is a difference."

"I cannot get pregnant."

She held on to me, both on the bed, and she ran her hand down my back with its cold sweat. From the side she kissed me on my mouth. She was very intimate and I let her be so.

Eventually I got up and had a shower. She had one just after me.

For the the day I just enjoyed her company. She could see that I was upset about Keith, and I was speculating about the length of his affair. Was it recent, perhaps a full two years, or as many as six?

Meanwhile, the evenly brown busty Manager at reception asked if one of us could cover for an hour while she went off to eat and pause, and seeing as there were two of us as members, one of us might review the CCTV and erase the recordings unless there was anything we'd deemed suspicious.

There were six squares for six cameras on the screen, and so Diana did this technical stuff while I dealt with the members or tried to answer enquiries.

"There he goes," said Diana. "That's Keith leaving... and down the road. Oh, and here he comes the other way up the road."

"What?"

"He's changed direction. His number plate. His face."

"Yeah. He started by heading for the Sibley junction with the A1 - the way we came - and changed to the other way east, the B road on to Gamston and the A1 further north."

Diana asked, "Why would he do that? Not for west or south."

"It's a puzzle. Perhaps this is what he does," I suggested. "He leaves false trails, leaves false information."

"There's hardly any difference," Diana said. "He'd go north via Gamston, but that's not for Harwich and Cheryl."

We closed the map. Diana told the Manager, Judi, back at reception, that the recordings could be erased.

So we had a day of lolloping about, as various east of England locals might say.

Come bedtime, I wanted sex but I didn't dare ask.

Diana noted I was using the dilators that night with a large amount of vigour. "Go easy," she said.

"You could help by doing it for me."

"No thanks," Diana said. "I can't see what benefit I'd bring."

Friday night was our last.

Narrator: Keith *Shocking Scenes in Hartlepool* (Friday 10th May)

I had enough knowledge to look in at Hartlepool's Interdependent Inspection Unit, on Friday, so this did involve some telephone calls and messages with Yojana. But

Charles Whyhne said I should concentrate on the operational administration because Yojana would come north to co-ordinate matters her side of the wall before she went talent scouting in South Wales (with Liz Huett) for expansion opportunities. Outside the building I met Rory Jackson, who vaped, and Philip Shrimpton, who did not.

Rory said to me, through his vapour, "Come on mate, Serninsea is less and less necessary and economically very marginal - its expertise has spread about."

"It was the original."

"Counts for nothing."

"It's barely profitable, I agree, but hasn't yet made a loss."

Philip said, "Doesn't have comparative advantage - on anything."

I said to them, "Yojana is excited about going to South Wales. One bloke, two women, all bishops. Who'd have thought it?"

I had an early finish because I'd done the SMS work. Indeed, Rory, thirty-eight, and Philip, forty-three, came over with others to the vicarage to see Bishop Elizabeth and a Buddhist woman called Anong. Elizabeth had discovered her through Interfaith work. Other Hereteu folk present were Tony Pierce, sixty-two, Janet Pierce, twenty (Tony's granddaughter), Bettina Wharfedale, fifty-seven, Kerry Wharfedale, fifty-five (Betty's sister), Michael Crozier, seventy, Ian Alcock, forty-nine, and Frances Alcock, forty-five. Also with us briefly was a woman called Sarah Farhadi, thirty-two, who took Akemi to her house for the evening and night.

Elizabeth introduced Anong who wore an orange wrap-around robe and sandals. Her head was shaven and she was thin and boney. She was from a self-started Buddhist group in Middlesbrough, with links into Thailand, and they were called the Danadeha Group. The group name meant 'Giving of the Body'. Anong said to us that her name meant Beautiful Woman. True, if she ate something.

Anong was to give us a talk; the talk with paper copies to leave behind at the vicarage; it would be sent electronically and encrypted to Christine Vine for theological scrutiny.

In our company, Anong declared that she would wear her gown open. So she did, with her rib cage very obvious, and she also removed her sandals. Elizabeth laid down her own mobile phone nearby, and switched something on.

We sat on the floor in a semi-circle and Anong was part of the semi-circle. So the bishop occupied the larger gap we all faced. Anong stood up and read her paper and, as the robe opened, we could see some scars as if from whip marks as well as her very obvious pubic bone, her slit towards an almond shape.

"Our sect name means that we gift our bodies for greater merit. We offer merit to sentient beings, deities, devas, and even ghosts. Ghosts? Well, these may haunt us, yet may, through merit, become our guardians. Buddhist views on the body range from almost attitudes of self-destruction to a respectful stance that our bodies are transitory. Generating a sense of the loathsomeness of the body is a powerful method for countering attachment to sensual pleasures, whether through activity or pride as generated through appearances. Very often the female body is seen as foul in Buddhism, and equating the female body as the equivalent of shit is an attempt to reduce sexual desire. The problem with this is that many get off on shit. The foul and disgusting is itself a form of sexual pleasure, for a few.

"By this argument, sexual pleasure is a trap, to turn us into slaves. It never

brings true joy or satisfaction; instead it causes conflict, inflames the mind, and introduces bad company. In other words, it is no road to nirvana; it is stuck in samsara. Sexual pleasure is indeed the prime example of craving for existence. Buddha is supposed to have said that, 'It would be better that your penis be stuck into the mouth of a poisonous snake than into a woman's vagina. It would be better that your penis be stuck into a pit of burning embers, blazing and glowing, than into a woman's vagina.' He did not say whether the vagina is better off, as far as we know.

"However, we have the whole Tantric tradition, or perhaps traditions. Most Tibetans surely believe that Tantric texts should be pursued metaphorically rather than physically, within rituals and using meditative visualisations. But then the Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism promotes sexual yoga as physical practice to attain Buddhahood in one lifetime: either during it or by death, or without it, as in the case of the founder Tsongkhapa, a philosopher of the logic of negation. The fourteenth Dalai Lama of the Gelug sect stated that the practice should be limited to visualisation. The Nyingma sect cuts down the sex on the basis that it is not necessary to achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime.

"But if sex is normal and healthy, as here your group thinks, then Tibetan Tantric Buddhism offers techniques for bringing mindfulness and practice to sex and some Zen masters say that sex can become skillful.

"What of love? As I understand it from Elizabeth your bishop, your fellowship is aiming to achieve a boundariless theosexual love through the expression of intimacy and mutual support. You are to love each other and express it sexually, and if you can achieve this without limit you will be closest to the Kingdom of Heaven. You have yet to convince your fellow Western Christians, and they are in such a condition of Augustinian Christian negativity that you must develop your vanguard group in secrecy.

"So you must see love, all the loves, as substantive and permanent, and flowing into your eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

"But, for us, love like this is transitory, and joy emerges in a cool manner uncraved. Libido then is not to be pursued for pure pleasure, where guilt and excess reign, but in a manner to be given up. We should not teach that celibacy is pure and thus sex is impure and a source of shame. But nor should we indulge in sex. This middle way is dharmasexual.

"It's all about how we deal with a level of energetic experience. It requires concentration, focus, an asana like experience. That happens during a continual flow of various sensations, and losses of liquid, so demands to be skillful. The meditation on the body, through the body, brings questions of the now in feeling, experiencing and change.

"How then do we deal with disenchantment with the body, its coming death, and the body as disregarded and even disgusting? We act through dharmasexual practices.

"Just some history, before I get to the practices. We have been around for about fifty years as a Buddhist Group. Over ten years ago we had a division between those focussed on the practices and doing more of them, to then consider their implications, and those focussed on the processes first with practices that then relate. The latter were Buddhist in analysis and outcome, but the former wanted breadth and variety, and did attach to the New Age. There are a number of groups now up and down the country in the 'practice first' camp that have long since ceased

to be Buddhist. Some are Tantric by name, some are motherly, some are called virginal to show sacrificial ritual involved in having sex. The groups are predominantly female, but a few are mixed. They have inherited our secrecy, but, in my view - our view - they are confused. Like we do, they pray for ourselves, our friends, our enemies, and the world. They may focus more on the world, however. Like we do, they study.

"They lack analysis.

"I come now to the most difficult part perhaps for you to understand, and why I think these other groups broke away and moderated themselves. We combine loathsomeness with disgust and the fact that the body must work through sensations that are indeed sexually interpreted."

She thus ended her written speech. She said that there may be no one present who wanted to carry out a practice with her. And that would be good. We always should do what we can use, and do not do what we cannot. She was going to make her body available.

It could be whipped and it could be caned but perhaps not this day. Such action can generate violent feelings without preparation of disinterest in the other's injuries.

However, her group more often than not carried flowing based rituals involving human fluid and waste. The smell, the disgust, the faecal matter in hair and crevices, did meet her two-sided criteria of both disgust and sensation that she had described. Vomit stinks and affects the giver and receiver reciprocally.

"What about dogs?" I asked.

"What about them?"

"Used sexually."

"Ah," she said. "Sex involves the knowing mind. It is reciprocal. The dog does lick afterwards, as it is cleaning up, but otherwise it must have been trained. For example, if a dog vomits then what is that?"

"I'm thinking of the dog that licks a pubic area," I said.

"It is not the same as another man or woman doing this, in full mindfulness."

"I was told about a woman who'd said to her dog, 'Not yet,' when it made a move towards her crotch."

"There may be a relationship of sorts there but it doesn't serve our purposes."

"But it involves disgust, for some," I added.

"Not for the dog. Clearly. It would amount to no more than exploitation for our purposes. The principle of compassion to sentient beings should operate."

"I'm just curious," I said.

"Well, curiosity is an example of samsara and you should drop it."

She then asked whether any of the women were menstruating. Fatima was.

"We can use such natural, flowing, life-liquid."

Anong then said that urinating emphasises the transitory: that life's medium, water, is yet made sterile with a chemical deposit after evaporation.

Many relationship partners experience the other one urinating, she said, listening with the bathroom door open or sharing the same space, or perhaps watching over a partner peeing by a roadside. However, they often do not go on to do it over each other. This was her practice with her group.

So she would now sit for five minutes whilst we discussed what we might and

might not do, and what we would like to see.

Elizabeth said, "Thank you very much. Anong is being reserved and respectful. What I will do I have done with Anong before. You may be shocked. I mean shit. Please discuss."

Rory Jackson said he would like to pee on Elizabeth. His work deputy Philip Shrimpton then said he would on Anong, but it would be fierce at the moment.

"Doesn't matter," said Anong.

Tony Pierce said that he'd had a shit but wanted to see one.

Betty Wharfedale said she'd find it a practice too far.

Liz said, "People are free to walk out."

I said that my wife Linda and I often peed in the same space, but we only ever splashed each other accidentally. Linda's father was often just letting it out in the open air as he needed.

Jenny said that late in their school career Linda and she would talk while one of them and maybe then the other sat on the loo and peed. It meant nothing.

Young Janet Pierce said she fancied having the opportunity of being peed on. Her grandfather could do it if he wanted. He then said she was his favourite.

Kerry Wharfedale said that any new experiences would be in private first.

Jenny World then said she could make herself sick easily, and would vomit. Fatima then told her she would not do so, not at all.

No one else wanted to vomit. Frances Alcock said vomiting makes people feel lousy.

The Buddhist Anong said, "I expect fucking. Just do it. Enter me. Produce sperm for me. I will produce a mixed liquid."

Thus it was that we would experience a night a kind of depravity in the bathroom. Everyone but Anong going upstairs naked. Anong hung her robe on the bathroom door inside. She was so boney!

Bishop Tess insisted we start with extremity. She lay on the bathroom floor and Anong squatted over her face. We looked closely as she said, "Look. My anus stretching out shows the beauty of flower petals."

At this point sisters Betty Wharfedale and Kerry Wharfedale decided to leave, and, seeing what was to come out, so did I. Also, I felt negative after disagreeing over dogs.

So we missed what happened but we could hear it. Betty and Kerry leaned against the wall in the hallway and so I was entering them alternately. Much more fun.

We could hear groans and ughs. Someone threw up. It seemed to be two females involved.

While enjoying the fucking we could hear sprays of a kind and I doubt it was the taps or shower hose.

There was the sound of orgasms, female and male.

Anong said something, possibly in Sanskrit.

Elizabeth praised God.

Very soon afterwards the skinny and smeared Buddhist opened the bathroom door with her robe on but open, went down the stairs, put on her sandals, and left. She hadn't even said a simple goodbye to anyone.

I could hear the shower hose going now, but first out were Fatima and Jenny.

"We'll clean it up properly tomorrow."

Bishop Liz came out, with still some evidence still of what Anong did on her chest. When I pointed at it (with my penis in Kerry) Liz went back into the bathroom.

Fatima came out with blood having run down her legs.

I was deep up into Bettina when I asked, "Did Anong run off?"

"No. She'll clean up when home."

Liz came out again when I was into Kerry . I asked, "Has Anong taken offence?"

"No," said Liz. "She recognised the path of the Dharma and I then praised God. This has been an interfaith meeting. Anyway, you three chickened out?"

We vertical three said in near unison, "No!"

I then said my wife had spent our sexual life making sure I could penetrate her anus deeply and cleanly and not that.

"Exactly," said Kerry, as I withdrew to re-enter Betty.

I asked, "What will Christine think?"

Elizabeth said that the talk had been recorded, and that she would send the sound file to Christine with the text, and she would also speak to Terry and Jonathan.

I came inside Bettina Wharfedale and brought both women to their orgasms, using my tongue from below. We three praised God.

Before we dispersed, a cleaned-up Liz told everyone that this woman, Anong, and those like her, were carrying out ideas and practices that some would say were not Buddhist, just as others would say that our activities were not Christian, and thus we should observe her group's secrecy as we maintained our own.

Meanwhile, Philip Shrimpton received Elizabeth's plan to see if Jonathan Eyre and Linda was a one-off. He'd claim to be an agency teacher (to be less traceable), and meantime, for credibility, was reading up on another Jackson of the anthropological school of teaching Religious Education. Headteacher Kay Parker would introduce him to Linda; he'd take Linda out, and would report back on all of Linda's responses.

That Friday night I slept between Fatima and Jenny without the sexual activity of the night before and did not even fuck Jenny.

Fatima said, "I changed my mind about Jenny vomiting on Anong or I'd never have heard the end of it."

Narrator: Linda *Lindy and Serhat* (Saturday 11th May)

When I was taking baggage to Diana's car, prior to dressing, I chatted to the now temporary Centre Manager, Judi, whose contrasting stodgy husband had lots of body hair. He had specific reception and administration duties. They spent their days nude: surely a great life. However, this was a job people said they could not keep due to the call of the wider family. His father had died and there was a furniture business to run. They were returning to Chesterfield, back into a family that knew nothing of this life of freedom to the air.

"So," I asked the receptionist, "what do I call you? Is it Sir Hat or Hat? Your surname is, what, Ahmed?"

"Serhat Ahmad."

Naked Diana walked up carrying her own luggage.
I continued: "So you like - and why not? - to use your title?"
"What title?" he asked.
Diana, dropping her suitcases, said, "Linda, it's..."
"Well, what did you do to become a knight of the realm? I'm assuming you didn't inherit it."
"I don't know what you are implying."
"You *title*. Sir Hat."
Diana turned her back to me.
"Ah. If I had been knighted I'd be Sir Serhat. Serhat is one word."
I stood motionless, realising that I was a fast-tracked idiot. "I'm *terribly* sorry.
Your wife, the manager?
"Judi is a very uncomplicated name."
"So that is not an Islamic name."
Diana still facing away flapped her arms about.
I barked at her: "What have I said now?"
He answered: "Judi is the mountain where the Prophet Noah - Peace be upon him - rested after the flood, found in south-east Turkey."
Now Diana faced me with a huge grin.
"I'm so sorry that, as a Christian minister, I display such ignorance."
Somehow, my failure to learn or understand names plunged me into further embarrassment when dealing with those of other ethnic origin.
Diana now said, "I hope you can come back from time to time, and enjoy the life here."
"Yes," I said, trying to be safe by agreeing with Diana.
"Not you. Them!"
"I was agreeing with you about... and his wife. Shall we just go? Sorry, Ser... hat."
We continued towards the car park beyond the doors, with me growling.
In the entrance area outside I nearly bumped into someone I recognised. It was a clothed Lindy Peacock, presumably entering to register and stay.
"Lindy!" I said. At least I knew her name, so similar to mine. "We're off home to Serninsea. How is everything?"
"Fine, fine."
"You've moved from Saxiclite to this club, or are you just visiting?"
"Something like that."
"To get distance between you and Jeremy?"
"Not quite."
"Are you on your own?"
"How shall I answer?" was her even stranger reply.
"Doesn't my question call for a simple binary answer?"
Diana smirked.
Lindy said, "He's out there. I think he is possibly hiding."
"From whom?"
"If you two dress, and leave, then..."
"Say hello to Jeremy for me," I said.
"You encountered his wife Emily," she added. "He told me all about it. Jeremy, stop hiding!" Lindy asked, "Are you going to preach at me then?"

"Nope," I replied.

"Are you going to tell her?"

"It's up to you, Lindy - you and him."

"We changed to Bever Wood not to deceive her, but to allow Jeremy to decide whether to be with me only or with her longer. She - and he - goes to Saxiclite with the kids."

"How do you think he will function as a clergyman if he chooses you only?"

"Look, I'm happy to be what some call a 'mistress' - it is she who wants all or nothing."

So I said, "I'm not enquiring any further. Nice seeing you again."

Diana said, "Good to meet you again."

We went outside, our bare backs and bottoms to the building.

"I heard you," said also clothed Jeremy, approaching us from the side. "Well, there we are."

"Good to see you again," I said. "Let me introduce my pal Diana."

After we loaded the car, we took our bags of clothes to the cloakroom, to put them on there. And we said hello again to Jeremy and Lindy, now naked. She was thin, blonde, hairy; he was showing some spread.

According to the rules, we returned directly to the car.

Diana said, with her driving out of the woods, "You were a bit preachy. I like Lindy."

"No I wasn't. Emily was upset when she chucked me out. I told you before. So you like Lindy Peacock?"

"She *has* made a habit of coupling with already coupled blokes."

"Quite," I said. "But I can't preach much, given all that is happening around me."

"Given your conference affair."

"It was not an affair; I'm not going to run off to Margate. So Jeremy is continuing to see her. And I won't tell Emily."

"Because she chucked you out?"

"No. Sometimes 'secrets secrets' is the best way and gives space for something to work out."

Narrator: Keith *Leaving Hartlepool* (Saturday 11th May)

Saturday morning did involve a quickie with Jenny. She was taking birth control. "Anong is a nutcase," she said.

I left as Sarah brought back Akemi to Fatima. Akemi often slept over at Sarah's, married to Taran Farhadi and with their own five year old.

I was home before Linda arrived, and so I rang the Reverend Jim Wilson about the evening at Hartlepool. He'd already heard about it, that three including me had declined participation, and Jen Willingale had today exited the group with sister Betty trying to persuade her back.

He said that we did not need depravity to demonstrate sinfulness. As for me asking about dogs, he said that they could be used, for example, if Linda resisted membership.

I thought this was a bit strong, but kept my opinion to myself, except to say, "I think there is a reaction against Anong and a rejection of dogs. It's the women involved that interest me," I said.

Jim went into his own rant against people using pastoral, commercial and especially personal confidentiality. "I don't get it how a rabbi can marry a Christian minister, and start claiming personal confidentiality. We've a right to know when they get together under the Confraternity."

"I've to divorce her first," I said. "Let's get her ordained. As for Maurice, he's Reformist. Progressive Jews were sympathetic to Protestant Christianity at one time."

He replied, "Sympathy is not conversion. Anyway, are you entertaining yourself with Yojana?"

"She is about to be very busy. I am very busy," I said, "so she can't be having an affair with me." I added, "I'm a one woman man - Cheryl."

He wondered if I had tried to convert Yojana during my mentoring.

"No, but we have discussed religious beliefs."

This inadequate answer seemed to bring the call to a close, with him mumbling to himself.

A secured message from Elizabeth arrived, which started with:

NW8PH1ZTEHOnbw==#M9+... [1,148 characters]

It translated as:

Some of us seemed to be disturbed by activities with Anong. We did not want to lose people, but we are in an elite group and we should be able to learn from varied practitioners. The Reverend Deacon Christine Vine suggests that people under the Confraternity have been having entertaining and easy experiences and we should learn from Anong. However, we may not be at her or my stage of self-sacrifice yet. Anong's other name is Sheila Patterson, sixty-one years old, operating in a group of twelve women and men in Middlesbrough and they frequently practise sensations of disgust on the body. I join them at times and discuss the differences in our theologies. Christine may have more to say soon. Until then the various theatrical players will not attempt to imitate what took place on Friday at the Hereteu vicarage. [819 characters]

Diana dropped Linda off. I claimed that I'd visited the office briefly on Friday but I had worked from home otherwise. She met my explanation with a stare and a nod. I had no reason to suppose that she knew otherwise.

Chapter 06 Adam Becomes Busy

Narrator: Linda *First Visit to the Detective Agency* (Monday 13th & Wednesday 15th May)

We called it Monday in the fourth week after Easter. I received a telephone call at the church from the supposed Martin Haralambos. "Reverend Jupitas? Go ahead." He said no more! By this I knew that the internal monitoring and testing at Systematic Measuring Services had at last begun.

I made an appointment through Peter the receptionist at Magellan Investigations.

As it happened, on Wednesday, I was with Diana at Patricia's staring through the conservatory roof at the clouds.

"I have an appointment next to see the detective about Keith's closeness with Yojana in order to expose the one with Cheryl."

"Why not directly about Cheryl Mould?"

"Because Keith works with Yojana up here."

"An investigator cannot look at closeness. I am close to loads of blokes but there is not affair."

"In the course of investigating her, wether they are too close to function, he finds out about the affair."

"What if he is screwing Yojana as well?"

"He's not because Cheryl and Keith are soppy about each other, I'm told."

"So you already know; why not put Magellan on to them?"

"It's about evidence and exposure."

"Is there something about you not being straightforward?" Diana asked. "You're not straightforward with Church beliefs and not with this, it seems."

"So Keith is very good at concealing, and I want to come at him left field."

Patricia arrived at 3 pm as ever. This time 3 pm was the suitable timing for dressing back into a blue blouse with a clerical collar, jacket, and trousers, strapped red shoes and low heels as ever.

Diana put her hands on my shoulders and wished me the best. Patricia seemed to stare at Diana, but wished me good luck.

On the way I made an appointment at the doctor's. The formidable receptionist, Doris Schutt, wanted me to declare why I'd see the GP but I refused to tell her, as was my right.

The detective agency was situated at the southern end of Upper Road, being in a middle house of a large terrace of three Victorian houses. The third one had Klärchen Sisse as its resident. The vacated premises next door at the north end of the block had been accommodation and office space. A tenfoot went around its double garage to the back of short gardens and bordered with the long gardens of properties on the Promenade Road.

The notice, 'Magellan Investigations', was in small text, as if no one should know he was even there, next to the left side front door of this middle of the terrace. The competition, Wickenby's Detective Agency, was better known, on Caffin Road, leading out of town.

Shown in by the suited 'Magician', the corridor that soon narrowed alongside the staircase was on the left or north side of the property, and this large reception room was to the right.

The young male assistant said, "I'm Peter Marshall. Take any seat." These were all somewhat worn leather armchairs and at the far wall a reasonable condition leather settee and a low table. Peter had a seat, desk and computer. There were shelves and boxes on the floor.

After a summons by intercom, Adam Magellan came and greeted me, and we moved into the next large room on the right as Peter moved past us down the corridor. There was obviously a small kitchen at the end, and, given a flushing sound, a toilet.

Adam's sweeping desk had technology above and below. There were shelves galore, but more boxes and papers on the floor. There were chairs and another leather settee again but at right angles. The walls needed painting. He sat and started tapping at his computer. He gestured me to come to the seat on my side of the long curvy desk.

He said, "Sorry about the decor - I'm thinking of having the builders in, never mind the decorators. Sometime maybe soon. These places are bigger than they seem."

He leaned back behind his desk. I faced him but he was partly concealed by his large computer screen.

"Slow today," he said. "Shit broadband in Serninsea. You're Reverend Linda Ju...Jupi..."

"...tas. Not a *bad* place to be a reverend. You live here as well?" I asked.

"Upstairs. I've got my eye on next door and its double garage. Nice lass at the other end. If I had enough money I'd buy hers as well. But it's not the most lucrative of jobs, this."

I enquired some more. "How does one end up becoming a private dick?" I asked, smiling, although he was still partly hidden and choosing not to look at me.

"I'm best described as a private investigator. I do very little detection. I was in the police but didn't like the command structure. So what can I do you for, Reverend?"

"Do you know me?" I asked.

"No, I don't. I don't think we've dealt, Mrs. Reverend Jupiter - tas. I've a terrible memory for faces and names."

"I saw you - and him - in the casino recently."

"Oh," he said. "I go in there occasionally. Miladdo out there took me to show me how to do blackjack."

"I have a similar problem with names," I said. "Were you linked to the Systematic Measuring Services do in there?" I asked him, seeking any connection ahead of business.

"I noticed that that lot of them were in, and then half of them seemed to disappear. *Amazing* women. Jupitas. Manager of Compliance."

"Correct. I'd not even been in there before, but my husband sometimes socialises with workmates."

"Funny place, that casino. Two steel doors. There's an upstairs from the first. Mysterious, huh?"

Now he looked around his screen at me. Looking thus at Adam's features, I

wondered if my appearance had changed much in twenty-two years. His hair was thinner and his body was fatter. My fairly recent dream of him had him much younger, of course.

"You still haven't said why you are here and, em, well, time is money - to me it is."

"Isn't an initial consultation free?"

"But it's opportunity cost. What else I could be doing? Don't hold back. Annie's on early."

"Who?"

"Nothing. Go on."

"I'm just establishing first that you have no connection with SMS because I have some private work for you that would be muddied up - or could be - if you work for them."

He was partially concealed again. "My competitor George Wickenby gets that work. I'm reduced to asking him if there are any scraps. Are you offering me scraps?"

"My husband and one of those amazing women is why I am here."

"So are you representing SMS and putting extra business in my direction for a change?"

"No. I am asking if Keith Richard Jupitas is having an affair among the personnel."

"Just a second. I'm typing in a hello here for 'Headgirl' Annie and give a tip. So you're the wife."

"Why don't you do yourself a favour and look up the National Church website for Wytham Diocese and the Parish of Serninsea, Titansea and Sutton and look me up."

"Bye Annie! I've left the room."

"You're still here."

"So do clergy divorce a lot? I'd I've thought they'd be in lovey dovey marriages."

"They divorce especially when there's an affair. But I'd hope there might be an alternative to divorce."

Who's he shagging, do you think - sorry - in the personnel?"

"One of them."

"He is only a year older than me. The name... I think I've heard of him, a long time ago, probs. Yeah, there was a Jupitas: a toff at school, or thought he was."

"Yes, him. Is he having an affair?"

"Cut to the chase. The cheapest option is for you to ask him yourself. I assume you have asked him and he has said no."

"I want evidence," I said.

"Oh. *Evidence*. Well, it is £35 an hour pure without expenses and a minimum £105, all excluding VAT. That's a lot of money for sitting in a car waiting for someone to appear, say from a hotel, all of which proves nothing."

"From the office? From her place?"

"I'd need to be within the office?"

"Perhaps she takes work home."

"What does that prove?"

"Perhaps she takes him home. I want you to observe."

"Well, I'm willing to take your money, madam, Mrs. Reverend, but you might be spending a lot for very little. Plus I like to do a thorough job and it adds up the pennies. I seem to remember Jupitas was always sniffing the females at school."

"So you don't want the work?"

"Oh I do," he said, staring at the computer screen and still only partially visible to me. "I just play straight with my clients. You give me as much information as possible, including when to act. Here is the thing. You give me good information and often I say, 'Why then do you need me?' You probably have more information than I could ever gather."

"You need to act now. They are working together now. I want to know what you observe."

"Also set yourself a maximum payment - say £525 and then add the VAT and expenses like travel. My work starts with your *question* for my focus and ends with a report containing an answer. You then pay the bill. I can do running commentaries for a bit extra."

"Like an essay then, at school sixth form." (I was trying to see if he would remember me.)

He said. "Not an essay, a report. Definitely not like at school."

"Perhaps there was a teacher who said, 'You must answer the question that I set.' Do you remember that, Mr. Magellan?"

"'Don't know' or 'Needs more work' is also a report."

"What about, 'Show your working?' - that's an old one."

"Oh no. That's trade secrets. Let me revise this. I can show what I did - 'your working' - but minus any secrets of the trade."

"Do you do anything tricky, different or special?"

"Well, Mrs. Reverend Jupitas... So he married a vicar!"

"I'm a curate not a vicar. And he didn't, then."

"Well, I do have a few tricks of the trade. My assistant tells me he is learning to be invisible, with the right props. He's learning to be a magician. So your question is, 'Is Mr. Keith Jupitas having an affair?' Do you have a name?" he asked, further.

"The name I do know, with whom he is said to be too close."

"Ah, *with whom*. School is that? Or being a vicar? Look, I work efficiently and I don't just pile on the costs. Here's a funny thing. The more you tell us, the more we can tell you. Name, places, times."

"So your magician joins in the investigating, for the same fee."

"My new assistant out there might observe and follow, but I'll make sure it's done right."

"You follow the clues."

"I put all of the information together."

"So what amount is involved now?"

"Okay. Up front as well... Ah, add seventy quid VAT. Three hundred and two."

"I see. Are you like Mr. Marker?"

"Who?"

"Seventies television. *Public Eye*. Alfred Burke played Frank Marker, a loner."

"Depends what he did."

"Divorces, multiple marriages, credit, missing people, protection, police liaison..."

"Look, you write down all that you suspect, in confidence with us."

Seeing whether he might remember me instead of my husband, I continued, "So, beyond paying and informing, is that it regarding me?"

"Your background is relevant, possibly. Now this SMS moved its HQ to... Harlow, didn't it?"

"Harwich."

"Of course it was. Felixstowe is another."

"Bigger operation," I said.

"And, er... Dunwich."

"Dunwich?" I asked.

"Oh no, that's different. It was twelve hundred and something. Very big port. Then. Search engines!"

"Harwich does local and national administration for SMS."

"Do you want to write stuff down now? Or you could use this computer now, if you have the time," he said.

"Okay. I'll come round to your side." This seemed the most sensible.

"Do vicars type?"

"I'm sorry: I forgot my quill pen. I must have left it in Dunwich."

"I meant, like, it's all cups of tea and... Look, here is a document template ready for you to type. Your name and contact details at the top, the investigation you want below, the details below that."

"This is like self-service," I said, with me now behind the desk, and him stood alongside me.

He said, "Ah! Don't press that. Annie."

"Your woman? You're not a lonely Frank Marker, then."

"She's not a lover, but a kind of a friend. Local, I know."

He advised me to include Keith's mobile phone number and provider. Then, "Give me some idea of when you think he is meeting this woman. Who is she? I've not yet got her name. As much as possible, please."

"Yojana Asthana, she is called. Systematic Measuring Services. You'll see she is in the Independent Inspection unit. Oh, the Interdependent Inspection Unit. So she is like a person who checks he's managing things properly, is being honest himself. The inspections test her, him, them, all sorts, but I want to know if they are having an affair."

After some of my typing, he asked, "Are you sure this is not SMS business? She's passing information?"

I paused. "Well, I suppose, if they are having an affair, she may well be passing information as well. I don't give a shit about that."

"A shit? Reverends use..."

"Reverends also shit."

"*Holy shit, Batman!* And why do you suspect?" he asked. "How did you suspect?"

"A member of the congregation knows someone who knows." (This was, of course, a complete lie.)

"Can I interview him or her?"

"Definitely not; it's the seal of the confessional."

"I like Donna Nook."

"I don't know anyone called Donna Nook, and if I did I wouldn't tell you in this context."

"It's a place. We might get a seals viewing facility here."

"And I am not an idiot," I said. (I was an idiot.)

"I was just thinking... So, she or he told you in one of those, like, *boxes*?" he asked. "Could you get her to go in again and tell you some more?"

"The 'seal of the confessional' is a phrase representing legal privilege."

"They look so helpless lying on the sands. I wonder how the sanctuary here will function. Em, do type in your precise job up there."

"I'm a deacon in the local Anglican church, to be priested in a matter of months. He's been with her probably two years since he got a job at SMS."

Looking at me from standing above, he said, "Am I supposed to know you?"

Hello, here we were. Not quite so stupid as he seemed. I played along. "You're the detective. Don't you recognise me? It could be handy for you when you do."

"I've said I have a terrible memory for faces and names."

"Bit of a handicap in your trade," I commented. "Mind you, it's awful in mine."

"Also, when I get a name wrong, I keep getting it wrong. Miladdo out there has corrected me a number of times."

"Remember Yojana Asthana. She is top bitch of the IIS in SMS."

He went on, "Where would I recognise you from in particular? Presumably the local parish church but then that's not my scene at all. Miladdo is a bit of a religious weirdo but I am definitely not."

I answered, "Do you want my maiden name?"

"Nah. It's not relevant."

"It's done, then, the relevant stuff. I think this is fairly comprehensive. I must go sharply now."

"You morph into a knife?" he asked.

"What?"

"It was a joke, Reverend Jupit...as." Laughing boy turned and walked to the door. "Follow me to Peter."

"Going to Rome?" I asked. "Crossing the Tiber?"

"Just along the corridor to miladdo."

Peter asked me, in the large reception room, "What will you download your report on?"

"Probably on to my mobile phone."

"Can I see it?"

"I suppose so. Here."

"So, a standard smart phone. When a report is ready, we will send an email It will say, em, *Arguments related to the theologian James Martineau* with a link. But you need to enter the password in capitals MARJUP3 to get the article. MAR for the theologian, JUP for you, and 3 as the likely usual number of reports."

Who is James Martineau?" I asked, retrieving the phone.

"A Unitarian theologian in the past."

"Oh I don't know about that," I said.

"No, he was."

"I don't want that association."

"Who do you want then?" Peter Marshall asked.

"Karl Barth?" I suggested, offhand.

"Is that a C or a K?"

"It's a K," I said. "It's t - h at the end."
"So you prefer Karl Barth?"
"Not really, no."
"Well, who do you prefer?"
"Whom."
"Who's that? I knew a John Hume at school."
Adam said, "He was in here the other day."
I said, "Dennis Nineham."
"Don't know him," said Adam.
"Dennis Nineham Hume?" Peter Marshall asked.
"No, *Stupi irriot*. Just, em, Dennis Nineham."
"Justine... Spell the middle name. Is it one N or two?"
"D - E - N - N - I - S *first name*, N - I - N - E - H - A - M *second name*."
"Arguments related to the theologian Dennis Nineham."
"Right," I said. "NINJUP3"
"Yes. You beat me to it."
"Show Reverend Mrs. Jupitas out," said Mr. Magellan, who left us.
I pointed at a little Buddha on a back wall shelf.
"I've seen you before," Peter Magellan said, "in the casino of course but you came to my show. We are just trying a few things out. Early days."
"Twins." I said.
"This is the trouble," he responded. "Many people here are likely to know them both, but in the publicity we have just Kath. I know it is obvious, but hiding is obvious."
I stretched to look at his screen. "You've looked me up."
"Jupitas is very unique."
"I am that. My husband's name was originally Jupitz, four generations up."
"Jewish."
"They were indeed."
"There is an actor and writer with that name - Jupitz. They say that the name Jupitz indicates an easy-going diplomat who likes to socialise," he told me.
"Is that how you do your personality profiling?"
"No. Anyway, I found out your maiden name. You're not on Facebook, but your sisters and brother have pages, and so I looked them up and looked up connections to Serninsea of course. Your family has moved to Wales."
"Yes. Correct. You might be better at this than him."
"By the way, I know you didn't say 'Justine'. Let me have your mobile phone. Show you something.
He brought a bottle from behind the desk, took my phone, seemed to bash it into the bottle and then it appeared in the bottle.
"Hey!" I said. "What happened there?"
"It's in the bottle."
"I can see that. Very clever. That's very clever. Now you just have to get it out."
"You take it home then," he said. "Bring the bottle back, but keep your clothes on after you get it out."
"I see. You found that out."
"You went to school with him, didn't you? I'll see if he realises this."

"He's got himself a good assistant. He needs one, if you ask me."

"Not a *stupi irriot*, then," he said.

"No. I hope he pays you well."

"Of course he doesn't. It's an apprentice scheme I'm afraid. I come free to him. Both Kath's sign on as well."

"That's not right. I'd better take this home. What do I do, hit the bottle with a hammer?"

"You'd better not," he said. "It could damage the phone. Bring the bottle back, and I can use it again."

"So how am I supposed to get it out, *miladdo*?"

"Give it to me."

He shook it behind the desk, and then he raised up my phone, apparently freed.

"Thank you," I said, relieved. "Well, I'll be off. See you again, naughty boy. Hope you make some progress."

"Mr. Magellan has sent me a message. Three hundred and two pounds, please, up front. Might be more at the end."

"My card; I'll pay up front by card."

Narrator: Keith *A Leak in Initials and Behaving* (Wednesday 15th May)

It was more and more unusual to receive things in the post at work. Most posted items were simply unwanted. I opened this letter, with a word processed address on the envelope, and an ordinary stamp, and inside was a cut sliver of paper. All it said was, *A.M.K.J.R.Y.L.A.*

My first thought was whether to approach Yojana on this. I could see my three initials and her three, so I did. I mentioned each letter having a full stop straight afterwards.

She saw the same, but asked, "Is *A.M.* a person as well or an activity?"

One of the options was that *A.M.* could be 'Adam Magellan'; but he would have to be working for SMS. If he was, we should not know this. (Other possibilities were: 'Action Management', 'Added Momentum', 'Aware of Management', 'Morning'.)

Yojana wondered if the note had come from a Goose in The Worshipful Company also in top management? But I pointed out that we were supposed to observe all the confidentiality and boundaries. These were commercial as well as pastoral and personal.

Yojana thought that we must obey all the Chinese wall rules. An investigator might indicate how friendly we were, and yet we would have been completely reliable.

We agreed to pause the nookie, to keep out and keep secret The Worshipful Company. We had to keep all under the Confraternity absolutely secret. No documents must be shared or exchanged.

I said that Security must read the note as it was a potential leak.

Thus we were in agreement.

Meanwhile, I asked her opinion of events in Hartlepool, when Elizabeth had

brought in Anong.

Yojana did not like it, and I was right to leave the bathroom. Yojana disliked a message from Christine that we were becoming far too soft in our ways. She said the point really is to love each other, and sex was often the way to reconnect and find a way to resolve matters. She did not want to take up practices that were not lovely to enjoy. She liked fucking with me, and did not pain instead of pleasure.

"Too right," I said.

She suspected that her Uncle San and Christine were different, but she was not her uncle. He also paid Christine a great deal.

I didn't dislike use of menstrual blood, so Yojana said that, if I really wanted, she would show me having her period next time. I said I did not want to see this. Cheryl, I added, made much of her menstrual cycle because she wondered how long it would be before it starts to become irregular, and then for it to stop altogether. So we had indulged in lots of sex. Yojana said that Cheryl obviously wants a baby.

I said, "Me too."

Yojana then said that Julie Manns' coming baby was probably the first baby of the three Confraternity groups. I took her point that Julie Manns' love for the world probably meant sleeping with many in that group, but Jonathan claimed responsibility and Julie agreed. I did not tell Yojana that I knew of one other Confraternity birth, in Hartlepool.

Yojana switching back to the SMS inspections and stress-testing suggested that by travelling to and from her parents' Maa Skelter Guest House we could give investigators something to observe. We should be pally with one another. She said that throughout the year some post is sent there rather than the office and away from prying eyes.

But I said we might have to find a way to demonstrate that I did not see her documents. If George Wickenby or associates followed us we might have to manipulate impressions.

Therefore we would arrange meetings at her bed and breakfast electronically, but use the beach to show documents not changing hands.

Yojana's tour north east and to South Wales was on her mind but would happen after the investigating.

Narrator: Linda *First Report from Adam Magellan* (Friday 17th May)

Two days after the initial meeting I got a call from Adam Magellan.

"Is that the Reverend Linda Jupitas?" He was speaking, I would think, into his desk telephone, given the reverberation. "She's a church priest."

"Yes, Mr. Magellan. It is me. But I am not the full entity yet."

"Am I able to speak to you?"

"Yes. Keith is at his office in Titansea; I work at home, like now, among other places."

"Well, I've just received a message from a technical source that your husband is going with Yojana Asthana this lunchtime to her home, and he is giving her a lift. I don't know how often they do this. So my young colleague and I will spend some time waiting and following today. They have sent relatively sweet messages between

them but they could just be friendly."

"Oh." I paused. "Relatively sweet?"

"Very friendly - well, from what I, er... And, em, by the way, I do remember who you are. Hello Linda."

"Hello Adam. What's 'relatively sweet'? Give me an example."

"Er, this might not be advisable."

"You won't hurt my feelings."

"Technicalities prevent."

"You don't want to say. Do you recall what is or was on your hand?"

"Yeah. It's fading. It was late sixth form," he said. "We cut each other, blood and simple scarring. Jenny Masters, you, and me. Keith was a year above us."

"I can just about see mine," I confirmed. "That was quite something for me to do that. My super-smooth skin I deliberately affected."

"We missed our ten year appointment, and twenty," he pointed out. "But I don't suppose you mind that now. I mean, being a priest..."

"A deacon."

"...means you will have changed."

"Well, you'd vanished in terms of my life. And the others have. Jenny Masters is in my profession, last known up north."

"Being a Reverend deflected me and 'Jupitas' didn't really register. As for me, I joined the police for just over ten years, including time in Nottingham, but with cut-backs I came back here and stayed by opening the town's second investigation agency. Gives George Wickenby a bit of competition. Geoff Virgo: now I think he might have gone abroad and did English language teaching or something like that. Jenny, yes, she got religion, and also she went up north to university a year after you. University of Tees. But her gap year was when she did nothing much, except she was with me before she was approached by a then small religious mob. So we split. I didn't know you'd got religion and I paid no attention to the local church - well, with one exception at one point, completely irrelevant to this."

"Really?"

"Well Peter Marshall, my new helper, and I haven't got long, so we are off now to have a look and keep our distance."

I asked if it was possible to be sent an instant report link to my email on today's following and he said yes for another £25 before VAT. (No discounts for friends.)

The email arrived that evening: *Arguments Related to Dennis Nineham*. The interim report, via my password, was entitled:

Report: Magellan Investigations: Targets Meet, Relationship Ambiguous

Report Findings: Ambiguous Relationship between Work Colleagues at Bed and Breakfast.

Just after 2 pm target Keith Jupitus drove out with target Yojana Asthana from the same workplace Systemic Measuring Services, Bolingbroke Road, Titansea, and were followed by Junior Investigator Peter Marshall and the two were travelling in the expected direction.

This was consistent with information received regarding their communications:

showing warmth and friendliness between the communicators but no electronic document sharing.

Marshall paused. Then Investigator Adam Magellan followed the targets together towards Maa Skelter Guest House run by her parents near the coast outside Sutton-on-Serninsea. With journeying as expected, Investigator Magellan turned to take a circuitous route for the bed and breakfast stopping in a nearby road while Junior Investigator Marshall parked at the Maa Skelter car park with two spaces in between his and Jupitas's car.

We know that target Asthana possessed papers she had received at her home address, indicating by private sources that Ephouse Travel Ltd. carried less than declared quantities of bulk products and that Compliance had failed to spot this. This test is by arrangement with Ephouse Travel who will report back on any contacts and information.

On the premise of he and (fictional) wife will be staying for a holiday, the female receptionist took agent Marshall up the stairs and showed him some rooms. He might stay himself as part of his travels as a salesperson in pharmaceuticals. Once downstairs again, targets Jupitus and Asthana were seen in the lounge. She had a closed documents folder close by. Target Asthana resembles the receptionist but the receptionist is older.

At the lounge door, Junior Investigator Marshall asked target Asthana if she and Jupitus were staying on holiday and what they thought of the place, and she stated that she lived there. Jupitus stayed quiet. The receptionist then declared to be her mother and asked Marshall if he wanted to book ahead; he declared he would contact his (fictional) wife and tell her what had been seen.

Marshall then rang Investigator Magellan, as if to his wife, and acted out what he had seen. At this point, the receptionist went away into a small room directly off the reception, and Marshall took an opportunity to look behind the reception desk and its shelf. He noted among other items a white plastic badge, with a white B on a black goose. It seemed noteworthy, but we do not know what it means.

The receptionist mother returned and added that the establishment provided evening meals and Marshall completed the call with this information.

The targets left the building towards the sea and Junior Investigator Marshall went into the lounge with its window. Target Asthana held the document folder under her right arm whilst outside target Jupitus was seen to put his left arm around Asthana's waist until they sat at one wooden picnic table with benches. The garden goes down to the water. The folder was unopened. Asthana waved her finger at Jupitus, and Jupitus put his hands into the air submissively. The folder stayed under her arm.

Junior Investigator Marshall left the building and went to his car. He could see along the beach and the targets walked down on to the beach and stood near the sea looking across the ocean. Hand movements suggested familiarity. Target Keith Jupitus gave target Yojana Asthana a kiss on the cheek and Marshall drove away.

An Indian family, of second and third generation of immigrants, we believe nothing culturally can be inferred from the colleagues' familiarity. Yojana Asthana is a career independent woman. We detect no particular conservatism from her background and therefore infer no excessive relationship.

Conclusion is that although consistent with an affair in working time it is on balance unlikely, especially at her home. She was indicating that he could not see

the documents she held. The result is so far inconclusive regarding having an affair.
End

I rang up rather than emailed.

"Peter, my surname is Jupitas with an 'a' and not Jupitus with a second 'u'. Surely he knew the correct spelling."

"Sorry. He must be thinking of the comedian. I will make sure he gets it right in writing next time. Do you wish to speak to Adam?"

"No. Not yet."

I would have been really surprised if an affair had been declared.

I had a call from my old head teacher soon to retire. Ms Kay Parker did arrange a visit, but she wanted me to meet a Mr. Philip Shrimpton, an agency RE teacher, interested in discussing the link between RE schools (approaches, biases) and theology. He'd taught in Lude and Rasa Market, although he was from Wearside, and I might tell her about him having met him.

I did a search for the said person but found nothing; however, wise teachers didn't have social media pages as pupils might compromise them.

Keith in the evening told me that the internal and external investigations had begun in earnest; if I didn't mind, he would not talk about it and wanted a break from thinking about work. However, he asked me why I was interested in Dennis Nineham of all people.

"Have you been looking at my mobile phone?"

"You left it around like you always do, and it doesn't take much moving it for it to come on."

"So did you follow the link regarding Dennis Nineham?"

"No. I already know about him. Don't you? He is an historical relativist and thinks we can go back in time, understand things tentatively, but not be able to use them in our time. There you are: no need to look anything up. Go down *his* route and you won't have much to say for today. You might have to work for SMS!"

"I see that you haven't lost *all* your interest in theology."

"Knowledge is not interest," he said.

"Yeah, but that is the issue: anthropological cultural translation through time as well as space."

He did not ask why such a link might be password protected. So I took it he hadn't clicked the link.

After a minute I said, "I still will want to look up what scholars have said including Nineham and about Nineham."

"As you wish," Keith said. "I'm tired. I've a good colleague, you know, that Yojana - very efficient, clever, knows the crap and what's good. Anyway, welcome to the weekend."

Seeing the Doctor (Monday 20th May)

I saw Jagjit and Gurinder Kapoor, for a quick chat on nothing much, though I mentioned my embarrassment at calling Serhat 'Sir Hat'. (I didn't say where.)

"He'll be a Muslim," he said. "I knew a Mrs. McCourt who was told by her imam not to call her son Serhat."

"Like Mahatma," I said.

"No. 'Mahatma' is after the event: of Hindi and Sanskrit origin, and means 'great soul' as an additional title. It was given to Mohandas Gandhi. Rabindranath Tagore probably used this title for Gandhi in 1915."

"I've so much to learn," I said.

Next I faced the formidable German receptionist Doris Schutt at the surgery. She was a gatekeeper for everyone regarding prescriptions and appointments, via telephone, email or face to face.

The local jokes were obvious and to be regretted. She didn't have a receptionist's desk but a sentry box; she took pills to make her head less square. She alone added hundreds to the referendum votes to leave the European Union among the older nationalistic seaside locals.

I waited for my appointment to see Dr. Gujjar, at 11 am, and then went in to see this medical investigator.

Staring at a screen, like Adam Magellan did, he said, "And what can I do for you Reverend Mrs. Jupitas in our allocated ten minutes? You said nothing ascertaining to why to the receptionist."

"It's something I live with. Since I've become a curate, it has somehow started to matter more. I have a condition of relative incontinence."

"How long is it?"

"It varies, doctor."

"How long has it been?" He breathed out, noticeably.

"Origins are some twenty years. It is just becoming inconvenient, doctor."

"You were still a spring chicken, Mrs. Jupitas. It's a strange time, into your twenties, to get incontinence."

"I was damaged, I think."

"Please lower your trousers and underwear so that I can examine you. I suggest you bend over and use the rest couch by putting your upper arms on it and sticking your bottom out. Would you like a female to attend?"

"No."

So I lowered my trousers, and turned to look at him. He was looking inside a supplies cabinet, and found a hollow metal tube with a small light bulb mounted at the end. He put on some clinical gloves. Then he found a tub of grease to apply to the tube.

He said, "This is a seven inches proctoscope. I shall insert it into your rectum, to then remove the obturator so that I can look inside your anus. It may hurt."

"I doubt it."

Without assistance from me, he inserted the proctoscope and removed the obturator to allow his inspection, throwing it into the sink. He moved the device about somewhat.

"There's nothing untoward in there, but I did notice how easily it went in."

"That's the point," I said. "How easily it goes in and how easily stuff comes out. My husband, before he was my husband, spent day after day stretching my anus so that he could do more sexually. It's because my vagina is so shallow, doctor."

"Ah."

He then removed the proctoscope and also threw that into the sink.

"Pull your trousers up, Reverend, while I look at the screen, for your gynaecological reports. Please sit down.

I sat there, while he stared at the screen and moved data up and down.

"Mrs. Jupitas. You still have undescended gonads. I recommend surgery, and you could have combined surgery - remove the gonads, extend your vagina, and we could close up your rectal cavity somewhat."

"Doctor, I have spent my life using dilators. I do not want surgery. I've heard all the recommendations. My sister had surgery; I'd prefer it otherwise, as my mother, in her rapid wisdom, realised."

"I wouldn't suggest bowel surgery unless it was also with these other procedures. Here is what you can do. You can get some advice from the nurse on diet. I will give you a priority appointment here."

"Thank you."

"Try to make a regular routine for going to the toilet, say always going after meals. Have a hot drink before going to the toilet. The nurse may suggest relevant exercises. Surgery gets better control over the muscles in your back passage. We can try a sphincteroplasty, or add a monitoring device for sacral nerve stimulation, or put silicone into the muscles there to bulk up your muscle capability."

"I have declined already."

"Exercise is the best option for now. See the nurse, please on Thursday at 3 pm. There is no point me giving you a prescription."

"Well, thank you doctor."

I thought, as a failing reverend, I could do with sacral nerve stimulation.

Second Report from Adam Magellan (Tuesday 21st May)

At the church on Tuesday morning in the fifth week after Easter I rang Adam Magellan's magical receptionist and suggested 'Criticism of Dennis Nineham' for the next title link.

However, just as the bell in the tower rang for three o'clock, I left the visiting primary school party coming out of the church to find Adam Magellan standing over the road. The children were returning towards the nearby school with their teacher. So I crossed the road.

"Hi," I said. "I read your first report of course. So anything more?"

"We can't say for sure. But they went to her bed and breakfast abode again. Bode! Sorry. Like I wrote first time, he again put his hand around her waist and they kissed, like sort of formally, and she touched his shoulder."

"Sort of formally?"

"Well, clearly it is acceptable that he kisses her. She didn't initiate it, but she's clearly okay about it."

"What else happened this time?"

"Again they looked at the sea and then he drove back to work. This time she got her car out of the garage and she also drove to work."

"You saw this?"

"No, Peter Marshall did. Did she go by public transport in the morning? He

thinks there's more to it but I got him to describe it accurately. He was in your house last night?"

"Peter?"

"No, your husband of course."

"He was in our bed." So I said, making this bit up: "What my friend told me is they are familiar when walking in town."

He added, "I mean, if they're having an affair, there is usually an affair bit."

"So can you look further?" I wanted this to extend.

"Getting close to the budget," he said. "But... Yes. Pay any more at the end. Does he come home late often?"

"Yeah. But not last night."

"Does he mention Yojana Asthana at all at home?"

"Yes, actually: he says she is efficient, impressive."

"Actually, that's a good sign."

"So you didn't see anything, Adam. He's clever at being discreet and discrete."

"What?"

"He's both under the radar, and careful, but also detached," I explained. "What were you doing when Peter saw them?"

"I had to do some monitoring for the State. Sometimes people think they can hide in Serninsea, it being out of the way. We'll try and find a time when he doesn't come home to you. Or any meeting with this lady when he isn't having lunch or doing work."

"Yes. Do that then."

"If we can." With surely other motives he asked me, "And are you all right? I'd like to remember old times."

"I bet you would," I said, with a smile.

"Not like that," he reacted. "Obviously things have changed a great deal with you. I'd like to hear about this departure in your life. Had you said or written 'Bode' I'd have done a double-take. An investigator needs clues."

So I said, "Things have changed a lot. I have a meeting just about now with the Vicar of Serninsea. Yep, my different life. But keep in touch - definitely."

In my head was this bad thought. If my husband could misbehave with another woman, if not this one being investigated, why couldn't I with someone where I had a past? So I was going to keep options open. So I made a bid. "We'll eat together, perhaps after you have made more progress. I want a positive result."

"If there is one," he said. "What's a positive result?"

"Er, the truth - I think. I'd better go." Adam moved off at a pace and then slowed.

As I arrived at the door he shouted out, from a distance: "So it's 'Criticism of Dennis Nineham' next time!"

"Yes!" I shouted back.

At which point, Colin Cromer appeared. "What's your interest in Dennis Nineham?"

"Historical translation."

"Well, I approve of criticising Dennis Nineham. Who was that walking away? What's his interest in Dennis Nineham?"

"Parishioner who spotted me and was on about Dennis Nineham."

"And did you invite him into the church?"

"He seems uninterested. It's the clerical collar that attracts them, though."

"Good," said Colin. "That's the idea. So less of the Dennis Nineham and, shortly, more of the administration."

"Administration then," I said to Colin. "What have I to learn?"

"How is someone interested in criticising Dennis Nineham uninterested in the church?"

"Because it doesn't follow through beyond ideas."

"Hmm. Shortly. I have received another report about your visiting. I just don't know where to begin with this one, or what to say."

"What have I done now - or supposed to have done?"

"A concerned parishioner has contacted me offering advice to my curate. She suggests not to visit these young women who, well, has some sort of relationship, er... This is *sick*. A dog?"

"That was ages ago."

"So it is true! I had hoped someone nasty was targetting you, like with those photographs. Look, we have about a hundred reliable regular and occasional attenders here. Something like that. Obviously *not* including someone who can talk about Dennis Nineham. Every one of them, or nearly every one of them, would appreciate a visit from you. Yet you seem to find these weirdos and perverts and, what's more, enjoy their company."

"She said to her dog that nudged her in the crotch, 'Not yet' speaking in German. I wanted to leave straight away, I can tell you." (This was not true. I only discovered the translation later.)

"The report I received said you met two of them."

"I later met another. I was not visiting then."

"Well, you seem to find them. Why do you find them, eh?"

"Perhaps it is animal magnetism, Colin."

"There is a time and place for humour and this is not it. I've said enough. This town is full of risk, and just try to be more careful. And I look at your reminder notes at visits, which you should indeed keep and share, and so I looked again and I didn't see any about a young woman and a dog."

"Because we don't put in pastorally sensitive details of confidentiality."

"How convenient. If you wanted to leave you could have recorded a warning to yourself."

"I did want to leave and I remember her name and address."

"And these are?"

"No, Colin, I won't tell you. I am not obliged to tell you. I am quite minded to avoid this woman and indeed her friend. In fact I dodged her house only recently."

"But you must have discovered that this *other* person was the pervert's friend."

"Because she also had a German accent and there was a college connection with my own friend. It sort of revealed itself - a detectorist with her dog."

"Enough! Enough. Now the administration we must do," he said.

When I left it was back to my hairbrush again. I soon received the report from Adam that laid out what I had been told in the street.

Lorry Kills Eastern European (Wednesday 22nd May)

I was in a town cafe with Diana and Patricia before Patricia would go to work and Diana and I would have gone off to Patricia's conservatory. However, I told her that Kay Parker, our old head teacher, still in office, wanted me to meet a teacher.

"He's an RE specialist, apparently, but agency employed. I think she wants a recommendation."

"Seems an odd thing to ask. I'll see you at Patricia's another time," Diana said.

Meanwhile, they said that my approach with the investigator was devious and could backfire on me, even if I found out Keith was having an affair in Harwich. (I was still knocked back still by Colin's ongoing criticism of me meeting weirdos.)

"Is Keith showing you any real evidence of having an affair?" Diana asked.

"No. Not to me. We're fucking like normal."

"Too much information," said Patricia.

I said, "The odd thing in Adam's reports is that he does seem to be a bit familiar with Yojana Asthana."

"So it might be the wrong person after all," said Patricia. "He's carrying on with a colleague here?"

"I still think..."

"He's not time-travelling then," said Diana. "Perhaps I should chat with Mouldy like I do with Glenda online. We fans find each other. Don't worry - I won't."

Suddenly there was a vehicle screech and thudding noise outside. I rushed out to find a man hit at a zebra crossing nearby, and it seemed he was lifeless. Others dialled 999; I messaged Reverend Colin, and I spoke to the shocked lorry driver bent over in his cab frozen from what had happened.

Apparently the victim was one of our agricultural workers from eastern Europe who'd looked left not right at the moment when a lorry was coming along and the driver had assumed he'd stay on the path. Colin Cromer arrived in five minutes, as did the ambulance and police. Clamping my backside, I directed some police to people who'd spoken to me (potential witnesses), and Colin gave what comforts he could to bystanders on the scene. Traffic built up and it was all soon coned off anyway. The man was killed there and then, and the lorry driver submitted himself for questioning.

When I seemed to run out of other people who wanted to speak to me, I returned to Diana and Patricia, as they had stayed in the cafe, and then used the loo. Back with them, I told them what had happened and recovered a little myself. Because the road was a potential crime scene, Patricia left to get back to her car in a car park, to get to her house and the arrival of her kids before the traffic disruption went in many directions.

As I was leaving I could overhear racist type chat at large about Eastern Europeans who shouldn't be over here in the first place and that there is nowhere to rent any more for our people. It wasn't true of course: as the Margate conference stated. It was tribal anti-European stuff.

Colin Cromer was still about and came over to me, suggesting I call it a day and he would be enquiring about who knew the deceased and whether he would be involved in funeral arrangements. He also added, "Behave yourself."

I had my appointment with Kay Parker about this agency teacher.

Meeting Philip Shrimpton the Teacher

For a reason I could not fathom, the headteacher messaged me to meet her and the agency teacher at The Playground, having reopened recently. There was no entry fee; one paid per ride.

I'd been into school twice as a curate to contribute to RE classes. Unlike Colin, I'd not taken any assemblies. But here we were in the warm open air, and the sea air was welcome.

On leaving, Kay managed to say to, "Let me know if Mr. Shrimpton is any good. One of my last acts before retirement might be to employ him."

"World Goth Day," he said to me, "And we're in Ramadan. And I'm interested in what pupils and their families do."

"Goths? I suppose they can be regarded as religious, in a sense," I replied. "So who arranged this meeting, and why here?"

"The head did. I suppose she wants you to check me out. And I said I'd come here, to have a go on the rides. It's been warm. My sort of thing."

On the thirty-five metre ferris wheel he told me all about Robert Jackson and the anthropological approach to teaching RE. He said it engaged pupils because of their experiences at home. I thought this odd, if only because I found very few religious experiences among the pupils at all. He said Rasa Market and Lude schools were favourable to his approach.

We didn't discuss anything on the slingshot ride with its forty-five metre launch height. He was like a kid himself, wanting to go here, there and everywhere. It was the same with the forty metre booster. The roller coaster was a conversation stopper too, and not a lot was said on the forty metre fly chairs (an alternative to the ferris wheel). I enjoyed the waltzers the best and let my hair down on them. The dodgems were the same, for me. We found some candy floss at a stall, and tried some shooting at passing ducks.

So to the cafe, and he wondered if I'd be more of a 'concept cracker' in applying theology to the school children. I tried to tell him that theology was usually from the inside, and pupils were inside nothing except when in strongly denominational schools. In any classroom like in Foss, in such 'white' ethnic areas, three or four pupils only would have religious communal experience. Introducing theology was for A level at best and, even then, not deeply. I'd enjoyed Religious Education but only a few from the outside find interest in such ideas and consider religion in a critical manner.

"Not phenomenological? The phenomenological school is about describing what is essential."

"Like in a tedious interfaith meeting? At least concept cracking is opening up the descriptors."

He wondered if we could go to a pub, and he'd like to talk about other things. However, I said to him I wouldn't. "I dealt with a vehicle accident earlier."

"A pub might help to soften the impact. Are you married, by the way?"

"Yes."

"A good marriage?"

"I'd rather not talk about it. Look, I'm very sorry, but I think we've tackled matters and I'd really like to go home and be alone. You know, or should know, that the headteacher asked me for a report back."

"You'll say what?"

"I'll tell her that you are theoretically well-informed but had enjoyed easier positive teaching experiences than most. Lude still has a grammar school, and Rasa Market includes pupils who live at school attending church on Sunday."

"Ah. Possibly."

"May I see you again, perhaps to socialise and have a more friendly type meeting?"

"Sorry but I'd like to leave this as a professional meeting."

Something wasn't quite right. I was pleased he was gone. The worst thought in my mind was he'd read about teaching RE in a book and hadn't actually ever taught anyone.

It was an enjoyable meeting, Kay, with Philip Shrimpton, but it was unusual to say the least that this man had such positive RE teaching experiences when an agency teacher. He seemed well versed in the schools of RE teaching, or at least three of them.

Narrator: Keith *Leaks and Sabotage* (Thursday 23rd May)

It turned out that Philip Shrimpton's attempt at wooing my wife towards a bed yesterday had failed spectacularly. He said she was still recalling the lorry accident earlier, but she wouldn't have gone with him for an extra ride.

As for his survey of SMS in Titansea, I thought he must have been making a report about running the place down.

Friday was intended to be the very last day of the stress testing, with an evaluation to come. In fact, we were done by late Wednesday, but on that day Security had grounds for believing that their system in Titansea was compromised and they were still running checks.

Perhaps it was Felixstowe passing on the blame! On Thursday Archie Holborn saw skulduggery in reverse: someone in ICT itself had produced a leak in order that we *should* upgrade in Serninsea. I told Archie that there was a leak that had come on paper in the post. What would 'A. M.' mean? He thought, possibly, 'About Monitoring'.

Why would an ICT weakness come through the post? Precisely because, he said, it would put the scent off ICT. It might all come out at the full evaluation coming along in some days. He made it clear that there were no still plans to upgrade ICT in Serninsea.

I told him that I hoped the note wasn't from anyone in the Worshipful Company, because it is supposed to observe commercial confidentiality boundaries. My mentoring Yojana was over and it shouldn't have affected anything anyway.

Meanwhile, he had some news being passed on by word of mouth from the bishops. It was that everyone, except me, should lend a hand (as the opportunity

arose) in recruiting Linda. Yes, Philip had failed but I should expect unusual developments very soon. Disturbances were to continue but real actions were also to happen around me.

Narrator: Linda *Seeing the Nurse* (Thursday 23rd May)

A message on my phone from Kay Parker said:

Thanks for your insights. We won't be employing Mr. Shrimpton. I'd like you to come next to the school on Tuesday 4th June (precise details later) to be shared with a rabbi of the Reformist tradition.

I arrived for my 3 pm appointment to see the nurse, Sister Yvonne Curzon.

"Hia," she said, looking at her computer screen. "You're here after seeing Dr. Gujjar."

"My rectal area is a bit loose; I go to toilet at inconvenient times."

"We don't want you developing incontinence. May I look?"

So, once again, my forearms were on a resting couch, with my bottom out. This time she wanted my legs apart, and used a speculum, and shone an LED torch down the rabbit hole.

"So what exactly happened with your boyfriend?"

"I was nineteen when it began. I gave up my own accommodation and moved in with my boyfriend. He had a speculum like that, and a bar speculum. He made my anus as wide as he could get it, day after day. Basically, he did to my arse what he did to my mouth."

"Both because of your vagina dimensions."

"Yes."

"You let him do this."

"I fell in love with him. I was dependent on him, away from home. And I felt like, you know, for him or anyone to make love to me, he needed other ways to be satisfied. When I need to go, I really need to go. It's not all bad. I was away in Margate and trapped in a lift. A pregnant woman needed to pee, so I did with her, and I nearly did a dump in front of everyone. At least I proved to myself that I could clamp my backside."

"Put your trousers on and come and sit down. So this really is a gynaecological issue, with potential incontinence consequences. I don't see why this is an issue as a clergywoman as such."

"Because it's embarrassing to have to evacuate my bowels in a parishioner's toilet. A number of times I have clamped my backside to get back to the church or my house."

"A possibility is to use foam plugs for that. If you wore underwear, you could use a pad better."

"I am not wearing underwear."

"And of course, lucky you, you never have periods."

"No. Give me a plan of action!"

"You should cut down on high-fibre foods, avoid alcohol."

"I don't drink, other than awful communion wine."

"Avoid caffeine if you can. Don't use a sweetener called sorbitol. But the main thing is to exercise, and I think we can try some sat in that chair. So when you dilate, do this as well."

"Sure."

"So the pelvic floor is a muscular lining for the pelvis a bit like a hammock in shape that attaches to the sitting bone, the tail bone, and the pubic bone. The muscle complex is to resist gravity - your faeces, basically. So, with me, now, breathe in, slide the tail bone forward, breathe out and slide the tail bone and pubic bone backwards. Good. Let's go forwards and backwards. You see, moving the bones is how to train the muscular lining. Two bum cheeks, of course: so take the weight on the left side, lifting the other sitting bone and bring the weight through the centre. You should feel the movement within the pelvis and the natural lift in the lining of the pelvis."

"I think so."

"The trick is to keep your head centred over the pelvic lining way below because the weight of your head works through to the pelvic muscles. Now, do some 'bottom walking' on the chair. One side goes forwards and then the other. Good. Slide back."

She got up and found a cushion.

She said, "Put this between your knees. Squeeze on it and allow the pelvic lining to lift up, relaxing the pelvic floor again as well as contracting it. Let's maintain the lift when contracting, and let it rest - combine this with breathing, so breathe in with contracting and breath out with relaxing. I have a leaflet here."

"So just these two exercises?"

"See how you go. But get into the habit of regular toilet times, using a hot drink to help beforehand, and get ahead of the curve. You should make good progress, but if you don't then return to Dr. Gujjar and we'll take it from there."

"Thank you."

"I'm not done yet. I will take your blood pressure and I would ask you for a blood sample."

While she was doing the first of these, she asked me, "Do you see a gynaecologist regularly?"

"Fairly. It has to be mine. I create too many waves with others. I don't mind students. They need to learn."

She took a blood sample. "We'll do the usual monitoring tests. If there is anything untoward, we'll be in touch. But one more thing, how is your sex life with this husband of yours?"

"In terminal decline, I think. He's been unfaithful. I have someone in mind I'd like to be unfaithful with. I did have some sex recently with a bishop. He was very vigorous."

"In your bottom?"

"In my mouth."

"Is he local?"

"You mean geography?"

"Yes."

"Is this relevant?"

"It is for frequency."

"Ah, no, south coast."

"And how is your reflex in your throat?"

"Gone. Gone completely."

"Your husband again."

"Yes."

"I'd divorce him. Perhaps as a reverend you don't agree."

"Oh I think it is coming. He has a partner. It's a serious relationship."

"So someone else will have their bottom loosened and their throat altered?"

"Possibly. But she has a cervix I'm sure and will accommodate him easily."

"We are done, here, for now. May I also respectfully suggest some gentler treatment for your hair? It looks a bit stressed. Nothing serious. Our next appointment. I have Wednesday 10th July, bang on midday. There may be a student in then. First years and they're not allowed to do anything but observe."

I left her thinking, yes, a clean divorce is inevitable and indeed preferable. I was a fool, as a student, and was ever since.

Narrator: Keith *Fun with Yojana* (Friday 24th May)

Really, the internal investigations were over, but formally they ran until the end of the week. So Yojana and I decided we'd have a finale: we'd do some sabotage and celebrate with some good fucking. On the basis of our plan, I picked her up in the morning of Friday at Maa Skelter. At Titansea we communicated with each other electronically on the firm's system that we would meet and discuss documents. We grabbed some irrelevant papers.

I took Yojana to Maa Skelter, arriving about 4 pm, taking advantage of early finishing after a busy week. Outside we recognised Adam Magellan's assistant's car, but played it normal by both of us ignoring him and going through the *Staff Only* door. With a secluded cold beer each we decided that I'd stay back, and then Yojana would go and sabotage this particular investigating role. I sent a message to Security.

Peter Marshall of Magellan Investigations is at the Marsh Coast Maa Skelter Guest House, anticipating our movements after Yojana and I sent out electronic messages. What's going on? We are going to confront him.

A reply did not take long.

Someone could be intercepting the communications system at Titansea. It will need investigating and raising at the various evaluations.

Yojana alone went out into the public space and approached Marshall, so that he had to collect his bag and take back his payment made just before to her mother. He'd actually intended to stay overnight, which seemed somewhat over the top - but then anything was possible from Magellan and him.

I said to her when she was back behind the scenes, "The stupidity of them, saying he was in pharmaceuticals, when he was doing the crappy magic show only

recently in pink Lent!"

Regarding Marshall's boss, it wasn't that I disliked Adam Magellan in particular, it's just that I regarded all ex-coppers with the same amount of contempt. I said that he'd love wielding authority - especially over that lad, someone indeed learning to be a magician.

So Yojana and I went to her room, and I had a request. I produced a shaver with new blades in it plus some foam. I was able to work her nicely to no pubic hair.

"Either one way or the other," I said to her. "Linda has nothing, her friend Diana de Groot at the Bever Wood Naturist Club was hairy - just as I remember her when we fucked."

"Okay. List the locals you have shagged," instructed Yojana. "Go on. Linda Bode was *the* one, very obviously. Cheryl Mould is the other. So you say Diana de Groot."

"She was Diana King then. She was good. She was on top and took me in deep, lost in the bush, producing some squeeze. Really wet she was."

Yojana said, "Jenny, of course, now among the Geese. List them. Actual sexual intercourse, but you'd better exclude the many Geese or we'll be here until tomorrow."

"Let's see. Helen Venus was the first and I lost my virginity on my sixteenth birthday - it was the dinner lady's present for me. I know that many pupils went to her house. Miss Venus, who thought I was a charming lad, later became Mrs. Helen Eris. Justine Geldzahler was at school and I was her first; Carrie Warren was full of sex talk but I was her actual first as well. Carrie has since transitioned to a man, Carl. When I came back on holiday during my first year at East Midlands University, I shagged Diana King, who was a new buddy of Linda. Diana struck me as bicurious long ago, but Linda was busy with Jenny Masters. Linda is clearly bisexual and knows it but Diana kept denying it then. Linda I avoided! Jenny Masters was next just before her fling with Adam alone. Jenny found Adam, was in a spin anyway, and spun faster into a small religious group and rammed the brakes on. However, when Linda went to my university, she hung on to me for comfort, so we had sex and she moved in with me in my third year. Later on there was Lucinda Bode..."

"Lucinda Bode?"

"When I got my degree I found a small administration job at *The Bird*..."

"The what?"

"East Midlands University - until Linda finished. When back in Serninsea, Diana started being Linda's close pal and that's when Lucinda was jealous - 'envious' as Linda would say - and paranoid really and came on to me. She was a lookalike and I could go deep. So, next: yep, Hannah and Tilly McClelland: Hannah and her sister were both seventeen year old farm workers - I had them both together in the same night, a bit like recently with Bettina and Kerry up in Hartlepool. I was twenty-three then. Who was next? Patricia Berger as she got divorced and then came Diana again, her mate, because she had a difficult moment in her marriage, and had sex with me, but also because she, like Lucinda, wanted to know what Linda was getting from me. But Diana couldn't take me in her throat or her arse. I tried; she tried."

"Why did you do Linda's throat and bottom? You don't with me."

"Something you do when younger. You're more experimental - but not with chance encounters."

This was six years ago and then it was a chance encounter with Cheryl. I said

that we both looked back at it fondly, being after some shared fish and chips and all out of doors."

"The special encounter in your book of women."

"Yeah."

"You *have* been around. Children?"

"Carrie had a boy by me but I didn't know at that time. Hannah's is mine: a boy as well. I've paid maintenance for Kevin ever since when working. You don't tell *anyone* - I have no contact with them. I told Terry only after he'd rejected me and I realised what he was really about."

"But your reputation..."

"Parents were upstanding Anglicans and provided excellent cover. So were Carrie's and they all bugged off; I think her transitioning was the final straw for them. He, now a father, still doesn't want to know me."

"You would have become a priest."

"Being a priest would have given me good cover when it came to women. It wouldn't have stopped anything. It's Cheryl that is domesticating me."

"It's your age."

"It's not my age. I'm in bed with you, aren't I?"

That was enough. We fucked.

After that we were back downstairs where we had a meal each of steak and kidney pie and beans and roast potatoes. (It did such evening meals for guests by request.)

She asked me an interesting question. Why did I so want to leave Linda? What was it about Cheryl? After all, if I liked her - Yojana - I could just carry on with Linda because Yojana said she accepted my situation. Ah. I said there could be nothing between us. We were a Gander and Goose, in the Worshipful Company, and it was a group ethos. She seemed sad, if accepting. She knew the ethos, and she had to be sexually free herself.

"Tell me about Linda, Keith."

"Though Linda was known to study hard, her applied intelligence was perhaps a rebellion against her parents who had no respect for school. Linda kept with them in her near sacred stance on naturism."

"Not religion."

Sort of Pagans. But, in the Chaplaincy, there was a liturgical phrase, *This is my body*, and it resonated with her. Through any differences she affirmed her body, and she affirmed through exposure. So I set about altering her body through sexual practices."

"So how were her siblings?"

"Her older sister is stupid, their older brother is a chancer and the youngest sister is brighter, sweeter, and no way to get to her."

"You've mentioned no female at university other than Linda."

"That's because I was hopeless abroad. There were some nearlies."

"How did you meet at university? Tell me - I'm fascinated - from first meeting to first fuck."

"I first encountered Linda outside between lectures. I told her that she was the strange Miss Bode of the farm above Serninsea. She said I was the Rolling Stone of the Upper Sixth."

"Because she knew your middle name."

"And now, I told her, we could make our own life away from opinionated parents. She said she was doing Religious Studies and Social Science. I said I did Applied Theology and Applied Mathematics. She remarked that she should be able to apply Social Science to Religious Studies but couldn't see how mine would combine. So that was the first meeting."

"And then?"

"In the student bar was next, where she confessed to being a little lonely. On the third occasion, it was to the Chaplaincy, after my invitation, which was very middle class Anglican, and then to my rented house, shared with other students. I wanted to get her knickers off, except she didn't wear any."

"And *then*..."

"She was so tight, and it was a shallow fuck. She could see this and asked me to lick her around her pubes. So that gave her pleasure. Then I said that the run-up to Easter is very important. She said Lent too, which was what I meant. She said she'd enjoyed the Chaplaincy meeting, allowing me to explain that it was not the wild, dogmatic, Christian Union. She asked if I went to the Serninsea parish church, and I mentioned the family going, and Colin Cromer running the show, but that she and I could make a life while at The Bird. Serninsea was possibly a problem."

"Why did you continue with Linda in Serninsea."

"Because I needed someone to marry, to be respectable. I was already formulating my approach to going into the ministry, with my family behind me."

Yojana and me still eating, I continued that a fragility entered our relationship, especially once I was rejected for the ordained ministry. Linda getting the future I had wanted was a big blow for me at first. But I was distracted by my parents starting to break up. Their shop window was shattered. Colin Cromer failed to save their marriage.

"I don't think they ever really loved each other. They were themselves under pressure to make good - I was the only child."

Saying that the Confraternity recruited me, Yojana asked why. I could only suppose that Terry Barman had a certain amount of regret, at least, that he was active in turning me down for theological college. He had since realised that I had a sexual past and theological interest that suited the group as a gander. Furthermore, there was still a possibility that I could be trained to be ordained.

Yojana said her invitation to become a goose was because her uncle had been recruited. He wanted to see her body, grope it and enter her occasionally. Thus we had two Hindus in the group, demanding a need for an interfaith approach, and the rabbi was brought in given the friendship between Terry and him.

Yojana said, "I'm not converting to Christianity."

"It's not required."

Yojana asked, "She must obey the bishops?"

I said, "The Vanguard needs more discipline, especially of apostolically ordained clergy who are the focus of sacramental power. Non-conformist clergy and cleric equivalents of other faiths have a freedom of choice that cannot be given to apostolic based clergy."

Yojana got off her seat, came around me and hugged me from the back. As she did this her mother came in and asked if we wanted a sweet. No. Coffee? Yes. So coffee came.

As Yojana sat down again for the coffees, I said that I did not want to become

personal with her. She was, basically, a good fuck. She'd have to learn to enjoy Bishop Liz on her coming travels, as well as the male and female (one each) bishops she'd meet. Liz, I told her, was a religious and sexual extremist.

"We are not personal to ourselves in this outfit. We open ourselves to God, and we do it in each religious tradition. You should study the erotic traditions of Hinduism that the British Victorians tried to suppress, and teach us, and open yourself to every sexual experience practised for the erotic gods."

I said that Linda had developed her skills, and I still had the metal objects by which I had altered her. If she wanted a lot of anal sex and throat fucking, I could use them to train her body. She said she would see what Liz wanted first.

We went back to Yojana's bed, despite feeling well fed. We could at least play with each other. I assured Yojana that I would not give up the group to be with Cheryl. The group represented a pure ideal of boundariless sexual liaison with one's body, a vision for a loving *Pure Land*. Cheryl definitely wanted a baby, and being a legitimate father appealed to me. If Yojana wanted a child, I said to her, it might have to be like in Julie Manns' situation.

"That it could be anybody's?"

"Trouble is, we know it's Jonathan's. He recruited her, mentored her, and he did the lot."

Yojana and I decided to share a warm soapy bath together, after which we returned to bed. I became ready for more action, and so we were fucking again.

I said to her, "You've done well today. The more sexual you get, the better for everyone."

I went on to say that I would report to management only that we realised we were being followed, while asking about the paper note.

It was 12:30 am before I said goodbye to Yojana's mother and father. Whilst her parents knew nothing about the Confraternity - at least I didn't think so - they did know the nature of our relationship with me being married and to be married again. After all, the mother's high-powered businessman brother was a client of an escort and had been a little incestuous with his niece.

I returned home about 1 am with the excuse for Linda of winding up all the investigating matters in hand. I told her that the stressful time was at last over. I had been working to clear all the documents, with rest periods. And, I said, "They are paying me generous overtime, as they bloody well should."

Narrator: Linda *Reading Adam's Report* (Saturday 25th May)

It was the Saturday afternoon that, with Keith doing a little gardening, I accessed a report headed on the phone *Arguments Relating to Geoffrey Lampe*. I actually downloaded this and the other reports on to my desktop computer, and made them encrypted and password protected.

The piece opened was entitled, *Investigation Thwarted* and dated yesterday. Oh dear, I thought. It all happened Friday. I combined reading with pelvic exercises on the seat.

Junior Investigator Peter Marshall asked for a room for one night about 3:20

pm at the Asthanas' Bed and Breakfast with a cover story of his work - resting before travelling on in the selling of pharmaceuticals to local GPs. His stock was in his car, he said. This overnight stay would be without his wife: he was of course recognised from before. Conversation was they were hoping to expand the bed and breakfast business towards a hotel with a new extension to produce a dining area with a view over the sea. Investigator Marshall took his own suitcase upstairs. He took a look around.

Investigator Marshall placed himself in the visitors' lounge downstairs where he could see people entering and leaving the establishment. Investigator Adam Magellan followed targets Keith Jupitas and Yojana Asthana in his car part-way to the guest house arriving 4 pm, satisfied that this was their destination and investigator Marshall saw them arrive together. Both walked past the lounge and through the Staff Only door. At 4:20 pm target Yojana Asthana alone emerged from the same door and walked into the lounge. She directly asked Junior Investigator Marshall if he was staying overnight and he confirmed. Target Yojana Asthana asked if Marshall had recommended the place to his own wife and he said yes and they might holiday there later.

Target Yojana Asthana's response was that he does not have a wife because, 'You are employed by that chap who runs that detective agency in town and you're not married.' Investigator Marshall was then asked, 'Are you really staying or just want to watch?' He asked about what he would watch, but she said, 'Nice knowing you,' and he was wasting his time perhaps he ought to collect his payment that they would generously not retain. Investigator Marshall retrieved his case, collected the money and returned to his car at 4:35 pm. She also stated that she had seen him talking to a private investigator.

This must be incorrect. The obvious conclusion drawn is that targets Jupitas and Asthana knew that they were under our surveillance. We do therefore suspect prior knowledge, and this could have come from George Wickenby Private Detective Agency or SMS self-investigation procedures or both.

We also conclude it unlikely although not impossible that an affair is taking place between Keith Jupitas and Yojana Asthana.

This investigation having been 'blown', no further investigation is possible by us. A final report will include all appendices.

End

Of course I was still not done with this, but was unsure where to take it. Yojana Asthana had bust the investigation with Keith not directly present but Keith had said nothing to me either. I did wonder too what Yojana was thinking asking if Peter wanted to watch.

Did Keith even suspect I was the person making the actual investigation with Adam Magellan's business? So far SMS would be paying but my actions were supposed to be private and deniable.

Having this on the computer was risky enough with Keith close by. So I re-encrypted the text, closed it securely, and made a drink for both of us.

Anyhow, having soon cleared my bowels, I went out to the High Street for anything of interest, and perhaps to bump into any active parishioners. I did not! But I did meet Salome Lichtblau and her dog Hendrik, giving it a pat and watching the direction of its nose towards me.

Enquiry Over (Sunday 6, 26th May)

Sunday and Adam Magellan was outside the church to tell me an excess bill was coming and it would add £50 on to all the costs so far. "Also, George Wickenby rang me complaining - but not at me - that he had lost the contract with SMS to investigate leaking information. He said that there could be future work for my agency instead."

"Oh dear," I said. "Or is that good?"

Adam asked me directly, "Was this really about an affair or something originating from the firm? It looks like George was doing it and I was doing it, even testing *him* out probably."

I tried to tell the truth, but didn't. I said, "I know he is having an affair and I wanted this discovered. I think Keith is very clever. He plays poker at the casino," I said, although as far as I knew he had never played poker at the casino.

"The inquiry is over," declared Adam. The final, formal report would be delivered the same way."

"Try with the link title *What about Maurice Wiles?*" I suggested. I spelt out: "W I L E S."

The *Final Report* was already written, he said. Anyway, he legged it before Colin might have seen us.

After Evensong I clicked on the *What about Maurice Wiles?* link. As well as all the summarising, there was a section on the extent to which SMS's internal investigating involved outsiders. Parties knew internally that they were being investigated and monitored, but not always by what precise means. Much would be revealed at an SMS-wide evaluation. There was a question of what the George Wickenby agency knew, leaked, stated, and did not state. The crux of the report for me was here:

It is quite possible that the gestures of friendliness or familiarity between the targets were in the context of the internal investigations and for potential display when knowing they were under surveillance - this amount of friendliness and yet reliability. After all, we discovered that they were handling documents properly.

Only with different investigating agents and/ or other means of interception at other times might it be possible to investigate further the nature of any relationship.

The central question is whether there is a relationship and sexual affair between Keith Jupitas and colleague Yojana Asthana at Systematic Measurement Services.

We found only familiarity between them that is compatible with close colleagues.

What I'd hoped for was this: that in the course of investigating Keith and Yojana, Adam would have discovered a personal conversation between Keith and Cheryl. But, obviously, nothing was found. Interestingly, Peter Marshall left the bed and breakfast at 4:35 pm but Keith still did not get in until one in the morning. So all that time went unmonitored. Was it all work? Really? This puzzled me.

As I went through all the appendix of documents, something caught my eye. There was this white plastic badge of a goose with a B on it seen under the reception shelf. The reason why this caught my attention was the connection between St. Sernin and Toulouse, and then Toulouse Geese as being good at egg laying and then raising their young. We had some on our farm, and they're productive geese that mix in their habitat with ducks. And the letter B. Bavette? Breed? Bird? But what else? Why would both Ken Osis and the Ashana's have it? Anyway, it wasn't relevant for my purposes. I now needed a strategy to turn this to tackle Keith over Cheryl Mould, and I wanted the Investigator to do it, and grabbed my favourite hair brush.

I went from the secured bedroom computer to go downstairs to Keith, who was visibly more relaxed. He asked if I fancied an early night, so I said yes and the marriage continued.

After the SMS Exercise (Monday 27th May)

Keith in bed said that a leak in the Titansea branch, thought to have been solved, was evident again at the end. Titansea was reliable, and then it was not.

I could not ask him about Ephouse Travel Ltd, and all that, in that Adam Magellan clearly knew about this material.

I did ask, "Give us an example where all this is important? For example, working relationships."

"Insurance. We measure and the insurance companies can't wriggle out of responsibilities."

"I meant within the firm."

"Well, Compliance mustn't let customers act like some MOT customers approach a garage. The customer says, 'I provide the payment, you just say the car has passed its MOT if near enough.' No. If I was like a dodgy garage, Yojana finds me out.

"And if Yojana is dodgy?"

"That's what this has been all about. Now I must get up: will you make my breakfast?"

"Yes, of course."

Later, the disguised manager Martin Haralambos rang me and told me himself that the exercise was ended, and actually my husband did very well because Yojana and her department and Keith and his did everything correctly. He then said, "I'm afraid that Adam Magellan wasn't very good. His investigation was blown by Keith and Yojana. We won't be using him again."

Martin arranged to pay me (I added up the amounts paid and yet to be paid) and added that the firm would in fact pay George Wickenby fully and use him again.

"Can I ask you a question about your monitoring of Keith and the relationship with the Independent Standards Unit?" I asked.

"Yes of course. *Interdependent*, now. Not 'Standards' either."

"Why monitor them when they *know* they are being monitored?"

"Because it reminds them of proper procedures and to use them, and it puts the heat on them when we plant various tasks where information sharing is easy.

They don't always know what is real and which is fake. And in around six months we monitor them briefly without telling them, using George Wickenby again. Which is why we can't lose George but, with his performance, we have no plans to use Adam Magellan again. I have a question for you. Magellan didn't find anything untoward that has affected your relationship?"

I said, "There was never any danger of that."

"Good. You should continue to keep your role in this unstated, at least for the time being. We'll do all the revealing in our evaluation, and he should think you've been helpful in your work."

"I've every confidence in that. Do you want the reports that Adam Magellan sent me?" I asked.

"You can keep those as private unless you want to redact by sending us only the information on document handling."

I agreed to that. I then stated, "I'd be interested in next year's formal testing." (That was untrue.)

He replied, "It's a good place to locate, Serninsea. This is a place to invest for the future. It is an upstanding place, an ethical place, good workforce."

So, I wondered, who might have been this Martin Haralambos? I went to the website and although there was no such person I reckoned who it was straight away: the Research and Development Executive, Archibald Holborn.

Chapter 07 Adam is Used

Narrator: Linda *Lay Competitor?* (Tuesday 28th May)

Colin suggested I go and visit and converse with Andrew Walter, a marginal and a disabled member of the congregation; in other words, he attended no more than once a month and didn't contribute much. In fact, I didn't know much about him, but his age was listed as forty-seven.

Before I went, I had a hot drink and visiting my house toilet to try and get ahead of the curve.

This was one of these pastoral visits where, basically, one was paid to have a conversation. His downstairs flat on Malbert Road turned out to be rather more extensive than I had expected and was suitable for wheelchair use, although he could walk on a stick. He'd been injured during firefighting service and had been moved to part-time administration. He had become one of those self-educated types that grapple with matters of the mind.

Entering this library-cum-study, he said, "This fireman, right, suspected a dad and his kid of starting a fire like pyromaniacs, and so the accused lad asked his accused dad if they were pyromaniacs, and he said, 'Yes we arson.'"

"Ah," I said, "but what did the religious fireman say when facing a big blaze? 'Let us spray.'"

"Call it a score draw."

He leaned on a stick, as we looked at his many books and I recognised some titles. He said, "A good chunk is psychology. I would do a degree in it, but then I don't really need to do one. It would be expensive too."

"So you also have a Christian outlook, participating in the liturgy, taking Communion about once a month or less; Colin has never got you into doing any jobs. I can't see any theology."

"I thought I would look into religion through my interest in the self. Especially after burns and muscle damage and the trauma of it all, including mental. My interest is the self in other than behaviourist terms. I don't want to get involved in institutional matters and its thinking."

"There's some sociology that says we have universal 'institutions', but we have specific 'institutes': religion is a universal institution and its institutes would include specific Churches - but you can't avoid institutions or choosing between institutes," I said. "Zidjerveld, he's called."

"Can't avoid? Only if the secular is counted as religious," he said, "and I use your rituals as a kind of engagement. But the self is active, bodily, psycho-sexual, activist, social, joining."

"You've not read any theology?"

"I wouldn't know where to start."

"Well, I could help you there. I mean, you *could* look at the differences between say natural and revealed theology: see if they are sustainable. One always ends up needing the other. Or between systematic and biblical, or..."

"I might have to start somewhere before all that. I'm more interested in persons, as in the great Carl Rogers, you know, who died in 1987. That was like

education relating to personhood, John Dewey onwards, and a strong sense of being a person."

"All that feeds into pastoral theology, then. It's what I am supposed to do, although to be honest deacons like myself and many a priest are amateurs when it comes to theoretical knowledge."

"You clerics bumble along."

"We have cups of tea and coffee. So tell me about you and all this stuff. Let's sit down. This is a room I should have."

"You can use it any time."

We did sit at a desk in this library and study. He leaned forward pointing at books by and on Carl Rogers. As he did, I noticed that white badge again. This was the one reported behind the reception at Yojana's, and worn by Reverend Ken Osis. The badge had a black goose and a large white B on it.

He said, "Rogers was a pragmatist, an interpreter of actions and outlooks, who diagnosed dysfunctional children."

"The days of the Sunday School are long gone."

"Eh?"

"Just a thought in my head."

"The days of the secondary school *here* might soon go; we can surely maintain a secondary school in the main town."

"That was my school. My husband went there; all my friends. I think we'll keep it. There used to be two. The headteacher there just started as we left; she's been there yonks."

"Kay Sally Parker. A lot of what Rogers did was relational, one with the other. It becomes about the client, the person, the outlook, concepts, attitudes. Being about the person is the I-Thou therapeutic relationship."

"Ah, Martin Buber; Jewish theology, personalist theology you see," I said, jumping in. "So you could start there. 'I-Thou'. Once again you could read the 1950s, 1960s and to the 1980s personalist God material. Depth and all that."

"Indeed, depth," he said. "And then, through social institutions like marriage and the effect on individuals, forming them, self and society. Makes me a bit of a hermit."

"There you are, then: *institutions!*"

"I didn't deny the role of institutions; it's just a preferred perspective."

"A lot of this is interpretive sociology as well. The meaning of the situation," I added.

"Right. It is about, I think, significant others, and that makes a leap across: people constructing the self-concept. But the self and the self-concept aren't quite the same. The self-concept is constructed, whereas the self is something more fundamental."

"Sounds similar to the institution versus the institute."

"OK, I'm going to give way on this, Linda. I can call you Linda?"

"Please do. Buddhism as well," I said, "like taking the self to no-self."

"Yes, I don't quite understand that. I've seen it. But also this liturgy you have, especially that 1662 stuff, it's as if the self is rotten - there is no health in us. Well, actually, *yes there is*. But what is the Buddhist reducing - the self or the self-concept?"

"They'd see them as one. Schopenhauer arrived at a kind of Buddhism in that

everything as it is gives way to there being only space and time."

"Recently I encountered some Buddhist material from a nun, I think, who talked about the body as something to be regarded as filth and yet it is also to be understood as transient and the means to experience."

"Have you some writing on this?" I asked.

"It was a talk. I haven't got it."

"Can I find it online?"

"No, I think it was informal; I heard about it from someone somewhere. Sorry."

"So the body is rotten, decaying, but you should be, what, positive about it?"

"I don't know. I'm sorry." (He seemed reluctant to say more, as if he shouldn't have mentioned it in the first place.) "Sounds like this contrast is within Christianity," he said, to move it on.

"As for *our* stuff," I said, "it's an historical tradition of the purity and goodness of God contrasted with what they used to call 'man' as utterly flawed. Very much that salvation and grace come from beyond: you can't pull yourself up with your own bootstraps. Anglicanism combines Calvinism and bishops."

"I don't know about that. But you can pull yourself up with a therapist, or with good friends, or a diary, or a wife or lovers. I mean, what makes a disinterested therapist secure is for the therapist to have a partner."

"You are single."

"I am single but you never know. I do have a sex life. With more than one person."

"Oh. I'd better not enquire, Andrew."

"It enhances everything. An ideal. Try it!" he said.

"In *my* job? You're right that a therapist benefits from having a stable partner: being partnered definitely helps being a deacon or a priest. Trying to go out with a member of the congregation, or even having significant friends with a member of the congregation, breaks too many walls to allow pastoral relations to work. We have to look beyond."

"Just saying. Because sex enjoyed is, what, like a vision of your Kingdom of God, or, more in my terms, a kind of inner ecstasy that is also an inner harmony?"

"Yes, I can see that. Presumably, the orgasm," I said.

"Yes, precisely."

"The danger for a minister is to become attached to the wrong person."

"And for a therapist too. Clients become dependent, might have fantasies about the therapist. 'I have a partner' is a very useful line to give to a client."

"You sound like a therapist, or you could be one," I told him.

"I've been a disaster with women. Maybe I've just been unlucky. Anyway, approval from important others is important. I'm getting that now."

"Would I be a significant other then? Pastorally?"

"Oh I see. You will be a significant other as a... You know, 'friends with benefits' does mean good friendship. But I've not even had a chat with you before," he said.

Wondering where this was going, I said, "I am happily married myself! I'm talking about the significance of pastoral relationships."

"I have chatted with Colin. He's a moderate chap. Softly spoken, light touch, knows many people locally over a long time. I think he is a bit innocent, though."

"It would be wrong for me to discuss him."

"More anonymously, a therapist provides positive inputs for a person who's had so much negativity in life - or even calls them 'conditions of worth', providing for a reciprocity that can't be given otherwise. It needs more than a therapy input: it needs a change of conditions, new significant others and so on. I mean all-round. This has happened to me."

"So, do you have these people around you?"

"Yeah. A move to firefighting admin was like a failure. So I need approving voices, and actually I've got them. Plus more understanding."

"Understanding?" I asked.

"Not appearances, not expectations from out there, but a new and different direction, saying this is right and good - positivity flows. Intimacy really helps. That's what you miss; and when you get it, it's very good."

I was a little puzzled. "I have a Spiritual Confessor. Ideally it should allow some offloading, but I think he is a bit incompetent."

"But your marriage provides intimacy," he stated. "Therapy is one thing, intimacy is another."

"I have good friends. I'm sure via this therapy material that you understand confidentiality and appropriateness. So I can tell you that I am a naturist. Naturism adds a level of intimacy to friendships: an absence of barriers and yet it emphasises the ordinary."

"You could study here naked if you want, Linda."

"Thank you very much but..."

"You and I could undress and sit closer and that would be more intimate but still with those pastoral rules," he said.

Oh dear, I was thinking, he wasn't backwards in coming forwards and this is going in a direction like with Jeremy Symes. I had to resist. I always had to open a can of worms; I could have kept my mouth shut. So I said, "We *could*, but not now, because it's also about appropriateness and proper relationships."

"Yes of course. Intimacy is problematic," he said.

"Rules apply."

"Why I think there is artificiality with some therapists. Each one has to be a trustworthy person, but those rules apply. Those rules aren't helpful if direct intimacy is sought."

"We're back to not mining the congregation for relationships."

"Acceptance, support, approval, are offered by therapists but a line is drawn; the other approach is to remove the line with your intimate others."

"Your experience, here: in Serninsea?"

"This is in Serninsea, yes, and some beyond. People I know here. We do the I-thou and remove the line. I get the feeling you don't want to obey rules."

"Me?"

"Yes."

"Do I give out these signals? I *want* to be rebellious, but then I want to be empathic in actuality and I'm saying why these rules exist, these lines."

"Outcomes improve from congruence, acceptance and empathy," he said. He leaned forward towards me, and I spotted that badge again under his jumper. "So, as a matter of interest, I approve of you." Then he leaned back.

"Well I certainly approve of you," I said. "And so this is your school of psychology?"

"Psychotherapy, actually, yes, but also I'm looking at others. I don't like behaviourism, obviously. I detect behaviourism in all these statistical publications for schools and hospitals. It's all deceptive. Performance without understanding: appearances again, nothing actual, isn't as deep."

"My bishop, well the under-bishop, reminds me about keeping up appearances. I shouldn't have said that."

"So I have my intimate circle, Linda, but there is a special woman coming into my orbit. Laura. Perhaps you could meet her, and meet her and me. We are doing some active empathy, really, given all her troubled background and even felt threats now. We have had sex."

"Oh. Is that wise?"

"It was mutual and wanted. She benefits from intimacy."

"Is she in your circle of friends?"

"She will benefit through understanding and such contact - yes, it is spiritual friendship."

"So this is spiritual friendship, intimate friendship?"

"Yes."

"Rules, again, Andrew, I'm afraid. They prevent me from talking about someone else. Indeed, like the therapist says: 'time's up' and I must move on to see others. I will see you again and you have my number."

"I'll see you out, Linda. Do come back - this could be good."

The chat made me think about this group he says existed: his intimate friends. Is the badge related to this? I wondered. I also thought about the poverty now of liturgical language, the inadequacy of our training in psychology, and how to achieve genuinely more intimacy with mind and body. He'd make a good priest, probably, at least at the pastoral level, except for perhaps these sexual intimacies, but in any case we train fewer people reaching their fifties.

Incidentally, Laura Kingswood was fifty years old and also a marginal attendee. Laura, Colin had told me, had endured a history of abuse with father, husbands, a boyfriend and even her brothers. She'd endured recent hospital mental health intervention. This was as much as Colin wanted me to know, should I find myself having to deal with her needs. Plus, apparently, she wanted anonymity where she lived as regards several of these people. Thus he said her address was in the safe, not on his computer. Therefore, being intimate with her seemed problematic.

I remarked to Colin, who found me in the church brushing my hair, at lunchtime, "Our ex-firefighter is helping Laura Kingswood; as he is well into understanding humanistic therapy, uplifting the sense of self. He's helping her, apparently, and has some sort of open relationship with her."

"Well there is a connection between them."

"It does raise the question of whether the clergy or people like him are the amateurs," I said.

"No it doesn't," Colin responded, rather definitely. "We have a distinctive religious, even missional dimension. It's not about the self, or images of the self, but transformation on a distinctive Christian understanding."

"I suppose so," I said, "now you put it like that."

Colin asked me: "Psychotherapy and open relationships and all that: did you, a Christian deacon of the Anglican tradition, convey a distinctly Christian message?"

"Well," I said, "I did refer to our liturgies, or he did, and I thought our liturgies

compare, em, yeah, badly."

"I'm too old for this," he suddenly said. "He and, with respect, you at present, do not understand sufficiently the thrust of the liturgical song. Really."

"Grace?"

"Oh, so you *do* understand. Well, if you conveyed that then you did at least make the essential point."

"I tried to do that. More tools needed."

"We are in need of grace; grace is freely offered: it is an act of love and deeper beyond any propping up of the self."

"Not pulling up with your own shoelaces."

"Absolutely. And if you mentioned that, it is even better."

"I did. Or he did."

"Perhaps if he takes it on board he will attend here more frequently. 'Missional', you see."

"And Laura Kingswood? He and others are hoping for a closer relationship with her. Is that right?"

"I'll continue to see her for the time being," he said. "And, whilst she is free to make her own mistakes, I'd warn against too many people being over-friendly, because true intimacy is precious. An extension to that is why we have and support very much the institution of monogamous marriage, Linda."

"Quite," I said. "Thank you, Colin."

Meanwhile, with no answer at Adam's front door, I delivered a note that I wanted to pay up now. He should get in touch by telephone to the church after Morning Prayer.

I also wanted to go in to create a report, and have it delivered to my husband in person by him with me present.

Narrator: Keith *Party Disagreements* (Tuesday 28th May)

Permission came from on-high to have time off from lunch onwards. It was to attend a Worshipful Company gathering. The bishop was putting on a party above the casino on Tuesday afternoon for us actors, the Geese: *Religion, Rest and Relaxation*. Rabbi Maurice Neptune joined us from Foss. Yojana was with me but her uncle was elsewhere.

While people were having light sandwiches and drinks from the kitchen, Christine read out the Buddhist's speech in Hartlepool, which meant that Fatima, Jenny, Tony Pierce, Janet Pierce and I had to hear it again less the ad-libs. The Bishop of Tees and others up there were not present.

We then had a Body Eucharist. Christine gave the sermon and she said that she had read this Buddhist talk carefully. "The Buddhist has a strong view of transience, but we as Christians should not view transience as dominant, and science is on our side. Matter does change, but it can become energy and then matter again. It is the first law of thermodynamics: conservation. And this means that matter is to be redeemed: it is brought to fulfilment. However, the Buddhist nun Anong and our bishop were right in their actions. *There is no health in us*. Our attitude, therefore, must become much more sacrificial. We perhaps ought to learn

some of the more difficult sexual activities that require some effort, a little pain or disgust, as too much is entertainment. Ascension Sunday is almost upon us, the moment of a torch into the reality we are promised, the means to it shown by the suffering servant himself."

At the Eucharist itself, Bishop Terry initiated Katy Ozga, the Marketing Manager of Ephouse Travel, whom he had mentored, and then Jenny initiated David Tosh, mentored by present but previously unknown to me Carolyn Goodie. Tosh was the Managing Director of Suffokent Electronics, the firm that had upgraded Felixstowe ICT and advised on the upgrade at Hartlepool. We then all participated in the bread and wine with bodily contact.

After this, the new initiate Andrew Walter said that his mentor's sermon had troubled him: he, a devotee of Carl Rogers, wanted to state that there surely is health in us and we could be positive. He asked if he could give a report to the group on his encounter with Linda.

Bishop Terry decided that, as bishop, he should speak first. He pointed out that we had a disagreement within the group and that we should not be afraid of disagreeing, so long as we continued to love and make love. A married couple having difficulty might enjoy an afternoon of sex and then find a will to solve their problems. He did not think, at this stage, that we should start with the more difficult sexual practices. The time may well come for some training in the darker practices, by someone like Christine. Meanwhile, the initiated should not become attached to their mentors and seek a wider range of sexual pleasures among more people. He wanted us to be loving and positive, spreading it about, ahead of the Kingdom.

Christine said in response of the need for shade as well as light.

Bishop Terry asked her to realise that the group just was not there yet. Meanwhile he said Philip Shrimpton's failure to go beyond a chat about Religious Education with Linda just added to the reputation of Bishop Jonathan. He agreed it was right that Philip did not wear his Hereteu badge; Andrew was sure Linda had noticed his badge.

Andrew Walter himself said that Linda and he had discussed psychology and theology. She probably noticed his badge twice. They'd discussed women openly; and she thought he was a member of some group who meet, remove their clothes and don't observe the usual boundaries. She'd asked if such a group was in Serninsea and he'd said it was. Andrew said he'd decided not to use the theatrical metaphors in case Linda joined too many dots. Andrew said that Linda was open and receptive - surprisingly so.

Bishop Terry said that we must be very very careful. Andrew had operated properly to nudge things along, as was policy for everyone but me towards Linda. The Bishop said we should praise God for all the positive signs we were receiving. Terry further said that he would see to it that Linda would still be required to continue with pastoral visits to Andrew.

Andrew said he would like to see Linda again. In fact, he wanted to fuck her. I don't know why he looked at me.

Rabbi Maurice Neptune was going to the secondary school for Religious Education on Tuesday 4th June. It was not normally a school for him to visit. The former head girl, Annie Fenwick, was with us and passed on the headteacher Kay Parker's greetings.

So Bishop Terry said, "Linda is expected there, I gather, thanks to Kay. I'll

contact Colin Cromer more or less immediately to continue the visits to Tony and reinforce her visit to the school. She can teach some RE. Kay and Annie can continue the 'softly softly catchee monkey' approach for now."

We had some good sex in the afternoon, all in the one hall above the casino, and I got around a few of the women, and left Yojana to find her own men, one of whom was Terry. Jenny was good. She indicated to me that she agreed with Christine, and indeed, when the session was over, these two went off together. Young Janet, whose deep throat technique rivalled Linda's, joined her grandfather for intimate contact. Fatima was vigorous with me, and was reassured that Christine left with Jenny, and she would join them in the town. I asked Fatima why she kept such a close eye on Jenny but she was quick to tell me that I would not get an answer. She and I were some of the last people to leave the hall space.

Back at work for just an hour, Yojana said she wanted to be with me but understood what Terry had said and accepted it. She said about accommodating his huge penis, "It doesn't just hang long, it's a grower."

"I was unfortunate when God handed out penises."

Yojana said she was looking forward to trying out theosex with Elizabeth: Bishop Terry had told her that Tess would teach her a great deal when visiting the South Wales coast, via the north east. "I hope it isn't her more extreme stuff. I like pleasure."

Narrator: Linda *Bank Robbery* (Tuesday Afternoon 28th May)

I was walking about aimlessly in town to say hello to parish people and this meant, whatever Colin had said, anyone. I could hear all these screaming police vehicles; they must have come over from Wytham. Colin Cromer rang me. It was gone 4 pm and he said I should get to High Street in Serninsea. I first had a shit (to get ahead of the curve) at the back of Jagjit and Gurinder Kapoor's shop.

When I arrived Colin was there and we both had to remain behind a police cordon. When the people emerged from the bank, we asked what had happened but beyond brief chats no one wanted to talk to us or receive our services. Some were with the police, and others went alone.

One passed and I asked, "Was it a big robbery?"

The man said, "Two of them with guns. There were two of your clergy in there. Wow, they were brave."

Another said, typically, "No no," and went saying, "The gunmen got away."

Another said, "Your vicars went with the police. The police are interviewing the rest of us later. That's it; I'm going home."

In the street I asked Colin if he'd heard anything about which brave clergy were hostages during the bank robbery. He just shook his head. There was nothing we could do, just standing around.

"By the way, Tuesday 4th June I understand you're taking RE at the secondary school. Rabbi Maurice Neptune will be there. You're not just a substitute teacher: you represent the Church and the Christian faith in your lessons content."

One woman's comment in the street made while walking away past us intrigued me: "Horrible. Some of them had come straight from the casino."

Surely not the clergy, I thought. They were gambling even in the afternoon. Why would the two unknown clergy be anywhere around a casino? Who would be in Wilkinson's Casino during the afternoon? I hated gambling as I had met addicts.

We were left with nothing to do, but after I had arrived home I received a phone call from Colin to view the local Sea TV immediately (as he himself had been rung up). I switched on. One of Sea TV's college-based presenters had been in the bank when the robbers entered. It was thus a more vivid story and it was a scoop.

He was saying, "It was a bit busier perhaps as seven of the public had walked up from the whereabouts of Wilkinson's Casino".

Seven? it sounded like they had gone together. What did 'whereabouts' mean? Were they hanging about outside or something? So perhaps they weren't gambling.

Some time later this reporter went back to presumably repeat the essential report: "When one of the two gunmen told the staff at the window to fill his two bags with notes, the shutters came crashing down and the door locked us all in. One then took his gun and shot up into the ceiling with a mighty bang which caused bits to fall. Everyone dived down to the floor when he did that, except some elderly and wheelchair. He said he would kill if the bags were not filled with readily available notes. Two National Church clergywomen then stood up and approached the man, and said they should be killed first. I caught their names from when the police came as Christine Whirl and Jennifer Vine."

I'd never heard of them. A search produced nothing. Whirl? Well? Wool?

"What happened then was a brave bank official opened a staff door with notes in his hands, and the gunman at the counter approached him with both bags, leaving the one gunman. The two men together went behind the counters, and the robber soon emerged again with the bags filled with money. The outer door was opened, and the two robbers simply got away before the police turned up.

"Obviously local police waited for the support coming over from Wytham. Those clergywomen went with the police for interviewing but the rest of the people are to be interviewed tomorrow with counselling if needed. Reports say an abandoned vehicle has since been discovered."

All I could think was the Reverends Christine W-something and Jennifer Vine could have had a ministry to prostitutes.

I rang Colin and asked him: "Do you know them?"

"No; never heard of them."

"They are supposed to be two of ours."

"Bishop John will know them, surely."

"Should I ask him?"

"I have already. He had left a message that he is very busy today and ought not to be contacted. Apparently he was in town."

I thought. This is most odd. We don't know what is going on when he's the vicar and I'm the curate and they are two of ours? And the bishop cannot answer a simple question?

I rang Jagjit Kapoor to tell him all I knew and he'd heard no more.

Keith came in from work and said he knew about the bank robbery. "Yojana Asthana was in there - you know her all right - and she was scared shitless. Some *became* shitless, actually. That's who went in the ambulances."

"Two of our clergywomen were in that bank."

"Yes. They want anonymity after their remarkable bravery."

"How do you know?"

"Some of it's on social media," he said. "Your bishop was in town, briefly. I said hello to him too. He himself could have easily been in that bank. Four other SMS people were in there too. "

Five SMS, therefore, plus two clergy. I wondered, did all of them walk from the whereabouts of Wilkinson's Casino?

Gosh," I exclaimed. "Ambulances as well. "You *weren't* there among the SMS crowd."

"I heard about it afterwards. Busy working. It'll be on the radio and television."

"Already. But you went out."

"No, the bishop called in. He does do this since his visit. He told us all about it. Just before home time."

I said, "A Sea TV person was present too, inside the bank at the time, and since reporting it."

"Yeah, quite a scoop for them," he responded. I still thought that Keith knew rather a lot.

Diana rang, so I stopped brushing my hair. She had been going in that direction after college; also, from a different angle, Patricia and Arthur Rhymes had been in the area. Diana would see me tomorrow and given events on the media and in town she would hold off her chat for now and wait until we had met.

Also tomorrow I would pay Adam Magellan and arrange the denouement of his investigation.

In Adam's Office to Rig a Report (Wednesday 29th May)

Wednesday and a call from Adam to the church telephone asking whether I was caught up in yesterday's drama. No. I told him to hurry, because Colin Cromer was likely to walk into the vestry any minute. Two clergy people were involved, he said, and no I did not know them.

Then he said, "George Wickenby got in touch. He told me he got a letter from the company believing that he had acted in good faith. I didn't know they had suspected bad faith."

"That's good. I must go. I'll come in to pay you what's outstanding."

I rang Julie Vaughan and told her I would have to ring her from the investigator's. I didn't want her to speak now, and I needed to be off the phone. She said the yes needed to involve her in confidential contact with the investigator. Rapid hair brushing followed until Colin did enter.

Thus, in the afternoon, having received a payment from SMS into my bank, and after a hot drink and evacuation, I made my way to Peter's reception office. Adam came in.

I paid up immediately, counting notes, but said, "I think you might be charging me some more for what I now want, Mr. Magellan."

"Oh?"

"I want you to confront Keith, that he *does* have a relationship."

"There is inadequate evidence," said Adam. "Too much is skewed by the

complications of that firm. They seem to have strong friendships there, but that's beyond my interest. Has your husband given you any clues?"

"No, that's not it," I said.

"There might be a relationship," said Peter. "They were very familiar."

"So speaks the Sorcerer's Apprentice," said Adam. "We go by evidence. There is no evidence. I cannot confront your husband with evidence I do not have. Linda *Bode*, as you were, I have a poem for you, and indeed for my apprentice here, nicked and reworked from the great Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*:

*"I cut in six my method pie,
The same as then and now,
The slices are what, when and why,
And where, and who, and how."*

I said, "With that ditty, there's something to put on the bill. Because the 'what' is an affair, the 'when' is currently, and 'why' is because he prefers her over me; 'where' is in Harwich, 'who' is Cheryl Mould and 'how' is his travels."

"Cheryl Mould? Mouldy? Hey?"

Peter said, "Nothing to do with Yojana Asthana?"

"May I use the telephone?" I asked. "You can put it on your next bill to me."

Adam said, "Use the speakerphone." Three of us were stood around the telephone.

"Hello, Julie Vaughan? Put her on please. Are you free to speak to me as arranged? Ten minutes time. You have the number displayed there? Good."

Adam and Peter chose to wait for an explanation. In fact it was less than ten minutes that a call came through from a mobile phone.

"I am at Adam Magellan's and I want you simply to confirm that my husband is having an affair. Keith will be confronted very soon."

"I had to come outside, Linda; Cheryl was in the office. She hasn't suspected and didn't check the display number. So: last time they were here, they were all over each other. She's been *blatant*. Are you all right, Linda?"

"Fine."

"Linda, you might need to sit down again. Can I tell you something personal? By the way, I'm not going to be quoted am I? This was to be in confidence."

Adam said, "Hello, Julie Vaughan. I'm going to make a report. I do not give away my sources and I do not have to quote but can summarise."

I said, "Go ahead, Julie."

"They are trying for a baby. She might even be pregnant. She's suddenly blabbing on about no period due a week ago."

I said, "Oh. Really."

Adam said, "Julie. How long for? Do you know for how long?"

"Just now."

"The affair has just started?" he asked.

"No, her being pregnant, if she is. They say two years ago, properly. Linda? Something else. She says, and this is new, but would make sense if she is pregnant, that Keith is going to dump you very soon. He may do it without even moving down here. Sorry, Linda. How is he behaving?"

"Hmm. Like *nothing* is happening. Julie. I had to ring you to tell my

investigator here. There is no doubt about it?"

"There wasn't before. There isn't now, either. I'd better go back."

"Bye Julie, and thank you very much."

The call ended. Then Adam instructed me to sit down, so I chose the sofa, as did Peter Marshall.

"Linda?" Adam asked. "What are you doing?"

"Pelvic exercises."

"No. I'm referring to Cheryl Mould and everything."

"Now you know."

"I need to ask you what has been going on."

"I thought you might track Keith and Yojana and find instead personal messages to and from Cheryl Mould. But he's been clever in not leaving a trail. I wanted him to think he was being investigated and perhaps he'd put a foot wrong. He didn't."

"You're asking me to confront your husband and risk getting a broken nose. You want a report where, clearly, I have to protect your source - my source now - with deception. One with my number on display. I'm not at all happy about the fact that I could have rung this Julie Vaughan earlier."

"Better she has been asked now and we confront Keith quickly so that he is less suspicious. I want the confrontation tomorrow, Adam. Bring your updated dossier."

"You haven't set this up?" he asked me directly.

"That was a 01255 number and she's a bloody good actor if I did. I did not."

"Hmm. But before I charge you even more, I need to know what I was supposed to have done to make the discovery. I don't wish to put anything in that contradicts with reality."

"You did a monitoring of him and Yojana and you discovered by, yeah, observing in Harwich and Felixstowe that you discovered the affair was between him and Cheryl."

"Why would I be observing over there?"

"You were looking for the source of the leak."

"What leak?"

"Their system was leaking information; after all, it was going to you."

"It wasn't."

"Pretend it did."

"But they'll contradict it at SMS. And we're back to an earlier question of mine, Linda. Was I doing your business or SMS business? Has SMS paid you? What is going on?"

"This was what Keith told me. About a leak. Felixstowe."

Peter said, "That wouldn't have been relevant to us at all. And they'll know where it hasn't gone."

I said, "I see. It is not relevant to you. This is personal. So can't you say you discovered communication between them, that Keith went to see Cheryl?"

"Did he?"

"Yes, overlapped when I went to Margate."

"You went to Margate?"

"Yes." I gave Adam and Peter the dates that Keith was sure to have been in Harwich. But Adam was still dissatisfied.

"Was this the last time he was in Harwich?"

"Yes."

"But it is before you hired me."

Peter said, "We can change the dates of Linda initiating the investigation."

"We need a timeline then," I said in response. "So I hired you when I suspected an affair. Let's say you investigated Keith and Yojana as cover." I realised I had to make an admission. "There is something I must tell you. SMS did take an interest."

"I knew it."

"It was my enquiry of you, Adam, but I approached SMS because it was facilitated through their business at a time of internal investigating. When they said they'd pay, and incorporate it, then I could carry it through without personal expense."

"Devious when it comes to money. Get *them* to pay. So they know that you suspected your husband of having an affair?"

"No, Adam, because I said to them that I didn't think there was anything in it, *with Yojana*. But it was a good way for them to see if their working relationship was too intimate for document handling and the Chinese Wall between them."

"But what about the reports I sent you? How do you explain *them* in this fiction of yours I am supposed to repeat?"

Peter said, "Your husband won't have seen them, but, in any case, they can be part of the deception."

I now said, "So the timeline is you started investigating before Margate and Harwich, and the Keith and Yojana thing was putting up a deception, by which I approached SMS."

"This will cost you. Don't forget that we *do not know* why Keith was able to sabotage my investigation. Did he think it was a company investigation?"

"Yes, he might have done," I admitted.

"Right Linda. Hundred quid before VAT. I will say that, using methodology I cannot disclose, I discovered the affair between Cheryl Mould and him. And only then I carried out a misdirecting investigation of him and Cheryl and the reports to you were a deception."

"Yes. But on my initiative"

"Hand over the dosh. I'll do this report straight away. I suggest I'll be at your house 7 pm tomorrow evening. Let's close this down and finish it."

I paid this part with my debit card. Adam left the room rather abruptly so that Peter was left to show me out. However, I could not resist any longer and asked if I could be excused.

When done, I returned to the reception room. "You could clean that toilet better," I said. "Why do men leave hairs all over the toilet?"

Peter said to me, "Really puzzling."

"It *isn't*. They drop off all the time. And I don't have any."

"I mean, I thought there was something in it. With Yojana."

"He can't be cheating on Cheryl as well."

"The kissing was good, the hand he put on her back was real. And she'd said, on a phone, 'Where's the other mobile?' What if he talks to someone else on that?"

The toilet flushed at the far end of the corridor.

"Why hasn't Adam told me this?"

"Sounds interesting, all this stuff," said one of the twins, letting herself in through the front door.

Peter said, "Hello Kathleen. You know, anyone can just walk in! Kath, you must keep anything you've heard to yourself. In any case, I'm speculating and talking about an illegal monitoring of a known mobile phone. But we don't know of this other phone."

"And neither do I," I said.

Adam came along at this point. "I've cleaned the toilet. And thank you Peter and Kathryn."

"I'm Kathleen, Mr Magellan." She sat down and joined us.

"And *who's* the same uncle?"

"I'm sorry Mr. Magellan. I'll go. Mr. Magellan: Kathryn and I have told Peter that we never discuss anything we hear from our uncle."

"But you might discuss what you hear with me. Peter, this is work material you are discussing with a client that has passed through a decision making process of what not to discuss and not put it in our reports."

"Sorry."

"Reverend Linda, this is all confidential. I will carry out the task as agreed, but what you have just heard must not leave these walls. If you would leave now I will speak firmly to my employee."

"No," I said.

"What?"

"Say what you want to say to him in front of me."

"I don't want a confrontation with you as well. Would you like to leave, Linda?"

"No. I *do* operate according to confidentiality, Adam - seal of the confessional and all that. You've told me a sin, I absolve you, and I have special legal privileges."

"What sin?"

"Illegal monitoring."

Peter said, "You're not a priest; you can't yet absolve."

I said, "It is still confidential. I'm waiting, Adam. Adam!"

"You're not going to treat me like you did when we were eighteen, Linda."

"Adam. My intended reward and treat for you is in jeopardy if you do not do as I demand."

"I'm not falling for this now I am forty. And not in front of them!"

"Adam!"

"Linda!"

"I'm not going."

"It's *my* property!"

"I don't care."

"Fuck off, Linda. Let me do my work and finish the job!"

"I'm not going anywhere." I folded my arms and stared directly at him.

There was a silence.

He buckled first. "Oh, fuck it. Peter. This is a sacking offence. If I sacked you this would have dire consequences on your dole. You were talking out of turn; you are my apprentice *and that is all.*"

"Hang on," I said.

"No, Linda, you've got your way, as you always did, and he's too clever by half. And now Ms Wickenby has heard too much. And your uncle, Kathleen, got wind

of our investigation, somehow."

Kathleen responded: "May I speak, Mr. Magellan?"

"Yes. Spill the beans, why not."

I said, "You're making an assumption there, Adam."

"Linda, you are no more than my client!"

Kathleen said, "It wasn't me and it wasn't Kathryn. Honestly, Mr. Magellan, and I am sorry I came in to discuss a magic trick just before Peter's break."

So Peter said, "Kathleen, can you tell Kathryn I'll see her later? I'll go out for my break."

Adam said, "Just a minute. When I have finished."

Kathleen asked, "Can I go now Mr Magellan?"

"Yeah. *You* can. Keep that trap shut. Not a magic trap, your gob."

She got up, and, passing us, left the room and indeed the building.

"Come on Adam," I said. "Cut the man some slack. You get him for nothing so that he is off the dole figures, and if you sack him they're not going to put him back on the dole figures."

"I won't! Peter: you're very good; you're also my trainee, but while you are here you don't talk to clients differently than me, especially when they are leaving. Because I might say what I need to say to clients and you don't then fill in any gaps. Peter, go; goodbye for now, Linda!"

Instead, I stayed while Peter went out, waving him away.

I said at Adam, "Look, one hint of a problem for this lad as a result of these conversations and it affects our renewed friendship. Understand?"

Adam said, "What friendship? Anyway, the twins are a good potential connection."

So I said, "Oh, I see. I think you might be having it both ways with these Wickenby twins. You are saying don't leak, but you want to use them."

"The dole said to me, 'He tells us he knows the nieces of George Wickenby, a private detective. Would that be a problem? No. After all, he could have gone to George, although George prefers to work alone and hire in helpers.'"

So I said, "I'll take you to a restaurant on me after you've done the deed to my husband. Starters and the main meal, and you can have afters too."

"*Lovely*," he said, being sarcastic. "Typical Linda."

I turned as I was leaving and said, "Do as you are told, Adam."

Outside, on the street, where I brushed my hair, Peter made a noise and was behind me.

"Where the fuck have you come from?"

"Ah. I wanted to say thanks. Are you interested in magic, Mrs. Jupitas?"

"Are you walking anywhere?"

"To a shop for sandwiches."

"I'll go your way." We walked at a brisk pace, my hairbrush put away.

Peter said, "I was reading about Gardiner and magick, and the power of their fire meetings at the beginnings of the Second World War."

"That's right. Rather than draw on the divine, they became divine, and they generate the power. It's a subtle difference, if you believe it. I might do a sermon on this - that's if I get the chance to give a sermon. My mother was into magic. She wanted to be a big breasted round tummy witch woman. She was born in the wrong era. From time to time I dream that I am a witch, Peter."

"I've a lot of time for aspects of Paganism, but magic has to be explainable," he said. "So I'm more rational too, like on the Pagan Unitarian Universalist web pages and in Britain."

"I thought they were some Victorian anti-Trinity outfit, probably gone now."

"Well, it's complicated: but no. There is a neo-Pagan wing, you know. Where are you going?"

"I'm not going anywhere," I said. "I'm walking with you."

"Where is your car?"

"Er, the church."

"I don't want to take up your time."

"This is how I use my time. Look, er, magic, Pagan, Unitarian. I'm sure I can use you. Maybe not Unitarian. Not that I want to *use* you. Not *use*. I'll leave you be, then. Be good: that's both of you."

"Me and Adam or me and Kathryn?"

"You and Adam. Is that Kathleen ahead?"

"Kathryn."

"Go and join Kathryn. Bye Peter."

I went to see Diana, at Patricia's conservatory, nude, and told her about the plan going into action and reviving the wimp that was Adam Magellan.

She growled but agreed he was a wimp.

Narrator: Keith *SMS Evaluation* (Wednesday 29th May)

We all sat down for an evaluation. Sir Sanjay Bunker, Chair, Archie Holborn, Director of SMS Research and Development, Yojana Asthana, and two others, Charles Rowland, Head of ICT in Serninsea, and Janet Hayes, new Marketing Developer across the business. Incidentally, Charles Rowland was about to be mentored for The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players by Archie's wife, June, and Janet Hayes had been talent scouted by Stephen McPhail, and his coming mentoring of her was a bit risky in my view given his and his wife's preferences for spectacle.

Here I learnt that my wife had acted for the firm on the basis of investigating the relationship between Yojana and myself as a means of further testing the reliability of the 'Chinese Wall' between us. I was told this was the firm's take on it and not hers. (I wondered about that.) This had worked via a number of documents using a client Ephouse Travel Limited. However, I pointed out the leak to Yojana and me using a paper message so that we knew what was happening. As a result, when everything was done, we sabotaged the continuing investigation. I said that I had no idea that my wife was involved.

"In a sense, she wasn't," said Archie Holborn. "But we did consult her and she said it all had to come out in the evaluation. You'd be assured to know that she never suspected an actual affair with Yojana, but we wanted Magellan to investigate on a different basis from George."

"Had this idea come from George Wickenby, passing this work to rival Adam Magellan?" I asked

"No," said the the two men together heading the annual inspections, Sir

Sanjay and Archie, who thought I should be pleased that she had taken such a keen interest and been amenable to the idea.

What of the leak: had it come from ICT? Charles said no. Security had approached him and was satisfied that ICT was not involved. Had it come from any external body, by which I meant The Worshipful Company - by staring at Sir Sanjay and Archie? No. So, there was an unexplained leak. I asked them about the source but nobody seemed to know.

"Well *somebody* wrote the note: all initials."

I suggested that there was an electronic leak (too) because Magellan and company were straight on to Yojana and my movements.

Yojana said we played touchy-feely colleagues whilst doing everything correctly with the documents, making this visible via hand gestures outside while being viewed.

Nevertheless the firm had paid my wife, who had passed on her expenses. Archie said that he had co-ordinated the contact with my wife after her approach to Sir Sanjay. He had called himself Martin Haralambos. So I wondered aloud if he had done any background on my wife, as this was the most ridiculous disguise of a name to be constructed. A 'Holborn' had partnered Michael Haralambos in the standard sociology tome for decades! Archie knew this, of course, and said it did not matter too much if she did know; it was for the benefit of confusing outsiders.

"Let's cut to the chase," said Sir Sanjay. "Everyone in Harwich knows you and Ms Mould are close. Linda never mentioned this, nor did we indicate this. It was solely using Yojana and you at this end."

"What were the responses to the initials leak?" Yojana asked.

"Security informed management. Security suggested several meanings of 'A. M.'"

More worrying, however, was the fact that other sites of SMS took advantage of the delays to upgrade their ICT systems whereas there were no plans to upgrade in Serninsea. I pointed out that the future of dredging the dock was in severe doubt.

The point was made by management that, up and down the SMS sites, the system of checking did work. We would also have unknown inspections later on in the year. My wife would not be involved in those, and there were no plans to hire Adam Magellan again.

I was concerned that the future of SMS in Serninsea had to be in doubt. After the meeting I asked Yojana if she had been considering moving to Felixstowe or Hartlepool. She had not, and would stay assisting at her parents' guest house, and that her uncle Sir Sanjay would be putting in his money to upgrade the property to be little short of a hotel.

She knew that I did hope to go down to Harwich, but I responded that I did not want Serninsea to close: down there I would have to join the Margate group like Janet Hayes. We needed a bishop or at least priests in Harwich. Would the Serninsea Worshipful Company even continue without SMS?

I had a special place for Cheryl because of our history, I said, and I liked her homeliness and comparative lack of ambition. I expected Yojana to do well either in tourism or accurate administration and to have lots of sexual partners including me but said it could be no more than this. She might find a boyfriend.

She felt sad about this.

Narrator: Linda *Ascending* (Thursday 30th May)

I was clapping at the play on stage in a theatre that was in Wytham. Keith was alongside me. On stage was a collection of people including Adam Magellan (now older) as Sherlock Holmes, Peter Marshall as Dr. Watson, and then in various suspect parts: Jenny (younger), Geoff (younger), Diana, Patricia, and the chief suspects Ken Osis and Andrew Walter, with Laura Kingswood glimpsed alongside him. Andrew announced an acted-out orgy would take place, and Adam and Peter were there to investigate. But, as the sex got underway on stage, and Keith and I were clapping at the performance, Andrew announced that Adam and Peter's characters were investigating them, and that the clever duo were not so clever after all, and that we in the audience would have to start doing the fucking ourselves. And, indeed, I woke to the pressure of my husband's body on me, and I said to him, "Go on then," and he realised I'd had yet another bad dream, if not one of the worst. As he fucked me I thought of him ascending into Cheryl.

Colin preached in the extra Eucharist during the mid-morning. I knew that, on this day, even Colin was likely to become a demythologiser. How would Colin do it? Incidentally, I had still not preached and would not until Trinity Sunday, the day to give the sermon to someone else.

"Of course," Colin said, "heaven is not up there and so Jesus will not have physically ascended as in an invisible lift shaft. The three decker universe we know is not true. Nevertheless the metaphor indicates something real. Jesus went into his heavenly state after meeting everyone over the some forty days from Easter, to guide the earthlings and set up the Church with what were its first bishops. Heaven is a spiritual state, not a geographical space, and where beyond we will meet Jesus and meet Jesus in person."

'Grrr', I was thinking. Claptrap from start to finish. He did not 'set up the Church' and the price of adjustment to our known cosmos was to sound ridiculous.

In the vestry afterwards I was brushing my hair too much and thinking that the stupidity of this Holy Thursday is that clergy and lay readers do not apply the same criteria to resurrection or miracle working. You notice how they demythologise the Ascension, but try to 'prove' the Resurrection beforehand. Yet the Ascension is essential to the narrative, because it is all about why the Early Church could not forever call upon an earthly resurrected Jesus. He'd gone. Thirty-nine days liturgically, he hung about and then went. I knew that the Ascension, and second coming, are rather unique to Christianity in the way that virgin births and resurrections are not.

Colin had restricted my preaching, the cost of which was I was thinking for myself. He had criticised my behaviour as well. And now he wanted me to sit down with him again.

"Linda, why are you shifting about in your seat?"

"Oh, sorry."

"Linda, Bishop John Barman takes a keen interest in all of us, and he is very good, very hands on. And he had a chat with Andrew Walter, who mentioned your pastoral visit. Now, Andrew Walter is under no obligation to maintain confidentiality of your conversation with him. And once again I come to you with difficult matters.

Apparently, Andrew said you were quite positive about his behavioural licence, and you showed no inclination to disapprove. Is this true?"

"No, Colin, it is not. I said about rules and boundaries, but I wasn't going to condemn his behaviour."

"Why ever not? He wants to involve Laura Kingswood, to whom I am ministering."

"She's an adult, and so is he - but I made it plain it was not for me."

"Not for you? One wonders what *is* for you? It seems to me that you are completely hedonistic in outlook, and it will not do."

"Go on Colin, what is the sanction this time? You stopped me preaching before."

"That was different. You became incomprehensible. Anyway, I haven't, but you should reflect on how you will preach on Trinity Sunday long before you put pen to paper."

"So what would it be? You won't now want me to visit Andrew as you don't Laura?"

"The bishop thinks you were on a fine line there, and still he is a compassionate and reasonable man. You may see Andrew and indeed Andrew with Laura, he says, but you are there to represent the Gospel and not your own hedonistic opinions."

"I tried to get him to see the relevance of theology. I'm really getting fed up with this."

"You are not some free agent handing out willy-nilly your own opinions, or going naked in public and giving expression to whatever you think is appropriate behaviour. We have sources for our statements and we have standards for our behaviour. Just be thankful that the Suffragan Bishop John Barman is a very sensitive man. I'd have stopped you seeing either of them - you were right to predict that, but I am under his authority as are you. And remember that you are the trainee here and... Look, Linda, do not put your ordination as priest in jeopardy. I think you are the sort of person who can easily go off the rails."

"Can I go now?"

"Yes, you can go now. Retain what I say. Oh, you meant go in there. That's another matter that should receive attention."

"It is. It's why I was shuffling on my bottom - pelvic floor exercising."

"Perhaps I ought to retire. I'm too old for this. Keith would surely not have been so much trouble."

"Except the reality is he's lost interest. You've got me instead."

"Don't I know it."

Confrontation

Adam Magellan knocked on our front door and I let him in. I whispered that he should at first assert an affair, and wait for a response, and then say with whom. I was nervous and perhaps he was. Keith was in the smaller living room at the front of the house.

I opened this room's door and said to my husband, "Please pay your full

attention, Keith. This man here, Keith, is a private detective and he has something important - distressing - to say."

"Mr. Jupitas. I am a local private investigator, Adam Magellan, and was hired by your wife. I followed you and Yojana Asthana and I have confirmed that you have been having an affair."

I thought, that's not quite how I wanted him to say it.

"Hey?" Keith reacted. "The exercise is all over, finished, evaluated. What are you on about?"

"I am here about your affair, and to tell you for your wife."

"You are quite a failure of an investigator, Mr. Magellan. We blew your little investigation. You're some ex-copper with a little sidekick who can't organise an extra little investigation, dressed up as something between me and Ms. Asthana. Now go away, little man."

Adam said, "Pardon?"

"My employer hires George Wickenby to discover the transfer of sensitive information set against the working relationship I have with Ms Asthana, and you were used in addition. She told your little sidekick to fuck off and that included you. That should be the end of it. As for my wife, she went along with it for the firm."

Adam looked at me, but replied. "Neither your firm, SMS, nor George Wickenby for that matter, contacted me to do any work. The only person who did was your wife. The firm was involved later on."

Adam looked at me. So I said, "Carry on, Mr. Magellan, to get to your main point."

"Never mind the SMS aspect. I am here to assert that you are indeed having an affair."

"You were just passed extra work via my over-interested wife and I was going to speak to her about it at an opportune moment."

"Oh, you will, will you?" I asked Keith. "So far: nothing."

Keith responded: "I'm supposed to be grateful that you took an interest in my work. I was waiting to see what you were going to say to me. And in fact you have said nothing to me."

"Well, I was waiting for *you* to say something. It doesn't matter because Mr. Magellan has concluded his report."

"I am Adam Magellan and you are..."

Keith said, "Go away. Leave my house."

"It is *my* house Keith, or rather the Church's."

"So why *did* you get involved, Linda, in my working life? You've never shown so much direct interest before."

I said, "I hired him. I hired him earlier."

"That's not an answer."

"I hired him; SMS were interested that I hired him. But I had hired him earlier."

Keith said, "You're a liar. SMS used you."

"No. I used *them*. Adam, move to the second part."

Adam then said rapidly, "I run an independent firm, and I repeat that I did not receive work from your firm. I am asserting..."

"No? The firm paid her!"

"Keith!" I exclaimed with frustration. "Adam, please."

"Your wife hired me earlier. The investigations, the stress testing came later

on, as your wife says. I have a report here and it concludes categorically that you have been having a relationship with..."

Keith said, "Then you are wrong. You listen to me, mate, and you Linda. We got a tip-off anonymously, possibly from George, or higher management, or the ICT people, or Ephouse, that Magellan Investigations at Upper Road were involved. As well as smoking you out at her parents', Yojana Asthana even put items like a nightie and knickers in my office drawer. You didn't discover those. No? Speak up, man."

Adam replied to him, "No, we did not see a nightie or knickers," said Adam, who looked at me again. "We didn't even look inside those offices."

Keith continued. "Blimey, we acted out kisses and my straying hand - deliberately, while your fool of an assistant was looking. You're a twit; you always were. I remember you; never mind that you were my wife's teenage dominatrix fling. She cut her teeth on you. Hey Linda, you must have been delighted to push him about again."

Adam said, "As far as Yojana Asthana was concerned: yes, we looked at her parents' bed and breakfast on the coast. *But...*"

Keith blocked Adam verbally. "That guest house Maa Skelter was a supposed private place to hand over or retain documents. I'll be generous, you twit, because I can give you our report on how you and your sidekick were a bunch of dummies. Linda, you are being misinformed by this incompetent."

Adam again said, "Well, I've made my report to your wife and my task is over."

I said, "Adam! You haven't finished."

Keith started laughing. "I can see your thumb mark on his forehead, and Ash Wednesday was long ago now."

So with me staring at Adam, he understood my look and said, "I repeat that I consider you were having an affair and it was not with Yojana Asthana at all."

Keith said, "What *are* you on about?"

I butted in: "And the point is the affair is not with Yojana Asthana. The evidence is you are having an affair and you should admit it. We need to discuss our future. Tell him her name, Adam."

"You are having an affair with Ms Cheryl Mould in Harwich."

Now Keith paused, and looked at him and then looked at me. I cocked my head slightly to one side, looking back at Keith.

"I don't get this," Keith said. "Measuring has to be watertight, utterly trusted and those who deliver must deliver in the quantity.. There can be no collusion. Yojana is nothing other than a colleague."

"Keith, he's already said it's not her."

I said. "He's speaking like Theresa May. Adam, tell him how you found out."

"I can't. My method is confidential."

Keith said, "You know, a penetration test with the ICT had failed before the inspection, but the leak about you investigating was different."

I said, "Keith, Mr. Magellan here is no twit, no incompetent. His later investigating around Yojana Asthana was cover for his real investigation. He is a brilliant investigator because he discovered that you are having an affair. It is with Cheryl Mould."

I could see that Adam was uneasy.

Keith said, "Anyway, what future to discuss? If I was being unfaithful you wouldn't want anything other than marriage stability if you want to be a priest. I'd be

careful what you wish for."

Ah, this was interesting. It was progress.

I said, "I wish for the truth. We will have to discuss the future. It was never about Yojana or measuring volumes. I knew there was no affair with her, and told that to your management, but I suspected you were having an affair. Adam carried out his job, and then I wanted to make you sweat a bit that he was investigating you."

Keith then said, "So it was you who gave us that note, the one that said you were investigating Yojana and me."

I knew nothing about this note, so I looked at Adam. He said, "I don't discuss my methods. What I want to say is that in Harwich my methods were searching and penetrative."

"Like yours with Cheryl," I said at Keith. I further said, "Mr Magellan and his very clever magician trainee know how to set up many a decoy."

"Some sort of Otto Leipzig, eh?"

"What?"

"Never mind, Ginger Pig."

"Don't call me a Ginger Pig!"

"Him!"

"He's not ginger."

"Neither are you. The Magician, who went to Paris to help the General."

"I don't know what you are on about, Keith, but the team went to Harwich and Felixstowe. Perhaps you would you like to tell us yourself of the affair at SMS headquarters?"

"I am not having an affair with anyone at SMS HQ in Harwich and that is the truth."

"You are having an affair with Cheryl Mould in Harwich," I insisted.

"But your reports, Magellan, with those theological titles: they did not mention an affair. They said an affair with Yojana was unlikely."

"Ah," I said, "I thought you might get to see those. Did your mates at SMS break the password?"

"Oh," said Adam. "This is concerning."

Keith said, "I don't discuss my methods. You penetrate my communications and I penetrate yours."

I said, "Keith. Tell me about your affair with Cheryl Mould."

"Why would I?" he asked. "Presumably you can tell me."

This was progress indeed. I gave Adam a smile, and his eyes were opening wider towards me.

Then Keith said, "My wife approached you independently?"

Adam replied. "I thought we had established that long ago."

Then Keith said, "Then why did SMS pay you? It paid for Wickenby and it paid for Magellan."

Adam said, "I didn't receive any money from SMS. I received it from your wife."

Keith said, "Judas was paid!"

"Oh very clever," I said. "Are you following what I said?"

"And you kept your counsel."

"Like you did."

"You must have suspected at the naturist holiday, and what about Margate?"

"Mr. Magellan made sure first. Yes, I did. Anyway, wives can tell, Keith. We are not stupid."

"You gave no hint of suspicion."

"I can play the game better than you, Keith."

"Come on then, Magellan, what did you do to suppose I've been having an affair?"

Adam said to Keith, "I'm not discussing my methods: electronic, observational, hiring other detectives, sending my apprentice places, penetrating SMS in Serninsea."

Clever, I thought; Adam was protecting the source, Julie Vaughan, as was I.

"Keith said, "That place would know and I would know if you'd been there. Anyway, you're wrong. I er, I work with Cheryl Mould and she is just one woman I work with when I am in Harwich."

"Not true," I said. (We could not say that Cheryl was likely pregnant, because this could only come from her talking very recently.)

Keith said, "And Mr. Magellan, on the same basis, *you* could be having an affair with Linda."

"No," I said, "the difference is he has evidence, that you *are* having an affair, whereas I have only recently rediscovered Adam, and he's done a brilliant job. I have no idea about Mr. Magellan's private emotional life and I have no intention of enquiring. He was *inquiring* about you."

"Always the pedant, you."

So Adam said, following up, "Mr. Jupitas. Having now given you the name, I would like to leave. If I stay much longer, the bill goes up."

Keith said, "That's actually a good idea. Go now. I'll be looking into you. Is SMS paying for this call as well? I wonder what *exactly* has been going on. Blimey - if they move Yojana to Harwich or Felixstowe, I think I'll go as well."

"I'll show you out," I said to Adam, who, holding his report, was walking backwards slightly. "Wait there," I said to Keith.

I opened the front door and Adam and I stepped out.

Adam said, "I don't want to do any more of this. Does he want this report?"

"You keep it. I'll be in touch," I said.

"You really are devious, Linda Bode; I was your plaything then, and I've been your plaything now."

"Play is nice. Off you go - thanks. It's time for me and him to get to the nitty gritty. You're a good bloke, Adam."

"By the way, he hasn't admitted it."

"He almost has and he will. Bye, my rediscovered plaything." I smiled. I went back in, and stood while Keith was sat looking at me, as if waiting for my next move.

He said to me, "I wondered why you hadn't undressed."

Immediate Aftermath

I was stood, facing Keith, and he watched as I shed my clothes. I thought he may as well see the one he had betrayed. Then I went elsewhere by necessity, and returned after a good five minutes holding three pieces of kitchen roll.

He asked, as I faced him again, "What exactly has been going on?"
"Lying," I said. "You need to stop lying." I found my hairbrush again, and used it.

"I wasn't lying."

"Hardly telling the truth. Going to Harwich; staying with her."

"Well, Dennis Nineham, Geoffrey Lampe, Maurice bloody Wiles."

"Yeah. You looked at them."

"A security man at SMS gave me the lot. There was no mention of any activity outside Serninsea."

"Exactly," I said. "I knew you'd read them."

"So presumably he gave you the real reports when he was ringing you at the church."

"You seem to know quite a bit," I stated.

"I work with Cheryl Mould," he said. "She's not at HQ but the local office, where I co-ordinate."

"It's all over Harwich, you and her; it was easy for Adam to find out."

"He is not so brilliant, then."

"From the moment you joined SMS you wanted her and when she'd moved down there you eyed her up properly." (I was speculating.)

"Yojana is dead attractive. Surely I'd have an affair up here."

"You do this," I responded. "The location is Harwich: you go there from time to time, and she only comes here occasionally. It is in the safety of distant Harwich that you are having your affair. But this isn't a fling, is it? It's serious."

"I thought you needed a loyal husband," he said.

"I do," I said. "But you're not."

"I don't go using investigators, while getting others to pay. You are so devious! All I know is you need a loyal husband for your career. Your career, your life," he said.

"Loyal and bang Cheryl?" I asked.

"I bang you. You make it sound as if I have walked out on you. I've never even hinted at it, and, in any case, you don't want a divorce at a time like this in your career. We are friends down there."

"You are not friends down there," I said, "You are all over her. You stay with her. You are going to marry her."

He paused. He was obviously calculating what I knew. I sat down on, first, some kitchen roll, my legs apart.

"He told you that? Is that from gossip?"

I said, instead, "I bet she is now more the sort of person you want to be with. You've lost a lot of interest in what I'm doing. I *can* understand that. I knew something was more wrong than a lack of interest and now I know why."

There was another pause. He broke it.

"Well, okay, if it is truth-time," he stated. "Since you became a deacon and since I was rejected, I have indeed made a different life and I suppose she represents a secular life and a secular life I'd rather have now, as a way forward. But I didn't want it to affect us. It's not zero-sum is it?"

"What measurement is that?" I asked (as if of his job).

"Just because I burn for her doesn't stop the fire in the grate for you. It doesn't stop my business relations with Yojana, for that matter. There are coals still glowing

all around. Look at your cunt now with its clit shining out. But then you're not exactly burning the enthusiasm you once had for me, if you ever quite had it."

"When was the last time you wanted to penetrate me like you did - really?"

"My goodness me. You mean deep into your arse?"

"Well, at least it showed an interest."

"Look, we've been on and off. You joined in with me, helped my application; then you 'had a go' and 'surprise-surprise' you were selected. Well that's how it is in your dud of a diocese about which I care less and less. But where's your burning ambition now? Did you read your own sermon? That's when he lets you do them."

"I know. It's all been very difficult. Anyway, selecting me and not you doesn't make the diocese a dud."

"Default error, I'd say. It's a dud, and it makes duds. And are you really committed?"

"Actually, the pastoral ideal, helping people, sacrificially, even the ideal of the purposeful life... Hang on a minute, I'm not the one having the affair. It's not me that should be examined here."

"You don't know the meaning of the word sacrificial."

"I dedicate my life."

"Then you'd better not chuck me out of this church house now, or separate now, or divorce now. Do that and the brakes go on making you a priest? Think about it."

He was right, of course. I said, "I wasn't suggesting or proposing any course of action. I wanted you to admit it. So, come on, straight up - have you had sex with Cheryl Mould when in Harwich?"

"You or he is supposed to know this already," Keith replied.

"I didn't want it to be true, and it's not as if I don't like you any more, don't love you any more. There is still heat in the grate. But discovering an affair is like chucking on a bucket of cold water."

He said, "Try this instead: Yojana is excitement, eh? I don't know what Yojana really thinks of me. In any case, her role and mine makes us intense. Nothing deep."

"You're doing it again," I said. "I'm talking about..."

"I'm hinting that I'm banging Yojana, and many others."

"No you're not. Stop deflecting this. Cheryl Mould. Come on."

"Have it your way."

"I want you to come clean. Cheryl Mould."

"Cheryl is lovely. It's great to go down there and to have someone who appreciates you, someone on your level, someone who responds."

I wanted to stay focused. "Sex with her or not?"

"There are lots of women I want to admit I'd go with, given the chance. SMS is one den of potential iniquity. Look at what they wear at events, a throwback corporate culture. What if I said I've not had sex with Cheryl Mould - that she is pure affectionate friendliness?"

"That's not the basis for moving on and finding a way forward," I stated, putting my legs further apart and ramrod straight.

"So if I say I *have* had sex with Cheryl Mould?" he asked.

"You are going to marry her. I'm sure you haven't decided to save yourself for the big day."

"If you, or Magellan, says so. News to me."

"Keith. Stop lying. I'm going to surprise you," I told him. "Say I give you permission, as still your wife, to go with Cheryl Mould? In exchange, you stay until I'm priested, during which I make my own relationship decisions."

"You want a withdrawal agreement and a transition period, a clerical 'Mexit' then. Let's do something for Northern Ireland where I can fuck you one end and you can fuck Magellan the other end. I nominate your arsehole."

"So imaginative. Can't I prove I am better than her? Can't I still be your future?"

"Sorry lass, I'm changing continent."

"I thought that was impossible. So you admit you are moving on. So why not admit you have had sex with Cheryl Mould?"

"Yes, of course we have had sex. There you are. Now I suppose you and I had better sleep in different beds," he said, "even different rooms. Your tied house has separate rooms, while you wait, for us."

"That's just what I am *not* saying," I said. "I sit naked in front of you."

"You'd sit naked in front of anybody."

"How special is Cheryl to you?"

He said, "This is getting ridiculous. Of course she is very special to me. I am going to marry her. I want a baby with her. Something you cannot do."

"You're a bastard."

"She has made the difference and she wants a baby. So do I, now that I can."

I sat and pulled my legs up on to the chair. "I'd say you've got two wives, now. You like numbers."

"You're not in a position to give me permission to take a lover."

"Okay, I want my ordination. Let's make a deal."

"My terms," he said. "I want full freedom to go with her when I like. For that, I will continue to appear with you as if we are happily married. When you are ordained, we can split. I will get out of this house only when I can. So we separate under the same building until I can go and live with her."

"My terms," I said. "I'll be friendly with you and her, and you can stay in this house, but I don't want her coming here. If she comes to Serninsea, find a hotel. I know! If she comes up here, go to Yojana's parents' bed and breakfast."

He said, "I'll accept that."

"Good. Answer me this: Two years or six?"

"We fucked six years ago after fish and chips, the fuck and the food outside. She moved south in pursuit of a bloke, but he moved south to get away from her. But when I visited Harwich we clicked. At first she realised I'd been supporting what you are doing. But things started to change, as they do. You've got your life, Linda, and I've got mine."

"And she will wait until the end of June at least?"

"Oh God yes."

"Is she pregnant?" I asked, knowing the answer.

"We don't know yet."

"When did you last speak to her?"

"Today."

"She's trying?"

"Yes, and she is late."

"It's a simple test."

"She is getting a pregnancy test kit tomorrow. I told her that she is assuming too much."

"And we say nothing about this to anyone around here," I added. "You can have your mistress."

"Don't call her a 'mistress'. She is not a mistress."

"No, I suppose not. It just means I can have the equivalent too - but I haven't got anyone as yet."

"Well, you couldn't exactly, possibly, find anyone, not with your role now. Can't exactly bonk the detective. 'Oh, well done, give us a shag.' Hardly possible, Mrs. Deacon."

"Then you've nothing to worry about. You go with your... second wife and I'll stay the dutiful career wife."

"Ranking. She's first, you're second."

"Fuck you."

"You're a career wife."

"Clergy wife', you said in public. But I'm saying now let you and me be practical."

"Aye. I suppose so," Keith replied.

"I *am* wife one."

"In time only. Believe me, you're wife two and will be wife zero. I think I'd like to celebrate."

"God almighty."

"I want to celebrate by us fucking. How about that, Linda? We carry on fucking. I told her. I said that she is my future, but you and me still have sex. She accepts that."

"I hope you never deceive her like you have deceived me. You want to fuck me then? Well, there's my arse and our decision goes nowhere public, so you may as well stick your little prick up it. Come on then, give me a fuck. Do it properly. We'll do it in bed, and you can fall asleep, and then when you go to Harwich, you can tell her that we are still at it, because it is what you want to do."

"Right. Wife number one, Cheryl; wife number two, Linda. I like this, I really do."

I thought he was a bastard, and on the bed I presented my backside to him, and with no lubricant he undermined recent pelvic exercises.

"Oh no, like anon," he said after pumping me with sperm and withdrawing.

"What do you mean, like anon?" I asked. "I'm still me."

"Your shitty arse could have been anybody's," he said.

"Oh dear," I said. "Don't make the same mistake with Cheryl."

"I don't fuck her in the arse; she doesn't like it and it was no way to make her pregnant."

Thus Ascension Day had an up my arse meaning for me. It wasn't the first time but, with less than a month to go, it was the last. He might stay in the house a bit longer, but I would then be shot of him. We had an agreement.

Narrator: Keith *Passing on the News* (Monday 3rd June)

So far Linda had acted as before. She had not even informed her friends, she told me. She was working out what she could say, consistent with keeping the situation quiet.

It was Monday and Linda took herself for a drive. I did not know where she had gone. I had a few words with Archie Holborn on what had happened. He knew nothing of earlier investigations by Magellan.

We were given time to take off in the afternoon. It was still reward time for recent efforts; however, work was slack and it was a bit concerning.

Sir Sanjay had flown off to India for a short while. Christine was looking for someone under the Confraternity to visit her at one of her properties. So Yojana and I went along to this terraced house, not before one o'clock, where there was a massage table downstairs for Christine to lie on. Prostitutes were busy on the Internet upstairs.

Christine took her top off and her breasts were red and greased. They must have been slapped many times this day. What she wanted was for both of us rub cream into her back. Where a whip mark had landed several times, her skin had cut and bled. Another potent cream had to go into these bloody lines. The lash marks looked ugly to me and there were small bloody and weepy areas. She refused to say who had done these injuries, whereas I'd have assumed Sir Sanjay. There would likely be some faint marks left a six weeks later or more, as indeed there were patches of scar tissue.

Yojana looked concerned. Yet Christine said Yojana should experience it, and me too, and in fact she would give us a gentler fifteen minutes session if Yojana and I would accept a sense of sacrifice and service, at least in theory. Theory? What was theoretical about it?

I asked her about if her bottom was affected at all, but she said the paddling she'd received would just calm down without effect. So I pulled her trousers down to look, but more concern for us was when she turned to show her front, for there was redness around her vulva as well and one cut on her thigh.

We applied the creams as she wanted.

Nevertheless I volunteered and Yojana followed my lead. We undressed completely to experience what sort of things Christine had received, but nowhere near as severely.

Staying naked but with shoes on, Christine produced a paddle to whack our backsides. It did sting. The cane she next showed us was thin and bendy. She said she would give one light stroke to each of us. Yojana yelped and, crumbs, if that was light I hated to know what was heavy. Then she decided she'd show us how we are more sensitive on our fronts to the cat o'nine tails, across my chest and across Yojana's breasts. The cat o'nine tails upwards at Yojana's crotch was especially sensitive and she bent over immediately after the strike. Then Christine produced two pegs, one for each of us, one on my left testicle and one on her Yojana's outer labia, and we easily agreed that this hurt a lot. Christine said Yojana should try loads around the body and linked by string, to be pulled off in one swift go. She refused.

"Terry Barman won't let me introduce these in the group sessions, above the casino. He says people aren't ready. But how can we represent sacrifice, beyond the giving of our bodies, unless we are at least introduced to a little pain?"

"So who in the Worshipful Company struck you?" I asked.

"The person isn't in the Worshipful Company."

This suggested to me another client.

"He paid you, a customer."

"No, he didn't and he isn't."

"Who then?" I asked.

"He is entitled to privacy," she said. "We agreed not to go public."

"It is sometimes necessary and useful," I said.

Meranwhile, Christine said that we would soon have a secure online messaging system to pass on news and comments. We would have elaborate user names and passwords to get in to make encrypted messages.

Meanwhile, I had my news to pass on within limited circles.

I now told them that Linda had used Adam Magellan to discover my affair with Cheryl Mould. He had investigated me in Harwich and then the involvement of the SMS processes, was misdirection. If she had the information she needed, why did she want to draw attention to an investigation at home? I said that the note *A. M. K. J. R. Y. L. A.* likely came from Adam Magellan himself, but that when I mentioned this to Archie Holborn earlier today he'd doubted it. But Archie did not know where the note had originated.

We had come to an agreement by which Linda would be ordained without disturbance.

Christine asked if anyone had spoken directly to Linda, and of course this was possible as a number of people who had gone from Serninsea to Harwich and Felixstowe.

However, it didn't matter, because the outcome was excellent. The two women should keep the news within the Worshipful Company.

I said, "Anyway, there are no more excuses: it's time to recruit Linda so that when she is ordained she can function for the Worshipful Company."

"There haven't been excuses. It's a question of getting the geese in a row."

"Very funny," I said to Christine, using geese instead of ducks.

I had already told Archie that I was very happy with everything. For the moment, Cheryl was wife number one and Linda wife number two. If I could, I would move to Harwich.

This made Yojana say she hoped I would not but realised Cheryl came first.

Christine said Linda would have to adopt the group ethos into her life, under the direction of the Vanguard Confraternity to help God bring in the Kingdom. It was not for my convenience that I would continue to fuck her but as her duty and mine. We must give our total selves for the sake of the Kingdom.

I had more news. A pregnancy test confirmed this day that Cheryl was pregnant and we were both very happy.

Christine turned her attention to Yojana. She said she needed Yojana to prove to her that she could give herself up fully. She had a client coming, called Harry. Christine wanted Yojana to go with him. Harry would not be cruel, but he would introduce some things she'd not done before. The fee of £200 indicated what was expected, whereas Christine didn't even start at ten times that much. Christine told Yojana to call herself Hind, as in hind legs, because she would have to be on her knees, sticking out her bottom, for a number of his pleasures, but Christine was also thinking of Yojana's religion.

Harry had to pay her first, and she should expect condom use. Christine gave suitable condoms and a bottle of lubricant to Yojana, or Hind. Yojana should

therefore wait, undressed, as he would be along very soon. Christine said that Yojana would be doing no more than Linda would, once Christine was able to work with Linda. I said I would go to Yojana's parents' Maa Skelter guest house to spend the rest of our afternoon off. I assured Christine that we were not forming an attachment.

Thus Christine and I left the house with Yojana waiting to be a prostitute. I asked if Christine could also come to the guest house, and she said certainly not. I would have to pay her a hefty fee, "and it is a punishing fee." At this point Harry was coming along the street, so Christine stopped him. She told him that his maid was waiting for him, nervously, and he was not to be cruel, but Hind did have extra strong condoms with her. He should spend no more than two hours with her, and probably less. Then we two continued walking.

Later on I woke after a nap on Yojana's bed and looked out of the window towards the sea. Yojana was sat outside in a coat. I went out to her and her face seemed strained. Yojana said she wanted to sleep with me until I should return to Linda, but I said we must obey the group ethos. I said to reassure her that she could teach me new pleasures she'd received when we next slept together again. I said I wanted to be with her, but we have to demonstrate our willingness to be within the Theatrical Players: we are actors after all.

Yojana said that Christine is so ideological. She really is a fanatic with her logic and ideas. Yojana told me to go home to Linda because she wanted a lie down. So I did go home and arrived earlier than expected. Linda had spent the day in local parks, contemplating, and also swimming naked, she said, in various south of Serninsea dykes. She denied she had seen any friends and said that no one, not even Diana or Patricia, knew of the confrontation or our subsequent arrangement.

"They can know," I said. "But don't tell Colin Cromer and so on."

Chapter 08 Adam Gets His Reward

Narrator: Linda A School Visit (Tuesday 4th June)

Tuesday in the eighth week after Easter and Colin Cromer said that if I wanted to preach before Trinity Sunday I could. Pentecost, it would be, in the evening, perhaps offering an unusual angle. "I'm being generous here; the bishop wants you more involved." The suffragan bishop had told him that I should be given opportunities to learn, including from Rabbi Maurice Neptune this day for faith presentations.

I went to Adam Magellan's, to see that he was all right. Peter said that Adam was out all day; my guess was that he was in the building. Peter did a card trick for me, and it was some sort of special shuffle involved. He thought he had to do more and better. I reminded him that I'd want to use him among my church folk.

"Tell Adam that he did a good job that night but I detected that he was a little unhappy."

"He said he won't talk about it," Peter told me, "and neither should I."

"It's done now. See you Peter; send him my love and gratitude. I want to take him out for a meal. Tell him that."

Before I left the building, Peter told of the death of Paul Darrow yesterday. Never was there such a controversy over an apostrophe used and not used in *Blake's 7* on television, the low-budget British science fiction series of moral ambiguities.

I went on to the secondary school, *my* secondary school indeed, and this meant taking Religious Education for Year 11 as a practitioner of the religion. One could always see how bored the kids were during RE and the relief on teachers' faces that they at least paid some attention to a visitor like me. To try and tackle the appalling reputation of RE, the classes were renamed Humanities.

Bishop Barman had been delegated on to the Local Authority Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education in Foss to improve collective worship in schools, looking at the quality of RE, finding people like me to speak, producing places to visit like our parish church, and we Anglicans should have but had not produced some teaching materials. It had been mentioned that parish clergy could add to staff training, but nothing had happened there. So far I had not taken an assembly at the school, because they did not want the religion up front. Their reflections were secular. Nevertheless the suffragan bishop was in my thoughts because he was in his element when it came to making connections into the wider community.

Humanities classes were run by Mr. Barratt and Mr. Fowler. Regarding Year 11 they told me about the confident Misty and Cathy, the 'want to be accepted' Buffy and then the loner but charismatic redhead Miriam. George and Jack were trying to impress the females, but not the teachers. Sally was actually a star pupil in Maths. Humanities seemed to cover a wider range of subjects than I expected: the Global Economy and British Constitution. These weren't Humanities! Ms Kathryn Sally Parker, the headteacher, regarded Humanities as the place to raise topics in which to discuss ethics. I would have thought a wider range of subjects discussed ethics.

Another class was about to be taught by the later-arriving Rabbi Maurice

Neptune, of the Reformist denomination. So, after my staff talk and toilet visit, I met him sat waiting in this corridor before we were taken to our respective classes.

"Yes I'm Rabbi Maurice, of the Reformist Shul over in Wytham. I'm here to tell some school students in Year 10 about Judaism."

"Good to meet you; I'm the Reverend Linda, a curate in the parish here. I'll be talking to Year 11. I have to confess that in all our time in theological college I didn't knowingly meet a rabbi. We did have a talk from an imam once on the fundamentals of Islam but we told ourselves about Judaism. How arrogant that must sound."

"There is danger of inaccuracy."

"So you are definitely not, what, Orthodox, Chassidic?"

"The Reformist strand is quite observant. Our setting is these times and not, say, the mediaeval. But for RE, as they have it here in Humanities, I am just a rabbi."

I said, "In RE it's as if they learn nothing. What I will tell Year 7 I will also tell Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 because, apparently, this is what the teachers do. There is very little of what the profession calls 'progression' in Religious Education."

He responded, "I'm sure I'll be asked many times about circumcision: yes, converts must do it I'll say and be healed before immersion, like using the mikveh. We have to discuss the penis honestly and directly to pupils, and that there is no female circumcision equivalent. Not in Judaism. We don't touch the clitoris, I may tell them. Have you ever encountered a circumcised penis?"

I thought this was a bit direct. "You mean *doing* it?"

"In any circumstances."

"Hmm." (There was a memory that Adam Magellan's friend Geoff Virgo had one, but he didn't stay with Adam, Jenny and me for me to see it, first hand or any hand.) "Er, no." My mind was drifting at this point. I wanted to make use of meeting this rabbi. So I then said, if a little bizarrely, "*Suppose* you have a Christian who doesn't really believe in Jesus as God the Son. If he was still important, then the person might be a Muslim, but if not important beyond all the other messianic figures at the same time, then the person might become a Jew. Yet it seems so unlikely that people switch."

"Is that your view?"

"I'm doing an interfaith comparison."

"It does happen; maybe a hundred times a year our denomination gets converts, but it would need commitment to Jewish identity and not just a theological loss."

"You don't baptise, then, oh... immersion? What's this about some Mick?"

"Mikveh. In fact we have it for spiritual elevation, for ritual purity, and it is full immersion: it is a requirement for conversion to Judaism. But many Jews immerse before the Sabbath and High Holy Days. Many women immerse monthly in harmony with their menstrual cycle. You fancy doing that? Marriage partners immerse in our mikveh before their wedding day."

"I apologise. *Mikveh*."

"It is a pool at the synagogue. You can have mikveh immersion for life cycle events such as milestone birthdays, personal loss, or after a bad illness - or indeed a set time after your menstruation."

"So you don't sprinkle water."

"The water must touch and cover every strand of hair, every birthmark, every lesion. You must be thoroughly cleansed immediately before the immersion and

have no adhesions such as bandages or ointment and no cosmetics. Pure you. Naked you."

"Sounds great. Does it get rid of sin?"

"Not in the sense you mean, but it does ritually cleanse a person from past deeds. A convert is like a new-born. There is a blessing that goes: 'Barukh atah Adonai Elo-henu melekh ha'olam asher kideshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al ha'tevillah,' and this means, 'Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding the immersion.' Now we always say it before the immersion, except with the convert. Why not with the convert, do you think?"

"Er... Because they are not yet Jewish?"

"*Exactly*. So the convert says it only when a Jew, and the ritual cleansing comes first."

"What are the regulations for a mikveh?"

"Yes, well it must be built into the ground or the structure of the building and be a minimum of twenty-four cubic feet of water or some two-hundred gallons. The water level should be nearly a foot above an average person's waist when stood up, and so allows everyone reasonably easy full immersion."

"Water from the Jordan?"

"No. Tap water - of natural water colour if indeed chlorinated - but some must be freely entering rainwater, which is where to start. The natural flow of waters, in other words. Like your natural flows in your body. And it must not flow when occupied in use."

"Do you have like baptismal services?"

"A conversion ceremony must take place on a daylight weekday and not on the Sabbath and accompanied by a knowledgeable person to advise and see that the ritual was properly carried out."

I said, "We in Christianity could do with more rituals and a few less beliefs."

Maurice Neptune said, "Well if you think about it, all other mitzvot use a part of the body whereas everything goes into the mikveh. Submersion plus understanding is true rebirth. So this person who does not believe: not thinking of becoming a rabbi?"

"I didn't mention any person."

"You wanted your own RE lesson?"

"Looks like that."

"It was not about you?"

"You are Reformed, then." (I ignored his question.)

"Reformist, not 'Reformed'. We are not like the 'reformed' in the United Presbyterian Congregationalist Church. It is a later Jewish theological trend. History and ideas gained a setting institutionally. We have women rabbis as well as men of course."

We were called to go to our classes. But he had a request.

He said, "Can we meet again? I would like to meet again. I can inform you about actual thought today and how Judaism might really assist you."

"Soon I'm approaching our retreat and will be ordained priest."

"Well I hope you feel you can go forward. I might even help your Christianity. But, anyway, you have a very good suffragan bishop," said Maurice. "I'm sure he'd help you if you are struggling. He knows all the theological arguments. I can debate

with him. He has a stagecraft and you might ask about that as you get to know him."

At this point, he turned to shake hands, but not before he put a white plastic badge with a black goose and a white B on it into his pocket to free his hand. Hmm.

I did my presentation and responses, all of which could have been with Year 7. They were about the hardly riveting topic for them of the layout of the church. I told them what our official beliefs were - the phenomenological school. And then, about to leave the building, along came the Bishop of Bolingbroke, John Barman, and the sweet smell of whatever he sprayed on himself. I had a keen sense of smell.

"Colin Cromer said you were here. I asked them if there was a room available. Best to see me now."

I followed him to an empty classroom.

"How's Keith?"

"Keith is fine, thank you."

"Supporting you as ever?"

"Indeed."

"We should book you in for your retreat and the ordination?"

"Er, yes."

"Are you progressing?"

"Funnily enough I was talking about that earlier."

"You are or you are not?"

"Schools not; I am."

"Oh yes; that. Does your confessor Ken Osis think you are ready?"

"Has he said?"

"Nothing."

"I've only seen him once."

"You should make best use of his availability at this time, and you are not."

"I'll talk with him again."

"You see, it matters that Keith is not diverted or uninterested and still gives you attention."

This seemed unusually personal. "He gives my concerns his full attention."

"We always understand that there is a difference between what happens and what appears to happen. You could be on the inside of this. Keith always seems to me to have directions, skill, craft..."

"I don't know what you are getting at," I stated. There was something familiar about this, but I saw no badge being worn by the bishop!

I asked, "Changing the subject, did you know those clergy involved in the bank robbery?"

"Of course. Jennifer World and Christine Vine. I put Ken Osis on to counselling them, but he's not needed. They're tough old birds. Obviously you don't know them but you will meet them I'm sure in due course at the ordination."

"Very brave women."

"Are you still studying? Reading?"

"Er, I still read but the content varies: a very good chat with a rabbi here earlier on."

"Maurice Neptune. Good man. You can rejoin him in a second."

"Oh?"

"We could do with more interfaith. He's come in on the inside - so our encounter isn't just that we proclaim this and they proclaim that. Look, on my main

purpose here, I'm booking you into the retreat. Julian Worsley or I or both will interview you then. The ordination is not a done deal but definitely the process is on. Concerns?"

"Everything is manageable."

"Well, must rush. Give my best wishes to Keith, you know, so busy here and in Harwich. Now, why don't you join Year 13 in their drama lesson?"

"Year 11 has Drama, Bishop. It was my lot's next lesson."

"Well, go and see how it is done. Theatre, dramatics. Good for public speaking, presentation, voice, ritual."

"I can't just walk around in the school!"

"I've already cleared Drama class with Ms Parker."

I tried to find the hall, but failed. A pupil gave me directions to go up the wide central staircase to the hall and then up a narrow staircase for the balcony. It's where I found Maurice Neptune, looking down. Meanwhile I was wondering why the bishop had mentioned Keith so much and Harwich.

I said to Maurice, on sitting alongside him, "Apparently this drama is good for presentation and even ritual."

"They do it all here. Lighting from the control room - which can be above the stage or as up here, getting the stagecraft learnt, clarity of speech and movement. Actually, I'm a forward talent scout."

"What's one of those?"

"Spotting who's good. These are Year 11, so a bit early. Far better with later sixth form, because real talent can shine then and, of course, they can go on to adult roles."

"You're into amateur dramatics."

"Well, I make suggestions. A few people get the bug. Actors can progress far from humble beginnings. You've never acted?"

"No. Never. I do like your idea of commitment through naked ritual submersion," I said, changing the subject. "I'm going to think about *that*."

"Actors in training. You know that they do a class in the nude? It has to be done. Simulate sex. Any of these going on professionally will have to do it."

"Not Year 11!" I joked.

"Nor Year 13, but think of the former Head Girl, whom I believe is visiting."

I was reminded of Andrew Walter and his group with whom he enjoyed sex but that surely this had to be irrelevant to the rabbi.

He said, "They're enjoying doing 'A Handbag!' here. Good Old 'Important' Ernest and Oscar Wilde. It does keep Year 11 out of mischief."

He then announced he had to go earlier than he would like, to get back to Wytham in time for a meeting.

It seemed to me alone that half of them were larking about. It was mischief. So I left the balcony.

Walking down the main stairs a somewhat familiar young woman and the headteacher seemed to join from different directions coming up. "Is Rabbi Maurice up there?" asked Ms Parker. "This is Annie, former Head Girl from our Upper Sixth." Annie seemed to have her blouse open enough to show one of those badges on her vest under her blouse.

I replied, "He went some minutes ago." So I asked, "What is that badge?"

Annie said, "It's a goose with a B on it."

"I have one," said the headteacher, revealing it from below her jacket with some of her breast revealed.

"Who wears these? What do they mean?"

Annie said, "The goose is a local animal symbol..."

"You should know this," said Kathryn Parker. "It's related to local religion."

"And," said Annie, "the B stands for Bolingbroke."

"It's an ancient local name," said the headteacher.

"So who wears these?"

"Actors!" she replied. "It's a way that we identify ourselves - to those who know. Like a club. Rabbi Maurice has one."

The recent student said, "You don't have to wear them. We're all actors and identify with each other. Obviously I know Ms Parker very well. And, Kay, I still want to look at additional lighting from the balcony."

"I've five minutes," said the headteacher to Annie. "And thank you for your lesson. I hope we see you again somehow."

Somehow this didn't seem quite right: a head teacher showing stage lighting in the balcony, and them approaching from different angles when they came to the staircase. What Andrew Walter had said now sounded like what all four had said in the school. So what was all this about actors and amateur dramatics? Why an apparent religious symbol to identify them?

Badges and Patricia's Need (Wednesday 5th June)

Wednesday I woke with Keith, as I had for years.

I told him, "Put your finger in me and swirl it around."

After this I was working on top of the duvet with my dilators and moving my pelvis with a pillow between my legs. He was still in the bed, with a book, taking Wednesday off for a change.

"What's with the pillow?" he asked.

"Exercises. I looked them up. Hopefully repairing recent damage."

"Oh."

"Do you work with Yojana Asthana a lot then, usually?"

"Some points I see her or, rather, she sees me."

"Is *she* an actor, into amateur dramatics?"

"That's a funny question. 'Are you thinking of going on the stage, Mrs. Robinson?'"

"What?"

"Like in, 'Don't put your daughter on the... Oh, never mind. How do I know?'"

"That report from Adam Magellan said she had a badge that shows a goose with a B on it."

"I don't want to talk about him. As for a badge, it could be her mother's or her father's. Or someone else's."

"Apparently, the goose is a local symbol and B is Bolingbroke," I said.

"I know both symbols," Keith replied.

"I found out yesterday."

"You should get out more. Or fly among the geese."

"I go out and see these badges: I'm a deacon of the local church. I did not know local actors wore badges and that they use the goose or gander identifier."

"But you know about Bolingbroke, because the suffragan is named after it."

"Yes."

"The goose is at least a religious symbol," he said.

"It is a symbol from Toulouse; St Sernin is from Toulouse."

"Not completely. Ask Colin Cromer. I'll leave you to find out more."

"Keith: someone, I cannot say, had a badge and talked about a group of people with whom he had sex. Does this make any sense? Even the rabbi was a bit personal."

"You can't ask Colin Cromer about that. Anyway, you have to get up even if I don't. That makes a change."

"Only because I'm observing Morning Prayer."

So, after Morning Prayer, I asked Colin Cromer: "Is the goose a local symbol of religion?"

"What a question!" he exclaimed. "We get the wild geese. But it's related to Toulouse, where geese were plentiful, and that's where the Basilica of St Sernin is found."

"Apparently some actors into amateur dramatics wear badges with a goose and a B on it for Bolingbroke."

He responded: "I think a number of people have used the goose. But, for us, the wild goose is a symbol of the Holy Spirit."

"Is it?" I asked.

"You seriously did not know?"

"I am asking."

"Well you will know because you now have a subject for your next sermon - this coming Sunday, of course."

"I walked into that one, Colin."

"No, it flew into you. You *receive* the Holy Spirit, remember. Watch the birdie: I'm going."

"Just before you do: you're not into amateur dramatics, are you Colin?"

"I'd like to do more with music. See you later. Behave."

I started brushing my hair, and realised that my bad habit wasn't reducing enough after the Magellan-Jupitas confrontation.

In the afternoon Diana, naked behind Patricia's front door, let me in and I lifted off my cassock (nothing underneath). She was keen to report something once we were laid down.

"Our lovely, stuffy, right wing friend, Patricia, with this lovely house and her lovely husband... Yes? Their marriage isn't brilliant apparently."

"Not another one," I said.

"Why? What other one?"

"Keith admitted he is having an affair. Adam Magellan confronted him, we had Cheryl Mould's name redy and he admitted it. So now we are working out what we will do."

"You and Magellan?"

"No, Keith and me - how to carry on in the short term."

"What do you mean?"

"Keeping it quiet so that I can get through the priesting at the end of June."

"But it's not your fault."

"It doesn't work like that. Because of Catholic theory - once a priest, always a priest - you get divorced only after being a priest. Patricia: what's the matter there?"

"They need to spice things up, Patricia told me. So they found some sort of therapist who'd advertised. He's a taboo buster to spice things up."

"Perhaps we could all benefit," I suggested.

"Speak for yourself. So Patricia's been going with Arthur and they've had tutoring and there might be group sessions in the same room."

"They kept that quiet."

"But here's the daft thing. She asked if Ardse and me would like to sit in while they have sex?"

"What? *What?*"

"I don't need to repeat it."

"You are kidding. And, well, presumably: 'No' was your short considered reply!"

"Of course!"

"I'm glad she hasn't asked me, and presumably she won't because of the clergy thing."

"Not yet."

"What?"

"Well, I did say that you might be more pastoral about it."

"Diana! Oh, come on."

"I sort of suggested you to get me out of it; you can say no as well - if she asks."

"I'll watch them wearing my cassock and collar!"

"She didn't want us to *join in* exactly. That's not just taboo busting: that's a whole different level."

"Fancy you suggesting me," I said, "when I've been faithful to my husband."

"That's not the reason."

"He was unfaithful to me. There's no one else in my life. I'll take Adam for a meal, if he says yes, but that's all it'll be."

"Magellan," she said. "The one and the same?"

"A thank you to him. Simple."

Then there was the sound of my mobile phone in my bag.

"Hello?"

"Colin here. About the sermon. I was telling Bishop John, and he has no problem with you doing a sermon on the goose as the Holy Spirit and all the connections, but thinks it's advisable not to mention these badges."

"Why ever not?"

"He said he understands that they are like private communications, so that one amateur actor recognises another but it's not something that should mean anything to the wider public."

I asked him, "Have you ever heard of an amateur dramatic group in Serninsea advertising and putting on a play?"

"There was something about up to ten years ago, but it folded."

"But obviously *something* is happening."

"I think this is the point: they are not ready. I gather that Rabbi Neptune and you looked at some drama lesson. You indicated to Rabbi Maurice that you had no

interest in drama."

"I don't."

"Well, don't forget that the rabbi is based at Wytham and there is a lot of amateur drama there. So Bishop John was unsure, but he thinks these badges could be useful for other places. Bolingbroke can apply across a wide area. Anyway, do the sermon, but find a different lead-in, I'd suggest, than seeing various people wearing these badges."

After the call, Diana said, "There is actually a drama study group in the college. It is a student thing and some did drama at school."

"So have you seen people wear a small badge with a goose and a B on it?"

"I can't say I have."

"Do those students in the drama group wear them?"

"Well, I don't go to their workshops or even productions."

"The school headteacher, the former head girl, my confessor, an amateur psychotherapist, and the rabbi, all wore one, and possibly Yojana Asthana has one. I've started to notice them all over the place."

"Perhaps now you've mentioned them, I might go on to see one or two. But there is no specific Am Dram in Serninsea. Is this important?"

"For God's sake it's not important," I said.

"Have you heard about Winchester Geese?"

"No?"

"Look up the Liberty of the Clink that is located around Southwark in London. It fell under the Bishop of Winchester rather than London, and so had all sorts of dodgy goings on. Cross Bones there probably was begun as an unconsecrated graveyard for prostitutes. Cross Bones and all associates features in some literature."

"So this might have something to do with it. Hmm."

Patricia arrived home which was the usual time to get dressed. However, she said she was early and fancied a talk. So we didn't move.

But Diana opened up. "Linda has discovered that Keith has been having an affair. When he goes to Harwich, he stays and sleeps with Cheryl Mould. Do you remember Cheryl Mould?"

"Er. Not really."

I told Patricia as well that Keith would stay with me until at least I was ordained. But he called me 'Wife Number Two' rather than number one.

Diana said, "From all you say, I think he could end up with Cheryl Mould and have an affair with Yojana Asthana."

Patricia thought, "Nah. Yojana's got more get up and go; he's a pipe and slippers man. Wants to settle down. Cheryl? Yes. Yojana? No."

Diana said, "Cheryl Mould set the standard for being a tart at school."

I chipped in: "She looks so different now."

Patricia said, "From what you say about all of them, Keith would have become another Colin Cromer, had he been ordained."

I said, "So what about this Bishop of Bolingbroke, John Terence Barman? This new confessor of mine makes more sense now: he said submit to him especially, promise to keep confidences and I'll be 'on the inside' like where the hub is."

Diana said, "That bishop man is a creep. Something is concealed. Get close

to him and he has this sweet smell of perfume."

I said, "He does groom himself."

Patricia said, "There's something of the dark about him. But I don't know him."

Diana added, "He's high and mighty among the tutors at college, as if he is a superior academic amongst a bunch of second-rate lecturers. Some of them join to him by the hip. He must have a charisma - and you either love him or hate him. And I don't hate anyone but he is a negative."

Patricia changed the subject back. "So Cheryl is Keith's future. What a betrayal. Don't waste energy getting angry when he's moving on."

I said, "That's what I've been doing. He can be him and let me be me. Perhaps Keith is becoming more like his parents. I've always had more edge, more danger, more risk. He's made me too risk-free."

Diana said, "You fell into that Church and it traps you. Anyway, Patricia, didn't you want to ask Linda something?"

Patricia said, "Didn't you know Keith well, at one time, Diana?"

"Er, Keith once told me I looked very brown all over."

"Hardly very revealing," I said. "You went all sun-worshipping when starting your naturism, but I didn't and don't."

Patricia stared at Diana in silence.

Diana then asked, "What do you want to talk to Linda about, Patricia?"

"I want to talk to Linda at some time."

"Well, I'll get dressed then," said Diana.

Patricia said, "Better both get dressed, it's nearly kids back time, and I can talk to you later."

"I'm in my cassock only, so dressing will take me ten seconds."

Both of us clothed, Patricia asked me into the living room. "Are you interested in helping Arthur and me in something personal. Stop smirking out there."

Diana said goodbye to us both and left the house.

"I'm interested to hear about it."

Patricia thus said to me, "Em, it's that Arthur and I have realised... We need to become more loving and intimate."

"Right. Go on. I'm all ears."

"Pipe and slippers again. We thought we could seek professional assistance and have done."

"After only six years of marriage?"

"A similar couple we know said about this consultant they'd seen, and how he'd turned them around. At Wytham is this consultant. He advertised. We've spent some money, really, and we are up to the session that focuses around taboo busting."

"You mean Diana thought I could help you."

"We had thought Keith and you could help. Obviously you're no longer a team."

"No, I'm second choice - number two, again."

"Diana is right, though: you're pastorally minded."

"Patricia. What do you think if I told my training vicar, 'Oh I'm doing some pastoral visiting, sitting in while a couple has a shag.?'"

She said, "You are right. I wasn't going to ask and we should look elsewhere. We are making progress."

"What do you want, Patricia?"

"I don't want to ask if you don't want to do it."

"Being pastorally minded, as you suggest, I might feel a compelling urge to help."

"Keep it quiet, then. Helped by people we can trust, we need an edge on things. You could watch and offer advice on how we, er, do lovemaking. Your watching is like taboo-busting. Makes things risky, makes them exciting."

"Watching?"

"You only *observe*. You can even comment afterwards."

"You could ask anyone."

"It is definitely not swinging. Not like *dogging*."

"I see."

"I'd hoped Diana would have said yes. This would be once only, to help Arthur towards being freer. We'd talk about it afterwards."

I said, "What about someone in this group?"

"It would cause a group dynamic. We are separate couples sitting in a circle. This is one intense bedroom experience."

"Just a minute. This isn't a group of sexual intimacy where you act things out?"

"Some do. It can happen."

"Do you wear a badge?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"Ah."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"It's an identifier. A white badge and black markings?"

"Yes. SDW with a rectangle and a square."

"Not a white badge and a white B on a goose in black?"

"No. What are you on about?"

"Never mind. You've never seen that badge, have you, by any chance?"

"No."

I felt guilty. "So, you're saying that by being present I will upset your safe equilibrium - is that it? Oh, fuck it. *If* I do this, I'm not joining in or anything like that."

"Will you be naked? That's why we wanted to ask Diana, and then there is you. I mean, she and Aardse, or Diana alone, or you, could be naked and observe."

"Patricia. And what happens afterwards?"

"We then go back to the group in Wytham guided by the counsellor and tell them."

Thinking of my new found freedom, I said, "I'll do it. Me only. Don't discuss it with anyone else. Not even Diana. I'll be there and that is all. I'll be naked; that's all right. You've seen me so often enough. You do what you do, and I'll talk about it afterwards if you want. But tell no one."

Patricia said, "I should have asked you first. When?"

I said, "Things are getting busy: sooner rather than later."

"Tonight? We can do it here from say nine and maybe to eleven and no longer than midnight. Like a good night out at the pub."

"What about the kids?" I suddenly asked. "Talk of the devils!" (The children came in.)

"Auntie Julie tonight, everyone," Patricia called out to them. "Eight O'Clock."

Your dad and I are going out."

One of them called out that she was going out with friends.

I left Patricia's to return later.

I had gathered that Diana must have had some encounter with Keith. There was a time that Diana seemed to disappear, if not for long, and came back. I was never quite sure what had happened, and asking moved off the agenda. I'd introduced Diana to naturism and she became a convert - thus she got brown rapidly. But even as good friends we kept secrets, and, by agreeing to see Patricia and Arthur on the job, I was about to add another secret.

Pastoral Help for Patricia and Arthur (Wednesday 5th June)

I told Keith I had a meeting at the vicarage and would return in some hours. First, of course, I had to get ahead of the curve with a hot drink and bowel movements.

Satisfied that Patricia was no secret badge-wearer (I didn't think she would be), I rang Patricia's doorbell at 8:45 pm, so to be ready for 9 pm and create a bit of time-space for however the proceedings would take place. I was wearing mufti.

Arthur Rhymes answered the front door, with a dressing gown on. "Thanks for coming. The kids all went at 7:30 and are staying overnight with aunt and uncle. So we are okay here. Come on in. We've had a little, er, uneventful time together. I should say she is a little uncomfortable about all of this."

"That makes two of us," I said, going in and following him.

"Three of us," he said. "But this is the point: we are upsetting the routines. We are going to do some naughty things at my business premises after hours as well. That sort of thing. Shall we go upstairs? Do you want the bathroom to prepare or anything like that?"

I asked, climbing the stairs in front of him, "Is it better I undress in the bathroom?"

"We're not asking for a striptease."

"Casually I undress and dress in front of Patricia when I chat with Diana."

"Hia Linda!" Patricia was welcoming but a little nervous in tone, I thought.

So I went into the bathroom. I needed another pee anyway, and so stripped off first. The one thing I needed with me was my hairbrush.

Then I went into the bedroom that had sidelights on either side of the bed, and was looked at by these two together, under bedclothes. I said, "Put the main light on. I need to see; I need you to see that I can see. Patricia. Get out and put the light on."

"Well, you do it Arthur."

"No, Patricia, you do it and throw that cover off."

So she got up and did as I asked. What I saw with the light put on was a woman with a large, square, closed bottom, full of cellulite and large, hanging but somewhat emptied breasts. Her legs seemed short. Laying on the bed was Arthur with a large belly and a very small manhood in an unexcited state. So I sat there in the far end corner at the foot of the bed and started my observation of their actions. Very slowly they started kissing. This could be a long night, I thought, and I hadn't even got a glass of water nearby.

Noticing his absence of response, I decided to talk. "Don't you think you might

suck him off? I mean not a lot is happening. I tell you what, I'll go and get a glass of water or something from your kitchen while you get started."

"Right," said Patricia. "We'll do that, if you don't mind..."

"Crumbs," I said. "This is why I am here. Get started and keep going for when I get back."

So I left my hairbrush behind and went to the kitchen and the fridge and found some cordial and a glass in the cupboard, to fill it up and return back upstairs, where I found Patricia on her knees on the bed, her big bottom facing in my direction. So I couldn't actually see what she was doing.

So I said, grabbing my hairbrush and pointing with it, "Much as I might like the sight of your bum, Patricia, you might get Arthur to move across a bit and let me see what you are doing, and also so that you can look at me looking at you."

There was a grunt and a pause; he shuffled along and she manoeuvred around. So now I could see. She was making a bit of a chomping noise, but not a lot was happening.

So I had some advice. "Try a combination of teeth, lips, tongue and suction. Remember the more sensitive head."

"Teeth? Bite his sausage?"

"Not *bite* his sausage. A bit, though. Carefully. Why not do it laying on top of him? A bit of *chwe-deg-naw*. *Croeso Chwe Deg Nain* sang Dafydd Iwan, although that was about Prince Charles."

Patricia and Arthur looked puzzled and then smiled at my humour.

She turned about to lay on top of him, for *chwe-deg-naw*, his business end to me. He played with her dangling breasts. There was some response within his business end.

He said, "Oh come on then," as he started to shuffle away from under her. There was all sorts of turning about by her and so he was to get on top of her, both facing the wall. "I can't see you now but you look lovely, Linda."

"Concentrate on your wife, Arthur."

And she said, "Oh this could be embarrassing." This suggested to me they'd thought about what they were going to do with my observation, as in him trying an early entry.

I said, "Sorry, but now neither of you can see me. Turn around so you can see me."

So they turned about, their heads now facing me. Arthur, on his knees, grasped each of Patricia's lower legs in each hand, pulled them up, entered her shallowly and started moving inwards and outwards. To me there was incompetence in these actions. I was thinking how fortunate I had been in that Keith always had technique.

Was there anything I could do to help? Having told him to concentrate on her, he did look at me at moments, so I decided to masturbate in front of them and get some reaction. I used the handle of my hairbrush, mainly without insertion. Now there was this rhythmic slapping of flesh, more slap and noise than effect. Something would have to improve. I needed to be more interventionist.

"Come over here, Arthur," I said from my chair, and he stopped his slapping motion, looked at me for confirmation, got off her and the bed, and came across. So, hairbrush released, I grasped hold of what I needed and pulled him forward and leaned forward myself. "Watch me, Patricia." Patricia on to her side looked on and

seemed accepting enough. Starting with my hand motions, I used my lips, teeth, tongue, suction and even blowing. It worked, of course, though presumably he was excited being in someone else's mouth.

"Why is it called a blow job?" he asked.

I paused. "Because it is a 'below job'. It's from prostitutes who fell to their knees. I'm staying sat down."

Getting him longer and stiff, I pushed him back and said, now stood up myself and closer to them, "Get on her, apply a muscle like feeling to it to keep it stiff, and put it in there as if you are digging. Push it in, search down the hole with it, and go left a bit and right a bit..."

"Fire," he said.

"No! Dig around. Change the motion."

"Oh, deep deep," said Patricia in response, who must have seen me upside down.

I said, standing up, "That's it and develop some rhythm slowly but keep digging around."

He said, "She's getting slippery."

So I said, "Put more effort in then to try and keep some purchase."

Patricia said, "This is so different."

Arthur said, "Brilliant advice."

I sat back down, and now took to my hairbrush handle. The result, peculiarly perhaps for them, was less slap and more rhythm, and not only that but he kept looking at me. I added to his encouragement by widening my legs and doing a little exposed play, the brush handle busy. Trouble is, when her eyes were open, Patricia was also looking at me upside down and not him. Whatever she'd thought about my presence, the result was a happy one in the sense that he changed from rhythm to spasm, and finally a Golden Shot.

So everything paused, as he moved alongside her, still looking in my direction, and after some minutes he got up to go to the bathroom, where the sound of urinating was very audible.

"Oh," said Patricia, rising up, turning to face me and swinging her legs over the bed.

I could hear her say into her breath, "I need the loo as well." She went.

He came back in the room and said to me, "Perhaps we do that again. You and me. In your mouth."

"I don't think that's the idea," I said. "It wouldn't be taboo-breaking, would it? It would become something else."

"Well, where did you learn to do it like that?"

"Acquired experience," I said. "So tell Patricia that. Yeah, I need a pee too, again." I kept my hairbrush.

I pushed forward the bathroom door and it opened. Patricia, stood at the mirror, and looking at me, I said, "I won't be a second."

So inside I just squatted down and started to pee. (I might have plopped a turd.)

She said, "Linda!"

"What? I need a pee. Masturbating brings it on. I drank too much coffee before coming out and then some of your juice. Cordial, I meant. Never mind."

"Where *do* you come from? I'd better go." Patricia said, "Don't get me wrong. I

really appreciate it. You were very brave to come. Thing is, even, I've seen your body and Diana's so many times, but I don't like you seeing mine. Or Arthur's, really."

She passed by me on the toilet. I used some paper; I flushed. "Or me sucking him off?" I asked.

"I'm learning," she called back.

Back in the bedroom both of them were stood up, as if about to say goodbye. I said, "Arthur, she hasn't come. Go to your headboard, Patricia, and lean back on it, and open your legs. You can close your eyes if you want." She did. Arthur was stood alongside me. "It isn't just about you ejaculating, you know. Her pubes need your tongue: go to it, soldier."

"What to do?" he asked. "She's waiting."

I put my finger to my mouth. Then, on to my knees I started circling around her pubes with my tongue. I covered her eyes with one hand. I pushed a finger in, and I raised my licking over an increasingly exposed pink clitoris.

Now I looked at Arthur. He said, "Eyes still closed." He climbed on board and I moved out of the way. He resumed what I had started.

Patricia said, "If what I think has happened *has* happened I might be... Oh, that is so nice again."

The result was she became runny and I pointed towards her vulva for him to continue. She rived somewhat and orgasmed fully.

I said, "There you go. She's done... you're done... I'm done."

Arthur said, "Yes. It was taboo busting all right. I think I need a drink now."

"No you don't," I said. "That is your wife around your mouth. You should savour it."

Patricia said, "Linda. Will you get dressed now and perhaps Arthur and I can chat about all this?"

I replied, "I think that's a good idea. I mean there's more I could offer but..."

Patricia said, "I'll always appreciate this but nothing to Diana please and absolutely nothing to anyone else."

"Of course. She's bound to ask, because you asked her and Aardse. But I won't answer."

"It's been great," Arthur said.

Patricia said, "Definitely no repeat."

So I turned around towards the door and bathroom and said, "I'll get dressed and let myself out. Have a good chat and get that sex life spiced."

She said, "We'll tell our consultant. Might have a further session with him, but probably then drop the consulting."

Back at the bathroom I retrieved my pile of clothing, got dressed and went downstairs and out through the front door.

Back at home Keith noted that I was not so late. Did I have a good meeting at the vicarage?

I told him that I'd had a very good meeting and, for some reason I was very randy, and his "Wife Number Two" fancied some of his well-developed attention.

I felt freed and liberated as he banged away into me.

Narrator: Keith *Under the Confraternity* (Thursday 6th June)

All three bishops were present; they had already had a meeting of the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the English National Church. Two unknown to me came up from the south. Locally was our retiring head teacher Kay Parker accompanied by the former head girl Annie Fenwick, plus the Wilsons, the McPhails, the Holborns, the Reverend Christine Vine, Rabbi Neptune, Ken Osis and Andrew Walter. From Hartlepool had come the Reverend Jenny World, the Reverend Fatima Tamuuz, Philip Shrimpton and Rory Jackson. There were the new people attending: Charles Rowland, mentored by Archie's wife, and Janet Hayes on her very first visit. But the one local person not present, nor at work and not answering at home, was Yojana.

The bishops asked the Reverend Deacon Christine Vine to give a talk with relevance to recent events.

She asserted that we under the Vanguard Confraternity could not agree with the scheme of Schopenhauer (1788-1860). Schopenhauer began with Kant that we perceive through our senses and we can't get to what is the reality in itself, except perhaps through ourselves as embodied, but where much was left mysterious. Schopenhauer in this sense pre-dates Freudian thought. Nevertheless, unlike Kant, the world itself doesn't have the differentiation as we perceive (things) except through space and time. But the one world as it is, and indeed we ourselves, have the Will, *the* driver; and it is really rather horrible by evidence as to the suffering it produces.

Thus Schopenhauer is a pessimist. Yet he can still state that in unity harming another is in a sense to harm ourselves, and so we should act ethically. Furthermore we have art, and art can be regarded as without material desire for consumption, and so can be approached as being disinterested.

Christine said that we can see parallels with Hinduism in the one metaphysical unity and in Buddhism with disinterest applied as ethical towards nirvana. Compassion arises with disinterest, unlike with samsara, the mixed-up clingy world as it is. However, the Will is incredibly powerful - that or the Will is not so horrible after all.

It wasn't easy to follow, this. Christine went on to give what should be our objections. She stated that the orgasm must surely be part of the Will. It is one of the energies that drives us. Indeed it comes within self-knowledge. Yet far from being part of the ugliness and horror of existence, the orgasm is an experience of beauty and connects us with the divine. It overturns Augustinian original sin.

Christine claimed that the Buddhist Anong's connection with practising disgust would link her with Schopenhauer. She was unsure what Anong would say to this. Nevertheless, we must be different from this and her, in that the orgasm approached through effort, sacrifice, and even suffering, has a redemptive quality and connects with our whole crucifixion and resurrection pattern. The orgasm makes the world ultimately good, and thus what the Confraternity promotes as our Vanguard purpose to the world along Christian lines.

Bishop Elizabeth thanked Christine for developing our thinking further in response to the meeting in Hartlepool. We had to move along with pragmatism, the bishops had decided.

We had to be careful. For example, other Anglican people might start

wondering why Bishop Liz was in the county of Foss again.

Then she asked Christine what had happened with Yojana. Christine replied that she had "toughened her up" somewhat, leaving her to entertain one of her ladies' clients and Yojana collected the fee. Then Christine said that one week of Yojana being in London with Christine would sort her out completely.

Elizabeth responded, "Absolutely not!" Yojana would only accompany Elizabeth herself in South Wales. "She needs nurturing," and the decision of the bishops was that we were not now introducing these tougher theosexual practices within the Worshipful Company. "And, given your views on the authority of the Confraternity, that is that and you will obey."

"Yes," said Bishop Terry. "Keith's mentoring of Yojana has gone on far too long, especially after her initiation. Mentoring should be as short as possible."

Jenny then gave the opinion that we ought to move forward. Fatima then said no we don't. Fatima said that Yojana was probably having difficulty disconnecting from her mentor, and I did nod in some agreement.

Jenny speaking caused Bishop Terry to mention that she and Christine had been so brave at the bank. They received a round of applause. Jenny said really it was Christine who made her feel brave. The reputation of Christine as tough and self-sacrificing was raised among us even more.

Terry said, "Under the Holy Spirit the news media got your names wrong, and this preserved our anonymity."

But Christine said that two days later they corrected when there was more information from the police.

"But we were assisted at the critical moment," he said.

I mentioned that Linda was unaware of Jenny's name change and Jenny said this was the whole point of her doing it.

Next, said Elizabeth, going online would be passwords secure and encrypted, but nevertheless we ought to talk in the theatrical metaphors and have user names that meant something to ourselves but not to outsiders. Terry said that Wilkinson's Casino downstairs had said we could have a link from their website, and it would be indistinct. They did not know what we did, and assumed we held valuables up there, like the Serninsea Cross brooch. Terry reminded us that this was not a Confraternity matter.

So the topic turned to the recruitment of Linda. She had seen a number of white plastic badges now, and raised her curiosity. So far, I said, she was talking about amateur dramatics and knew there was no known drama group in town. She had picked up some sort of sexual connection but was puzzled.

Terry said that the bishops agreed today with him that Linda should be followed by George Wickenby at times likely to produce results. For example George had used powerful binoculars and a tripod at the marshes when Linda was at Patricia Rhymes', and he was sure that she and another person were naked in a conservatory.

"I could have told you that," I said. "And she had a church meeting in the evening last night, at the vicarage."

"Except she didn't," said Bishop Terry. She had been back at the same house as in the afternoon and was there for less than two hours. George did not know why, but the lights were on upstairs and eventually went off downstairs. Terry told me not to ask her what she was doing; she was not to know that she was being followed.

"But I'm wondering if we should claim that Patricia Rhymes has one of our badges - just in case."

"But if Linda asks her, when she hasn't, Linda will be suspicious," I said.

"Maybe not, then," said the bishop.

Terry suggested I test Linda's toleration by going to Harwich rapidly, taking best wishes to Cheryl for her pregnancy.

Of course this latest news was relevant to the group. I had even called Linda 'Wife Number Two' and she seemed to accept this. I added that, apparently, Adam Magellan had earlier observed me in Harwich. Nevertheless, he had not discovered the Confraternity. What did we know about him?

Christine said about him being very attached to Ann Dromeghda and her partner Labhaoise Vlahos, but not sexually.

Kay Parker said Ann had been his teacher at school, and Labhaoise was a supply teacher and became her lover. They resigned soon after the school merger. They've been partners ever since and they married.

Christine, who knew them through property deals, said that Ann would never cease to support Adam, which suggested she was in his debt; Ann and Labhaoise went into business upgrading properties, selling most on and renting a few out.

I said, "There was a hint of scandal. Magellan did marry a Rumanian, who left the church choir, and that is now a redundant relationship."

Christine said she had bought a number of their properties, when done up by them; and Christine's larger portfolio and escorting allowed her to purchase a helicopter recently and pay for a driver. Many houses were rented by prostitutes working online through her own Goosechat business. Christine and two others escorting in London had raised their fees considerably over the last few years. Sanjay Bunker was but one client. She invited Helen McPhail to go south and participate instead of Yojana and Helen said yes.

Jenny pointed out that there were rumours about teacher Ann Dromeghda threatening Adam Magellan. Then came Jenny's own late upper sixth form discovery-time with Linda and Adam, followed by her own short relationship with Adam after school during her gap year. She said that Magellan was definitely not gay, but his friend, Geoff Masters, now a self-styled bishop, was gay, in the fashion of her precious uncle Bishop Bill Masters. Jenny said Geoff lived with a gay partner in Bristol, Bishop Luis Callas. Geoff had soon given up teaching English as a foreign language.

Rabbi Maurice told us that he'd got off to a good start with Linda; he would discuss theology again and see whether she could be a wife to him.

Ken Osis stated that he could not feed back pastorally confidential conversations with Linda. Ken added that Maurice did not have a monopoly on taking Linda on as a wife.

Bishop Jonathan Eyre said we needed feedback on Linda, and confidentiality should be minimal, drawing strong support from the Wilsons.

I said I expected a rapid divorce after Petertide; there were no children to consider, of course. Philip Shrimpton, reflecting on his own failure, wondered how Jonathan had managed to bed Linda so easily, but Jonathan simply smiled.

In this setting we were introduced to Charles Rowland, the Head of ICT in Serninsea, and Janet Hayes, new Marketing Developer across the SMS business. Charles Rowland had been mentored for The Worshipful Company of Serninsea

Theatrical Players by Archie's wife, June, and Janet Hayes was enjoying a short mentoring by Stephen McPhail.

Janet was going to move to Hartlepool at a convenient point; Sir Sanjay (in India at present) and the board had already approved the move, although it did not matter where she was located given she was Group Marketing Developer. She would stay at Fatima's temporarily and, of course, Jenny lived there as well.

Elizabeth suggested that I did not try to contact Yojana. She would herself, and SMS would be giving her plenty of expenses to go around South Wales. She would stay with Yojana on their travels, but Yojana would also have sex with the new bishops and there would be a South Wales Worshipful Company formed.

The Diocesan Bishop of Mynyw, Bishop Afanen Ffrwyth, fifty-five, a lesbian, with a fine collection of Shiva statues big and small that would interest Yojana, and the Suffragan Bishop of Newport, Niall Ifan, forty-six, could only be initiated by the three existing bishops. It would be a big occasion but necessarily secret. The bishops would come directly on to the Confraternity after initiation.

With the meeting over, we moved to a religious service, the Body Eucharist and Initiation, in which ordained Fatima did the honours with Charles Rowland, exchanging vaginal and penis body fluids. After the service had finished, we all had sex and this was the first time I had penetrated Janet Hayes, having known her for some time.

Narrator: Linda *Keith's Immediate Trip to Harwich* (Thursday 6th June)

I was walking around town and along the promenade having occasional chats with anyone who stopped me. I paused in Café Albert. I had a text message from Keith.

Going to Harwich now for three nights. Staying with Cheryl. Her address is...

I constructed what might be thought an unusual reply.

Give her my best wishes. Tell her I remember her fondly.

Armed with this information, I went to Upper Road and Magellan Investigations.

"Hello Peter. I really ought to see Adam. Is he in?"

"I'll go and ask him if he is in." After two minutes, Peter was back. "His office."

So I walked through to the second large room off the corridor and stairs. "Hello you," I said to Adam sat with his own female accompaniment. "I am here to say my 'thank you' and arrange to treat you to a meal."

"May I introduce Ann Dromeghda. Ann is my sleeping partner."

"Oh," I said. "I didn't know."

She said, "He means 'sleeping partner' in the business sense. You must remember me! I taught both of you."

"Of course I remember you. Nice to meet you again after all this time. You still live around here, or visiting?"

"Labhaoise and I do still live in Serninsea. We were young teachers at the time, only six years older than you two. You remember that the other secondary

school closed, and Labhaoise came over to ours and we had a quiet exploratory relationship then."

"I do remember."

"We both got out before they pursued the rumours. Our relationship solidified. We went on to have two children, so our children are nine and they will be attending the very same secondary school themselves in a couple of years - if it stays open. Anyway, I've been hearing that the business is doing better. Very good to meet you, Linda. I'll go upstairs."

"Pleased to meet you too."

She went up his staircase, obviously feeling at liberty to do such a thing.

Adam said, "I'm one of those unfortunate blokes who proves to someone that they are lesbian."

"Adam, Keith is going to Harwich out of the blue, and tells me he is staying with Cheryl. I don't care. Our working truce is working too well, perhaps."

Adam said, "You're good at this deception game. You used me throughout."

"My apology and a thank you. Our story seems to be holding up."

"You did what your husband's lot did. Set up wild goose chases."

"Not you as well," I said.

"What?"

"Geese."

"I don't understand," he said to me.

"Good," I responded. "Look, there's a curry house in Titansea I'd like to try and it does all sorts like seafood and stuff."

"I know it."

"Are you free tonight or tomorrow evening?"

I heard a female voice from beyond and above shout, "Go!"

"Tonight, Adam? Come on, let's go tonight."

"If Ann says go, I go. *Tomorrow*, I think. Eight o'clock here? Talk over what we did..."

"Oh no, let's forget the business."

"What we did together when we were younger," he said.

"Definitely," I responded.

He called out, "You can come down now."

"She was listening anyway."

I remembered the time I went to Ann and Labhaoise's house. There were secrets to keep, all right.

In the street, as I got away from these terraced houses, there was an exchange of texts. I started it.

Tomorrow evening: going out with Adam Magellan. A restaurant.

Minutes later came a response.

With my blessing, if needed. Irrelevant that I don't like him. Ask about a woman that he got pregnant.

Clearly, he wanted to stir something. I had a simple response.

I might well. The meal is a thank you - I'm paying.

About ten minutes later he sent me Cheryl's house telephone number. He added a cheeky message.

Here's some close encounter detective work for you. Ask Magellan about the rookie teacher he knew.

I had a reply:

No. Water under the bridge out to sea.

After a visit to a parishioner I looked again. There was another message.

No doubt you'll swim in it.

Time for a reply:

You were the respectable one, up front, but actually otherwise. I was seen as the wild one, yet I was loyal and reliable.

Seconds later:

About to drive further south. No hard feelings to you. You may soon get them. Yojana is off with SMS to South Wales via Hartlepool. Sends you her best wishes. She sent best wishes to Cheryl.

I had to reply.

I met Ann Dromeghda today. Adam's sleeping partner, in the business sense. You too have sleeping partners.

His final message was:

Enjoy tomorrow evening in the pastoral sense. Must go.

This gave me an idea. In the early evening from home (with Keith gone) I had a dump to clear the way before ringing Julie Vaughan.

"Keith is arriving at your end of things. I thought I'd tell you he has admitted the affair. He is supposed to think Adam did observations at the time of his visit before SMS started its annual self-inspections cum stress tests, and therefore Adam looking at him and Yojana Asthana was a kind of deception."

"I see. What are you going to do?"

"We have an arrangement. He now has my blessing regarding Cheryl. I can also do as I wish."

"You, a clergywoman?"

"With discretion."

"So he just admitted it."

"After further questioning."

"He speaks highly of Yojana Asthana. I'm not saying anything more! How was it with meeting Adam Magellan after so long?"

"He didn't remember me at first."

"He was never the sharpest needle. A decade ago he returned to Serninsea after a duff time as a copper in Nottingham and Ann Dromeghda quickly bankrolled his investigations business. Do you think your arrangement with Keith will work out? What does Cheryl think?"

"It's only weeks until I'll get priested; I then want the fastest divorce, though, and he might hang on a bit before he moves in with Cheryl. You seem to have your finger on the pulse, Julie. What do you know about Ann?"

"Ann the lezzy! She was on to Adam and I think she used him to discover any vestiges of heterosexuality. She's owed him ever since. She married Labhaoise Vlahos, I heard, and they each had a child."

"Nine years old - both."

"And some minister got into property from their done-up stock."

"Who? I know there was the United Presbyterian Congregationalist minister living in her own house - the Reverend Georgie Smith."

"Wasn't her but from your lot. Loads of their done up properties are owed by some Anglican clergywoman now."

"How come I don't know any of this?"

"Because you've always gone around with your eyes shut, Linda. Do you remember the RE teacher? She said you went around 'in a cloud of unknowing'. I once thought, you'd never be a taxi driver: you don't know half of Serninsea's streets."

"I know the way to the seafood restaurant in Titansea. I'm treating Adam."

"Its name?"

"I can't remember. I'm about to search it, find out, see that there is a table."

"Dok Dak."

"What? Is that Morse Code?"

"No, it's the name of the restaurant. Free to take him further, eh?"

"Just a meal," I said.

"I'd warn you that Adam Magellan is uninterested in women, men, or animals. Women he's encountered have taken away his interest in women. Definitely not gay, unlike his mate Geoff Virgo. Here is something for you to investigate - some say there was a loveless relationship Adam did have, and she was a foreigner - already with a daughter. I'm *such* a gossip. Oh, so Ann and Labhaoise each had kids that are nine years old: is he the father?"

"I'm saying nothing but I owe you a thank you for telling me about Keith, and for being correct. He has been so unrevealing, but I decided what you'd said had to be true, and I got a result."

So we said our goodbyes, and the Dok Dak Indian restaurant in Titansea had a table.

I wondered: did Jenny and I really exploit and abuse Adam? Surely they were games, enjoyed on both sides. He did then go out with Jenny. Being in a 'cloud of unknowing' did have its advantages.

Restaurant (Friday 7th June)

Of course I was dressed in mufti, a long thin white dress with a no bra widening cleavage on display. An uncovered smooth left leg could be pushed into view up to the no knickers thigh. I was ultra-clean, despite being odourless even when sweating, evacuated and self-checked for cleanness. I should always look better than some, with no menopause to come: I had lean leg muscles, held an attractive female shape, and completely hairless below the head.

So we met in the डॉक डक Dok Dak Indian restaurant in Titansea. He was already in the waiting area as I parked nearby and walked in. Adam looked no different from when at work but he eyed me up and down and established a habit of talking to my chest. Good.

Each of us sat to table and agreed on a luxury seafood curry (advertised as part local region in catch) and the spice tray came first for dipping. In fact we ordered the lot at once, to include lobster, to finish with ice cream sundaes. Crab was in the mix, somewhere, as well.

In between dips I described my working and still studying days, with thoughts of priesting and then perhaps moving to a new place for future ministry if, hopefully, nearby.

"You surprise me," he said, "with all this. We lost touch, although I knew of your existence second hand."

"I had no idea you had gone to the police, or had come back to Serninsea. I never thought to enquire; nobody told me."

"Is Diana King still your friend?"

"Yes. Diana de Groot, now. She married, has kids."

"She never mentions me, for example?"

"Not until I did about seeing you."

"Oh. Heard from Jenny? I knew Jenny got religion, but not you as well. Does she mention me?"

"I haven't heard from her."

As the main meal was delivered I decided to get to the elephant in the room. "Of course I appreciate you coming to the house at Sutton. This is the thank you."

Adam said, on swallowing his first bites, "Perhaps this is also your apology. I don't like cock and bull reports. There's Shotley Gate in there for a bit of colour; it says I paid a visit to Dunwich, the lost mediaeval city. Peter's idea. I have a cloud web address for the report if you'd like to read it. You'll need the password. It is 'cherylmould', all one word.

I said, after I swallowed more, "So Keith admitted it all, and it was never about Yojana. So now he can have a relationship with Cheryl Mould with my blessing. We are quite civilised about it all."

He chomped away. "So will you not separate, divorce?"

My answer was delayed by chewing. I then said, "Yes. We will separate under the same building. Divorce must be as quick as possible. I expect him to go for good."

"You're very strong on this."

"Because he concealed it so well. What else might he be concealing?"

There was some silence. I was looking at the meal and getting the lobster part

ready to start to eat. He was focusing on the tougher to eat food too.

I then said, "So I've now met our brief sixth form teacher, still with you. Ann Dromeghda. Who is she to you now?"

"As I indicated before, she is my sleeping partner in the business sense."

"I mean, why is she interested in you now?"

"She doesn't make any operational decisions."

"Don't you remember her emphasised cleavage at her desk and our view of her legs? It wasn't just for the boys, either, but for the girls."

"I was fascinated with her. She was eye-opening for me, and she still is great as a person. Labhaoise was the practical DIY one, and took all the woodwork and metalwork..."

"Design and Technology."

"... into doing up houses. We've remained close for so long. I was never going to report Ann if that's what worried them at the time. The law has tightened a lot, since. They knew the score, then. So they got into house renovation - buying, doing up, selling.

"She sold houses to a clergywoman," I suggested.

"She wasn't a clergywoman at the beginning of buying: Christine Vine. She's from a family of clergy."

"I've heard this name. She was in that bank robbery - as a customer. She was with another Jenny, Jenny World. New names to me. How is Ann's love life? How is yours?"

"Something you need to know, then. Jenny World was Jenny Masters. I saw the later television report. Two days later they had her name and her photo from the parish website."

"What? Really?"

"It certainly was Jenny. The first reports by the guy in the bank got the names mixed up. You don't watch Sea TV that much?"

"Hardly. Has Jenny married?"

"There is nothing on the parish website I found. She is a curate of a priest called Fatima Tamuuz in Hartlepool. Fatima has a five year old daughter, Akemi. Jenny is childless."

"Hartlepool of all places. SMS operates there. Is the parish website out of date?"

"No."

"A curate? I wonder if Keith knows of her there. If he does - and he needn't - it would be something else he's concealing."

"Hartlepool is a big place," Adam said. "He'd have told you if he knew."

The conversation was slowing down our eating, and taking away concentration from tackling the lobster. Still, we did engage with the food.

I asked, "Why is she a curate after all this time?"

"I don't know. I just read it off the page."

"Should we try and contact her?"

"Well, she hasn't contacted you and me."

"Why was she in Serninsea?"

His mouth was full. I waited.

"How do I know? Her parents are dead. Mother was ill and he was old enough to be her grandfather. Her uncle lives near enough. Perhaps she visits him."

"On the other hand, why Hartlepool? Eat, Adam."

With his mouth not yet empty he said, "She must have been here many times in nearly two decades."

"Yeah. I might ask Keith, but he is away in the arms of his Wife Number One and I'd rather not disturb him."

After some more eating I said, "Ann: she is local, really. Labhaoise was known as 'Labhaoise the Tease'. Someone knew she was called that before she moved to our school."

"Labhaoise's father was Greek and her mother is Irish. She understands Irish Gaelic very well."

"I met someone recently who could speak Scottish Gaelic with the Archbishop, but I don't think she was fluent. And with a Norfolk accent."

"I sometimes use her to translate into Irish Gaelic before I encrypt. That really buggers them up, those who think they can bust the encryption."

"You didn't do it for me."

"Can you read Irish Gaelic?"

"Some of the family are looking into Welsh."

Then he said, "My phone. A password! Linda, look at your phone."

"It's from Ann and Labhaoise. What is the password, Adam? It's not in Gaelic, is it?"

"No. Lower case 'hosea1114'."

When it was revealed, it said:

When Adam was a youth, I loved him;

Out of school, I owed him all.

I advise him,

I can never walk away from him.

To my Adam I sacrifice,

To his cause I burn energy.

It was I who took in Adam's love,

I took him into my thighs;

And you did not know

That I birthed from him.

With loving ties my Labhaoise,

With cords of love,

Gave birth from him.

We two raise our given two;

He stooped to us and fed us.

I said, "So they are yours."

"Yes. What do you know about Cheryl Mould?" Adam then asked.

"Nothing much. Keith met her six years ago"

"She was divorced then from Frank Little - after less than six years married."

"You're well informed!"

"She became Mould, again. Will you revert to Bode?"

"Dunno."

"You see, Cheryl paid me for a brief investigation into her husband ten years back - one of my first jobs. This is quite tasty. I had fish and chips with her."

"So did you charge her a lot ten years ago or offer her discount?"

"Why, do you want discount?"

"I'm paying extra. I will buy this meal, Adam."

"A minister of religion is bound to disapprove of that sort of discount."

"You can end that idea now," I said. "Anyway, so much around Cheryl was and is gossip. I disapprove of gossip," I said. "Well, Adam: the rumour about you is that you are sexless, uninterested, don't want it. Cheryl Mould doesn't quite fit the picture, does it?"

"Preaching one thing and doing another, Linda? You're the one now indulging in gossip. I have met women, but I do have a habit of meeting strange women - like you."

"Have you met your next door neighbour?"

"The one with the dog?"

"Yeah." I chuckled.

"Once or twice. He's her best buddy, she says."

"I bet she does."

"Why?"

"Oh, forget it Adam."

"Regarding gossip, Cheryl knew her nickname from school. Anyway, you and Jenny were once 'Bodey and Doyle' but then 'Bodey and Bendy' and then 'Boney and Bendy'."

"I'm not offended. Can you explain our nicknames?"

"Well, you still have these enormous knockers and yet you were and are quite thin. Jenny seemed to all to be your 'special friend' indeed."

"Bendy? Jenny? Like a lesbian?"

"Jenny in the gym. She was bendy: she could bend."

"I couldn't?"

"You'd fall over. Sorry. People stared at you and her, and you showed no interest in any of the lads. Geoff and I came to know different."

"I had issues of my own: I didn't want a relationship, but I did want to find things out."

"So why did you in the lower sixth form once get your breasts out in the common room?"

"Because it didn't matter? I was making a point."

"Yeah. Like they are now. Your headlights are definitely on, Linda. Don't get them out!" (I didn't.)

With more eating progress made, I said, "I thought the lads were all stupid: they will never understand me going about naked on the farm. I played Naked Twister at Saxiclite Naturist Club, so I did bend. Teenage life got so complicated there. I had issues."

"Actually, you in a leotard was like, well, why bother to put it on."

A male waiter was close. "Is madam and sir happy with the meal?"

I said, "Yes thanks. Be ready with the sundaes. What the girls saw, in the showers, was that I never wore knickers. Like now. Mother never bought them, I never wore them."

"But she had thighs."

"My mother?"

The waiter moved off and spoke to others.

"Jenny. I looked up at you, and down at her."

"She must know her place," I said, thinking of ancient television. "Adam, what did I care if you were looking at her arse and my large teenage breasts? You became intimate with both of us. I don't care now, either, for that matter."

"You're a clergywoman."

"And I am still a fucking naturist, Adam."

"Swearing with a dog collar? I know it's not on now."

"What do you remember about Keith, back then?"

"He actually got somewhere at school."

"You got A levels too..."

"Girls! Success with girls. I got nowhere."

"Jenny and me? Jenny?"

"Come on. When I came back from Nottingham I heard distantly that Keith had become happily married and was clergy-seeking with the same acquired pomposity as his parents. Never imagined he was with you. In any case I wanted to and did forget about you. You were so emotionless. Your family was known to be odd. Another reason perhaps you had no boyfriend."

"I'm a lifelong naturist. I was brought up that way. I would walk naked around town if I could."

"You nearly are."

"It wasn't easy, even on the farm. Dad, mum, brother, sisters. Not in the shop. Keith helped out in the shop. I often told him to *get them off*, and he did sometimes."

"By the way, a reminder of you was someone on your neighbouring farm. Yootha, she was called. Worked for Mr. Yannis Youell. You were somewhat racist."

"You know about this? How do you know about her? You are embarrassing me. She was Rumanian. She was called Agota before adopting Yootha and I did call her 'Goat'. I am not proud at all about this."

"A good reason to keep out of touch with you. I'd come back by then, from being in the police. 'Mouldy' was a cruel nickname as well. It was never about her personal hygiene, but when we were a lot younger she'd let us feel her up. She'd moulded our hands to herself, and a finger went in."

"Oh come on!" I said

"There was our sixth form Malham field trip weekend - Geoff and I did Geography - and we had the room next to her and her two mates. And when we were having a loud laugh she came round in her nightie, opened the door and told us to be quiet. Well, I mean, the way the light was through her, you could see the lot. A bit like you now, except you're behind a table."

"This is getting rather tiring, Adam."

"So I said, 'Come in and stay a few minutes,' putting my bed-side light on, and then she came in, and in the low light raised her nightie up above her breasts for the whole torso knickerless view. She came over to my bed side, and I put my hand to her pubes, and again moulded my hand to her pubes. Geoff did too but made nothing of it. Then she told us to 'fuck off' and dropped her nightie before walking straight out."

"So did you quieten down?"

"I was heated up."

"So your sex after fish and chips was in that tradition..."

"She'd put on some curves in the years since first gropes."

"So Malham was a dirty Geography field trip weekend."

"On the walk the next day she approached me in a corner of Gordale Scar..."

"Oh, there *is* more... Waiter, it looks like we're nearly done here on our plates."

"Gordale Scar and she grabbed me right on the, well, bone, let's say, and told me to remember the field trip. And I thought, there might be more going to happen."

"Oh," I said. "And did you make more noise next night?"

"Actually, nothing else happened. You and Jenny came along later with your proposition. But there was that notorious party at the end of sixth form. The End Party. That was a peculiar encounter."

I said, "Yes, my first ever bodily encounter with Keith. He'd left school but was still friends with those of us in younger years like Mouldy and he came to the party. Ah, it's all making sense."

"Yeah. Well, Cheryl again. It was out in the garden in the dark and some chap was pissing into the hedge. I came alongside her, said hello, and she pointed at him and grabbed me again in the area. I was too reserved to do something immediately back..."

"Good boy."

"But she grabbed my hand anyway and it was placed on obviously damp knickers and then redirected underneath to feel scratchy hair. She moved closer in to me as the ex-pisser went by and then she said, 'I'm desperate,' which meant not desperate for me but to go behind this bush. I followed despite her shaking her head, and she then, 'Oh sod it,' and squatted with her knickers pulled to the side. She was pissing like gallons. I was motionless but then looked up and stared at the orange sky - you know, those streetlights. Am I shocking you telling you this tale?"

"You *were* a good boy."

"Obviously not. Then she got up, gave a kiss to my cheek and went indoors. That did me for years, the action and sound of her squatting and pissing. She pissed furiously after our fish and chips sex."

"Lovely Cheryl Mould," I said. And then I thought of what my husband had said: '*...a woman I went with that he then got pregnant.*' "I have to ask you, Adam. Rumours of you and a foreign woman, and a woman who became pregnant?"

"Who says?"

"Keith."

Sundaes were arriving, brought by male waiters.

"Hmm. I think there might be an investigation there," he said. "I did not become a father - then. Gossip strikes where it will. Once again, Linda."

"You did with Ann and Labhaoise."

"We arranged it and it was very loving, for their future. I'm only the father in the biological sense.

"Hmm. The woman in the rumour was linked with my husband."

Adam said, "He shagged Jenny! I knew that. Jenny's free-running attitude to sex was then hit by fundamentalism. She'd met fundies at Serninsea, first of all, and they chipped away, but then a similar lot turned her at university. She vanished completely from my life."

I said, "Jenny and I started with friendly sleep-overs. Jenny saw my naked family, dad peeing into the compost, so she undressed, and then she and I started dabbling and discovering. So, as it came about, we extended our self discovery to

you and your mate, Geoff, who ran off after one session. The rest between us three we can surely remember. Yes, indeed, we're having coffee after these. Thank you."

There were about four male waiters close by, hovering, with coffee being poured.

Adam said, "I had to keep secret the truth of Boney with Bendy."

"Jenny and I told each other that we were ending our virginities, both of us, with you.

Adam said to a nearby waiter, "Excuse me! Can we have the bill please?"

"I'm paying. This has been my treat. Jenny was worried if you'd come inside her. I knew then that you could in me. Do you remember? You always ejaculated outside her but after two sessions you did inside me. The very last session was the full foreplay, play, and after-play. We finished with that foolish little cut on our hands and smeared the blood on our arms, and we did that dedication ceremony. Thus we were to wait no longer than ten years before coming together again. The bill is for me, please."

"Can I see the bill?" Adam asked.

"No. Give it to me, please. Thank you."

"Halves?"

"No. I will pay for it all."

"On expenses?"

"No."

"Good job we didn't buy any wine," he said.

"Don't like it," I responded, "and I drink the crap we distribute in the Eucharists."

"I do drink, but not a lot. Mr. Wickenby: he does drink. Jenny drank, following on from her parents' habit. They died within a year of each other, both from alcohol related diseases. Colin Cromer did both funerals."

I said, "I think we have finished here. Time to leave these premises." We got up and went to the counter, and, using my phone, I paid the chap who had waited on us the most. I said, as I took the receipt, "You came inside her then when together?"

"She was on the pill by this time," Adam told me.

I took out a ten pound note and gave it to the waiter. "Share it."

"Thank you very much, madam, and for the extras."

Outside I said to Adam, "I've somewhere I want us to go. Is your car all right where it is?"

"Yes," he said. "But I'd like it to come home with me."

"I'll bring you back here," I instructed.

"Jenny. You know, she wrote me a weird letter from university. All about sin according to some Grapes church or something."

"Vineyard, not Grapes," I informed him. "Come on."

In the car Adam told me that after Jenny, he joined the police, and later did try the more plain clothes and investigative. But he had some ill health and didn't like the command structure. There was a string of redundancies coming, so he went private.

"Ann had property and I came back. I thought people are always searching for ex-directory numbers and want reports on what people are doing. George had it all to himself but there was room for some competition. Ann helped, and keeps helping."

"She paid you for your sperm."

"Absolutely not! This was my gift. Her financial help was irrelevant."

"Sorry. You can't arrest any one now."

"I have a good relationship with the police, but they have the resources - forensics is their overtaking lane. And I do get paid to go in and look over a case as a different pair of eyes, or sift through documents. Being ex-police I know the procedures. George might have SMS, but I have the police, government departments and the council. Otherwise I watch, look at financial records and compare documents. Typically, I look for unusual patterns and tell-tale signs."

"We've arrived," I told him, switching off the engine.

"Yes, I could have driven here."

"Well, you're with me. I'll take you back later. Don't panic."

Narrator: Linda *Sex in the Curate's House* (Friday 7th June 2019)

We got out of my car.

Adam Magellan asked, "Why did you want me to experience your driving?"

"Because I only want my car outside. Nosy neighbours. 'What is the curate doing?' That sort of thing."

"You want me to come in again, for a better chat this time? We've chatted well tonight."

"Come straight into this front room on the right and wait please."

"I confronted your husband here."

I needed the loo and went upstairs into the bathroom and I started to run a bath. I had a piss. I kept my dress on and closed the curtains in our main bedroom facing the street. Back in the bathroom I found a pair of scissors in the bathroom cupboard and lined up some bath gel and a sponge. When the water was about half way up, I checked it wasn't too hot.

Coming out of the door, I called out, "Adam! Come up the stairs."

He came to the staircase, and approached me at the top as I concealed the scissors.

"Please go in there."

He went in the bathroom. I put off the light off the downstairs hall at the double switch, as was my habit, and then went in behind him, and shut the door, for me to lean against the door.

"Take your clothes off and stand up in the bath. I have tested it with my elbow."

"Thanks but I think I will be going. Excuse me please."

"No. Take your clothes off, Adam, and stand in the bath."

"You can't stand in my way."

"You can claim wrongful imprisonment at the police station later. Take your clothes off and get in the bath."

"And if I don't?"

"I will cut your clothes off myself," I said, revealing the scissors with a smile. "Don't force things Adam, because these blades are very sharp."

"Are you serious?"

"Deadly. Snip-snip."

He looked at me, and then started to undress, giving items to me, so I threw

them on to a seat under the far window.

As he paused at his underpants I said, "Take them down, yes. Come on." Handing them to me, I inspected them and said, "Oh Adam, what if you had an accident and the paramedics had to cut these off you?"

"Or if a woman you didn't know for a long time suddenly got to see them."

I left him and took his underpants and trousers with me, to prevent an escape. I took a scrubbing brush in the kitchen and scrubbed his underpants with water and spray cleaner.

"What are you doing?"

"Being a scrubber," I replied. They went in the washing machine and I returned holding his trousers, thrown back on the far pile.

"Get in and stand up to begin!"

I picked up the washing gel and sponge and got them ready. Focussing close, I now attacked the upper front of his body.

"This is like what you and Jenny did," he said.

"Arms up."

They got the treatment, and then I did his legs.

"Turn around, Adam."

I scrubbed his back and then directly went below his bottom, down his legs.

"I'm going to have to get to where it matters. Bend forward."

"No."

"Bend forward and spread your cheeks."

"I'm not some teenager facing two developing girls."

"If you don't bend over I'll take the shower hose off and stick it where the sun doesn't shine."

Adam then bent forward and separated his bottom cheeks.

I picked up a small bathroom scrubbing brush and got it wet with gel on it. I went into his bum crack.

"Oy that hurts. You bastard, Linda Bode."

"I'm still Jupitas, unfortunately."

He said, "You haven't changed a bit."

I shook the brush in the bathwater several times as I scraped its bristles into his bottom.

"Adam, turn around. A little excitement, I detect."

At this point I picked hold of his growing penis to wash it. Then, for a surprise and to assert command, I gripped it hard.

"I'll rinse you down."

First I did the front, then the back, then held his penis from around his body.

"Would you like to wash me?"

"No."

"Good job I'm clean, including my arse. Get out and I will dry you." And so he did, and I did, from a position blocking the door. He turned so I could do it all.

I grabbed his penis to lead him into my bedroom.

"Ah ah, Adam. Let's get you stood this side of the telly and you can watch me on the bed."

As I sat on to the bed, he bolted out of the door and ran into the bathroom. He grabbed his clothes and found me already at the top of the stairs.

I said, "Put the clothes back where they were." Pausing for a second, he

obeyed. "Go back in he bedroom, Adam, where *you* were."

He said, standing between the end of the bed and the wall, "What is the matter with you? I'm grown up. I'm forty."

"If you don't shut up... Lean against the wall and watch me."

This time he obeyed, which is what I wanted to see.

I sat on the bed at an angle with legs open, rather as he once saw me all those years ago. I started playing with myself. "You play with yourself. Show me."

At this point, the doorbell rang. An outside light shone, including on to the curtains.

"What's that?" he asked.

I said, "Oh *fuck*. Stay there. Who is it at this time?"

I picked up a remote from the left side cupboard to put the TV on; I selected a channel, and he sat on the bed so both of us saw who was at the front door.

"It's a fucking parishioner," I said.

"That's Miss Venus the one-time sexy dinner lady. So are you going down to answer the door?" he asked.

"She knows I don't answer the door after nine o'clock unless there's a meeting on. Mrs. Helen Eris, the retired dinner lady. Nowadays she does stalls - sells rubbish for pennies."

"Do you want the light off up here?"

"No! You stay there. Let her go away." I pressed the standby switch on the remote and put it down on that bedside cupboard. "Resume watching me."

"How do you shave it so smooth? I mean, twenty years later I can't shave my face so smooth."

"Adam, I am coming over to you. Face the wall. Face the *wall!* Good. Back a bit and bend over."

"Not again."

"Sorry, Adam, I'm going in to get that stiff. One finger."

I pushed his back down and his bottom came out, his hands slapping the wall for balance and support. I licked my finger, and pushed it in deep to the knuckle and twisted back and forth.

"Bloody hell!" he said.

"It always works." My finger came out in one swift move. "Turn around and stand up."

He raised himself up, and I dropped down. In case he had second thoughts I gripped his testicles.

I asked, "Do you remember all the positions I did?"

I did various 'imposter vagina' and similar hand grips, one hand clapping, and then the 'batter up' to my own pirouette, and of course I had to do Church and Steeple as the roof of my outstretched fingers moved to the side and his penis emerged - to go into my mouth.

In fact he kept going into my mouth this time.

I removed the length and said, "I couldn't do that when a teenager. There are two ways to go deep into me now, thanks to Keith: one is down my mouth, and one is up my arse."

Back in he went, and I created a moving throat rhythm under my control, unlike with Jonathan Eyre.

I finished this and got on to the bed, to raise my buttocks high.

"In," I said. "Arsehole."

No," he said.

So I got up and slapped him fairly gently across the face. In case he ran, I was close to him - face to face. "You do as I say. It is ready for you. Unlike you, I made it ready."

"No!"

I squeezed his testicles, and looked directly into his eyes. Getting underneath him, I started sucking him off to keep him hard. I warned him by showing him my moving outstretched finger. That meant do it or it's back up his backside.

So this time after dragging him, I raised my buttocks and in it went easier than expected, and his whole length too.

"See, it's not too bad at all. Start fucking."

"You're appalling."

"I know."

"Ugh," he said, as he ejaculated deep inside me.

"Let your mouth go south," I said, poetically.

"To Harwich?" he asked.

"Fuck off. Lick me and insert one finger precisely."

"My, you're soft as velvet and tight as a drum."

"I rhymed and you scanned. Hold on."

I turned to lie on my back.

"I'd like to open you and look. I never did look at you like I did at Jenny."

"Stop being a gynaecologist and bring me off. Do your tongue like an ampersand. Try some of the SHIFT plus characters below the functions on top of a keyboard."

"Tell me, Linda. Is the pound better than the euro?"

"The € is Control plus Alt plus 4, Adam."

My breathing was getting stronger and I did give some small yelps. Adam did vary his tongue's speed, and soon I let out a long preparatory whine with my body raised up, tense, and increasingly sweaty; and then came the highlight of an uncontrolled spasm right up my body and through my head. Wow.

I put my hands towards him to indicate laying off, and he indeed stopped and released his finger end.

"Well done!" I said, as soon as I could.

So he came upwards, and he lay alongside me, indicating that his knees were aching somewhat. "That was a lot less clumsy than twenty-two years ago," I reported.

He ran his hand across my breasts.

"Not as long nipples as Jenny's," he said. "Small too, around."

"Time to go to the Blackpool Tower," I stated.

We repositioned so that I went on top of him. "All this pudding you've acquired - you've sat behind a desk too much."

"I do get out," he said, as my vagina accommodated him as much as it could. "Condom?" he asked, a little late.

"Not necessary. I get regular check-ups and you can't make me pregnant. By the way, who's Annie? You mentioned an Annie a while back."

"Online."

"Oh, I see. So when did you last fuck a woman?"

"Quite a while *back*. I was married, sort of. It was consummated. 2013."
"When did you fuck Cheryl?"
"2009 and early 2013 with her divorce done. This feels surprisingly good."
"Adam. The children you did have. Did you three use the clinic in Serninsea?"
"Mind your own business."
"You will answer me." (I demonstrated I could squeeze my drum of a vagina.)
"It was a gift, like I told you."
"Adam. If you and I are going to get it together, as I'd like, I need to know."
"Really? Is that what you want? I was rather expecting this was a one-off."
"I want another man."
"I'll ask them first. Surely you agree to me asking permission."
"Sure."

I reduced my grip and intensified the rhythm, and tickled his balls, and he raised his hands to feel my breasts, and thus a second time he spurted inside me. As I raised myself up it nearly all ran out of my left side.

I came off the bed, and bent down to kiss him on the mouth.

I said, "Get up Adam and you can go home. Leave your underpants off."

I sat on the bed, still naked, contemplating. He went in the bathroom and had a very audible pee. As the toilet flushed I went in to see him dressing. Naked, I put the seat down and had a pee myself. I then applied some toilet paper, including a second set of sheets up my left leg. I flushed the loo, got the dress back on and followed him down the stairs and handed him his cleaned underpants.

The journey was silent. Arriving near to his own car, I turned, kissed him on the cheek and said, "I'll see you again."

"Maybe. Good night, reverend."

"My very own private dick," I joked at him.

He got out and closed the passenger door without further comment. I drove back to my house with some aggression in my driving.

Morning Call from the Bishop (Saturday 8th June)

The morning after my encounter with Adam, the telephone rang, and I said aloud, "What the fuck was, is, what day, what time is...?" With the receiver up I said, "Hello?"

"Bishop John here, ringing unfortunately bright and early. I'm not disturbing your breakfast am I?"

"Bishop John. It's Saturday."

"I know. How is Keith?"

"Keith is just fine. He is in Harwich, part of his management job that also takes him there. Back tomorrow. It's my day off."

"Tell me about your sacrificial understanding of ministry."

"I must... I put myself out for others."

"On the model of Jesus, yes?"

"Yes," I said. Receiver in one hand, I was now hair brushing with the other.

"So how do you make a judgement about whether to answer the door to someone?"

"Really? Whether it is, er, oh, safe to do so, if late at night."

"But if you knew the person at the door, you would answer it."

"Has she complained? Mrs. Eris knows I've said - what we've all said - about respecting our private lives."

"Yes, but you put your entertainment of a friend above the potential needs of the parish."

"What? What friend? If she'd have needed me then she could also have rung via the telephone. Now I really must..."

"No, she wanted your advice on a letter being sent with a CV for her son and it had to be in the post this morning. She did ring on your door but thought you might not want to be disturbed, as you had a friend present."

"Do people still send CVs in the post? What friend?"

"I think they do, with hand-written letters. I have no more to say on the subject, but I will ask your training vicar to offer you some advice on the balance of these sort of things. Just letting you know. You knew who she was; you should have answered the door."

"Oh, yes, this could be useful, Bishop John, your 'some advice'," I said with a touch of sharpness of speech, vigorously brushing my hair.

"Indeed and I do wish Keith was more active again in the Church, supporting his wife."

"These are his decisions," I said. "Anyway, thank you for ringing..."

"There is something else. Despite the short notice I want as many people as possible to go and hear an exciting Canadian theologian who is calling at Wytham on her journey down from Scotland. Well, our Bishop, Derek Imperial, is very pleased to have secured her visit to lecture us on *Reinvigorating the Church* at the Cathedral, one of the series of lectures in which the Bishop himself will teach. Unfortunately we couldn't quite get her for Lent. I'd love her to see some real parish life as well. So I'm hoping someone - perhaps yourself, but maybe someone more local in Wytham - can show her something, well, local. Pity we are so far east when she is pausing overnight and heading for London and returning to Canada. I don't know how much is possible, really."

"You didn't say who."

"She is the fiery redhead Gretta Cox-Jenkins."

"I think I've heard of her. Wasn't she some independent and became Anglican?"

"No, not Anglican. She might be described as a high Lutheran these days, in Canada. Yes, she was ordained independently, as a bishop too, but she's a Lutheran priest now, as the Lutherans don't recognise ecclesiastical independence and she did compromise when they ordained her priest. She retains her academic post. Lots on Queer Theology, Urban Theology and also Church Management, much of it semi-sociological. Contextual, of course. But this is apparently urban theology applied to the Church institution. So there are echoes of the conference where you met the Bishop of Margate."

"And the Archbishop and others."

"Of course."

"Interesting, bishop. I'll hear that lecture."

"I don't want to compromise your day off. Goodbye and God bless."

"God bless you bishop," I said. And once the phone was disconnected I said

further, "What a creep and what a cow - reporting me over a bloody covering letter for her son!"

Anyway, I placed my hairbrush down and headed out of bed.

Later over breakfast, in fact, a call came *on a Saturday* from the Reverend Kenneth Osis, my appointed counsellor.

"Can we have a chat soon?" he asked "Long needed."

"Is there any reason for this?" I asked back. "It is Saturday today."

"Not today. It is your day off. There might be difficulties with parish life and possible underlying matters affecting them."

I agreed to this, for Tuesday, but the bishop must have been on to him and Osis would be fishing for information.

As a result of all this I rang Helen Eris using a very pleasant voice and she said that her son had sent the CV off by email and that she was sure it would be all right, although she didn't know about these things. "He told me he'd scanned the handwritten letter."

I asked her, "Were you upset that I didn't answer the door? I was very tired."

"No, curate, it's only that when I mentioned my concern about David looking for a job that the vicar said I should contact you, as maybe your husband might have looked at it. Oh, the vicar was having a meeting with Bishop John."

"Right. So you came around here."

"A little later the vicar rang me and he suggested I called in person, for you to look at the document. So I did. That's all. You only live around the corner."

"Yes of course. I was lying in bed."

"I understand that, Reverend Jupitas. I just went home. David sorted everything out."

"Did I upset you by not answering?"

"No. You are, after all, just around the corner, Reverend Ju..."

"Call me Linda. Nice to talk to you, Helen. I was talking to a chap who remembered you from school dinner times..."

"Yes, Reverend Linda. I especially remember your husband."

So, she wasn't going to call; they got her to call. She accepted the point, if passively, that I was simply tired.

I was thinking over Adam's experience of females, and realised I hadn't really examined him regarding the foreigner. The foreign women I knew was Yootha, or Agota, but she was ten years or so younger than us. He must have known her. She wasn't here alone: she had a mother. There was also, still, the oddity of the pregnancy before fathering one each with Ann and Labhaoise.

Diana suggested that I go shopping with her. I said yes, and would also buy groceries as Keith would be back during Sunday.

In her car I said, "No, Diana, I cannot tell you anything. You know this."

And, after some more probing, I had to say, "Diana, you should stop trying."

Plus, later, after the actual shopping, I said, "Good attempt, Diana, but I am not biting."

As a result of this probing, she came back into my curate's house. We stripped off naked. I told of the restaurant with Adam, but her continued focus on Patricia and Arthur meant she missed out on asking if there was any more to Adam and me.

Sat down together, I showed her some of my pelvic exercises. "It is all having

an effect. I am getting more regular, disciplined. There are moments going backwards, but I keep up the exercises."

Diana found my game of *Coppit*, where we each controlled three colours. I bought the board game when at Bishop Querceto Theological College for any kids in a congregation, but I saw so few and there were none now. Diana showed me that by flooding some of my men by so many of hers, that she could pick me off one by one. She won easily. The lesson was not to get lost in a hostile crowd.

After Diana had gone, I sent a simply encrypted message for Ann Dromeghda, with the password 'deut3268918 sent to Adam. Before encryption, the message read:

*Was he not your lover who protected you,
Who forgave and established you?
For Adam's portion made your child born,
Labhaoise's her allotted child as well.
You found him in a seaside school,
And in a business start - a new enterprise...
You must be mindful of the rock that begat them,
To not let go of he who changed your life.*

Narrator: Keith *Telephone Calls Puzzle Cheryl* (Sunday 9th June)

"Good morning, Mon Cheryl," I said to my future wife, as we intended, in the morning.

Yes, here we were on a third morning, and with Linda's blessing. I turned myself and rose up to look down on Cheryl, who returned her gaze quite satisfied at the situation. I'd be going home to Linda, but 'home' would hopefully change within weeks or months.

This was our valuable time. I told Cheryl that I believed in providence. She asked what that meant. It's a sort of good coming to good people under the protection of God. Yes, I said, we were good people. And yes, I did still have religious beliefs. Surely she should expect this, after all I was brought up with a certain culture of churchgoing and belief, and I did not neglect this despite my disappointment at not being selected for ordination training. She said she always knew that I was brainy and thinking about things.

I told her, "Julie Vaughan said there was a young man snooping about when I was last here, before the inspections. Do you believe her?"

Cheryl wondered why she would say otherwise.

I responded that if the young person is the person I think she saw, then he was supposed to be a trainee magician. "But I didn't detect anyone," I said.

"You wouldn't," said Cheryl. "Do you believe in magic?"

I said religion and magic are different. I told her that I said the Creeds with due diligence through my upbringing and student life, so she asked me what are creeds. I realised that I had little in the way of a hook to even begin this conversation. She really had no idea about religion. She was the perfect secular person. All that mattered to her - and it suited me - was that she was a bit fuzzy from orgasms, as midday arrived, when we got up. We ate in a leisurely fashion. The plan

was to go shopping before I went home. We would look for a new bed. Cheryl's bed was, to be frank, a bit basic, and I liked a good bed. Ours in Serninsea was super-wide, and long. It cost us plenty, and it was comfortable. The bed was our most important piece of furniture, because it was where we rested and made love.

However, just before we were due to go, her landline telephone rang, and Cheryl, who seemed to want to know all my business, picked it up and answered it. It was Bishop Elizabeth Huett, Bishop of Tees, and assumed I would answer. So I took the phone from Cheryl.

I said I was in Harwich, yes. I said Cheryl is my partner to come. There were two items of news. One was that Yojana was doing very well with her and indeed could come on to the phone. Yojana was immediately making contacts to set up SMS branches, in Casnewydd (or Newport in old money) and soon in Aberdaugleddau (Milford Haven), and Liz had been impressed, so that two Welsh Anglican bishops would come on to the Confraternity.

Secondly, she had heard from Bishop Terry. Linda had gone to a restaurant dressed in the most revealing translucent white dress she might ever wear. (I did not reply although I knew it. It is translucence is set against the fact that there is little dark and light in Linda's skin.)

She was followed by George Wickenby. After a meal with 'Andrew' Magellan, she took him to her curate's house in her car. I corrected her to 'Adam'. The bishop, via Linda's training vicar, had an opportunity to get a person living close by to ring her doorbell, and Linda refused to answer. The bishop had already been on to it yesterday, as if the parishioner had complained.

I said, "I hope this person had actually complained then."

Liz said that Linda would be too embarrassed to check.

"Who was it?"

"Someone called Helen Eris."

"I lost my virginity to her."

Anyway, the bishop had told Colin Cromer that the woman was upset, so Colin might address Linda too, because Colin would take the parishioner's side.

"Then she'd better be upset," I said.

Later on, Linda drove Adam - she had it right after my correction - back to his car. She seemed to drive quickly back home.

The call ended. Cheryl asked me, "Who did you lose your virginity to?" (Linda would never have asked me this in that word-order.)

"At school. She was a dinner lady. She taught me a few things."

"Why is a bishop ringing you, and you telling her that?"

"Yes, it might have been embarrassing. It was the first thing that came into my head. The parishioner had rung the doorbell late and Linda did not answer."

"A bishop rings you to tell you your wife was with a bloke?"

"She happens to be a bishop. But yes. Which is good news for us. Until now, Linda has been faithful."

"I overheard his name. I had sex with him myself. About the same time - just before - I first had sex with you."

"Small world in these coastal towns," I said to her.

"Doesn't it worry you? I could have gone with him, not you. And he got married."

"Well, you didn't. So I will to you, years later."

"Anyway, he didn't have your confidence in the bedroom department."

The obvious question in my mind was why Linda had driven him, to take him back. Presumably his car was reliable. I might have to raise this later. Did Linda know that she was being followed and it might look as if she was alone, at least in transit? There is this trainee magician he employs, and he might have advised on how to move people about relatively unseen. There is a driveway at home and possibly she could have shielded Adam around the back for the back door into the kitchen. Alternatively, Linda might have done this to restrict Adam's movements - he can't leave to his own car - in case he tried to leave. Sutton is more than a long walk from Titansea, after all, and not much less far to Magellan's office and residence.

After fifteen minutes the phone went again, and Cheryl handed it to me again. "Your colleague."

Yojana came on. She said she was having a really good time. Yojana thought she was first going to Hartlepool but went to Middlesbrough instead. Elizabeth was wonderful, all to herself. She wasn't sure at first, but she had discovered things about herself she could not discover with me. She said she was envious of Fatima, regularly visited by Liz.

So, this call over, Cheryl had some basic questions for me. Why was I being contacted by some bishop called Elizabeth? Then, why was Yojana also contacting via her house phone number?

"Because it is out in the open now. I am with you."

"What did she discover about herself she could not discover with you?"

"Because of her tour around South Wales, looking for potential SMS sites, and Elizabeth Huett is a friend. Liz is the Bishop of Tees. Yojana went to Middlesbrough, for the first night, where Liz is based."

"What, like a 'special friend'?"

"Well," I said. "I don't know for sure. Not really."

"Who is Fatima?"

"The bishop knows her, a priest in Hartlepool."

"Is Fatima this bishop's 'special friend'?"

"She might be. I can see that being possible."

"I never thought Yojana is a lezzy."

"It's an interesting development. Yojana went to Middlesbrough and Fatima ministers in Hartlepool." (I thought it was useful that Yojana had not gone to Hartlepool!)

"Yojana Asthana is a Hindu. You told me that. That's not the same as a bishop."

"I know," I said. "It's suddenly revealing."

"What is?"

"Yojana, if she has a secret life."

"How far is Middlesbrough from Hartlepool?"

"They're not next door. Someone in SMS once said something like fifteen miles?"

"How does someone like Yojana Asthana in Serninsea or visiting SMS Hartlepool know a bishop in Middlesbrough?"

"I will have to ask her. I think you're right: it must connect via Hartlepool somehow."

Thus ended Cheryl's enquiries, as the focus turned to the bed, especially

going around one store in Harwich. The store could get what we needed, and there was a king size version of what we wanted (or, strictly speaking, what I wanted).

Cheryl said, as we went back to her place, "If I give birth at home, it will be in our new bed."

Chapter 09 Linda Attempts to Turn the Tables

Narrator: Linda *Pentecost: Goose* (Sunday 9th June)

So my sermon at Pentecost was about the goose. There were no references to badges worn. I'd found and borrowed from a dealer a painting of a goose in flight, with geese in formation in the background. This was placed in front of the pulpit, which I then climbed up to give the customary sermon prayer introduction and pause before beginning.

It was then that I noticed Keith on the back row, back from Harwich. Interesting.

"We've all heard about going on a 'wild goose chase,' but have you ever thought that this might be the goose doing the chasing? Because this is what is implied by the goose as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. You know about geese. They fly in formation, and they're noisy. See the picture.

"We know all about the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and peace, but for providence and vigilance the goose is another such symbol.

"The goose warns by its loud noise, and it can give you an unpredictable bite. Celtic Christians knew this. That's the point about the Holy Spirit: it is not always predictable and can seem to have bite. My husband once or twice pinched my bottom and moved away: he had goosed me! I doubt that the Holy Spirit was involved then, but you never know."

There was the odd chuckle: my husband was one of those who smiled.

"Wild geese are like the untamed, uncontrollable spirit of God. Christianity has always included the unexpected, and we've seen movements break away from official groups; theologians explore new ideas and return to old ideas, and inspiring saints like St. Francis - whose received instruction to build a church mean the people not a building. The goose symbolises such breaking out: spirit-filled people showing that the gospel cannot be contained and controlled.

"But there is more. The goose can sniff people out. Really, it smells our odour very well, and therefore symbolises knowing good and bad reputations.

"Why mention this? Well, Serninsea's name relates to Saint Sernin, the saint of this our church, who was killed by being dragged down the main street by a bull after he refused to worship Pagan gods. St. Sernin or Saturnin was the first Bishop of Toulouse around 250 CE and the basilica is also on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela - you know, the one with the shell. 'You can be sure of Shell'. We have an apparent connection to Toulouse, lost in unrecorded history but in a myth of a traveller. Simon de Montfort, known in the East Midlands, beseiged Toulouse in 1218, and a rock was thrown from the roof of Saint-Sernin basilica and killed him.

"Maybe it is the geese, common to here and to Toulouse, that really makes the connection. In fact Toulouse has one breed in two types of domesticated goose. The breed was first brought to England and Liverpool in 1840 by Lord Derby, and then used as breeding stock to produce a big bird. We have some of these locally, good for meat and down feathers. Unfortunately, some Toulouse Geese are forced to produce fatty livers for foie gras, but not geese here.

"Toulouse Geese contrast with wild geese because they don't like to be startled or rushed, and also they don't like a lot of rainfall. They are rather trusting. More standard, aggressive breeds can upset the rather gentle Toulouse Goose. Some humans in Serninsea are like this: cannot be startled or rushed, are trusting, and easily upset by bullies. And we stay in when it rains. In this part of the world, however, we have many more of the wilder kind of geese. So many people move into Serninsea, looking for somewhere to live. All geese, looking for somewhere, like our ponds, our grass and sand.

"St. Isidore of Seville wrote about the goose. He knew of the story that when the Gauls, attacking Rome stealthily, approached a temple dedicated to Juno, a sacred flock of geese woke up and alerted the Roman guards. The Roman army turned back the invaders and the geese had saved Rome. We might regard this as a bit of interfaith, these days: the goose is not an exclusive Christian symbol but, possibly, St. Sernin might have told them to shut up - who knows.

"The other useful feature of the goose is that it sticks with others. It is a collective bird. It's all about the flock. So, as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, it is the symbol of community, where the lead role is shared, as the bird at the head of the V formation settles further back in after it has done its stint, and where other birds attend to the misfortune of the individual, for example when a bird is injured. So, the V formation is advantageous for flying efficiency, and thus involves a group direction, and the collective sense is also about looking after the weaker individual. The goose honks to encourage the others along, all together.

"So next time you think of the Holy Spirit coming to the group, think of the goose. Our wild geese remind us here, and in Toulouse, about our mission. Although I would not say that a company of people being worshipful are being goosed... by the Holy Spirit. I'm sorry, I could not resist that."

It was a short sermon, but sometimes short ones are the best. Colin Cromer indicated his satisfaction, other than the "appalling joke" that had spoiled it. I had a sense that a short report would go to the bishop. I felt that the sermon was flat: I wanted to mention locals wearing badges, rather than staying out of the rain, but if a trivial matter (I felt) I'd given way and gave no clues.

It turned out that, as the least theological of my sermons, and the least intellectual, it was the most appreciated by the congregation, including the final joke, so said Mohammad McArden, and this made me feel a little frustrated. I had plugged a gap in my knowledge, however.

Linnaeus Hook, one of the congregation, said, on leaving, "If you go south of the River Thames, there is a garden where people still hang ribbons and messages all in recognition of the ladies of the night buried there: they were called 'Winchester Geese', curate."

"I've heard about them," I said. "Just the basic details."

"The burial site was not consecrated, but now folk hold a ceremony at the garden they resurrected there every month."

So in the course of shaking hands with the congregation, I shook hands with Keith. He did not mention Cheryl.

Colin came over. "Keith. Quite a surprise; you're very welcome."

However, Colin wanted to mention a Pastoral Letter from the Suffragan Bishop of Scredington, Julian Worsley. Keith said he would wait. So we went into the vestry and Colin showed it to me, adding that because my husband was present he

would not talk to me about a matter that perhaps he should; he also wanted to be positive with me after the sermon.

Dear colleagues,

RE: A Pastoral Letter for clergy and licensed lay members of the Diocese of Wytham

Authored by Bishop Julian of Scredington with the full approval of Bishop John of Bolingbroke. The speech was also seen in advance by the diocesan bishop, Bishop Derek.

Those of you who attended the closed study day yesterday will know that I tried to address pastorally the issues relating to the ongoing management efficiency difficulties of the Diocese of Wytham. Please see below a summary of the speech delivered by me, Bishop Julian.

Over the months the two suffragan bishops, myself of Scredington and Bishop John of Bolingbroke, have received a large number of emails and letters and have had personal conversations regarding the ongoing investigation into the management of Wytham diocese. Bishop Derek Imperial has received emails and letters directly. A large percentage of these have raised concerns about Bishop Derek's office in terms of administrative competence and efficiency, as part of his responsibilities as the diocesan.

There has also been a good deal of rather uninformed chatter on social and other media. Whilst the comments raise legitimate concerns, including the debt level and reducing income, we feel that undue focus has fallen upon Bishop Derek for something that has long been structural. Bishop Derek is, of course, committed to Operational Guidelines and our Diocesan Vision.

My colleague John Bolingbroke and I assert that he expresses his charisma and learning with inspiring gifts and skills that are far more than we can expect. He promotes ongoing reform. Some even complain about reform itself.

Over the past weeks we as suffragan bishops have been in deep prayer - including together - asking God's wisdom as to how we can listen to the comments within the diocese, and find a way forward. We do not diminish or underestimate the importance of the issues facing all of us. Prayer assures that, through God's grace, ways forward will emerge. We must trust that God is journeying with us and has been involved in our dilemmas and disappointments. We may not know where the journey will lead us structurally but we must trust and have confidence in God. We can only move forward in relationship with each other and under God. This follows on from Bishop Derek's time in Lent in retreat.

Bishop Derek has been criticised for not making any public statement over the weeks and since as the Church Commission Report has loomed towards publication. This is a Church, and we really must allow our mothers and fathers in God to have space in prayer that does not involve public communication. After his retreat, the Bishop did join us in his full duties of announcing to us the resurrection of Jesus Christ Our Lord in the many services and events that are our central exclamation, and he has continued his work since.

The full report is called The Special Church Commission Report into the Administration of the Diocese of Wytham. We understand that it has been delayed

for legal reference and final editing. In such anticipation the Bishop feels it is still inappropriate to comment despite the temptation to respond to social media and other correspondence. We suffragans agree with him, and support him. We ask that all in the diocese pray for each other and Bishop Derek; and that whatever concerns or issues people may have we continue to pray together as a diocese that God's will is done. Bishop Derek has nevertheless asked me to thank you for the prayers that he knows so many people in our diocese, across all our traditions, have been offering as he faces a tense and difficult time waiting for the findings. We know that these will be challenging and call for significant changes.

We suffragans are happy meet with individuals and groups across the diocese to discuss issues of concern. We are also happy to receive invitations from individual parishes as it is important to hear from both clergy and laity. However, we do not and cannot speak for Bishop Derek. He has a unique responsibility. We, the two suffragans, are offering a genuine listening exercise. So do get in touch.

In the meantime, we remain your servants under God and committed to your care and support. Suffragans do not have this territory or that: we each offer to the whole diocese as we move forward together in partnership, in unity, and furthering God's mission.

With all blessings

+ Julian Scredington

+ John Bolingbroke

Colin said, "I thought about reading this out. Does it actually say anything? I don't want to read this out."

"It's a bit long," I responded, "and also has a few stock phrases."

"It is on the diocese website. I think the Parish Website can provide a link. I suppose it shows that Derek Imperial is under a lot of pressure and the publication is coming. He may have to resign or retire. I wouldn't be at all surprised if we don't lose one of the suffragans, when what we really need is a third one."

"That puts the wage bill up more," I said.

"We know what's coming. There'll be less residential training like yours was, fewer paid curacies: we'll end up with even fewer clergy and many more volunteers. They'll advance the 'minster principle' of grouping clergy together to serve over a wide area. Anyhow, I will put tonight's sermon in the parish magazine. These are your days of relative freedom because, as a vicar, you cannot contradict the creed that follows - particularly in the morning Parish Eucharist. I'm looking forward to when you can preside at the Eucharist very soon."

"Ah, thank you Colin."

"Following on from your success at Margate, I need to tell you about the *Wytham Region Conference to Attract Business*, held in the Titansea Grand Hotel. I'd like you to not just support your husband out there, but show involvement in the local community, and therefore talk about something relevant to the community with a Christian perspective. And can you make it so that the business people understand it?"

"So a bit like when I went to Margate then on the seaside economy and community."

"Yes. The suffragan was full of praise for that. Do what you did there! But you

have less than a week to prepare. Bishop John is presenting all about the Serninsea Cross brooch that was found by detectorists and has become an interest of his. He'll be discussing it under 'Cultural and Tourist Development'. So leave that subject to him."

"What was this other matter, Colin? I can take criticism."

"The bishop says Helen Eris complained when you didn't answer the door on Friday night. But she says she didn't complain when you were in touch with her. So the matter is closed."

I said to Keith, before we drove home in separate vehicles, that the bishop must be out to make trouble for me, because Helen had not complained. Keith wondered if he was doing it ahead of my ordination retreat, reminding me of my own duties, unless wires were crossed and there was a genuine misunderstanding.

Sexual Dream (Monday 10th June)

I found myself in the church, although to the sides there were vertical drapes like in a theatre. I was in the pulpit; a naked man was sliding up the outside of the pulpit vertically; I realised that I only had on a clerical collar and a very hairy pubic mound below, that seemed to be physically growing in bushiness. This was forcing me to stay in the pulpit, the congregation all looking on (and seemingly not seeing the rising man). I brushed the pubic hair downwards with my favourite hairbrush as if to stop it growing, but to no effect.

There, ahead, sat in a large throne-like chair, in the centre of the church, between the pews, and facing me, was Bishop John Barman, and giving me an intense gaze. Next to him, stood, hand on the bishop's shoulder, was Kenneth Osis, openly masturbating with his other hand, his heavy vestry garments pushed up.

I folded my arms as if to hide my breasts, but then I started stroking myself at the hairy mound and this did stop the growth. The male arrived at the top of the pulpit, now recognised as Adam Magellan. The bishop afar looked restless; Osis was more vigorous and took his hand off the bishop to point at his penis. My tongue came out as he did this.

Adam was solidly erect, so I climbed up and out of the pulpit and dropped on to his shaft, like in mid air, with gasps from the congregation - yet a long smile from the bishop and ever more vigorous self-action by Osis. But then, I wasn't on Adam at all, but found myself straddling the bishop, oozing all over his raised elaborate clerical dress and receiving Osis's penis into my mouth.

I woke up to Keith, Monday my day off, in a sweat, and told him to fuck me.

He asked if I was sure. I thought Cheryl must be changing his attitude to sex with me. "You've been dreaming again. Was it bad? Was I in it?"

"That's a point. You weren't in it at all."

"Perhaps, in your dream, I was with Cheryl."

"You must have been," I said.

"Who was in your dream?"

"While I can remember: Adam Magellan, elevating up in front of the pulpit while I was in it, the suffragan bishop, Ken Osis - all in a state of sexual excitement."

"Like you, then."

"It's more like fear. It's like they're out to get me."

When I went out I went swimming in Ingle Under Drain near Ingle Barrow. Here was a moribund church perched on a mound, on a site that was for Pagan burial. I stared at the place for a while.

I was sat naked on the inner grassy mound and pleased that my bowels had settled in the morning. Without realising it I drifted off to sleep.

A woman, perhaps sixty years old, was standing over me. "I thought you were a dead body dumped. You gave me such a fright. You have nothing on. Is it warm enough?"

"I'm sorry. I am a bit cold. It's a bit unseasonal today and rainy too."

"I have a coat in the car." She went over the dyke top and returned with it for me to put it on.

She told me to get in her car, and she drove me the short distance to my car, a swim away, where I was able to return her coat and put my clothes back on. We parted in a friendly way and I thanked her. She was called Lesley Pointer. I felt like I'd opened myself for more criticism, if I had been recognised. At least it was a pleasant sleep.

I decided to go to the local library, a safer and uncontroversial place to sit and contemplate, only to realise that it now shut on Mondays.

The Confessor Calls (Tuesday 11th June)

Reverend Kenneth Osis, my allocated confessor, came to my house by appointment. I was in a mufti selection of blouse and trousers that any woman might wear at this point.

I answered the front door. "Hello Linda, so good to see you. Meeting at yer 'ouse," he said. "The Holy Spirit has come; I hear that yer sermon were the best ever."

"And I perform on Trinity Sunday," I said. "Do come in, er, Kenneth."

"Ken. Now 'ave yer 'ranged yer 'olidays yit?" This little fat man reverted away from the Church-speak we all seem to absorb.

"I think I'll go to see the family just before the retreat," I said, "I had a short break with my husband and friend a little while back. Come through to the big lounge."

"It's not a bad 'ouse this, is it? They don't do things badly, like."

"It takes ages to get repairs done and necessities dealt with."

"Do you want me to pass that on?"

"I thought our meetings were confidential," I said. "Please sit down."

"Yer right, which is why am asking permission, like. But I can pass it on because I'm close to the control booth."

"Ah, I remember last time you made these references to the control booth and stagecraft. Are they acting metaphors or actual amateur dramatics?"

"Something you do need to know: your active suffragan bishop does admire you. With all he knows, he wants you in on the team."

"That's positive," I said, keeping quiet about negative thoughts. "Metaphors? Do you know anything about badges with a goose and a B on them?"

"Er, yes."

"So who wears them?"

"Actors."

"Metaphorical actors?"

"I think you'd be a good actor. I have got one. Look." (It was on his shirt under his jacket, well below his round clerical collar.)

"You are an actor. Where are the metaphorical plays put on?"

"If you are asking. I did an audition. I attended a rehearsal."

"You see, I'm told that the college has a drama group, and it puts on plays; there was an Am Dram group ten years ago or so and folded. So what do these badge-wearers do?"

"It's all private. Perhaps it is too early to put it on in public."

"So they are *not* metaphors. Identify the goose and the B."

"The gander or goose badge has a B on it. The ancient name of Bolingbroke; same name as the suffragan bishop. Do you want to be involved?"

"I can't act. I could take a look."

"Yes, but you need to be invited, and need to be prepared to act - at least. But I hear that at Bishop Querceto Theological College you could recite whole chunks of liturgy without having the book."

"Yes, I have a very good memory for words. I handle ideas, and I can remember what I like to read and what people say. But I'm useless at remembering names. Am I having a confidential chat with you about work and life, or is this some sort of pre-audition?"

He then said, "No. You would have to be invited. Can I pass this on?"

"I am curious, not because I want to act at all but because this is strange. You see, *metaphor* points to a something else into which it gives a very good parallel insight."

"Do I have the permission to contact the Serninsea Players?"

"Yes. On the basis of my curiosity only."

"Someone will be in touch, Linda. Let's get on to you as you, then. You, the whole rounded figure - mind, body and spirit. This is confidential."

"Go on."

"Contented sort of person? Frustrated? Eager? Annoyed?"

"Actually, all four."

"It is said that you visit the toilet too often and inappropriately."

"You don't worry about being too personal, do you Ken? Yes, but I have improved and will further. The rest is shared with my medical folk alone."

"I suppose so. How is yer marriage?"

"Fine, thank you, seeing as you ask."

"There is this suggestion it is not doing so well."

"Like the suggestion of how I shit?"

"Hmm. Do you have friends?"

"I have friends, some from school days. I have a fellow naturist friend. We meet at our mutual friend's house because it has a conservatory and it is secluded. We strip off and lie on sofas and chat. Or sometimes go to the gazebo in the garden."

He said, "You being naturist: like, if I were to say let's sit here with nothing on, you'd find that unremarkable. I'm not suggesting this."

"Well there's a time and place for everything. Yes, I am often naked, but I don't answer the door naked, and try not to embarrass sensitive souls. Not saying that you are sensitive, of course. Invasive, maybe."

"I'm only asking. Is your hostility part of yer family? Yer family has always been alternative, sort of."

"I don't see any notes this time."

"I read them, as updated; memorised the main points."

"On the farm, on a nice day, my family went about with nothing on. We're not masochists but I can take the cold better than some."

"You were a nude model."

"Yes?"

"Do you entertain male friends, you know, in a way others might find unusual?"

"I invite male friends in and show them my body?"

"Well?"

"No. When there are male friends, I keep my textiles on."

"What about parishioners?" he asked.

"I don't get my textiles off in front of parishioners."

"Your service to your parishioners. You are there for them. Our stipends are to make us available."

"If you are referring to Helen Eris, calling at my door, I have spoken to her. She came on the off-chance for advice. She knows it was too late in the day. I was tired. I rang her the next day, and checked all was well, which it was."

"You felt tired."

"Yes. We are available for others, but we are also entitled to our own time," I claimed.

"Who was he?"

"Who was whom?"

"The man you were entertaining."

"Who says there was a man I was entertaining?"

"The implication is that it was a man you were entertaining."

"There is no implication, and, by the way, if there ever was a man, it's none of anyone's business but mine."

"But that's not the case, is it, in a provided curate's house and with a stipend to be available for others?"

I thought: this horrible little man had been sent to do the bishop's dirty work.

I asked him back, "Do *you* have a girlfriend, or significant other? She wouldn't have one of these badges, would she?"

"The woman I was with does, actually. She is an actor."

"These badges seem to be everywhere, all of a sudden."

"She passed her audition."

"Ken. This house might be a 'tied cottage', but it is my home. If I choose to entertain a male friend, I am entitled to do so without permission of the landlord."

"Indeed, 'tied' is yer correct word. You 'an't got a landlord: it is the Church to which y've given yer moral commitments and statements of obedience."

It was time to create a test.

"As I know you better, now, I'd like to be without my pointless clothes."

"Oh. I see."

"Furthermore, let's deepen our talk by lying down on my bed upstairs, and just talking."

"And me?"

"If you want. You don't have to. If someone - one of these parishioners - comes to the door I'll grab my cassock and slip it over my head. Easy."

And there and then I removed my clothes. His eyeballs were bulging.

"Gosh. Ye're still very beautiful, like, a lot."

"What do you mean by 'still'?" (Had he seen me before?)

"Sorry. Er... Yer forty."

"Yes."

"The cassock," I told him, "is a fantastic garment because it hides what I reveal. Many a cassock is worn over just a bra and knickers by women clergy in hot weather: I just don't include the bra and knickers."

"Ye're... Ye're often seen in yer cassock. People associate it with commitment, like, but yer saying it's nakedness convenience."

"Yes. Come upstairs."

He followed me up the stairs but went into the bathroom, where he did undress, and this small, stocky, naked man appeared at the bedroom door and paused. I indicated the bed on the left side, as I was on the right.

"I'm nervous," he said.

"Lie down because I am resting and I want to chat. If I fall asleep, get your clothes back on and let yourself out."

"If I respond, you know, like, will it bother you?"

"No. *Secrets*," I said to him. "Tell me about secrets."

He did lay down to face me, and looked me up and down. "Are you aware, doing Sociology once, of the work of Georg Simmel?"

"Like the National Church was a triad with its Catholic, Evangelical and Liberal corners? Although the traditionalist Anglican Catholic is bust now so it's more like a dyad, and a dyad is more less stable than a dyad. The LGBTQ debate is a dyad too."

"Not that. His best work were secrets. Equivalent of Durkheim and all about suicide."

"Oh, right."

"Communication and about the self. Secrets allow us to be more autonomous; the *lie* makes life bearable. We can manage our presentation to others. The lie is *integral*, isn't it, to a relationship - so, rather than destroy it, it allows yer relationship to happen. And, with an intimate relationship, like, you can tell them *whole* without having to tell 'em *all*. See what I mean?"

"We are like novels in the management of narrative secrets."

"Yeah. And even sexual love, right - that opens us to the most intimacy, includes the maintenance of secrets, so that it can work."

"To a point," I said.

"And all the more necessary because, right, sexual love is more uneven than friendship. So you should give the whole self, but not all of the self."

"I've got that," I said.

"So, individually, you gain more autonomy and self-worth. *But* if you have the secret *society*, that reduces your autonomy and self-worth. The secret group, and especially the secret State, takes it away. The more there is surveillance, and the more there are operatives, the less you are your self."

"I can see that. You see, concentrating on this matter, it doesn't matter that you've got nothing on and I have got nothing on."

"I am trying to concentrate and avoid the obvious. You are still so attractive. You are attractive."

"Go on concentrating."

"Yer right. So, now, also, you have the community and association thing. So, right, in a village, or in rural society, which is community, there are fewer chances to maintain secrets. The lines of communication criss-cross from the same people. But in a city, with differentiation, isn't it, a modern economy, yer 'ave more chances of 'aving secrets, more chance of retaining yer autonomy. Far from being alienating, or having *anomie*, you know, it can be liberating. It is liberating to have secrets. Can I touch you?"

"No."

"Oh."

"This isn't sex. This is two people, grown up people, in and around this town, in our profession, having a conversation."

"But look, I cannot help myself."

"Naturists see that all the time. It is quite normal, especially among newbies and textiles."

"Can I attend to it please?"

"If you must." So he began and then he stopped.

"I won't. How is yer marriage?" he asked again.

"I've already answered."

"Problems?"

"You said before. Who is making the suggestion?"

"I don't know, and if I did I couldn't say."

"So we are not getting any further," I declared. "Well, you've done much better than before. You want me to attend an audition, so in exchange I would like you to see into my naturist world. So, for next time you come, I will ask my friend, my naturist friend, let's call her 'D', to be with me when I see you next. There'll be time to talk to me alone for confidences. Otherwise I want her here. Yes? That's not to say she will say 'yes' herself."

"Sounds interesting. I would like to come."

"Anyway, I am feeling tired, like I was when Helen Eris rang my doorbell. Have you said everything? Thank you for your lecture on secrets."

"Is this tiredness an illness?"

"No. I'll sleep and get back on track."

"I will get my clothes on."

As he did, I went down to the under-stairs toilet, for my urine needs and the hanging black cassock. I put it over my head for it to drop down, and he came down the stairs. We went to the front door.

I said, "Good bye. Go home. You can say I'd experience an audition. The rest, including the naturist invitation, goes no further: not to the bishop, not to my training vicar, not to anyone, nor to this peculiar badge-wearing woman you know."

"Rest assured. You might be wearing such a badge yourself, soon."

"We'll see you again very soon. Go home."

Diana agrees to Help (Wednesday 12th June)

I had been in touch with Peter. So, wearing my white cassock at lunchtime, I called in very briefly at Adam's. Adam was out all day. It didn't matter. It was Peter Marshall I wanted. On his computer screen was something to do with Unitarians and a reference there to Buddhism.

"That doesn't make sense to me. Is there something you'd have here that would upset an evangelical or traditionalist? I know it all does, but something to disturb their sensibilities and sensitivities."

"Neo-Paganism?"

"Perfick," I said

"Perfick?"

"Pop Larkin."

"The poet?" he asked. "'They fuck you up...' Sorry, Reverend Jupitas."

"*Darling Buds of May*. Print out a summary of the Unitarian position regarding Paganism, for a friend who knows nothing about them. I'll give her what you print out."

"There isn't a Unitarian position," he said. "I'll find some brief viewpoints or stances, and from neo-Paganism as well."

"Neo-Paganism? Yes, fine. Brief, though: she has very little time and possibly a short attention span. No, that's unkind. After all, she reads *The Jacobite Gap Years* novels."

"Remind me."

"About a physician Mary Douglas who, back in time, marries to become Mary MacKenzie or Màiri NicCoinnich."

"Don't know it."

I received three pages of printed notes potentially for Diana.

Peter said, "Adam was going to send a message that George Wickenby has been following you. I'm not talking out of turn. The Bishop of Bolingbroke has an account with Mr. Wickenby."

"That is most interesting and disturbing," I said. "Is he in tomorrow?"

"I wouldn't know and you shouldn't approach Mr. Wickenby directly anyway."

"Is *Adam* in tomorrow?"

"Should be. I'll check."

"He needs a reward for that. I'm off to see friends at the Café Albert on the sea front"

I left and headed around the block. In there, Diana, Patricia and I just slowly consumed coffees. I had honey and spray cream with mine, discovering that the cafe would do this (at a price). Diana received the three sheets of paper provided by Peter on Unitarians on Pagans and neo-Pagans.

I said to Diana, "So what I want you to do is have a personal profile that irritates this horrible little man. You could be one of these Unitarians. I'm told they still exist even in Britain. You and I will be good naked pals. I talked to him naked yesterday and said I would ask 'D'. That was all, Patricia. Naked chat. He is not one of us."

"You got his clothes off?" Diana asked.

"He was a bit nervous. He keeps saying I 'still' look good, and then says it's

my age."

Patricia said, "You really are ridiculous, Linda. You are scheming."

"He's not pervy?" asked Diana.

"He is a clergyman."

"That's no guarantee of anything," said Patricia.

Diana said, "Okay. It's a dull life, this, without a bit of fun. I mean, there was this bit of fun when you Linda went to see Arthur and Patricia and, well..."

I stopped her by saying, "It's Osis and the bishop who are scheming. I want to set up a feedback loop where he sees extraordinary things that he cannot keep to himself. There's a peculiar group that wears these badges, and now he wants me to be able to wear one. I want us to hug, Diana, and we will hug him."

"Watch it Linda," Diana said. "And no family - I'll be a single woman, Dee. I am not hugging strange men."

"If we need a surname. Er, on there it says Joseph Priestley, James Martineau, Francis William... pick Newman. 'Dee Newman'. I knew about John Henry, but nothing about a Francis."

Adam Magellan called in at the Café Albert on the promenade and obtained a drink.

He said, "So you are being followed, and we were followed. Helen Eris seems to have been set up. I don't know why."

"It's these badges that Peter saw at the bed and breakfast. Adam, I'd like to see you again."

"Woo!" said Diana and Patricia together.

"Grow up," I said at them.

Adam said, "Wickenby will hire people."

"How do you know, Adam? Is it from Kathryn, Kathleen?"

"I don't give away my methods. So this is as you come up to this retreat and your ordination."

"Yes, I wasn't aware that undergoing surveillance was part of the preparation. I'm going to see my family first. I would like their blessing, for a change. Come with me to Wales, Adam."

"Woo!" said Diana and Patricia again.

"I can't. I'm busy. Isn't Keith going, for keeping up appearances?"

"In Wales? Fuck off."

"Right, well I'm going. I mean: to do some work."

"Not 'fuck off' to you, Adam."

"Woo," they went yet again.

"Shut up. See you soon, Adam. Right let's get this Osis pillock set up."

My confessor was thus told by text to meet 'us' at Patricia's, on a Friday as well, and given directions. *The whole meeting must be confidential*, I wrote; he could also speak to me alone.

Diana said, "Don't tell him stuff then."

Patricia nodded in agreement.

"Au contraire. We need to give him plenty."

"I am *not* posing as your lover."

"Let's make you, like Peter, a neo-Pagan Unitarian. I assume he is. You do spells and stuff like that. Your yoni is your power."

"My what?"

"Cunt, love," I said, to be crude. "Come on, it will be there for him to see."

Patricia said, "So what is this white garment you are wearing?"

"A cassock?"

"With a filthy mouth and devious mind like yours? Keith was flushed out regarding Mouldy by your devious means."

"No. It was straightforward telephony."

"Anything else has happened with you and Osis?" asked Diana. "I mean, you do have a track record."

"I do *not* have a track record. I stayed loyal. It was Keith who wandered off. Well, now I am free."

Patricia said, "You are not free. You are about to be ordained a priest. By the way, don't get into an acrimonious divorce like I did."

"No, I won't," I said. "Clean break."

Patricia went off to work, and Diana and I went to Patricia's house, where we stripped off and lay down in the conservatory.

"I want more information on this man," said Diana.

"Osis lives twenty-five miles out. He is round, stocky, small penis."

"Some people at college *cycle* twenty-five miles. I'm wondering if I have seen him in there, occasionally."

"He coupled up with some woman for a short time, who also wears one of these badges. On, er, a separate point (it wasn't), do you know someone called Laura Kingswood, Diana?"

"Oh, she's a college regular. She has a few issues, let's say. She is on some course or other most years. Why?"

"Nothing. Just asking..."

"So is this Osis like your bishop? He's creepy and wears perfume. I think *he* is devious. What did he say to that archaeologist lass? She wasn't involved in something he's doing? Why has he grabbed this Serninsea Cross brooch for himself?"

"I wonder if either or both twins have started to see these badges? Kathleen didn't mention it last time I saw her."

"Are they trying to say, 'Join the amateur dramatics!' to you?"

"Not quite. But there is one question, given his ability to keep quiet about Cheryl. Is Keith involved? He normally slags off the bishop, like you do, but I'm beginning to wonder. Just wondering."

Diana had a demand. "So tell me what happened with Patricia and her husband." (She meant when I helped them.)

"I can't and won't," I responded.

"In that case..." said Diana.

"So you won't help me?"

"Tell me! What did they do, and, more to the point, what did you do?"

"No, Diana. I'm testing Osis for his confidentiality, or lack of it, so don't test me on mine. I am not going to tell you."

"I'm scratching your back..."

"I'll operate on my own then, with Osis."

"I know," she said. "I won't help you unless you tell me about you and Adam Magellan."

"Oh, that's easy. I showed him who was boss. I wanked him, sucked him off

and shagged him."

Diana burst out laughing. "I'm all yours then, dearie. I don't like this bishop and anything to undermine your lot is bound to be a good thing."

"Friendship does not rely on reciprocity," I said.

"Is that theological?" asked Diana.

"Sort of theological."

"You don't want us to be lesbians, then?"

"I thought you'd said not to go this far."

"In front of Patricia," said Diana. "I want some fun. Let's just entice his imagination. So he'll strip off with us; I have no family but you can say that you introduced me to naturism."

"Yes, we'll add to the deflection a real history," I said. "Spies do this successfully."

Diana said, "Oh, by the way, I'm going to be a part time receptionist at Wilkinson's Casino, downstairs."

"Best wishes with that."

"You don't approve?"

"I don't approve of temptations towards addiction."

"You and Adam. Is it like knowing him at school again?"

"I think he's a bit shy."

Diana said, "He married that Rumanian woman, and she ran away."

"You seem well informed."

"The mother of Agota, who changed her name to Yootha Ann."

"I once offended her. Adam will know all about that, then. I wonder what he really thinks about me."

She said, "So, after they were around for nearly two years, including Agota Annabella György on the neighbouring farm to you, Adam married Mirela Annabella György, Agota's mother, six years ago."

"Fuck!" I said, reaching into my bag for my hairbrush.

Diana said, "Leave it alone."

"Sorry, I shouldn't."

Diana said, "When people saw *Jenny* brushing your hair, in the classroom, they thought she was being affectionate. You've had this behaviour ever since."

"Sand in my hair," I said. "Like if grit is in it."

"*Jenny*," said Diana, being insistent.

"Maybe... Adam. We were sort of mentally cruel with him. We gave him pleasures, but we were in control. I wish he could come with me to Wales. It would give us some time to be normal, restore things. Anyway, there's no one else."

"You want some cock."

"I want to say Keith lied and I want someone I know."

"Not Ken Osis then."

"Shit, no. I like Jeremy Symes but he's well and truly taken."

The conversation came to a pause. When Patricia reappeared after work, she asked us if our scheming was fully planned. A lot would be left to the day, I said.

She told us to confine ourselves to the conservatory, garden and gazebo. No going upstairs with Osis. Patricia said, "I don't want my house turning into a knocking shop."

Diana responded, "Oh, that would never do. Or inviting a third party to have a

good look, and a bit more."

So Diana and I dressed, and went home. I waited for Keith to return from work.

Sex at Adam's (Thursday Morning 13th June)

I was frustrated waking up Thursday morning next to Keith, and by Morning Prayer with Colin. I wanted something fresh and new. So, after ten minutes in the vestry's loo, I went to Adam's (via Jagjit and Gurinder Kapoor's shop).

Adam appeared. "Hold the fort Peter, will you. Would you like to come through?"

So I did. I said, "Hope you don't mind this cassock."

"Hope you don't mind the office - bit of a mess now Ann has gone."

"She cleans for you?"

"No, I clean for her - including the toilets."

"I spy a whiteboard and a blackboard. Not much on them."

"Show customers other people's business? Labhaoise said these would benefit me."

"You've got screwed up paper in a basket. Could be stolen. Going to offer me a drink?"

"Would you like to see my flat? It is upstairs."

"Lead on to your inner sanctum."

Upstairs had a sort of layout that needed rationalising - and where we ended up I could see the view down into the variously busy end-of-the-street to the double mini-roundabout by leaning on to his lounge windowsill.

I said, "It all needs decorating. And your bathroom is, well, downstairs and we are up here. Old fashioned windows: I bet they're drafty when shut. I'll open this because it feels stuffy"

"Yes to all of that," he said. "But I want to ask you a direct question."

"Go on." I got the window up higher than I wanted.

"I like you and to have sex with you, but can you stop treating me like shit?"

"Yes, is my answer. Push up my cassock."

I managed to lean over as a pair of hands acquired contact with my lower legs. The raised black material exposed my bare bottom. He gently slapped each inner thigh for me to widen my legs more and pressed my back to bend further. Oops, yep: then he was inside and nicely, and traffic continued to go by. People on upper deck buses would see me and might see in but I assumed not far, given the equivalent dark you would see of the cassock merging into the dim room.

"Gosh you really are tight," he said."

I recognised someone coming out of next door's front door.

"Hello Klärchen!" I said, and she looked up, as did the dog. "How's Dieter?"

"He's lovely," she said in her German accent. "He woke me up this morning really nice. He brought me his bone."

"That was good of him."

"And we had a nice time before breakfast. Why are you up there?"

"I'm visiting my friend Adam." (He was busy giving me his bone, as I stretched

my neck out of the window.)

"We are meeting up with my friend Salome and Hendrik. I think we're going to have a nice time. We'll find a drain to swim in, all four of us, and then have a good shower back at home. That will be nice, Dieter, won't it? Goodbye for today."

"I often go... swimming in the Ingle... Drains."

"Yah. Bye-bye."

"Bye."

I somewhat slid back a bit while Adam continued his thrusting. I gripped the window frame but then raised my right hand up to the wall at the window side. He was working hard in me. His hands travelled up within my cassock up to my free breasts, and I was quite happy.

I said, "This is a new one on me."

He asked, "How do you justify religion, Reverend?"

"Go on. I think... I like the pastoral... and meeting people's needs... but I'm not sure if it's not all... the wrong way around."

"This isn't the wrong way around," he commented, about his activity with me.

"Grace, revelation, inner... conviction; it's a struggle... sometimes. Oh you are very good; keep up the rhythm."

There was a voice from the street below.

"Hello Reverend, getting some fresh air at the window?"

"I am," I said. It was Mrs. Gertrude Carter, one of our stalwarts. "You shopping, Gert?"

"Along the promenade. I want a birthday present for my nephew," she said. "Don't know what to get. A shop has closed down there; I bet its garden meets this property."

"I saw that there's a tenfoot behind," I told her from above.

Adam was still humping and I was trying to reject Newton's law again; I'll stay still and he goes further in, if he can.

"I'll try the high street."

"Best of luck," I said to her below.

"You're in the private detective's place isn't it?" said Mrs. Carter.

"It is - some business with my... husband's firm," I replied.

Adam said, "Liar."

I said, further, "I'm waiting for him to... come, Gert."

Adam said, "That's true."

"I'll be on my way, Reverend," she said. "God bless!"

"Bye. See you Sunday, I'm sure, Mrs. Carter."

Now Adam said, "Ah me kettle's boiling." He made a male noise, that outside might have been drowned out by the street traffic at the double mini roundabout.

"You steaming in me? Gosh yes. Detective Adam pumping in... some data, information, naughty... boy."

He said, "You're losing a lot out. I'll get a kitchen roll. In here somewhere."

With him released, my cassock dropped to just above my feet.

"It's down my left leg now," I said, still looking out of the window while I waited. "Is the left leg advantageous?" I asked, "Or is the right leg as probable?"

He returned and got my cassock up again and rubbed up and down my left leg with kitchen paper. I continued: "Must have been pure chance," I answered, for myself.

"Two quantum universes opened up then," he said. "You ask Peter."

"Really? Explain." (I knew the answer).

"One with sperm down your right leg, which we are not in, and one with sperm down your left leg, here. We are now fixed in the left leg universe."

I said, "The differences for the future could be profound. I'll write a film script: *Sliding Labia*."

Suitably rubbed with kitchen roll, I sat on his settee next to him. His television was put on, showing afternoon snooker.

He said, "I don't get it. You are slim, still, as tight as a teenager, as hairless as a pre-pubescent, your skin is as smooth as silk. How do you keep yourself so well?"

"I just do." I told him, "I'm going away soon. Twice. The family first and then a retreat. It's the big lead up to the ordination. I should be gloriously happy and expectant. I bet Jenny Masters was. Thing is, I've never felt so completely secular. I'm supposed to do a sermon that is orthodox. I can't do orthodox."

"I wonder if we will ever see Jenny," he said. "She's obviously been in and out of Serninsea."

I said, "I hope I am not a Jenny substitute."

"Oh no. You are unique. You're also shuffling about on your bottom."

"Well, I'm wondering if she will come to my ordination. She likely knows Christine Vine, so perhaps I will see the said Christine as well."

"Ah, but will you get to your own ordination if you feel so secular?"

"Gosh, I don't know. Keith will be there; he did promise."

"Shall I come?"

"The ordination?" He nodded. "You could, somewhere left-off perhaps."

"Left off the invites?"

"Position in the cathedral. Change the subject. This is not a job, but listen. This confessor says to me about being near the centre of decision making, and uses these theatrical metaphors. Then I see people wearing these badges. You tell me that we are being followed. I do not think this is a theatrical drama group that does everything in private."

"So what's your investigation strategy?" Adam asked. "Diana and you setting up one of its badge-wearers?"

"Something like that. 'What's Osis telling John Barman, the Bishop of Bolingbroke?'"

"The question implies a range of answers, and the strategy is how to answer the question and the methods construct the process."

"Clearly the bishop has put Osis on to me and said certain things. He knows, this confessor, that we were together."

"The fact that somebody watches doesn't mean they see. They have to interpret and often miss things. Believe me. It may be an assertion."

"So my strategy is to create a conversation and happenings loop. My method is Diana and me as naturists. She is going to have a religion that causes him to want to evangelise her and with any luck desire her. Then I wait for the loop, for the bishop to act in the knowledge that Diana is interested and in an odd religion."

"There's a flaw in the method," Adam said.

"What?"

"Well, why should it concern the bishop? And Osis already knows, so you can't measure the feedback."

"Everything concerns the bishop. Plus, the bishop might want her 'at the centre' too and perhaps she starts seeing these badges."

"Thing is, if Osis is excited by naked women - crumbs, Linda! - then he is likely to keep it to himself. If you think there is some clandestine group then you ought to investigate the group."

"But it is secretive."

"You have to have a strategy, see, to find a secret group. All groups meet, all leave traces, and these days, even with security measures, they have electronic deposits."

"So, if I can ask, with all your work, have you ever heard of some group with these badges that have some leadership elements?"

"Nope."

"I'll try it my way first."

"I've a question for you," Adam said.

"Go on."

"Are you a psychopath or a sociopath?"

"You serious? Adam!"

"Yeah. Serious question."

"Serious answer then. Hopefully, I am ethically trained enough or have sufficient idealism that any psychopathic tendencies are controlled."

"A psychopath is very personal in ruthlessness; a sociopath doesn't give a shit. Psychopaths are more calculating. A sociopath blames others and can be quite chaotic."

"Gosh. What *do* you think of me?"

"I bet no one else asks you this, Reverend Bode?"

"Try the Reverend Linda. 'Hello, I'm the Reverend Linda, soon to be the psychopathic priest of this parish.'"

"I'm a parishioner?" he asked. "Come for coffee, vicar, and don't give a shit."

"You were so busy exposing my bottom that you forgot to give me a drink, you sociopath."

"You still have quite a trim bottom. *Big tits.*"

"I can whip this off and suffocate you with my tits."

"You left the window open, sociopath."

I got up and shut it.

He resumed. "Well, I think you're exciting and interesting. There's no love in what we have done, is there?"

"Love?" I asked.

"What is love?" he asked. "So we've established that our after-restaurant meeting again wasn't a one night stand. Is this then, likely to go on? It must have been your cassock that turned me on, like fucking a female vicar."

"Please. Not a fetish. Not sure about love and Keith. I might have had Obsessional Love Disorder when a student."

"You getting OLD now? Anyway, I have a secret to declare," said Adam. "I mean, if we are going to have some sort of relationship, you'd better know. You remember the one you called 'Goat', ten years younger than us?"

"Don't embarrass me again. Diana told me that you were married."

"Technically I am still married."

"What do you mean 'technically' married? Like technically I am pregnant?"

"Are you pregnant?"

"No. You are or you are not."

"I am still married, to Yootha Ann's mother. She now lives in Slough. I hardly talk to her."

"So I am having to add this technicality to my list of sins - fucking a *married* man."

"She worked for SMS, mother did, and here got a new created job as Translator and Administrator - I think that was its title. She speaks Hungarian, Rumanian, German, French and English. Fantastic, really. I wasn't long at all out of the police and she was one of my first jobs, for indeed SMS. I mean we were married fast and then separated fast. It helped her achieve respectability, place, stability."

"You tell me her name."

"Mary. Mary Ann. She uses Magellan as well, still."

"She can't be our age because Agota, Yootha Ann you say, is but ten years younger."

"Yootha Ann is multi-linguistic, without the French and German."

"What would she think about you and me?"

"I can get in touch and ask her. We had an eight months of marriage, and after she moved on there was the prospect of me going to Slough. But I was getting the business going."

"How come a Rumanian ended up in some out of the way place like this?"

"Funnily enough, it was an SMS advert for Harwich and yet she ended up not going there but coming here. So she was in this 'out of the way place' and looked for friends and activities, and her other attempt at a bloke was a big flop."

"What activities; who did she meet?"

"I ought to keep that to myself."

"Why? I would not be number two would I? The *We of Me*, could I be?"

"The *We of Me*?"

"Suzanne Vega."

"I did say that I hardly speak with her. With her daughter too, both from abroad, she wanted a loose arrangement even with marriage. That's me in a nutshell. There is no coal on the fire, and if you can detect any warmth it is room temperature."

"It's was warm in here before I opened the window."

"Cooler now."

"And what does she think of Ann Dromeghda?" I asked.

"She thinks nothing of her - she is a business partner, as you know."

"Who had your child, as did Labhaoise."

"Like a business partner too, but friendly."

"You being married is all right by me. After all, I'm a sociopath and don't give a shit."

"I've got this job on."

"Another woman?"

"No. A male manager in a DIY store and it's a peculiar one. He is my client."

"So, Mary she is called."

"Mary Ann Magellan, who was Mirela Annabella György, and before György she was Ardelean. Agota Annabella György became anglicised as Yootha Ann George but she had a short marriage too, in Reading, after following her mother

south. Aysher is her married name she's used since living in Reading."

The coffee drunk and my cassock down, I got bored with the snooker on television and so made my excuses and went downstairs, leaving Adam to see out a game.

I said to Peter, passing, leaving, "He's still married."

Peter said, "Never seen her."

"Look, I must go. Trinity Sunday and I must preach on it."

"Complicated stuff," he said.

"Tell me about it," I replied.

Emerging outside, I didn't think Mrs. Carter would report me, but a paranoid thought was that she had passed by below on the bishop's initiative. What could she report? That a sociopath clergywoman was fucking a married man when married myself? That'll do nicely.

Titantsea Businesses Conference (Thursday Afternoon 13th June)

Nicely penetrated by Adam and lunch taken at the promenade's Café Albert, I joined Keith at *The East Foss Regional Conference to Attract Business*, held in the Titantsea Grand Hotel in the afternoon in its downstairs meeting room.

This hotel had seen better days but it was one of those big enough to hold gatherings and had meeting rooms. It was also usefully at Titantsea, where many businesses were located.

We had written our different presentations, so Keith, going before me, was already at the front.

Adam Magellan himself had left the televised snooker and was in the audience on one side with Ann Dromeghda again but also there was George Wickenby further over. I first sat provocatively between the two investigators, hoping to pick anything up. After all, the one on my right had been following me, according to the one on my left.

"Spilling any beans to an old colleague and friend?" asked George, across me. He then said, "Mrs. Jupitas! I have heard so much about you!"

"Really. How so?"

"Putting business in the direction of Adam Magellan. Wife of the chap at the front, there. Your bishop goes first. I know that he likes to be in the thick of it locally."

"Yes, I'd better change position and join him." So I went to the front centre.

So now, from my right, we had an unknown (to me) clergywoman, the bishop (stinking of perfume), Keith and, ah, a happy Yojana Asthana. He *did* seem familiar with her. They all said hello.

Bishop John's presentation was a short one on the apparent discovery in the ground by detectorists of the Anglo-Saxon Serninsea Cross brooch. He had been asked to look after it. It was an item of immense local value that could be an attraction once the research was done and if a proper and secure place could be made to display it. It was a Christian symbol from the past to the present.

"This area does not have its own museum or art gallery, and surely now there is the reason to persuade funders and the local authority to provide a cultural centre to attract more visitors, even if it relied on local artists and metal-detected finds. This

could be done by giving the library a new lease of life and offering multiple functions.

One of the Wickenby twins raised her hand. I turned and saw not only them, but Diana as well. I waved.

"Ah," said the bishop, "an archaeologist who doesn't do religion. Kathleen Wickenby - yes?"

"Not present day religion. Why don't we invest in a metal detector assembly plant? After all, since this brooch was apparently found we have people crawling all over the fields in the marshes. We won't be able to do proper archaeology soon."

"Good ironical point, yes. Give my best wishes to your sister. I don't want to be patronising but we do need to encourage local talent to get involved. It's a pity you and your sister are not involved. No, this seems to have been a *fabulous* discovery; there's a place for everyone, including metal detectorists. What we have to do is establish the worth of this discovery. You could be more on the inside, you and your sister."

Strange comments, I thought: rather personal and direct. 'Inside'? 'Involved'? This followed a pattern. Were they now being targeted? After all, they *are* involved, in archaeology. The smelly bishop sat down and Keith got up.

Keith gave a short presentation on the dock and how better storage facilities might lead to more land traffic. He said that nowhere in England is really isolated except for having inadequate roads like here.

He called for dual carriageways throughout Foss. He talked about his pet imaginary project of his - an M16. (A year back at home he would mark out routes on maps and sometimes on the home computer. He contacted the Council and to the Department of Transport.) He told us that the eastern M16 could link to the M11 going south, and there could be an M17 connecting Norwich and Wisbech to north of Nottingham. The M16 north could reach the M180, use the A15 and A63, to have a further M16 to reach the A19 and at the A168 be complete as an alternative to the A1.

The tramway was becoming more than just a tourist attraction. He also wanted a restoration of the railways, that here would serve the dock. These projects would attract business.

Keith now sat down well back near George Wickenby. My presentation came next using notes to pad out.

"Just in case you are puzzled about the same surnames," I said, "he is my husband!"

I suggested that we have to promote ethical businesses, but why the Church should be against a significant casino development. (Colin had told me that the bishop was opposed, and so was he.)

"We're all interested, theologians and economists, and business people, surely, in *having life and having it more abundantly*. The point about business, even before we consider ethical business, is that it should add value. So imagine that we *can* be rational, like the economists say, and that we all operate with measuring marginal utility - the more we have of something, the less each extra unit consumed gives us in benefit. *Diminishing marginal returns*: but they are still positive up to an equilibrium. We buy what we want at a price to an extent where that marginal utility equals our marginal cost, or the price paid. We make things that way too - marginal costs in production up to the price received. We also do this in *marginal indifference* to other goods or services, consumed or produced. Now, this so-called utility is

ultimately psychological and therefore a whole objective system, keenly displayed in maths, is actually *subjective-in-the-mind*. We want life more abundantly, and yet we know that it has an equilibrium of efficiency for every technological level.

"But what about gambling? Suppose gambling is an addiction or craving. An *addiction is like a perception of negative utility* in a vacuum before we start. It needs filling. Psychologically, utility is not provided by doing the activity, but *to fill a perceived loss of utility* prior to consumption. This is craving, and the absence soon restores itself.

"More rationally, alternatively, previous losses we hope to overcome, but we forget that gambling has no history. Every throw of the dice is the same, new, odds."

I think this audience was with me. Ann Dromeghda, who did once teach Economic History, seemed focused on my words.

"Some things we consume and we are given positive enjoyment. That's fine. So long as, when we go away, *we don't undergo a prolonged sense of loss* when we then don't have that something. Because all the addict ends up doing is finding the gap again and paying out to fill it. But, rather *like inflation, the gap gets subsequently bigger the more it is fed*.

"When you have a hit, like gambling, you perceive the utility going in, but *the pleasure is transitory*, and the actual utility then reduces. In the end the costs are such that *you cannot fund the desire for plugging the gap*."

I stared directly at Adam.

"Being like inflation, demand is to plug the loss. The solution, as with inflation, is to take the negative utility on the chin, to stop it, flush it out and never go back. Unfortunately, unlike with inflation, the goods are tainted rather than the money, and so *consume again and the inflation kicks off again*. Indeed, the gap to plug can become so severe that the victim can no longer judge the price paid - the desperate addict will still pay. Rationality is then but transitory: *longer term rationality contradicts short term apparent rationality*.

"Because, it's like a history-imprint. There is hyper-loss of marginal utility: every return to addiction and the solving of the addiction becomes more futile.

"But remember those indifference curves. The *consuming addict often steals and then deprives someone else of their utility*. What happens is that they take away the higher marginal utility of others to get hits of diminishing returns themselves.

"To produce a rejuvenated *rebuilt Titansea Casino may raise profits locally but there is no actual value added going on*. Indeed, it facilitates the negative utility gap and absence of long-term rationality of the addict.

"But let's ask beyond the addict. What is the utility generated for the non-addict? In *someone who can still behave to an equilibrium, the total utility is tiny*. It is perhaps social, and a little bit of excitement, or watching the wheel go round in roulette or the holding and playing of cards. I suggest this is quite trivial. But it risks sending many into addiction, into the loss of equilibrium as a craving sets short term rationality into contradiction with long term rationality. We cannot offer jobs and employment, or local development, on the basis of such negative utility. I assert that a successful gambling operation relies on negative utility elsewhere and it is *not adding value, but transferring on the basis of someone's misery*.

"It's like when people say that arms spending creates technological innovation. No! Just do the technological innovation. Develop pleasure or utility far more directly.

Another strategy is to raise the entry level, that only those who can afford to lose a considerable sum actually gamble with a desire to win. But, like minimum alcohol pricing, we are accused of denying pleasures to the patronised poor who supposedly can't control themselves. It's like the *feudalised capitalism* we see these days: a *circulatory elite economy* rather than a mass economy as Keynes recommended.

"So leave the casino alone. It actually helps to go past a steel door and in through the far steel door. They're unwelcoming. Don't let it advertise. I saw a clock when I went into the casino recently, and I don't want a rebuilt casino that deliberately excludes clocks. A new one, to pay for itself, would have to use all the tricks of the trade, and those tricks *encourage* negative utility. It would not be economic expansion because there is no added value."

My talk received a dutiful round of applause.

Then this fantastic presentation of a woman, with her shiny brown flesh (bare legs that glowed), jet black hair, and revealing yellow dress, stood to speak.

"I'm Yojana Likhsha Asthana, thirty-five, and I lead the re-renamed Interdependent Standards Unit at Systematic Measuring Services. Hartlepool, Felixstowe and Harwich have one, and there might be ones at Casnewydd and Aberdaugleddau. We are actually becoming more integrated across the sites. Not all administrators are boring people," said Yojana, "and I would like to explain why we can be more positive about ourselves. People ask, 'What do you do?' and there is an assumption that what you do is who you have become.

"This reminds me of *jnanamarga* in Hinduism, combining with *karmamarga*, which is works. *Jnanamarga* is an intellectual self-knowledge, your identity as a person coming to be one with the Other.

"On the one hand, I am an administrator where I check those who check things. Mr. Keith Jupitas in Compliance is one of those I check. He checks things.

"It's mainly mathematical, because it is measurement. There is no knowledge in measurement - we just measure. But there *is*, because the knowledge is in the procedures. We make and follow rules.

"Rules have to be obeyed, because they give certainty. This is the certainty that what (a) says it is is what (b) finds it is.

"The coffee houses of the early City of London succeeded because of 'my word is my bond' - and woe betide anyone who did not do what they promised. Promises were everything, and allowed borrowing, lending, trading: credit to hold things before the purchase was made and credit was fulfilled.

"But now things are run by systems. We are cogs in wheels that work because the cogs are measured. It's not then what sort of person is attracted to this work, but what sort of person does this work produce?

"This is why, in a job like this, I want to express myself. I still want art and music, and I want human contact. I have been told about a German man called Weber who thought all work would become routine. A lot of people have work like this, and get drunk! Many get addicted, and we've just heard about that. My religion says find yourself, express yourself; my religion before interference by outsiders also understood the purpose of the erotic contact in finding the self.

"The routines of life cannot turn you into the cog in a wheel if you look outward, if you have a wider interest or hinterland. So work providers, to attract quality labour, should be leisure providers. Fortunately, my employer understands

the importance of pleasure in leisure, and encourages us to get together and experience ourselves outside the cogs. We interlock in other ways.

"I also have another string to my bow. My family runs a guest house. Maa Skelter sounds like Mama Shelter but isn't. 'Maa' is a Hindu title, as in Maa Durga, and 'Skelter' means to get on with it with a leisure reference. Let's not shy away from the fact that we see people who love each other, and we clean beds of semen and other fruits of love. We add to their experiences through hospitality.

"Look at the Khajuraho and Konark temples with their erotic imagery, and of course there is the Kama Sutra. Kama, as deity, is the first-born cosmic desire for getting creation out of the primaeval chaos. Shiva was meditating, but Kama caused Shiva's passion for Parvati and as a result Shiva turned on Kama to burn him to ashes and turn him into Angara, the bodiless. The bodiless gets about more easily, and puts desire into our bodies. Thus Kama means desire, passion, longing, pleasure of the senses, or the aesthetic enjoyment of life.

"All I am saying is that we have the necessity of precision but we can beat routine through the pleasures. Thank you."

Then a clergywoman in a suit went to the microphone. "Interesting, so far. I am a Christian deacon. In fact, I believe I get ordained priest at the same time and place as the Reverend Jupitas. I am a volunteer; I don't get paid, and I didn't do residential training. I am Christine Vine."

I thought, she was the one in the bank at the time of the robbery, with the identified Jenny World. I was reminded too of the woman at the prostitute murder scene who wouldn't show me her face.

"Listen: the reason I am here is property. Safe as houses, we say, but prices rise and fall, and interest rates; here prices are less than regionally, and regionally is below the national average. I recently purchased some ten properties from a woman in the audience here, Ann Dromeghda, and her partner Labhaoise Vlahos (who's busy with property today). They started by doing one up, and moving on, but I now have ten times their portfolio. Georgie Smith, a UPCC minister, here since the 1980s, got one of mine from one of theirs.

"What they do in property is buy and renovate, and never invest more than the price ceiling. What I do is rent, particularly to sex workers and put them online. I own Goosechat, and it is sex, but prostitution will be with us forever. I work with the police, contributing to the social good. It is safer online.

"Yojana made reference to her faith. Mine involves a strong sense of the subset Social Gospel and indeed what she would call Moksha and I would not. 'Feed thy sheep' has multiple meanings, setting people up for entering the Kingdom, we'd say, under the guidance of the Church. A chap called Reinhold Niebuhr was practical and pragmatic when it came to institutional sin, so we have to work with what we have got, turn the negatives into social positives, sometimes resist, but build life. As it happens I do take from the rich and facilitate the poor, many of the latter being in Serninsea. The Reverend Linda Jupitas referred to having life more abundantly and Yojana Asthana about fulfilment. Properties are like bodies: we live inside them and through them we aspire and attract. Enough from me. Thank you."

Other speakers wanted tourism allied more to business, such as conference space for events like the big electronics conference soon coming to town.

"Klärchen Sisse, I am called, and I lecture at Foss Upper Coast College." I smiled at her. She spoke about the benefits of free movement throughout Europe,

such as young people travelling by rail easily, and having a European Pet Passport.

Councillor Gethin Layne said, "To attract such leading events we need leading facilities and it does mean a better presented casino, Reverend, along with a theatre that used to be there, and better entertainment facilities all round. You miss out the point that in a tourist town, people come and go and have not the time to develop their craving here. We've got this one good hotel, but it needs investment, and we need at least one more. Your husband is so correct about travel infrastructure and what is missing."

I nodded back. He had a point. So I called out, "But I am a parish deacon, and my concern is the local population and all year round use."

Another person, Michelle Rowland, said that new processes would need so-called artificial intelligence that would make many redundant and still being paid, but: "Artificial intelligence as it exists relies on extracting our data as regards preference patterns that it then tries to manipulate."

With the presentations over, I went over to see Diana (and kept my back to Klärchen - partly because Keith had once asked for her name and address and I didn't want him remembering his requests.). She said that my presentation made a lot of sense but the casino premises needed modernising. She gave some personal cards to people with a website address for viewing her CV for more employment.

When Christine came across to Yojana, I also said hello. "South of Foss, my parish base," she said to me, and not only will we be ordained together but we will be in the same retreat."

"You were in that bank."

"With my friend and colleague the Reverend Jenny World, yeah. The police responders were so far away that they got away."

"You were very brave," I said.

Then Christine approached Yojana and took from her bag a white badge. Christine said to her, "So, here is mine. The W is for Wippedsfleet and the image is an elephant. So yours is a B and a goose. Local."

"Excuse me," I asked, to muscle in. "What do they mean?"

Christine said, "Listen: it's all about identifying ourselves to one another, when we need to. We went through auditions and we are a pool of involved people. Cultural and expressive. My badge is from Ebbsfleet; I am from Rainham. Now I have a training parish based in Wytham diocese but we don't need to get new badges: in any case, I am backwards and forwards to London. See you in an hour, Yojana. Bye Linda. I've got two properties to inspect and London beckons tomorrow. Then I'll be back."

Puzzled more than ever, I went and said hello to this Kathleen, freed from the bishop. "You disagreed with Bishop John about metal detectorists."

"Far more than that," she said. "Sorry, but he's a creep. What has the Serninsea Cross brooch got to do with him? He seems to have taken possession. He's not an archaeologist. He seems to want Kathryn my sister and me to join him on some basis, but why should we join him? What is he anyway?"

"A bishop," I said. "Did he show you a badge of any kind?"

"No."

"Oh," I responded. "Peter, your magician; he's a good chap."

"Especially for Kathryn. You were right about the casino," she said.

Well, that was something. She went out of the hotel.

Keith said he had a meeting and I should go home on my own.

The perfumed bishop, however, approached me and criticised me. He said, "Linda, dear: you could have mentioned God."

Not wanting to usurp his authority, I did still reply, "I referred to 'having life more abundantly' quite clearly."

"But we have a unique opportunity to put our faith into the public square." I thought back to his speech, as in pot and kettle. Then he said, "Why couldn't you have said something along the lines of Yojana Asthana?"

"Because, to start with, I'm not a Hindu, and, secondly, I tackled addiction and she tackled desire."

"But," he said, "she, who is secular, referred to her faith, and you, in the Christian clergy, virtually ignored it. Something else," he said. "Be careful. Let me be helpful. A woman discovered you asleep and naked at a grass bank of a drain and this news arrived at my door. I have not told Colin. He has enough on his plate."

I saw this not as helpful but as a direct threat. So indeed I was being followed.

Over five hours later Keith was back in the bedroom complaining that meetings should be chaired better and not go on and on.

I said, casually, and without evidence, "If you're fucking someone, you can admit it without consequence."

"Yes, I suppose I can," he responded, and got into bed, went on to his side with his back to me and fell asleep.

The Confessor Meets 'Dee' (Friday 14th June)

Colin Cromer knew that the confessor was seeing me on Friday afternoon, but he knew nothing of my intentions. I arrived at Patricia's, so that Diana let me in about 12:45 pm.

Her bell rang just after 1 pm. I went to the front door in one of Patricia's dressing gowns, and said to Ken Osis, "We're both ready. Come to the lounge, undress in private; you can use some of Dee's flip-flops she brought." In there I said, "You see that out there, nice and circular? It's good for chatting and looking out."

"And a lovely inviting woman inside. Are yer ready yet for Trinity Sunday?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Anything I need to know about first?"

"About my preaching?"

"No. Now."

"Behave in a mature and responsible naturist way. The towel is to sit on."

"Gosh. I'm nervous, Linda. Can you wait for me?" he asked.

I did, and looked at him as he disrobed all his clobber. He settled for bare feet and I said nothing. My gown came off. So he walked behind my hanging hair, back, trim bottom, long legs, big feet in my flip-flops.

I said, "You shake hands; no hugging until you know her better."

We arrived at naked Diana, and he looked her up and down, from her thickening bush to her good head of same coloured brunette hair.

"Good afternoon, Dee." He shook hands as instructed. "I'm yer Rev' Ken."

"Hello you Rev' Ken," said Diana. "Do you 'rev up' then?"

He smiled. I said, "Sit there and relax, towel first." We sat on a bench that went in a semi-circle around the gazebo circumference, and he was in between us.

"You meet like this here normally?" he asked.

I replied, "More often than not back in the conservatory where there are two parallel settees, so we lie down on them and discuss. We get warmth from the heating in the house when it is a cold day and view the sky. Sometimes we come here, with the door open in summer. Let's shut the gazebo door today. One day Patricia might install a pool; that would be nice."

"Or a jacuzzi just outside the conservatory," said Diana. "That would be really good."

Having shut the door, I said, "No secrets between us, Ken: no clothes for no secrets. Do you remember telling me about secrets?"

"How can I forget?"

Diana looked at me. I noticed that he was looking at her more than me. She was more curvy in body than me, longish hair but not as long as my natural blonde.

He said, "I didn't want to take advantage of yer flip-flops."

I said, "If your feet get cold, sort of get them up on to the bench."

"If *you* did that..."

I said, "Ken! We're naturists. It doesn't matter a jot. Anyway, let me introduce you two better. Dee, this is the Reverend Kenneth Osis of my Anglican Church. Kenneth: Dee is like me, naturist and religious, except she is rather Pagan and Unitarian too."

"Unitarian?"

Diana said, "Neo-Pagan and Unitarian Universalist, to be precise."

"That's a funny mixture," Ken Osis said. "Unitarian? Are there any of them left? Where do you meet?"

I spoke for her, "There's a place in, er, Wytham (I'd no idea if there was or not), but the main thing is the Internet."

"I'll 'ave to 'ave a serious talk with yer some time, Dee, like. I've a Baptist, like, ecumenical colleague who goes on about them as they disrupted the Baptists. Are they into New Age then? I thought they just preached against the Trinity and undermined the possibility of salvation. Fancy hearing that every week."

"Di...ee: tell him."

"Er, New Age? Dunno. Neo-Pagan," she said, not knowing the connection. "Witches and fairies and funny things at the end of the garden."

"Fairies at the end of the garden? Gosh. They really must have changed. I suppose ghosts and all sorts. I'll ask my colleague. I thought they were supposed to think their way out of belief."

"Lots of different influences, these Unitarian Universalists," said Diana, trying to act as Dee. "So there is Christianity, Humanism, Buddhism and Paganism, and I am neo-Pagan as well. I think."

Clearly Peter's three A4 sheets hadn't told her enough - a bit like when I try to present Religious Education through bullet points.

I said, instead, "It's a really nice house and garden this; I mean some business acumen has gone into acquiring this. Pat... is married and has children, and Dee, here, you have..."

"Two. Oh shit," she then said.

"Problem?" asked Ken.

"Something I forget," said Diana. "It's Okay. Obviously I know I have two children."

"And of course I have none," I said.

He said to me, "Nor me. I do know you can't have children, though you have never said why. Your husband first said so when he candidated, and you have confirmed it since."

"Yeah yeah."

"Do you want to say why? You'll have told Dee why," he said. In fact I had not told Diana the details, which was why she looked at me.

"Dee and I have been close for a long time," I added.

Ken said, "I won't press it. Though I'm a bit worried, because I can definitely see people in the distance."

Diana said, "Oh, they are detectorists and the odd walker. Or wanker."

"So," said Ken, ignoring her wordy addition, "this is whereabouts the Serninsea Cross brooch were found?"

Diana said, "If you listen to those Wickenby nieces, there is no reason to find anything like that here. It would be out of place."

"The bishop talks it up," said Ken.

Diana responded, "The detectorists have never found anything supporting such a find in the marshes. He's out on its own."

"Here is a puzzle," said Ken. "Sutton-on-Serninsea. Sutton means 'South Town', so why is it north of Serninsea?"

"Because it was Sutton-in-the Marshes, originally," I replied.

"I like this," he said, "sat here with two lovely ladies without a stitch on and having a normal conversation."

This was what worried me: a communications loop needed spice. We paused.

Ken asked, "How does Keith your husband respond to all this?"

I replied, "Keith has always understood Dee and me."

She said, "Linda introduced me to this. No one else here knowingly goes to a club."

He said, "Jeremy Symes... Oh."

"Not with us and not now with me," I said.

"Of course. If Dee knows everything, can I ask then if there's a contrast between this happy female-female naturism and yer marriage?"

"Rubbish," said 'Dee', helpfully.

I replied. "Keith is my strength going towards ordination."

Ken then asked, "Do you know about the 'not answering the door' incident, Dee?"

"Yes."

"I sympathise because I really don't think clergywomen should answer the door at night."

"She was tired, that's all. You may as well say Linda and I are the basis for a rocky marriage."

"Why so?" Ken asked.

I wasn't sure where she was heading.

"Well, as a Unitarian Universalist I am in favour of polyamory. So *there*."

This warmed things up. I had not read those three sheets closely enough!

"Are you metrosexual?" Ken asked. I'd no idea what this meant in this context.

Diana said, "We're not active lesbians, reverend. But as a single woman - albeit with *two* children - I will happily take a boyfriend who has a girlfriend and her boyfriend might be mine as well."

Rock on, Diana!

"Are you in a relationship?" he asked her.

"Just because I'd do something doesn't mean I am doing it. And, also, if the other person wants monogamy, then it's respected and that's it. If I put my arm around Linda, it doesn't mean I have a sexual relationship with her."

"Have you ever?" he asked.

I said, "Kenneth. Don't be so nosy! We are just mates. But what she has done, and what I have done, are for your imaginings and our own private lives."

"Our conversation remains confidential," he said.

"I'm pleased to hear it; it's essential," I now said. "But if Bishop John thinks my marriage is in trouble, then he is very wrong."

"Their marriage is solid," said Diana.

"Thank you Dee," I replied. "You've always got on with Keith."

"Known him a very long time. He was with your sister: he must have preferred you."

(Hang on, was she speaking as Dee, or as Diana? I knew the rumour.)

Ken said, "I cannot discuss what we know about Keith. But Dee is fresh to and I must say, Dee, it is disappointing to hear that you are religious in how you describe when you could join our eucharistic community.

"We like you, Ken," 'Dee' said.

"Linda. I must tell you more. I understand Dee has said you were tired, and you have denied that you were with a man. Dee is either misinformed or covering up for you. Sorry, but you *were* seen with a man at a restaurant. It were - was - an Indian restaurant. The man came back to yer 'ouse with you. You both went inside. So you could be having an affair, Linda. Dee, your eyes are looking up to the roof of this gazebo. Are you shocked or frustrated about this?"

"It's none of your lot's fucking business," 'Dee' said. "Yes, she was with a man, and he is a friend. She does have friends, you know. What you forget is that I was in the restaurant as well. I certainly know who the man is. He was discussing SMS business with Linda and me. And did these people who saw Linda also see me go separately to her curate's house?"

"Oh, I don't know anything about this."

Dee then said, "You see, Reverend Ken, Keith Jupitas is in SMS. It is a very sensitive matter for him, with all those check-ups."

"Oh," said Ken. "They'd not finished?"

Actually, I thought that this was rather clever. Surely this would get back to the bishop. Now I could raise the stakes! "Loose ends," I said. "Remember, Ken, everything depends on this meeting being confidential. You have made an oath on this: this meeting comes under the 'seal of the confessional'. I abide by this and so do you."

"Adam Magellan," said Ken. "You entertained Adam Magellan."

Diana tried to follow through: "Yes, one of the town's investigators. He was involved. Check it if... No, you must not."

"I am reminding you, the Reverend Confessor Ken." I asserted.

"Yes," said Ken. "Can I ask, then, why is a wife of an employee still discussing SMS business without knowledge of her husband?"

"Well, have you heard of their Independent Inspection Unit, the one that checks if the checking is robust and uncorrupted?"

"Yes. 'Interdependent', they now call it." (He was clearly well-informed.)

I needed to continue with this. "Well, from time to time wives and others do a job with investigators to test out the robustness of the operation. And they had an annual test, sure, but it went on further into legacies."

"I'm sure Keith and Yojana have finished all that," said Ken.

"Finished what, Ken?" I asked. "You seem to know them well, when he is secular and she is a Hindu."

"Yes, I probably do," he said. "Look, I won't inform Keith or Yojana but what you say cannot be true."

"Why not, Ken?"

"They had finished; there was no legacy. The firm had evaluated everything and completed everything before Adam and you were at the restaurant. It cannot be why you were with Adam Magellan."

"Both of us, I told you," Diana said, as Dee, or as a lying Diana perhaps.

"Would you tell me how there were three of you?" asked Ken.

Diana adjusted her story. "Okay. Linda knew she was being followed, so I was already in the restaurant, Ken, and I didn't come out until later. I got to Linda's and went in round the back. Don't forget: Keith was away that night. I'll tell you what we were discussing. We were discussing SMS involvement, but in how they were following Linda, along with the group that has these badges - like you have a badge, Ken."

I was thinking: he must now tell them they were getting it wrong. It would come back to me, 'corrected'.

Then I stood up and faced Ken directly, fully frontal, hands on hips. "Come on Ken. You wear this badge, and I now know Yojana has this badge, because she compared hers with the Reverend Christine's. And I think the bishop is involved. I worked with SMS, and Adam did his investigating, and now we three - Adam, Dee, me - think SMS are in on this. I know that my husband has been having an affair with Cheryl Mould, as Adam Magellan did discover much earlier, but there is ongoing SMS activity and something also between my husband and Yojana."

I looked at him carefully. This reference to Yojana had worked. He said, "This is getting very uncomfortable for me."

"Oh, do tell," I said.

"This is not SMS but a group called *The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players*."

I sat down. "Seriously?"

"Seriously," he said.

"Is my husband involved?"

"I don't know the ins and outs of all this, but a lot of what you are saying cannot be true."

"Ken, we know that you have a lot more information than you are letting on."

"I think you have tricked me into saying more than I ever intended, or should have yet, via something that wasn't true."

"Ken: I remind you that this conversation - this that is happening now - is

under the seal of the confessional."

"As you've said several times. Look, I'm in an impossible situation here. I hear everything and can say nothing. Can't we change the subject? Because we are all trying to conceal things. In fact, I am beginning to wonder at the point of it all. I'm just in the middle, having to keep my mouth shut."

"Ah," I said. "You're like a go-between. Well, rest assured, Ken, Dee and I are not *Dumb and Dumber*, you know."

"Evidently."

"As I run up to my ordination, something odd is going on, and clearly more is to be revealed. So, there is something you haven't said 'yet'. Is it your job to say it? And when it is said, Ken, I will be ready."

"The seal of the confessional runs both ways," he said.

"Not quite," I said. "Laity are not expected to understand."

"Dee?" he asked.

She said, "Don't panic. We'll keep the conversation to ourselves."

He said, "I'm reassured. Linda, I'd like to speak outside this seal of..."

"No, Ken, you must keep confidences. I'll be ready."

"Then let us change the subject."

'Dee' said, "Okay. New balls... Sorry!"

"Em, can I," asked Ken, "talk to my Baptist friend about your Unitarianism and Paganism, Dee?"

"No," she replied. "I don't want him criticising me."

I thought, that was a shame because it might have generated something interesting. So I said to her, "You *can* take criticism. Let him talk about religion *only* to his mate."

"Really? Oh, go on then," said Diana. "You can tell your Baptist mate that I am one of your out and out heretics. But that's all."

"Thank you," he said. "The bishop is so uninformed," he repeated.

"Not the bishop," said Diana.

I said, "Look, let's really change the subject. The last thing we want is for you to be uncomfortable in our presence. We want you to relax, Ken."

"Yes," Ken said. "Good idea. What topic can we cover?"

"The pastoral letter. The diocese is heading for a crash."

"Oh yes," said Ken. "That pastoral from Bishop Julian is very serious, like. I'm sure he is right to call upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We believe in that Dee, even if you don't - if you don't mind me saying."

"No," Diana replied, looking a bit fidgety. She pulled one leg up to the curved bench; she looked at him look at her and face away again, and she put her leg back down.

I suggested that things could unravel at the very top, upon publication, and Ken seemed worried, saying that there are people who want the report published, and there are others who don't want it published. He referred to the lack of competent management, the waste and the bad administration.

"What about the Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke?" I asked. "Does he want it suppressing or revealing?"

"I don't know," said Ken. "I honestly don't know."

"But he's at the centre, the control room, Ken."

"Please don't," he responded.

I said, "Perhaps he's only at the centre in the, what is it, The Worshipful Company of..."

Diana completed it: "Serninsea Theatrical Players."

"I think I must be moving," said Ken.

At which point, Diana pulled up both her legs, and his eyes did move to look between them. Diana started laughing.

"What are you laughing for?" I asked her.

"Oh what a tangled web we weave," said Diana.

"I know," said Kenneth. "I feel very bad about this. I don't think what is happening is ethical. I really want to be going, ladies."

"Not ethical here?" I asked.

"No. In general. In the Worshipful Company. You will be contacted."

"Oh," I said. "We should have changed the subject properly. What about this Baptist mate of yours? What does he say against these Unitarians?"

"My Baptist colleague told me all about Jonathan Edwards clashing with William Ellery Channing in America. Edwards was a Calvinist and Channing was a Unitarian. Have you heard about them? He preached on them. I hope your liberal approach, Linda, is not influenced by Dee's William Ellery Channing."

"I don't know about... who?" asked Diana, from real ignorance. Her legs were back up.

"I thought every Unitarian would know about William Ellery Channing. According to my friend."

"Well, I don't," said Diana as Dee, looking down at herself and twitching at her pubic hair with her right forefinger.

Ken said, "And, em, oh dear, Sunday you have your sermon on the Trinity itself, Linda. Hope it is orthodox."

"It is Ken, written to preach what the Church teaches."

Suddenly we all lost focus. I notice he was trying to ignore Diana, with her looking at me while playing with her outer pubic lips.

After referring to the the garden and trees he then said, "I need a toilet."

I said, "If it's a piss, water the verges."

"The verger?" asked Diana, sniggering.

I said, "Ken, go out, face away from us, so we won't see anything and piss on the verge over there."

With him gone, I said, "Diana, we need to soup this up a bit. Show him a bit more."

"What do you think I've been doing? He was going to say something."

"I'll ask about his recent woman."

As he came back into the gazebo, now with my left ankle on my right leg, and surely about to say again that he wanted to leave, I said, "Dee, Ken here has been having the pleasure of a new girlfriend."

"That was personal," he said. "But no longer."

I stopped myself from saying she was linked to this group. I wanted him to stay, not go.

It was Diana who said, "Sit down, Ken; you seem to be handling a few issues."

"I'd like to be, er, friendly."

Diana said. "I'm just Linda's mate. You back in the market, Ken?"

"I really must be moving." Ken stood up.

Diana crossed her legs to mirror mine. "This bishop: sounds like he's got a database," she said. "And an ego like some actors perhaps?"

"Sorry Dee," he said. "He might get things wrong but you have him wrong. He is very pastoral, very progressive, in touch with the community, knows its economics, its networks. He's close to the diocesan. I know the top is inefficient. He's at the control booth, directs the... Oh it doesn't matter. It does not matter. I'm fed up with this."

Diana told him, "I was at that attracting business conference." She put her leg down and her forearms over her knees. "He *is* creepy."

"No Dee, no. Does he really give... that impression?"

"Spying on our activities?"

Diana was now rubbing her breasts. Normally it might be one way to make an impression as a naturist when you fancy someone - not as if you can put something on nice and revealing, is it? She was playing a dangerous game, here.

The Reverend Ken then said, "Well, most interesting to have met you both together. Another time too, I hope. Different circumstances, maybe? Shall we go back? I'd like to dress and prepare for my next appointment."

Diana then shocked me, going way off the script. "You go back with him, Linda. I'm going to *masturbate*."

He said, "Excuse me; excuse us. Maybe see you again. Enjoy your, er..."

"Sorry, I'm feeling a bit randy between my legs," Diana said, recklessly in my opinion.

"Come on Ken," I said. "She's a man-eater, that one."

Walking across the garden with him, he was being led by his sexual excitement meter and he kept glancing back until indoors. I stood in the lounge while he dressed. When he looked out he saw her wave.

I emphasised to him again, "She says you *can* talk to your Baptist mate about her religion - and that's all."

"I know. But I can contact Dee?"

"For now, contact her only through me."

He became a clothed clergyman again.

"You have a very wonderful friend," he said. "I'm just so sorry that things are getting conflicted and difficult."

With Patricia's dressing gown on I saw him to the door and he left.

As I went back and dropped the gown, Diana had come into the conservatory and was sat down. She said, "What a creep! I bet he wanks himself off tonight."

"I thought you'd gone off your trolley!"

"I can handle him."

"What if he's a stalker?"

"I bet he's never been in a theatre in his life. He's in a masons-like group, and, Linda, they want you to be in it. That's what it is. *Worshipful Company*, right? Insiders. And what does all this Channing mean? Never heard of him. In fact, I hadn't a clue what I was supposed to be on about. This Baptist chap might tell him I was talking bullshit - for all I know."

"I'm not sure what will loop back," I said. "So they are going to invite me to join. He ought to be able to tell them."

"No, he will keep it to himself. My bet is he is under pressure to report back,

but the visible strain on him says he won't. So I just gave him something to look at. He won't tell them even about that."

"He did give us the group's name."

"Yes, he's jumped the gun - trying to be honest within confidentiality. Therefore he'll say nothing to protect his mistake. You don't need to find this out any more. Secondly, they will approach you anyway. Let them choose their timing. Just be aware."

"We were successful, then."

"Yes. Don't give me that look or shuffle. You are the one person I know capable of anything. I bet Patricia watched while Arthur shagged you. What I did and said is nothing compared with what *you* do. Keith and Lucinda were at it and it bloody well runs in your family."

"Diana. What *is* the matter?"

"I'm not telling *you* any more. I already observe the confessing sealworld." She did some seal-like clapping motions.

"We haven't got a Sealworld," I said. "I think you are starting to fantasise - *Dee.*"

And so we paused. We were even half dozing in the conservatory until an alarm clock went off to remind us to clothe and leave before any inquisitive inhabitants started coming back.

However, Patricia came in just as we were going out..

"Good time with the visitor?" Patricia asked. "Did he get his togs off as well?"

"He did," said Diana. "But he is another creep, like her bishop. And she is scheming and it will bite her on her exposed bottom."

Outside, with Patricia inside and the door closed, I said, "More like he'll bite *your* bottom."

"Ugh."

And so Diana and I went our separate car-journey ways.

Chapter 10 Ordination in Doubt

Narrator: Keith *Two Bishops Meet Keith* (Saturday 15th June)

Bishop John Barman wanted to see me in the Blue Diamond Club in Titansea after lunch. Linda was out; I told him she was with Adam Magellan. Elizabeth and Yojana were somewhere else in the building; he'd seen Elizabeth earlier.

The BDC had a shared ownership between Terry Barman and Sanjay Bunker; the Red Diamond Club or RDC in Felixstowe was a shared ownership between Jonathan Eyre and Sanjay Bunker. Christine Vine wanted in on both, but so far her offers had been rejected. Sanjay Bunker wanted a Green Diamond Club or GDC to open in Hartlepool, but the council didn't think it was the sort of place wanted in Hartlepool's rejuvenation, and Elizabeth had suggested that Middlesbrough was more desperate and willing. Jonathan wanted to establish the Pink Diamond Club in Margate, Brighton or Worthing, but could not decide where.

I had a simple meal at the BDC with Terry Barman while a naked woman and a naked man gyrated in rehearsal alongside on stage for a show.

The bishop said that Linda, her friend and Ken Osis had all been viewed starkers in Patricia Rhymes' garden thanks to powerful binoculars used by George Wickenby or hired associates. Terry knew that Linda had now seen Ken twice recently. This morning Ken Osis refused to tell the bishop what had been said in the gazebo. Nevertheless Terry Barman said he sounded conflicted and unhappy.

I said I couldn't think why Diana de Groot might be introduced to Ken. The only equivalent male naturist in the area was Jeremy Symes, and he had his own problems. Linda and Diana might well have been up to something, but Linda was not going to tell me.

The bishop said he was minded to introduce a Clergy Discipline Measure to Jeremy Symes, should his wife expose his affair, but he wasn't going to do the same to Linda.

The bishop also knew that Linda had been seen looking out of Adam Magellan's upstairs window at Upper Road. She was engaged in conversation with Mrs. Gertrude Carter (I knew her) at the time, who was on the street below. He had received this information second hand.

I said that there was no doubt about it that Linda was screwing Adam Magellan. Terry Barman considered that he might use the information, but he'd had his fingers burnt recently over incorrect information that then gives the game away.

The two on stage stopped dancing. Then Elizabeth and Yojana came through, and Yojana got on the stage to do a striptease dance for the three of us. The music was suddenly loud and prevented conversation. Yojana ended her dance with a masturbatory element, but Elizabeth gestured her to join us, and so the music stopped as we clapped her effort and Yojana came across and sat naked next to Liz, receiving her kiss.

Resuming my conversation, I said that Linda and I were being civilised but she wanted her freedom, as with seeing Adam.

"Seeing Magellan is one experience," said Terry Barman, "but her freedom is to be submitted to the Confraternity under our bishops' direction."

Liz said, "She is a clergywoman and has made ordination vows of obedience. Well, we've been in touch with Jonathan and have decided it is time to intensify our move on Linda. We still have to retain the group's secrecy."

The key moment was her priesting, after which she could not refuse to be recruited. She would then be the arm of the bishop, according to Catholic theory, and must follow the demands of Vanguard Confraternity bishops.

I said that there was a possible purchase on her given Colin Cromer's particular dislike for Adam Magellan. About six years back or so this Rumanian woman had presented herself to the church choir that still functioned then, getting close to Colin, but after doing some SMS business she ended up marrying Adam Magellan. It was a marriage mainly for her convenience, but it upset Colin Cromer. I added that I remembered the choir and her arrival; I did not realise until they'd left the area that her daughter worked on the Youells' farm next to the Bodes'; Yootha Ann did not go to the church.

And then, what should happen but Colin Cromer himself contacted John Barman by his mobile phone! One of the congregation had suffered a fall, outside Adam Magellan's place of all places, and she was inside our mini-hospital waiting for tests (a clinic with some beds). The fall could be more serious than it appeared and they might subject her to mental tests. It was normally his day off, and Linda's too, and Linda had her mobile phone off. Did the bishop know of any available clergy? Colin Cromer was asking.

I said, quietly, "Tell Colin. Tell him who she's with."

"I happen to know something that might annoy you," said Bishop Terry. "The Reverend Linda is having a day out with Adam Magellan, and it is a social day out. Her husband is concerned. I am considering whether she should in fact be ordained priest."

I could hear much of the reaction. It was on the lines that she was out of control. Colin Cromer said that she has so much to learn, and simply did not seem to be doing it. He even said, and I was amazed to overhear that it was, "a pity her husband had not been ordained," because I'd have known my priorities.

Liz said, afterwards, "We can put that right if you reapply."

"Would be difficult in Harwich," I said. "I do want to join Cheryl."

Terry said there was no mistake over training Linda. Her sexual talents were required.

I told them that Linda did not want me to go to Wales, where she would visit her family directly before her retreat and ordination. Indeed, I did not want to go either as I had never liked her parents and they had never liked me.

Yojana commented that my family had been respectable.

"They were but my mother was odd, in private. Into my teens she would tell me to wash my nether regions and often made sure herself that they were washed. She used to say that dogs could smell urine and I should not sit in respectable company with dogs sniffing at my crotch." Only by the sixth form, I said, had my mother stopped interfering with my sweaty areas at the top of my legs.

I thought that Linda might steal Lucinda's new Welsh husband; after all, throughout their lives, they used to take what the other had enjoyed. Indeed, Lucinda accused Linda of stealing me. That wasn't true, as such.

Terry wondered if I could go there and wander off with Lucinda again and create more rivalry. The more Linda was unsteady, the better for her flexibility.

"Fraid not."

This bishop himself mentioned prohibitive expense if Wickenby observed the farm. I said it was a remote farm, up a long private road, with security CCTV. But unless Linda did 'steal' Dyfed, Lucinda's husband, there'd be nothing to observe.

Liz agreed. His efforts ought to concentrate on the retreat. What did he have planned?

Terry said that the ordinands get paired off, so he would pair her with Christine. There were interviews front and back; Terry might try and disturb Linda further there but, obviously, did not want heightened doubts to threaten her ordination. Also, for afterwards, he'd been in touch with Gretta Cox-Jenkins to test out Linda, prior to us moving in on her: he'd given Gretta a profile of naturist Linda that she could use. Gretta might start something of a Confraternity in Canada, he thought, except her position was complicated: she had been a bishop in the Independent 'wandering bishop' sense. British law and Church law now prevented people saying that these were pretend bishops.

Terry Barman was, however, concerned about Christine pushing her sacrifice and service theology on to Linda. The new bishops were attracted by pleasure, and so should Linda.

Liz thought Christine was bishop material, evident by her thinking influence, and thought that pleasure and pain weren't so far apart.

I pointed out that I would end up as one of the SMS visitors to above the casino, coming from the south, so with less to contribute.

I said Linda was gaining knowledge about the group, and of course Magellan was likely to get interested.

Liz said that we had to move forward. Christine had deliberately shown her variant badge and Yojana revealed hers. Ken might have introduced the cover name of the group. Everyone had to communicate with discretion.

Before we parted I gave the three a kind of speech. "I've never loved her, you know. I say I have, but now she has found out about Cheryl, I don't think I ever did. She was a good and willing shag at university, and a support, and I've supported her back and respected her privacy. It was just my inability to make a future that kept me with her and then the prospect of ordination. I was successfully tempted by her sister again, but she's repulsive. I had sex with Linda's friend Diana, and nearly with Patricia Rhymes. When I was not ordained, and she was, that was always going to be the end. I'll just stay in the curate's house for my convenience, but I can move away even if in Serninsea. I don't care what she does with Adam Magellan. I view him with contempt. The thing is, the orgasm indicates the divine spark, and I want as many of them with as many women as I can. And I do fancy Cheryl like a comfort blanket, so long as she doesn't become irritating."

Liz asked me to stay with Linda at least to ordination, and Terry said until they could trap her and give her no options, and have her working inside the group. I would not be asked to mentor her. Stephen McPhail was likely to have that task and Terry would initiate her.

On more general matters Terry said that The National Church Report into the Managerial Efficiency of the Diocese of Wytham might result in the fall of the diocesan bishop and he'd like to work himself into that position. He'd need to be a step in front of his suffragan colleague, Julian Worsley.

Yojana said Middlesbrough and Wales had been very good, but their shared

'strap on' relationship wasn't sufficient to tempt her to transfer to SMS in Hartlepool.

I said, "They may ask you to move to South Wales."

Liz said she stayed with Yojana last night but had to travel back to Middlesbrough today to do her Sunday diocesan duties. With that, I left them for my private gathering with two friends.

A Park, a Garden and the Hospital (Saturday 15th June)

I'd already sent Adam a message that this masons-like group (Diana) was apparently called *The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players*. Adam had replied that he would be free Saturday, this being my half-weekend off. (Monday off made up for working on Sunday.)

Adam, alone in the building, came downstairs. "Okay, I could do with a break for my birthday, so no more on the religious nutters."

"I've not brought you anything."

"You've brought you!"

"Aw, that's nice Adam."

"Ann approves of you."

On the front door step he said that Ann and Labhaoise had bought the empty next door property (the northern one with a double garage attached) quite some time back, and had presented the news as a surprise for his birthday. They had acquired a change to business service use (but allowing accommodation). So he signed today with Ann to merge the properties. His business would still have to buy it.

"Not exactly a birthday gift, then."

We went out from the town in my vehicle.

"So where we going?" he asked me, as I drove more or less south out of town.

"Somewhere local: Caffen Park, and not the car park but the B road just about where the woods are. There's a pull-in there, and not a lot use it, so there should be a space."

"Opening more of the Caffen Line is good, using the extra grant," he said. "The workfare lot and others will be down there finishing off. It needed a brand new link line - single track from the branch to the fragment of mainline. It's a fascinating project."

"Yes, but I'd rather not look at that today. Just sit where we can look, eat, and chat. And then we can go back to my place or yours. I could give you a birthday treat."

The B road went from Upper Park near Serninsea to the edge of Caffen Park, and we turned left, past a car park, and right. Where we stopped in a little indent off the road we looked east, with a wood behind us and the view back towards Serninsea and the coast in front.

"Dogging," he said. "Behind that wall and beyond."

"Not here, I don't think. The favourite haunt is Carr Wood," I suggested.

"Ah, it goes on in several places," he said. "I should know. I've viewed people."

"I didn't know you were a voyeur."

"It's called investigating. The people who avoid their wives, that sort of thing, or wives who drive to have some husband-free fun."

"You're the expert. Anyway, it is lunch-time so I brought these sandwiches."

"Aha. So we are not getting out of the car. We're not going down into the woods today, where you can be sure of a big surprise. What have you been doing *lately*?" he asked me, as if I was some sort of stranger.

"Most recently reading and writing about the Trinity," I said. "I want some of it to be extempore. Tomorrow we celebrate what few understand, and I'm not sure I do either."

"I bet that will be riveting."

"I fear it will be bogged down. I lack communication skills."

"Right, a little bit of insight - even training - for you around messaging."

"Sounds relevant."

"There's a wall around this parking spot. What does your phone say about the grid reference?"

I looked. "It's TF 493 797."

He said, "Do us a favour, as it is you. So in my pocket is a tin, and in this tin - hang on - is a piece of yellow chalk."

"You've got white as well in there."

"Take the yellow one. It's a very old method, this, as I can't use electronics in this case. In my other pocket is a little plastic pouch where you can see some paper content inside for a friend. Here we are. If you can find a gap in that wall where you can push it in out of sight, push it in, and make a vertical chalk line very close by. If it won't go in anywhere, bring it back."

I went out with the items and looked, and there was actually a missing part of stone and mortar. In went the pouch. I made the yellow chalk mark.

"How does the person know where to go?" I asked, having got back behind the wheel.

"Because the message I'm writing now is a coded grid reference for finding the message itself, the first six words of which reveal the number grid reference and the next one or two letters are usually TF or, rarely, SK. So, hang on..." He was writing. "I've put: *Food Nine then send night selection to feed*. The fact that nine is Nine helps not hinders. I want this to be understood, so I won't ask Labhaoise to translate it into Irish Gaelic, which I do before coding for really secure messages."

"Here's your yellow chalk back, chuck. Er... What's the future, Adam? That's what I want to talk about. When Keith leaves me, for Harwich: well there's still your Rumanian wife. I'm divorcing."

"Is this some sort of proposal? By the way, she and Yootha became British."

"Only I'd like us to be more close, more together, more of a mutual comfort, even if it is looser, more unconventional and under the radar."

I wasn't sure why I wanted to partner up so quickly. The advantage was convenience: that I knew him already and I liked to have someone on tap.

"This view is boring," he said. "I know where to go for a view that might be more interesting."

"I'll drive there then," I said, "once we've eaten these."

"Well, no, I've three sarnies left so let's have them there. You've three left as well."

"Eat them here!"

"Are we arguing already?"

"No." So I drove off. He directed me south, until I took us into Caffenmere village itself. I turned left into the B road at the shops area, over the main road, and then right at a minor road to pause after all at the opening tram stop on the line extension.

"The Caffen Line, it is being called, throughout," he said. "Naming it all after these posher parts. Drive on *Bode*."

"Huh," I muttered. So we proceeded further down this road, and at a junction he told me to turn right, so that we were facing north east. And we were close to a hedge and a gap of a gate, over which in the fair distance was the back of a large house. So this was its large garden of lawns and clumps of trees. You could have put a garden party and tennis courts in it.

"Do you know what that is?" he asked me.

"Nope. A big house at Caffenmere. Edge of Caffenmere."

"This is the residence of a certain Bishop John Terence Barman, who suggested successfully that they call the new tramline the Caffen Line. The obvious name was Ingle Line."

"Or Serninsea Line or the Sernin Line," I said.

"Well yes, but they wanted a distinctive name."

"Sernin *is* distinctive. How many places in England are named after a Toulouse bishop, for goodness sake? Adam, what are we doing at the Bishop of Bolingbroke's back gate, me with you, when he has had people spying on me when I was going out with you?"

"Sandwiches now. Keep your eyes open. If you see a bloke as tall as you coming up his back garden, so to speak, then we'll scarper."

"Was that a euphemism, Adam?"

"Get your baps out then."

"That doesn't work either. They're sliced."

"Have you got any milk to drink?"

"Not if you mean in my baps."

"Not having had any children."

"They're redundant except for sexual thrills, Adam. Fancy living in that bloody thing. I bet he has loads of parties and receptions, and dodgy goings on in there."

"Never had the pleasure to investigate," Adam said. "I read the other day that some women can teach their bodies to express milk without having had any children."

"I've had enough of tailoring my body to meet male requirements. By the way, Diana thinks he and they are running a kind of masonic outfit. It must be for mutual advantage or something. Christine has a badge different from all the others I've seen. So there must be other branches."

We sat there, eating and looking at the bishop's garden.

All of a sudden I had to say, "Oh Adam, put it away! Do you not know where we are? Adam! This is a public road!"

He said, "I'm trying to prevent needing a piss. If I don't do this, I need a piss."

"Adam!"

"All right, I'm getting out to find a place to pee."

"Didn't you go before you came out? I have to have a dump before coming out."

"I referred to my bladder, not bowels."

"I can pee without shitting, Adam, though I can't shit without peeing. It's so easy for men."

"You're such a model of femininity, reverend," he said.

He got out (todger returned under cover) and wandered around. Oh no, he went through the gateway and behind the hedge of the garden boundary.

I let the window down and called out, "Adam! Adam! That's private property! And not only private, but it's my effing bishop's!"

The sound of him going now did nothing for my resistance. How does this happen? One minute you're perfectly content, and next minute you suddenly need to go. Now I was looking around. No access behind anywhere to anything useful, except through this gate left open.

Out I got, and he was finishing as I joined him. "Bastard!" I said to him.

"What - have you come for something?"

"Yes, the same thing." Down my trousers came, but, oh, how could I do this keeping them dry? "Hang on to me," I told him. So his arms went under my arms to hold me, allowing me to stick my bottom forward and just piss. And this was some jet I did, into the bishop's hedge.

He said, "Someone's coming."

"What?"

"Oh no. It's a tree in the distance."

"You fucking bastard!"

"Your parents should wash your mouth out. Oh no, they wouldn't."

"Good job I don't need a shit," I said.

"You've no knickers. Again."

"No. Come on, let's get out of here, and let's drive away."

So we got into the car, and I did drive off.

"You've never been into the bishop's?" he asked.

"No, actually. And I hadn't seen his place from the rear."

"That's a relief," he said. "Seeing his place from his arsehole."

"Let's go to the coast," I said. "It's not so far away."

Funny how often after a pee the first thing you do is drink. I had some peach flavoured water in my door pocket, so we shared it. The best way to go was to Caffemere, along the A road to Ingle Park, then down the B road to Inglemire and then well south past the area of Ingle Under Drain to come up the coastal road among the dunes. Parking, we walked past Ingle Barrow to gain access on to the dunes over the hump on to the sand. And this is where we sat, viewing the sea and a few people and the odd dog being walked. Houses for the well-off (like the McPhails) were a little way north.

"Stay overnight tonight?" I asked.

"Is he in Harwich?"

"No. I want to make a point. You are my partner now."

"I can't do that! Anyway, it's something to discuss."

"He openly sees Cheryl. We can use the second bedroom."

"Last time I saw him it could have come to blows."

"I *want* it to come to blows," I said, "But only inside a bed with you."

"You are filthy, Linda."

"Look, he and I made an agreement. He stays around as if with me until even

after the ordination. It's you and me for the future, Adam."

"Are we?"

"Why not?"

"You made that Mary Ann respectable, so why can't you make me respectable - in public?"

"Because I'm still married. I'm not a respectability service."

"you were once. I really fancy getting all my things off. I don't care Adam, though I do hope that the bishop didn't have some back gate security camera hidden somewhere."

"Otherwise he has a nice video of you pissing while I hold on to you."

"Oh, I'd do a theology of *that*," I said.

"No idea what you are on about," he responded. "

"The theology of Georges Bataille?"

"Never heard of him. I've heard of *Nora Batty*. Keep your clothes on - there are people about."

"French. A bit unusual, 'The eye', as in the seeing thing, 'and I', as in me, and rather a lot on body fluids and excreting, spherical and near objects inserted in vaginas that are a bit squishy. I mean, if you'd *fancied* a boiled egg I could have kept it warm."

"Oh lovely," he said. "Theology? I might come to *that* sermon - not. Peter would go. Linda: we don't match, really, but we kind of get on. I grant that you are also curious: investigating this badge-wearing bunch. But really were are both misfits. A shared memory, too."

"Perhaps, like Nietzsche, I should thrust out alone."

"Well, that *was* quick, you and me."

"I tried to introduce Nietzsche's *Ubermensch*, without naming him, back in Lent. I got told off then."

"Taxi driver, was he?"

And with my blank look he stared towards the sea with nothing more said. So I unzipped him and carried on doing what he'd started before.

"Keep your clothes on," he said again.

With some distant people gone, I added a bit of mouth cover for extra effect. It had the intended effect. "All right now?" I asked him, finding a tissue in my pocket to wipe the blobs on exposed flesh.

"Fancy fish and chips?" he asked. "Those sarnies were fuck all. Sorry, but they were."

We walked back. I said, "Come on, be brave. I'll get three fish and chips but you stay with me overnight. Or we *could* stay at yours."

"You don't want to stay overnight in my bed. It's a bit grotty."

So it was into Titansea and heading towards a good fish and chip shop. However, on the way, Adam switched on my mobile phone and found that I had received a text, and it was from Colin Cromer. It was very unusual for Colin to text anything. So Adam read it.

Gertrude Carter admitted to clinic hospital after fall in street. Having tests. Know it is weekend but can you visit?

I diverted to the small hospital and clinic in Serninsea. She was alone in one

of the four small wards (two beds per ward). I reckoned that it didn't matter if Adam came in with me, and he knew of this long-term resident in town. But when we arrived, and came around the corner, Colin was with Mrs. Carter. This meant that Adam had shown his face.

"Everyone," I said. "This is Adam Magellan." I said to Adam, for cover, "I'll take you to my friend's when the visit is over."

"I can go," he said, more nervously than I'd expect. (I should have been the nervous one.) "But thank you for your assistance so far."

"Wait! I won't be long."

Mrs Carter said, "Hello Reverend Linda; hello Adam; I've been a bit unlucky. How are Mrs. Dromeghda and Mrs. Vlahos?"

"Fine, thank you."

Colin said, "Gertrude here was walking along into Upper Road around from the promenade and you fell on the pavement - one of those slabs sticking up. Near your business."

"Sue them," said Adam.

"Gertrude was brought into our little A and E and they think there could be more to investigate. Look, I'll go for an hour," said Colin to me, "and then I can come back, hopefully. No, don't you come with me." With that, Colin left.

"Did you see what I did?" asked Mrs. Carter.

"Yes," said Adam.

"What did you do, Gert?" I asked her.

"I asked about Ann and Labhaoise, and not about... Oh, does she know?"

"Yes, Linda knows," Adam said.

"And not about Mary Ann. Colin was very close to Mary Ann and then Adam married her. I'm afraid she took fright at being a clergyman's wife."

"I can quite understand it," I said, and then wondered why I'd said it.

Gert Carter said, "She was seen as 'foreign'. People are unkind. You must have been kind," she said to Adam.

Or disinterested, I thought.

He replied, "She and Yootha Ann wanted to live in this country - goodness knows why. Marrying her helped her feel more secure. You know *all* about this, don't you Gertrude?"

"Yes, young man. Her daughter found no one locally. She still left our area because marrying you made her situation worse among the gossips."

He said, "Less messing about for her now we're leaving the EU."

I asked her, "Are you walking all right?"

"I'm not unsteady on my feet," she replied, "and not in my head either. That pavement," said Mrs. Carter. "Do you remember, curate? You were leaning out of that upstairs window talking to me. That's where I tripped. Today. I looked up again and went over. When we chatted, reverend, I could see you moving. I'm not losing my marbles and I won't tell."

I said, "We were going to get some fish and chips but came here directly."

So what happened is that we sat with Mrs. Carter for some time, including seeing a doctor who came with x-ray results.

The doctor said, "It's a lot better than we feared. It looks black and it will be black down your upper left leg, but you are very lucky. You must have good bones. You're in good working order."

"Yes, doctor. I was telling the happy couple."

I said, "Mrs Carter lives alone..."

"The other minister has already contacted a relative to come over to Serninsea."

"Oh good," I said.

Doctors never stay long. She was off in a flash.

And indeed this woman relative arrived, over from Wytham, introduced as Gabrielle Edwards, who said we could go if we wanted, and she would stay until Colin Cromer returned, due then in about ten minutes.

Mrs Carter said, "Thank you for coming, Gabrielle. This our curate and it looks like she is entertaining a new partner."

I said, "No, Mrs. Carter, I am still married. Adam is a friend."

"Push and pull the other one," said Gert. "Last time I saw Keith in church, you two were distant."

"I'd like to say you are very perceptive, Mrs. Carter, but I think this time you are reading more into this than is the case. I'll no doubt see you very soon. Come on Adam. Bye, Mrs. Edwards."

Out in the corridor Adam started laughing.

I said, "Hey shit face, she knew you were humping me. And that fucking weirdo woman with the dog: she too must have known you were humping me."

"My female neighbour? Is she weird? Ah, the Reverend Cromer," Adam said.

Colin had been coming along the corridor.

"Her cousin has arrived," I said.

Colin said, "Share the same great grandparents, lost in time. I'll just say a quick hello then."

So Adam and I got into my car, me paying a hefty parking fee (I put it on my expenses), and then we went for the fish and chips - three portions.

"Colin is going to read me the riot act," I said to Adam. "You are coming to my place because I am not going to take his shit for nothing."

"He hates my guts."

Along the way with the grub, Adam said to me. "See that bus stop there. There is a fence behind it. If you stop here, I will get out and put my little reference message behind it. See, I have the chalk and I have a drawing pin in my little box. The chalk will say I've left it. The pin is for picking up something left for me. Let me out here, drive up and park, and I'll get back in further up."

So I paused, while looking. These are the days of CCTV! Does this method work these days? Then I drove two hundred yards or so further up. It meant he walked in a straight line.

"That's a camera," I said.

"Behind me. I didn't need to turn around."

"You've received a message?"

"Yes. And I left the grid reference in the form I wrote it. So there's a pin in and a chalk mark. The message is in the package you left at the grid reference, in that wall."

"What does your message there say?"

"The client is ready to meet me."

"And what will the client find back at the wall?"

"Actually, where to meet me, when, and how to travel."

"Adam. This is a crap system. You're on CCTV, and anyone could work that grid reference out."

"Peter has said similar. Let's go and eat these fish and chips."

"And then I am going to fuck your brains out."

Narrator: Keith Visit to Helen and Stephen (Saturday 15th June)

I received an invitation to visit Stephen and Helen McPhail down at Ingle Barrow.

"It's all going very well, from my perspective, with Cheryl, Yojana and Linda. You're likely to mentor Linda," I told Stephen, who smiled.

Helen said, "We don't think everything has to be under the Confraternity. We two fancied using some of your expertise. But first, come to our playroom."

The lighting had been altered, Stephen demonstrated, but also he had a new contraption he had made in the forge and a woodwork room. It was a double A frame device, where an A at each end in metal-supported oak held a high pole and lower polls between them with attached chains and a central plank that could move up and down.

Helen stripped off and did a demonstration, with Stephen using velcro attached wrist cuffs attached to chains to raise her arms and then attaching velcro ankle cuffs to widen Helen's legs. He used a winder to raise the plank to apply pressure to her vulva. The person could be pushed long the plank, with a burning sensation, to be whipped or anything else.

"It can be used to give pleasure or apply discipline," Stephen said.

She said, "With the velcro cuffs you're totally powerless."

I said they didn't need my expertise here.

"Not this," said Helen, having her wrists and ankles released. "Linda can take a penis right down her throat but I can't, and you altered her anus. And seeing as you are here, Stevie can lie on that chaise longue and fuck my vag, and you can press down into my arse.

"She doesn't get many chances, even at Worshipful Company events, to have two males at once."

So there was I really forcing my rod the wrong way through her sphincter and down her tube and feeling, through a thin membrane, another man's penis on mine. We tried to alternate the in-out for Helen's pleasure.

Helen actually enjoying this movement (many wouldn't) asked me to tell when I first approached Linda's throat.

"Obviously, I remember it well. It was 9th November 1997. Deng Xiaoping had died, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu went heavenward, Diana Windsor was dead, Isaiah Berlin had departed somehow; er, Tony Blair was vertical and kicking politics, Yeltsin was barely vertical, Clinton had a part of him nearly vertical. Aqua's annoying Barbie Girl was number 1." With that, I shoved hard.

"Crumbs," said Stephen. "Barbie Girl was number 1."

"I remember these only because of Linda. I had a gift-wrapped cloth bag of items, but I only revealed each item as needed."

Not sure I liked feeling his manhood below mine.

"I said to her that everyone has a pharyngeal reflex or laryngeal spasm, and

this prevents the penis going too far into the mouth. But with training, this could be overcome. There was also another sphincter or valve in the anus, and with training again her anus could be an alternative vagina."

"Like now," said Helen.

"No. I've just pushed it in, no more. Her anus is wide and responsive.

"I first investigated her gag reflex, using my finger. So she 'opened wide', as my mother also put it, and my finger went in slowly and then she jerked back."

First thing was for Linda to take deep breaths as my finger went in.

Stephen said, "Let him repeat it on you."

So we three disconnected and naked Helen sat on the chaise longue with her mouth open. I started moving my finger in and out of her throat, and she should keep breathing.

She did gag and choke, and coughed stuff up. Nevertheless, I was keen to replace my finger with my penis, despite it having been in her bottom. She coughed up saliva, but this and phlegm or mucus was good for lubrication. As I tried this out, she was in fact slightly sick (as Linda had been).

"I did get her to lie on her back."

Helen's head was also over the edge. As with Linda I could get to her throat in a straight line from her mouth. Helen produced a lot more saliva, as I went in and out very slowly.

As with Linda, I asked Helen to inhale as I slid out, and exhale through her nose as I went in. Then I also suggested the precise opposite! I said to Helen as to Linda that it was about gaining control.

"One of my presents was a long vibrator. Trying to humm like it does takes it in further. Singing is another option."

I said the aim is for Stephen or anyone to ejaculate down Helen's throat without a second thought.

"I also gave Linda a silicon based lube, a shorter vibrator especially for prostate and perineum stimulation, and a bar speculum.

"Now if we move forward to Friday 2nd September 2016, things are very different. It was the day Linda began at Bishop Querceto Theological College. I helped her move in."

"Number one was the otherwise forgettable Closer by The Chainsmokers, I think, and Muhammad Ali had died in June not long before the UK voted to leave the EU.

"I was able to fuck her in the mouth without her producing any excess spittle and with no threat of throwing up. I remember we fucked to a CD from 1979 of Led Zeppelin's *In Through The Out Door*.

"Linda did, however, have to be careful with her food and not letting sperm go down into her lungs. She was also just beginning to have toilet difficulties.

"So there is a down side?" Helen asked.

"When her arse had become so flexible, yes."

At that time John Barman and Elizabeth Huett together had their revelation, shared with Jonathan Eyre, and intellectualised by Christine Vine. Christine was beginning non-residential training."

"I learnt about women producing prostate specific antigen and prostatic acid phosphatase with small amounts of creatinine and urea. When back in Serninsea I came to regard these liquids as divine signs because the Skene's glands are God's

glands.

Helen said I'd achieved a great deal with Linda and, masturbating Stephen and me, wondered how we had met originally.

"I'd been to a lecture, Thursday October 8th, 1998, Saint Keyne's Day. I stopped this tall first year student with long blonde hair, because I was sure I'd seen her before. However, I dragged up the name 'Lucy' whilst seeking for a longer name.

"I was told instead that Lucinda was this girl's year-older sister. She hadn't gone to university. She preferred the agricultural life after sixth form.

"I admitted to Linda that Religious Studies and Applied Mathematics was an odd combination. One of her A levels was a largely descriptive and diagrammatic Economics but at university she avoided the mathematics in Economics alone. Instead she started broader Social Sciences. Responding positively to religious issues in A levels Philosophy and History, she thought she'd try Religious Studies. Thus she was a year behind me and thought I could help her."

Stephen said, "Explains a lot."

"I suggested that she could apply her Religious Studies by accompanying me that very evening to the Chaplaincy.

"She told me that she wasn't really Christian but added, 'I could come for a sneek.'

"And so in the evening she came and got bored listening to middle class students speak respectfully to each other. On Sunday 11th she tried the Anglican Eucharist, sitting out regarding the core ritual.

"Free of my family's criticism of her family, I couldn't exactly turn down the prospect of seeing the slightly younger, similar one, in the buff.

"It meant nothing to me that stripping off had to be mutual. This was in my student flat that Sunday evening: first view of her fabulous tits and hairless fanny. I said to myself, in the bathroom, 'Gimme somma that!'

"I realised that I was her reference point for home and so it was important that we met more often and naked. So by November 9th I knew I'd want to change her body and we started having sex.

"Just to say that the Legend of Saint Keyne, located at a well in St. Keyne, Cornwall, is that whoever drinks from the well will gain the upper hand in marriage. I drank that water in 1995 on a family holiday, as did my parents. In 2018 my mother and father separated and both left town for Norwich and Thetford respectively."

History told, there was another hour in the playroom of two males and one female.

Adam Stays Overnight (Saturday 15th June)

Adam was behind me. Keith was home and in the front room, the door open. Hello Keith. What did you do today?"

"Just went into Titansea. Back fifteen minutes ago."

"Tea tonight is fish and chips. And there's three of us. If you like, we can leave you in peace because, just as you now go and see Cheryl, he's staying."

"I'll eat these on my lap here. Microwave them a minute and bring them on a plate."

"You and me to the kitchen?" I asked Adam.

This is where Adam and I went. "I'm going to strip off. I don't want grease on my clothing. Join me?"

"No, not with him here."

"Put the heating up there to 22 will you? I'll microwave his first, back up to hot."

Stripped off with my clothes taken to the larger lounge, on the leather-effect sofa, I returned to the kitchen to get Keith's out of the microwave and add Adam's, to then take Keith his food on a plate plus vinegar and salt to the front room.

"Thanks." He shook the vinegar bottle for effect, and gave it back.

Back in the kitchen, with Adam's food released from the microwave, and mine put in, I said, "Come on, get them off. He's seen it all before."

"He's not."

"Adam! I don't care what he says or does any more."

Adam gave in to my severe stare and his clothes went on the floor. When my husband came into the kitchen with his emptied plate, with Adam picking up his clothes and using them as a shield, Keith asked, "Do we all join in?"

"Up to you," I said. "I'll bring you a cup of tea when we're done."

"I noticed the radiators are busy. Okay." He took his stuff off, in front of us, but dumped his clothes in the larger lounge, like mine, and returned to the smaller lounge.

Adam said, "And we all thought your parents were weird."

I put the kettle on and we ate our fish and chips. Without washing up, I made the tea and took some to Keith. I poured our tea and sat opposite Adam at the table to stare at him some more, but with a smile this time. I got up, to put our plates to the sink and ran my hands down his greasy plate.

"Beats washing up," Adam said.

I took a swig of tea and then said, "Swing round on your seat. Open your legs a bit, Adam. I'll do you 'Church and Steeple' again."

"Here we go," he said.

I got a rhythm going; I let him emerge through the gap between my fingers and thumbs, and to extend the stroke the pressure between my hands was maintained all the time.

He said, cleverly, "Hands together, church and steeple, look inside to see no people, just one growing cock again that should be on the weathervane."

"A bit of architectural ecclesiology for you."

"Never heard it called architectural ecclesiology before," he said. "I don't think this cock can crow three times," he added, "unlike when I was a teenager."

"Ah, well, we can hope for miracles."

I went back around the table and did the washing up while Adam sat there looking at my bare arse, which I wiggled at him from time to time, whilst humming.

I went to Keith, who'd finished his tea drink. So, taking his mug, I told him, "We're having an early night. We'll use the second bedroom."

"No," he said. "I'll go in there. I might make the second bedroom mine until I go, unless you want in between Adam fucks."

"I'm hoping that we can stay civilised."

"I might need an extension, and you may need to grant me that extension."

"Why?"

"Happily married?"

"Once I get ordained they can't unordain me. So we have our agreement. If you want to negotiate an extension, present your case. But not now. I'm busy with him."

"But, regarding this agreement, can't you wait until you're ordained before bringing him back here?"

"No. And he'll be coming again. I'm striking while the iron is hot. You and I are finished, Keith; we start the fastest divorce ever the very next day after I'm ordained. There you go."

"Yep. Shame but yep."

"Good. We agree."

I collected Adam from the kitchen. "We'll use my bedroom. He's going in the other one."

"I need the bathroom," he said.

I said I did too, and followed him in. "I'll hold that for you."

"What?"

"I said I'll hold that for you."

"Why?"

"Because I don't want you peeing on the floor."

"I'm not going to pee on the floor."

"Just let me hold it, and start peeing. Adam! Do as I want, Adam."

I got my way. I stood alongside, held and directed as his pee came out at an angle and missed the water, until I adjusted it.

I said, "I'll shake it when you're done." I also applied some tissue paper.

I flushed the loo, and sat upon it.

"What are you doing? Oh no: you're taking a dump."

"Adam, stop being a wimp. Learn to be intimate and know me. Put your hands on my shoulders. Adam, come on, help me by putting your hands on my shoulders."

What Adam didn't realise was that I once did these things with Keith. After six months with him and for nearly two years he often supervised me when I took a dump. And here Adam complied. His hands were on my shoulders as I evacuated my bowels.

I did, though, let him escape and wiped my own arse. I entered the bedroom, after washing my hands.

"You did this with him? I am not him."

"No, you are not. Because at times he used to wipe my arse. He often washed my arse, he stretched my arse... He entered my arse. I was in love, I thought."

"I am not a substitute for him."

"Adam, I don't want him any more but understand my issues. Now then, we've had fish and chips, and I did have greasy hands, if no longer, but let's try again the 'batter him up' method. I'll go under and over your testicles and then using a rising and falling hand grip to come down again, over and under. All right about that?"

"Yes." He asked me, "Do you ever remember a commentator of rugby league called Eddie Waring?"

"Up and under? This is up and over."

This carried on until another warming up method was tried: "Time for the fruit basket now." This involved use of my cleavage and my breasts as the fruit basket.

Beyond the masturbation manual I got on top of him so that he could view me during bumping and grinding, breasts moving and hair falling. It allowed him to play with my small nipples. I was perspiring (odourless) through effort.

Nevertheless, I know he was keen to get as much penetration as possible, so I got off the bed and touched my toes. I gave him the choice, but he still took the shallow route. He put in some effort and started to sweat himself (with me smelling this). Then I felt him licking my bottom, which was progress, and he sucked on my right buttock and finally bit it, right where I sit too.

"Don't bite! Suck, but don't bite," I said. "My skin is sensitive."

The best was back on the bed side by side, because that allowed a much more intimate one to one spooning, of the body and person. And we had plenty of time.

As he'd sucked on my arse cheek, he now sucked on my neck intensely. I said, "Oy, I told you that my skin is very sensitive. It has to stay smooth and undefiled."

I always prefer it when a chap can finish on the job within the premises. His seed was thrust into my inner purse; many a chap does like the visual of it running out, even if the animal in him might wish it to stay in.

He said, "I'm surprised I managed that with Keith in the house."

"You've done very well."

We fell asleep, and we had a long time in bed.

Until... My telephone rang, and I disentangled from Adam to attend to it.

"Bishop John here. Seemed a bit slow."

"Yes, sorry."

"Woke you up, yes. I'm just ringing around early Sunday before the action begins and I thought, for a change, I'd like to offer you some praise. I hear that you had a day off yesterday, but made yourself available to visit a hospital when one of your parishioners had an accident."

"Oh? Oh right, yes. Yes, so I *should*."

"Don't sound so surprised. I like to encourage my clergy."

"Your clergy?" (Oops, it was a mistake to say that so openly.)

"Quite right. Correction. Our clergy. I'm not a diocesan."

"I had my mobile switched off for the day. I just happened to put it back on."

"Well, it was your day off. You provided necessary space for Colin to attend to other pressing matters. I understand she is all right, Gertrude Carter, having tripped over near that investigator you know. But well done. I must go."

"Good morning, Bishop John."

With the receiver down I asked Adam, "How much does he know?"

"Trouble is, people play along to find out more. But the simplest explanations are usually correct."

Keith called out that he'd get himself up later. Yes, I had to be up and busy.

When I went in the loo, I saw the mark Adam had made on my neck. It was probably low enough to be hidden by a clerical collar. Thus I remembered him biting my arse.

Rapid breakfast, we had, and I almost bundled Adam into the car, dropping him at his place via a route avoiding the church, and then arriving at the church from the wrong direction.

Trinity Sunday (16th June)

I had asked Adam if he'd come to the church. No, he would not. The mark on my neck was quite red and I tried to conceal it. My bottom was stinging a bit.

I was, for a big change, delivering the sermon for the main Eucharist service. Let the curate, the deacon, preach on the Trinity. I was the sermon's creator, incarnate holder, and deliverer. I was all three of those persons, but it didn't mean I was any good at it. It was all about the Son being sent by the Father as if on a mission, in John's Gospel as in chapter 3 verses 16-17 but also 7:28-29, 8:42 and 17:3.

Colin sat there as I climbed the pulpit. I saw that Peter Marshall and Ken Osis were in the congregation at the back, although they did not know each other. My right buttock did not help my lack of confidence in my ability or otherwise to communicate, as it kept distracting me and I kept scratching it through the cassock. I did have notes to assist me.

So I was telling them, "The danger from the Father telling the Son what to do - the Son being obedient - is *subordination and patriarchy*. The Son represents the Father and then the glory is but for the Father. Em, unlike in the creed, in which the Kingdom has no end, and where the son is eternal, Paul says the Son returns to the Father. Indeed, *the Son returns to the Father is not the Trinity*. There is a contradiction here."

"I look at it like this. A royal ambassador in a foreign court receives lots of affirming rituals, but everyone knows they are recognition for the King abroad. Devotion to the Son is devotion for the Father. But what if the ambassador is in the King's family? Maybe not."

I could see that Colin was not pleased, but he'd been cold with me from the off. I kept on creating problems for myself.

When preparing, I'd simply thought, 'What on earth does any of this *mean*?' Does it concern the congregation? Probably not, and certainly no one outside. But I had a problem because so much biblical material contrasts with the creed and the Trinity after all. The biblical presentation is not exactly about being co-equal and co-eternal regarding the Son, the Spirit, and the Father.

"It's not that 'In the beginning was the Word' gives equality *either*, between sent and sender, because this refers to *the beginning and not eternity*. In Arianism, God's first act is to create the Word or Son that makes the world. But that inequality was ruled out by Nicaea the Council. That's a Church council, not a local authority.

"Also, how in the Bible is *the Spirit a different personality of God*? And the Bible never refers to God the Son. So..."

As I glanced back, Colin had put his head into his hands.

"Let's try and see what's essential. I start with Jesus personifying God's character." This sounded weak.

I added, "There's much coming and going and descending and ascending that is like the godly side, and the sent and presence, which is the human side. But this sounds Gnostic and is reducing the all important humanity of Jesus."

Everyone's eyes looked glazed over. Even Peter looked puzzled. This was a Bernard Cribbins' hole.

I said to the twenty or so, still digging, "So the interpretation could be this. The Father," I said, "trusts the Son. There's the idea that the condition of *the Son's obedience was like the flip side of the will of the Father*. It kind of allows for more equality between them, and perhaps it does. The 'will' is a form of obedience, on both sides. Plus the Spirit - mustn't forget that - is itself a paraclete slave, slave to the whole will and obedience. So 'The Father is greater than I' could be less about behaviour and *more about being* and source expressed as 'will': but, no, the Father's life in the Son could still be Arian. Hmm - just think that the Son could never send the Father, the being of the Father cannot come from the Son."

This was a truly terrible sermon; like a walk through tangled weeds. To get out of the mess I decided to say, "So, in essentials, we distinguish between *the economic Trinity, the social Trinity, and the Being Trinity*. The first is what they do, or modes - or the error of modalism if taken as everything. Modalism: that is where each person of the Trinity is just a job to be done. The second is behaviour and obedience: that Jesus is the human contact of a social deity. But the Being Trinity is *belief in* rather than doctrine about, where all was rounded up, so to speak, where the Godhead simply is, where divine love flows between the three versions in equal measure and without any restriction including of time before or after. That's how I square the circle, or circles.

"*The Trinity is the Christian insight*, our contribution to the world of religions. So the Hindus have the Trimurti, but it is not supreme, whereas ours is, and therefore attempts, like John Hick's, to have a 'Real' to unite the religions, above our Trinity, must be wrong for us. I hope this makes some sort of sense. Perhaps not."

I felt utterly depressed. I knew when researching it that I should avoid doing this doctrinal stuff for Trinity Sunday, tying myself in knots, boring everyone with incomprehensible irrelevance, and simply losing more belief via rotten expression.

Once out of the pulpit I told everyone to say the creed. When I sat next to Colin, I said, "Sorry."

"A lot to think about," he replied, dryly. I heard him mutter the terrible words, "This has got to stop."

Colin's sermons were so much simpler, so much more straightforward. 'Something happened in our experience,' or 'something to reflect on biblically or in tradition,' he'd indicate. Once he'd said: "A person died at the crossing in the High Street. You will all have heard about that. Our Reverend Linda and I were there, attending to people. The driver was Polish and a gave chance for some people to be xenophobic again. 'He does not know our roads; why is he even here?' And what of the death - a pointless death ending a life? Our Gospel tells us nothing is pointless..." And he explained why.

After the service, Ken Osis came along to Colin Cromer and me.

I said to him, "Hello Kenneth, I'm afraid that was probably my worst sermon among some pretty bad ones."

"No," he said. "My Baptist colleague struggles with the issue of authority between the Father and the Son. I have a Lay Reader doing mine today. Do you mind, Colin, if I have a private word, just for a minute?"

"Use the vestry," said Colin. "Tell me when you've finished with her. I have much to say."

Inside Ken asked, "I mentioned the Unitarianism of Dee to my Baptist colleague. He thinks that if she does not know about William Ellery Channing, then

she is probably not very committed. Dee is not here?"

I said, "No. Obviously she doesn't come to my services. She might have gone to Wytham. I don't know."

"I suppose it follows," Ken said. "Being a bit of a heretic, if a bit, well, casual. My Baptist friend thinks she needs my intellectual attention. I hope I can meet her again; I hope you can arrange something."

"Perhaps not," I said. "She's sort of evaluating things."

"If you can, though. Let's go back out there," he said.

Colin was with Peter Marshall at the door. "Apparently this chap," said Colin, "reads a lot of Unitarian websites."

Ken said, "Not you as well!"

"Who else?" asked Colin.

"My friend Di-ee," I said.

"Diee?" asked Colin.

"Dee," I replied.

"Don't know her." Colin and I shook a few hands at this point.

"Yes, I know her," said Peter, very helpfully, after a long gap. After all, he'd provided Diana with the information, but he didn't know her. Perhaps he should have briefed Diana directly, instead of giving me sheets of paper.

Ken asked him, "So have *you* heard of Channing, em...?"

"I'm Peter Marshall. Yes, of course, but he is a bit old school."

Colin said, "Linda. You know Peter here and you know this Dee. Sounds like they are influencing you, when you should be preaching them the Gospel."

Ken said, "Absolutely."

"Peter," I asked, "do I express to you the virtues of believing the Gospel?"

"You do," he said, again so helpfully, "but I am not persuaded."

"Nor Dee or Diee, I suppose," said Ken.

Peter said at least I struggled with the issues. So all three clergy wished him well. Ken also decided to go, and so we two clerics shook the hands of the rest.

"On the dole, he told me," said Colin. "Gosh."

"On a scheme," I said. "Peter is not counted as unemployed."

"An internship, then," said Colin.

I said, "No. The tax people go after *them*, but the government gets away with its own schemes, and then they are not counted as being unemployed."

Colin then asked me, "Who is Dee?"

"Short name for Diana, my friend."

"Let me think. Diana de Groot."

"Yes."

"He met Diana."

"Yes."

"Is *she* having marriage troubles?"

"No, and neither am I."

"Well, regardless of that, I'll give you an opening piece of advice: Kenneth Osis is a delicate man. I don't know why he was chosen to be a confessor. He lacks ballast. His family has a history of suicides. His woman trouble is continuous, because he is one of life's failures with relationships. So my advice is to treat him gently and treat him with business-like neutrality. Don't involve your friends."

"Thanks Colin."

"I'll leave those clearing up to make their own way home. Can you come with me to the vestry please?"

"Yes, sure."

Inside, he asked, "Are you having an affair with Adam Magellan?"

"No I am not. I have had to see him from time to time; he is an old friend, of course."

"Your phone was switched off, yesterday. I rang the bishop to see if there was another clergyperson available, waiting for Mrs. Carter's relative. The bishop knew you were with Magellan, and what I saw confirmed the implication of what he said."

"Has he got it in for me of something? Why does he keep having people follow me?"

"I think your guilt might be making you a touch paranoid."

"Colin, if you knew the half of it."

"It's the half I don't know that worries me. Are you having an affair with Adam Magellan?"

"I've already answered. Accept my answer, please. But clearly going out with Adam has confirmed that I am being followed. Why?"

"Are you mentally all right, Linda?"

"What? Why is he feeding you with information about me?"

"It sounds like you are paranoid. So what *is* that brown mark on your neck?"

"There is some sort of sensitivity."

"I haven't noticed it before these last days or indeed at all."

"The downside of my smooth skin is it reacts very easily. In fact, if I cut I am in more danger than most."

"The doctors know this?"

"Yes. Since teenage days they've known for sure."

"So you have to be careful?"

"Especially. Do you know, a new toothbrush can damage my flesh?"

"Linda. You were also scratching your bottom in that pulpit. What happened there?"

"I don't have to say."

"Is it related to your, well, need to 'go' so often?"

"I don't have to say!"

"I'm fed up with this. I ask you an innocent question and you raise my suspicions. Anyway, stop treating me like an idiot. I'll ask you for a third time. Are you having an affair with Adam Magellan?"

"For the third time, no."

"Twice, I think. All right. You've denied my question three times. Let me give you some advice. You are putting your ordination at severe risk. I don't think you paid enough attention to preparing that sermon. You did not pay sufficient attention to presentation. You are not thinking straight. You are distracted by something, and you were showing all the signs of distraction yesterday. No, do not deny that. I gave you prime spot of the sermon for a significant day and the return to Ordinary Time. Your sermon was terrible on every level."

"I researched the information, Colin."

"Information," he said. "The bishop tells me that you must train. He so compassionate towards you!"

"He was when he rang."

"So why are you accusing him?"

"Ask Adam Magellan then. That's why I was with him. He was telling me I am being followed."

"And he says you will have to give sermons, as a priest, assuming you do get ordained. And the bishop is entitled to give me information about you. I am worried that you are going to ruin this my parish. Monday after your ordination starts my holiday. Surely I'm entitled to a holiday. I'm wondering if to cancel. You see, the one person I do not want to see in this church is Adam Magellan. That includes when I am away, if I am away. Peter? He is very welcome. I am telling you to stay away from Adam Magellan."

"Surely I can choose my friends? Surely the parish church is open to everyone?"

"Take some advice for a change. That *would* be a change. You are a married woman about to be ordained. Now go home and be back on time for the lay reader who'll tell you something like what you should have said, and with less training. Just go home, Linda, and prepare for your future - if you have one."

"*Here's what you would have won!*" I said, as soon as I started walking away.

"What?" he called out.

"Bully."

"I am not a bully, Linda."

"I meant... You can't beat a bit of... It was a programme, gets repeated a lot. Jim Bowen."

"Linda. You are drifting and you're out of control!"

Back at the house in the lounge and seeing pointless television, naked, I was dragging the hairbrush through my hair. Clothed Keith had a wry smile at my anger. Soon I had to return for Evensong. I'd slip my cassock over my head and add a collar. I put the brush on this seat, looking for my cassock the one time it wasn't hung in the downstairs loo.

I remembered I'd dropped it in the front room, off in a huff as soon as I'd shut the front door. So now, with ten minutes to go, I grabbed it and the ripped off collar.

Carried back to the lounge, I did something while looking at the TV screen and holding the bundle: I sat on my hairbrush, and its spikes penetrated my right buttock, particularly where Adam had bitten me.

As this brush went back a long way, many of its plastic spikes had lost the little balls on top of them that smoothed their contact with skin. It could be fierce on my scalp - under my hair. When I sat on it, the precise angle meant at least one of the buggers went in. And boy did it hurt.

I bent over and asked Keith to look at my arse. He told me that the teeth marks had produced bruising and there was blood after this hairbrush penetration. Three spikes - three! - had gone in.

Keith said, "You ought not to put your finger on it. I never bit you because your skin is so sensitive. Remember when I did once smack your bum? It was like my hand print was photocopied on it in red. That plastic thing has spikes like nails. Why do you keep it?"

I turned to him and started crying, so he held me. I asked, "Do you smack Cheryl then?"

"I shouldn't discuss what Cheryl and I do. I bet that submissive Adam

Magellan loves whips and chains."

"No, but he has a ball and chain," I said.

"Really? Has he chained it up to your leg? Is there a bruise around your ankle?"

"I mean he is married."

"That's right. He never divorced."

"You knew?"

"Mary Magellan. A Rumanian. They called her 'The Vampire' in the church before she ran off into his arms, via doing a job for SMS. She was from Transylvania. Black haired. They imagined her flying out of her Lord's castle and turning into a human in Britain."

"It's supposed to be a church."

"You get racists everywhere. She was the *undead*. Well, I can see that now, married to him. Let me check your neck. It is bruising as well. Have you two looked in a mirror? I suppose vampires never divorce, they just turn their partners into the undead as well. I'd be careful if I were you, taking his semen even if you can do nothing with it."

"Yes, you've made your point. Fuck off, Keith." I walked away from him. He was not compassionate, and neither was the bishop.

Evensong was a frosty affair of avoidance. A lay preacher had a go at the Trinity, and preached simple doctrine. As soon as I could, I drove home. My arse was burning hot.

Friends Comment (Monday 17th June)

On Monday, after a half hour gossiping with Gurinder Kapoor, I went in the cool conditions towards the inner town cafe that Patricia, Diana and I frequented. It was renaming itself to 'Bytes' with new online facilities.

At the cafe, I said to my friends, "I'm going off ill tomorrow. I'm not ill. I'm fed up. Colin Cromer has told me to stop seeing Adam. It's not just the rift between them over Mary Ann, this Rumanian who found Adam when it seems Colin and her got on so well. It's that I am still married to Keith and I keep being followed."

"Are you being followed now?"

"I don't know. I don't care. Keith is in the second bedroom now. I missed the spontaneous fuck. Men could waste me. That's how I feel. I don't know if I want to get even or give way to power."

Diana said, "The best thing is for Keith to leave altogether. But just stay out of trouble. Go back to your job, take your holiday, get ordained, and tell Keith he has got to go."

"Sad as it is," said Patricia, "she is right."

"We've come to Ordinary Time, but things are not ordinary," I said.

"What's Ordinary Time?" asked Patricia.

"The hum-drum of the solar calendar, week by week, up to Christ the King," I said. "I know it means nothing to you. Doesn't mean much to me either. Tradition. *I wish I was a rich woman.*"

Diana said, "I bet Cheryl likes it traditional - if no longer the wild child."

I said, "He'll like her domesticity. I assume all this - I might be wrong. Perhaps he is reworking her. Come to think of it..."

"She works," said Patricia.

"As an updated typist," I said.

Diana put it: "Uhuru on *Star Trek* was an updated telephonist."

Patricia said, "Cheryl works in a progressive company."

"What? SMS?" I exclaimed. "They are not progressive. They are not! Just look at their social events. The women look like tarts. Cheryl dresses like a tart and yet she is domestic bliss."

"Diana then said, "Well, perhaps she's not - she could be a whore in bed. It is a good combination, if you can do it. A domestic in the kitchen, a whore in the bedroom, and put on the glamour in public."

"I thought he wanted a whore at all times," I said. "I gave him that. Trouble is, Colin Cromer also thinks I am a whore."

Diana said, "By the way, that Ken Osis has been sniffing around the college. I hope he isn't on to me. There's something really strange about the people you know." Diana added, "However, I'm starting to include me in this assessment."

I said, "You're both, in fact, very ordinary."

Patricia responded: "I'm not sure about Diana, but definitely sure about you. You're not ordinary at all."

Diana responded herself: "Well, *I've* never invited Linda into *my* bedroom..."

"Hello," said Patricia. "What have you told her?"

"Nothing." I said, "Once I get ordained, who cares whether I am weird or not?"

"Your beliefs don't fit, but there may be some other basis for you having the job," said Diana.

"The pastoral?" I asked.

"The pastoral can be too personal in your case," Diana responded. "But I can see that. I can't see the rest of it."

I said, "My views are on the more investigatory side, investigating the doctrines we are supposed to defend. I deal with them by examining them."

"Anyway, it's your day off, so d'you fancy joining me later?"

"Yes," I replied. "In Patricia's Bat Cave."

"Were you in Patricia's cave?" asked Diana. "Was Arthur in..."

"Diana!" Patricia interrupted.

At that point I simply got up and walked off. I went to Adam's, where Ann and her wife Labhaoise were in the reception room.

Ann said, "Go upstairs. We told Peter to take an afternoon off. Sod the government's schemes. Adam should relax too. We'll be down here if there's any problem."

"Why should there be a problem?" So I went upstairs.

"Hia," He said. "I had a think about you..."

"Oh shut up and give me a fuck. Adam, I want a fucking, in what ever way you like."

"You can open the window if you want."

"I'll stick my stomach on the arm of your sofa."

He was quick. As he wiped my leg, he remarked on the state of my right bottom cheek. It was fast becoming rather nasty looking, a big red area and the red marks going towards becoming a developing head. "It might need antibiotics."

I asked him to come with me to Diana's. I said he would have to remove his clothes with us, because this is what we did. He refused. He would do some work instead. So I walked off and left him upstairs, and he didn't follow me out or down at all.

Ann and Labhaoise asked me to come in to the reception room. I said, "I have my afternoon with Diana. We always take off our clothes and chat about friends, life, the universe and everything. I asked him to come with me. Don't blame me if he does some work instead."

Ann said, "We want you to be good for him; we want him to be happy. Labhaoise and I will have to discuss this. And we gather work is dodgy for you."

"Think what you like," I said in an offhand way, and walked out. I couldn't understand it, as if *they* would decide the matter. And Adam had stayed upstairs, as much from their deliberations as from mine.

Quizzed by Diana (Monday 17th June)

So, on this cool, now wet day, inside Patricia's conservatory, I said, "He fucked me and I walked out."

"Did you have a row?"

"If he wants a relationship with me, he should take an interest in my life. I wanted him to come here because, apparently, Ann and Labhaoise demanded Peter and he have the day off. And now they are going to discuss together about me making him happy."

"Sounds like these ex-teachers are still running his life."

"He had said Ann approves. Perhaps she's not so sure. I'm furious with everything and everyone at the moment."

"Relax, Linda," Diana told me.

This was good advice, until my phone buzzed in my bag. I ignored it. It buzzed again.

"Ken Osis here. Are you with Diana? I know she is called Diana. I know she has a family, married. I've abandoned all counselling and confessing roles, including yours, with a message to the suffragan bishop five minutes ago."

"OK, bye then," I said, and silenced the phone, and switched it off.

"Was that our previous visitor?"

"Ken Osis has resigned as my confessor. And others. He won't be bothering me again, and, as for you, he now knows you are married and unavailable."

"He might stop your ordination - you leading him a merry dance."

"No, he won't. He has too many secrets to reveal. Anyway, are you and Patricia coming to the cathedral?"

"I think we're both working."

"Bullshit. It's on a Sunday. Just be honest with me."

"Why are you shuffling about on there?"

"Because my arse is hurting like hell."

"Show me."

I got up, went very close to Diana, and bent right over with my trim arse in her face.

"Ugh, it looks nasty. And so does that red patch."

"Ha ha," I said. I went to get a cushion to make things more tolerable, to put more weight on my left buttock.

"You're as mardy as your bum. It's looking rare and black over bull's mother's, noo?" Diana said, in a rare visit to local speech. "Kelchin' such a lot!"

"Noo the moo."

"This pastoral side you claim. Isn't there a belief side? Surely there is. Let's try you out," said Diana. "Are you willing to answer?"

"Go on if you must."

"Was Jesus born of a virgin?"

"Of course not," I replied.

"His biological mother, then, didn't compose and sing *The Magnificat* that was in that service I once attended."

"Now you are being really silly," I replied.

"But you are silly masquerading as someone who appears to believe these things," said Diana. "So, take this idea that he died and came back to life. Presumably you believe in a spiritual resurrection alone."

"I don't think I do," I said.

"What, physical? 'Hello! It's me. I popped me clogs but I'm back.'"

"I thought you wanted a sensible conversation."

"Does your boss Colin Cromer know your lack of stance?"

"I could not give a shit what he thinks. He thinks angels sing in the choir eternal."

"It's in the job description: 'People who believe unlikely things wanted for job in Church ministry.' That sort of thing. What about the Boss?"

"What, God?"

"I mean *Barman*."

"As they say, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you. Anyway, Derek Imperial is the boss - supposedly."

Diana asked more, "Is there actually anything you *do* believe?"

"I believe in the worth of human beings, and indeed developing empathy for conscious beings. Yeah."

"What about that funny Jesus chap you all worship, or only some of you."

"They shouldn't. Technically, *through* him - Christ, that is."

Diana further said, "So this Jesus chap then. Presumably he might not have existed either!"

"No, I think he did. There is some independent evidence and there are sayings."

"Something to go on, then," Diana assured me, in a funny kind of way.

"Well there were different Judaisms and in one sense he was closest to the rabbinical. He didn't reject participating in the Temple, in the animal sacrifices, however. But he was particularly messianic, chosen, and he pointed to God."

"Weren't the rabbis all against him? I don't know."

"No, it's shite. There was healthy debate about the spirit and real meaning of the Law. So there was that and then the expectation that God would sweep all away and the Kingdom of God would come. A messiah would appear, and Jesus pointed to a messiah coming."

Diana again. "Jesus saying, 'Hello! I am the Messiah. I am the Son of God.'"

I said, "Definitely not. I think he thought he was important in nudging God to start the process, as in the suffering servant. There is an issue of Jesus's ego, his own sense of his self-importance in this."

"Like Son of God?"

"That's a term for any devout Jew. He must have had a huge ego, even if he restrained himself."

Diana carried on, "I'm just trying to help you: to see if you actually fit into any part of the job description."

"Better than *The fucking Jacobite Gap Years*."

"Oh, I wonder. But didn't your Jesus actually visit his mates after his death, in the sense of when you do Easter? Do you remember Easter? It wasn't that long ago. I mean, remembering it once a year. Perhaps you're a Buddhist, if you don't like ego. Ergo."

"I think the primitive community, the core, were disappointed but still expectant, and they were bereaved holy men and women seeking and seeing signs and wonders and had meal rituals with a place at the table for the return. Beaten people want a hero, and the options had narrowed. Once he was dead, he was either the Messiah to be resurrected, or he was nothing. And they expected something."

"But this Paul chap, like who was *he* banging the drum?"

"Paul also thought all reality was coming to a conclusion in a short time. Like I said, the seder meal left a place open for Joshua. Now Yeshua was the only route for them to God in doing the job."

"Yeshua?"

"Jesus."

"What about the simpler, 'Oh look he's there!'"

"Even today some bereaved people see their dead, though those actual accounts are all theologised into the early Church. When you read it."

"I don't. All I've learnt has come from you, perhaps Jenny a long time back, and other nutters."

"Goodness me, I'm evangelising my friend!"

Diana said, "Really? Clearly, it's all relative to that time and it's a sort of kilter and rammel now - if you are right."

"But you are tackling the issues," I replied.

Diana said, "But I'd want you to say he *is* the messiah or Son of God, rather than something like, 'He's a really naughty boy.'"

I said, "Okay, I admit defeat."

Diana added, "Your bottom. That's real. Let it come up to a big head and go down of its own accord."

"That's what I've been doing!"

"You might need antibiotics," she suggested.

"I hope it goes down and heals properly."

I shifted to face Diana, who was on her back looking up at the sky and only occasionally looked my way. I told her about passing messages, chalk and sticking in drawing pins.

She said, "Your religion doesn't stick in pins."

"Not as a whole."

"It's about honesty, Linda."

"I am bisexual, Diana."
"For God's sake, Linda. "Do you believe in God?"
"Sort of transcendence. Doesn't matter. I *am* bisexual, Diana."
"We've had this out before. I am not interested."
"You want me to be honest; I am being honest, Diana."
"Linda, no."
"I was told, at least once, that you fancied me, Diana."
"Stop it now, Linda. You're out of control. Get a grip."
"Do you get a grip, Diana?"
"Yes, with a man, my husband. And you have Adam, now. Well, if they approve - according to you."
"But you don't approve, Diana."
"You're welcome to him."
"Did you really fancy me once, or twice, or often, Diana?"
"Linda. Stop this now. Now! Look, have a good holiday, and have a good retreat - whatever that involves..."
"Gaggle of women. Best behaviour. Unless one of them fancies me, *Diana*."
"Women like geese?" Diana asked.
"I'd better not say that, given those badges," I said. "Although one has an elephant on it."
"Geese are more appropriate, given those Winchester Geese. Do have a good ordination. Don't let it go to your head."
"I'd want it to go to my head."
She then said, "I understand why you did what you did with Ken Osis, I mean before, but you could have ended his phone call more nicely."
"Ken Osis and Adam are delicate types. They're all wimps. Contrast them with Keith: what Keith did to me. Keith is a strong man."
"Come on," said Diana. "It's nearly time, anyway. It's time you went home. Let's get dressed."
We left ahead of Patricia and her children even arriving.

Narrator: Keith *Linda's Thanks* (Monday 17th June)

I came in from work and Linda had been back from Patricia's with Diana. "Come back to my bed tonight," she told me. "I want you to do what you used to do: I want you to hurt me, do you understand?"

"Really?"

"Yes. No embarrassments tonight. Think of when we were students. Do what you did when we were students. I will too. Yes? We'll go early. Yes?"

"And we stay in the same bed?"

"Of course. You can do to me what you'd never do with Cheryl. Something to remember me by."

So we had tea. I asked if she'd seen Adam Magellan lately. Yes she had, and she'd had sex with him, but it was quick, and unfulfilling, and bizarrely Ann and Labhaoise were deciding if she was acceptable to him. I said that he had been dominated by women all his life, although one, his actual wife, had walked out on

him when it was convenient.

Linda then announced that she was not going through with the ordination. She'd spoken with Diana, and, "I've had a deconversion experience," she said. She realised she believed in nothing.

I told her not to lose heart and that loads of candidates get cold feet as it arrives. They've been to theological college, and much has unravelled. "Colin Cromer himself survived that but made so many mistakes early in his ministry. Go through with it, and the ceremony itself will give you a boost. That's what they say."

"You're so kind," she told me. "You're the one person who has offered me support."

If 'done' they cannot then unordain her and she can still walk away, I told her. There is a wastage rate and, as in any profession, people find that they are in the wrong job.

Of course she did not know that I was acting on the spot for the Confraternity, who needed her to get ordained.

She said, "You must be cruel tonight. I want to feel it. For one more time, I want your power, Keith. And thank you for keeping my most essential secret of all."

"I said I would, and I have."

So the time came for us to go to bed and both of us had already undressed downstairs. She wanted a shit and so did I, so I told her to wait, taking up a kitchen roll. When I was done she was called upstairs, and she sat on the toilet. I put my arms on her shoulders as she evacuated, and then she presented her bottom to me by bending over.

I cleaned her, with lots of roll used and several flushes. "You are a dirty dirty girl." But I was concerned about this enraged spot growing on her right buttock. I told her to wait and not to move from presenting her bottom. Downstairs in the kitchen I found the first aid box and assembled a fresh syringe and needle. I found a plastic bottle with a lid to unscrew and removed its final amount of peach flavoured water. Using large scissors I cut the bottle in half. Back upstairs, in an airing cupboard next to the bathroom, I acquired a loo roll and hid the assembled syringe within it, concealing behind me the cut plastic half bottle.

So I asked her to leave the bathroom and show me her bottom some more on the bed. She thought I was going to wipe her arse further and make her really clean.

Instead, and without her seeing, I took the syringe with its sterile needle and jabbed it into the rising sore. She SCREAMED instantly, and leapt off the bed, and screamed more, and looked at me crouched with wide eyes as she cowered in the corner of the room. She screamed again, because she was in agony as pus and blood ran from her buttock. I simply placed the plastic half bottle with screw thread under the bed.

"Keith. I'm sweating, I'm shaking. Keith it hurts so much, it hurts so..." She was, too. Her face was wet with sweat and tears and, leaning on her elbows, her hands were visibly shaking.

I said, "You're not a student now. Come out of the corner. If you don't, I'll come and get you."

"No, no. No, no, no..."

I thought this was promising for the Confraternity, because she was encountering different experiences.

So I went over to her and grasped both her forearms, and pulled her towards

me from the corner, and then transferred this to holding her around the waste with her head pointing behind me. The upshot was I got her on to the bed, looking down on her bleeding arse.

"You've got watery blood running out of the spot. Hopefully, that's released it. I'll wipe it with some of this tissue." I did that but it kept weeping. I pushed toilet paper into her anus, and wiped it. "Dirty girl," I told her, although, actually, she wasn't any more.

Now I released the plastic half bottle, and started to screw it into her anus. Once this would hurt her, but she just accommodated it, even I pushed it further in.

"Hmm," I said, dissatisfied. "Will you stop shaking?" I went to a lower dressing table draw, and took out a metal object with two tongues coming from a horizontal bar with ridges and a winding device. I asked if she remembered this.

"It's a bar speculum. Keith, it is still hurting a lot."

I yanked out the plastic bottle to a small effect and then inside her anus this bar speculum got her wider and wider. Now, in the past, she could only manage so much at a time, but here I just pushed the device to its limit. I used my fingers to pull her vertically. Anyway, I could get four fingers in and go very deep. But I left the device inside her, and I shifted myself so that I could look directly at her bottom, and the light from the ceiling shone deep inside. I wasn't satisfied, so I told her not to move, or I really would hurt her, and went downstairs.

I came back with twelve new pencils from a box with a rubber band around them. I placed these, graphite first, erasers facing me, into her anus and used them to gyrate around. She was gasping and yelping as I did this, while that bloody sore kept weeping out.

"Bloody hell!" she gasped, as I worked the pencils, so I took them out but there was no blood or shit on them. So I removed the speculum, and pushed them in again, now as far as they could go. When she gasped a little, I took them out again.

So I had her get on her back, and lifted her legs up. I took one pencil, eraser end first, and pushed it into her vulva, going below her urethra, and pushed it as far as it might go.

"Work your nipples."

She was pinching her own nipples very hard. So she was joining in. Okay, so I tried a pencil, pointed end, into her urethra. It caused her to gasp. I rapidly pushed and pulled the pencil, and then withdrew it completely. The result was she had an instant short pee. I think it was nervousness more than anything. She looked at me with spaced-out eyes fingers pressing as instructed. So the best thing was to grip her breasts with my clawed fingers, over her hands, and enter her purse hard in the traditional way, thrusting hard and fast, and I ejaculated fairly soon because I had been genuinely excited. I let go of her breasts with my nails having left a strong impression.

With my sperm running out of her, I asked her, "What do you say?"

"Thank you, Keith."

That was enough, and I lay on my back, although it was not enough for Linda, who became like an animal and took me into her mouth to try to bring me back, which she did with some violence. So I went on top and gave her a throat fuck, and I came a second time down inside her neck.

Linda said, staring at me with a wild face, "You can't do that with Cheryl. You don't need to go with Cheryl. You're a fucking bastard."

"You're wrong, you tart. She is having my child. I am moving on, but part of me moving on is that you get ordained. You get ordained and build that life. And as for Colin Cromer, he'll be gone in two years. The man is going to retire and you can take his place."

"Can I ask..." She swallowed. "Can I ask you a question, Keith?"

"Yes."

"Have you slept with Yojana Asthana?"

"Of course."

"I was beginning to wonder, recently."

"I am weak willed," I told her. "She came on to me."

"Adam found no evidence you were sleeping with her."

"That's because he is stupid."

I went on to say that with a baby I would have responsibilities. Linda said that I was welcome to stay at the curate's house until I needed to leave.

Then she asked me if I would go to Wales with her.

I said I wouldn't, and she knew why. Going there two years ago was generous enough from me. "Go back to work in the morning and get ordained."

"We talk to the book in Morning Prayer. It's no effort; I may as well go. I was going to go off sick."

"We have issues to sort out with a road haulage company."

"Thank you Keith; thank you for everything."

She started shaking again, so I left her alone for half an hour, thinking she was perfect.

Declaring for Cheryl (Tuesday 18th June)

Linda prepared our breakfast before we went to our workplaces. She said that her bottom was now lethal in its pain.

Before we went out the front way, she said, "I might have misled you with my real wishes last night. I want you to find your future with Cheryl. I really wish you the best."

I confimed, "Yes. Cheryl is my woman now. It's just frustrating when I'm not going down there. Move my job or something similar south and it's sorted. As for you, going on holiday first, your family might be pleased if you did chuck it. Only because they do crystals and patterns in the sky with birthdays."

"It's mother and Lucinda who do crystals: no one else."

We went out to our cars and she checked that the front door was locked.

I said, "I have a prediction for Aries: the stars and planets will not affect your day in any way. But don't let them persuade you not to get ordained. So am I in the same bed as you tonight, until you go to Wales in fact?"

"Yes, unless Adam stays over. Then please use the other bedroom."

"Sure. Well, I'll be picking Yojana up this morning so I'm leaving the same time as you. I'll send her a message so that she waits for me. Let's go."

"Be honest with me, Keith. You haven't stopped fucking her have you?"

"In this new morning it's more than my life's worth to say; let's put it like that."

"That'll do. See you tonight, then, Keith," she said to me, as we got into our

cars.

A little way along I stopped the car and rang Jim Wilson. I said, "As a fruit, she is lower hanging." I described events, including her mental switch into a submissive frame of mind, and the spot like a boil that I made burst.

His only criticism was that I hadn't said anything theological about the flow of her pus and blood, but replied that I couldn't because I had pushed the line of lack of interest in the Church and even the faith.

Narrator: Linda *Ken Osis Confesses Details* (Tuesday 18th June)

I received two letters at the church itself, each with a first class stamp.

The first letter opened told me that on the 18th June the Roman Catholic Church - the Western Church - celebrates The Feast of St. Marina the Monk. The letter stated that in Lebanon in the 5th century Marina became Marinos in order to enter a monastery with her father, and later the pious man became 'Abba Marinos'. But, on a trip away, an innkeeper's daughter accused Marinos of fathering her child, and he was ejected and eventually sat outside the monastery to nurture the child using goats' milk from shepherds. Upon death, her female phenotype was discovered, the innkeeper's daughter confessed her wrong accusation and became penitent at the tomb of Marinos. I showed the letter to Colin Cromer.

He asked, "Why has someone sent this to you?"

"I don't know. The envelope says it was posted in Whitby, first class."

"An interesting story but I wouldn't preach on it. It would raise suspicions. Is that the idea?"

"Colin: I'd hope you'd know better."

"You are very female."

"Thank you."

I wondered who on earth would post this from Whitby? Did anyone really think I was transgender? No! The gossip that circulated was usually about me as a wild girl on the farm. So I was puzzled.

The second letter was local, and all it stated was: *McGuffie1982*. So when home I used this as a password on an email linked download, and it worked.

Please pass on my apology for telling it this way but my client's car (and mine) could have been bugged. Bolingbroke Geese badges refer directly to Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke John Terence Barman. Geese could refer to prostitutes, but Yojana Asthana is one of the wearers. She is very close to Keith Jupitas, despite his affair with Cheryl Mould, and KJ is monitoring his wife Linda for JTB partly via YA at least prior to her ordination. Ken Osis is used to pass selective messages to LJ from JTB. KJ receives his information via YA.

I read this with some alarm and confusion, particularly that Yojana was critical, until I read the text below it. It was obviously from Adam.

Linda. This was the message you left in the stone wall. My writing is guessing. It might be good guessing, but it might be wrong. That you made the message drop

will create confusion if we were followed (I don't think we were). It still shows that I am investigating the group, although I am not. I then left your grid reference, in the full sight of the CCTV. I know he has contacts. The grid reference note was picked up by George Wickenby and put back. George went to see the message at the wall and replaced it as well. George now has a 'bird camera' on a tree nearby to detect movement and take photographs in daylight and dark. George will want to know who picks it up. Can you ask your friend Diana to pick it up? It might or might not be credible, but it should stir things regarding Ken Osis, having met both of you.

Blimey! I contacted Diana by ordinary telephone. I told her I had to collect a secret message, and it would be safer if she collected it, because I was being followed. I told her where to find it. She might collect it today, or perhaps at the weekend. Diana said she'd go now; she was intrigued and it would not take long. However, when she called in, an hour and a half later, she wanted to read it as well. So we read it together, me as if I had seen it for the first time.

I said to Diana, "I think it is speculative. Adam is making some connections."

Diana said, "So there are SMS connections via these badge wearers, and Yojana is not in the religious group but is a key person."

"Could well be," I said.

"And Adam is investigating. Are you screwing him or offering him business?"

"I am screwing him. Keith is uncomfortable in his presence but we accommodate."

"This Ken Osis," said Diana. "He is no longer your counsellor. He knows who I am. Let's get him to join us, and see if he can now spill some beans, and let's see how he reacts to suggestions."

"He and I still operate under the seal of the confessional, if one of us demands it. Keith is at work, now, and I am soon to go to Wales."

"Let's take advantage now of his irritating curiosity."

"All right, Diana. Are *you* free now?"

"Yes. Tell him I am with you at this curate's house."

"Right. Here goes. A text message."

Fifteen minutes later his message said he would come straight away. It would replace his reading time that had replaced a counselling session.

So Diana and I stripped off, and I asked her, "What have you done?"

"I wanted it gone. I got it waxed. So I am like you. How often do you go?"

"I think you ought to go once a month." (I was guessing.)

To answer the door to Ken Osis, my cassock was on, and it came off in the hallway once he was inside. He went in front towards the larger lounge, which allowed Diana to come out of the front room quietly behind me. The result was we both watched him undress in the hall and he then saw her with some surprise. I took his clothes with my cassock and laid them down in the lounge.

Diana asked, "How did you find out about me, Ken?"

"You were identified," he said, looking at her crotch.

"How? Who?"

So I said, "It is because I am being followed, isn't it Ken? Sit on the sofa."

Diana said, sitting down on to a leather-effect chair, as I stayed standing, "We know more than you think, Ken."

"I don't doubt it. That has always been the risk."

I said, hands placed on my hips, legs a little apart, "Oh, really, Ken? How do you know that was always the risk?"

"I can't say. But what you know, what you are supposed to know, carries the risk that in fact you get to know more. And you are, after all, seeing Adam Magellan. Your training parish priest is very concerned. Although this is no longer any of my business."

"Maybe not," I said, "but it is what you know that I want to know."

"Anyway, Colin Cromer should be pleased that you two have stayed together. Leave it: I'd hoped I'd be coming for some other conversation. You are beautiful, Diana. You've had your wotsit done. It looks lovely."

Diana said, "Thank you Ken. I look like Linda now."

I said, "Remember our chat on my bed? We could - all three of us - lie on my double bed, you in the middle, Ken."

Diana looked at me rather severely.

"Naturist rules, Ken, on your back, and absolutely no touching with your hands. A bit like we did before."

"Like before?" asked Diana.

"Pure, nice chat, very relaxed, a little intimate but in a nice sort of way."

"How is your bottom?" he asked. "It was very painful, I heard."

"What do you know about my bottom? I've been concealing it from you since you've been here."

"Well, em, you've shuffled about in church. I was told these things."

"I think we should go upstairs," I said.

So as we went upstairs, me first, Diana last, and Ken between us, he said, "You do have some boil on your bum and it is terrible. I really hope Keith and Adam haven't been too cruel."

It was almost as if he considered it part of the sex I was having with them. Into the bedroom I told Ken, "Lie on your back, exactly in the middle of my bed. Go on."

Diana asked me quietly, "Are you sure?"

"Making sure we succeed. You lie to his right, me to his left."

"I think you're mad round the head," she told me.

We lay there and nothing was said, Ken looking side to side at us. He broke the silence by asking, "Has Connie Wilson invited you to go shopping yet?"

"The wife of Jim? No. Tell me more."

"Oh, I'm out of touch. Maybe after your ordination then. I'm talking out of turn. She is a formidable woman. Very cold, though."

"Who told you she would invite me to go shopping? The bishop?"

"No, she did."

"Interesting," said Diana.

"Will the bishop know?"

"She is close to the bishop. But I don't know."

"She certainly talks to you," I put it to him.

"You and Diana have really voluptuous bodies. I love feeling your heat and both sides! You two are not cold."

I said, "Thank you Ken, but I am not convinced that what you have just said is naturist talk. You can praise our bodies but I get a hint of excitement." Diana raised herself, looked at his knob and stared at me.

He then said, "The woman I mentioned once before to you, Linda... She

dismissed me. Don't you two dismiss me, please. I know you were hiding Diana as Dee. I'm pleased you are seeing me again since I found out, but don't dismiss me."

"We welcomed you, Ken. Do I know this woman who dismissed you?" I asked.

He paused, and stayed silent.

Diana asked, "Is she the very same Connie Wilson by any chance?"

He paused again. "Yes, Diana"

"That's really interesting," said Diana.

"Ah," I responded. "She's drawn you in, and dismissed you. Very cold. And she, like you, has got a badge?"

"Yes."

"It figures, Ken."

"Yer training incumbent Colin Cromer said a while back he thinks *you* could lack sympathy."

"Have you broken confidentiality rules, Ken?" I asked.

"There was that incident with the Polish driver and pedestrian. You showed little emotional reaction."

"Ah. I have had an ethical training along the way, which redirects what might be a, well, sociopathic tendency."

"You're bang on there," said Diana.

"Isn't that at all worrying?" Ken Osis asked, looking directly at me looking at him.

"What exactly?"

"To self-identify as sociopathic?"

"What would you call it?"

"But yer could be sympathetic and trained to cope. Is this all right to say with Diana?"

"Yes."

"You two share secrets."

"Ken, is Connie Wilson a sociopath?" I asked.

"She might be a psychopath," he said. "And Reverend Jim too. Diana, none of this must go anywhere. Can I look at you Diana, just a minute?"

"Get up via the bottom edge of the bed and have a look at her," I said to him. "Stand over there and lean against the wall." He went and stood near the wall. "With your back in contact with the wall. Look at her. My friend has always been so attractive. Now look at me."

"What are you doing?" Diana asked me.

"Opening myself up so he can have a look at me."

"Linda! I *knew* it."

"Do whatever you like. Nothing, if you prefer, but I am showing him some of the pink stuff."

"You're mad."

"Show him yours," I told her. "It is only flesh. See, you can't resist, Diana, just touching yourself."

"I'll get you for this." She pulled herself open.

"Stay back and leave yourself alone, boy! She's a *good* girl."

"I thought you'd become submissive," said Ken.

"With whom?" I asked, wondering if this was about Keith and me. Come back

Ken. Come back now. *No touching*. Confess to us, Ken: what happened with Connie?"

Diana muttered, "You're evil, you are. Look at what's happening."

"I'm not evil," said Ken.

"Not you," Diana replied. "I don't know where you got 'submissive' from, Ken. She's hardly being submissive."

"I can't say, answering you both," he said. "I'm not evil but I've been a fool. And I'm getting erect and cannot help it."

Diana said at me, "If you can do it with Arthur, you can do it with him. This is how you are, how you always were."

I said, ignoring her, "Connie. Is she a *naughty naughty* woman, Ken?"

"My God," said Diana.

He said, "She is that way."

"Naughty with you, Ken?"

"Yes."

"Would she want to be naughty with me, Ken? Like, after shopping?"

"My God," said Diana again.

He said, "Accepts lesbians."

"Bloody hell," said Diana.

I said, "Ken, people are accusing me, but you, a priest, has had sexual relations with someone else's wife, the wife of another priest, and with her consent. It wasn't with his consent, was it? Was it?"

"I've told you far too much already."

I said, "What do you mean, 'Accepts lesbians'?"

"For an evangelical, it's unusual."

"Who does?" I asked further.

"What is going on around here?" asked Diana.

"You see, he must accept lesbians as well as she if Connie might make a move on me."

"Presumably," he said.

"You *know*, Ken."

"I've told you before, I don't like what is happening."

"What *is* happening, Ken?"

"I'm going, that is what is happening."

I put my right arm on his chest, and pressed down.

"Ah, no," I said. "We're now getting somewhere, so you stay. Ken, Is it a burden for you to hold on to so many secrets, with so many different people?"

"Yes, frankly, and why I stopped."

"You come across as a bit of a worrier to me."

"I tried to make that a quality of counselling. I still have my own confessor. It came with the role, originally."

I did remove my arm from him. "Do you offload your secrets to your own confessor?"

"I can't," he said. "I can only say how I feel in general terms, talk in non-specifics. It takes time to receive counselling when you can't say your anxieties."

"Ken, I will masturbate you. It needs attention. You are a nice chap."

"I knew it," Diana said, "I think I might be going."

"You were the one who mentioned Arthur," I said, "and I am not asking *you* to

do anything."

"That would be nice," said Ken. "Please don't go, Diana. Linda might become cruel as well."

Diana said, "He's right there. You really do frighten people, Linda."

He said, "I meant like Connie."

"It's all coming out," I said, "because it is going to come out, and out of there, Ken. I am not cruel. I like men, Ken, and I like women too. Give me permission."

"Please," he said.

"I'll perform, I said. (I chose that word). Diana had a fixed stare to the ceiling. "Did Connie Wilson talk about 'getting near the centre' with you? That's right. I'm a bit moist, Ken. Touch me there."

Diana said, quietly, "You bastard."

"Yes, she did, Linda, early on. You are nice and damp."

"Are they connected? Her sex with you and the AmDram that was all your talk?"

"Please don't make what we are doing conditional on talking about that."

"You can put your finger in, Ken. She wears a badge with a goose and a B on it?"

"Yes."

"But the Reverend Vine. Her badge is a W with an elephant."

"Different group."

"Mmm. It's not AmDram though, is it? Diana said it was like the masons. Is that right?"

"No. I can't talk about that."

"No?"

"No."

"Do you want to put that in me, Ken? Well, Diana, you could be more useful than just staring at the ceiling."

"I am astonished."

"Stroke his back, Diana."

"I have never, ever... Oh, what the fuck."

"Ken, your thing may be a bit small but it is just right for me. In it goes."

"This is ridiculous," said Diana. "We were supposed to use so-called 'naturist rules'. These aren't naturist rules!"

"Fuck me and talk, Ken."

"I cannot tell you more," he said, getting a motion going. "I have given an oath. I can only tell you... what I am allowed to tell you. I know you've put up with a lot. Your bottom..."

"Hang on. It's not good enough, Ken. You get out of me and go up against the wall, again. Go on. You cannot continue in a woman who says no."

He lifted himself from me, and I made hand movements for him to go against the wall again.

"What are you doing now?" asked Diana.

"You might want to go home. So, thanks Diana. See you. I'm getting somewhere here, and I intend to get there. I have under my bed a cut away screw thread from a water bottle."

"Why?" Diana asked. "Was this for him? Was it for Adam? Was it for you?"

"Keith used it on me. I have washed it.

Ken said, "He was cruel; please don't be cruel to me."

"Nah. It didn't have much effect in me. It will in you. Go home, Diana."

"No."

"Ken, you are shaking. You are not allowed to shake. Bend over. Well bend over towards me! If you don't, well, I'll make you. Diana, go home."

Diana was sitting up. "What the hell are you doing?" she asked.

"How I was trained by Keith," I said. With him bending slowly towards me, white in the face, I gripped Ken's waist with my left arm, and turned him somewhat from the wall. "Now we can either do this with my grip, Ken, which won't be the best, or will you show me your bottom?"

"No," he said, my arm still around his waste, his bottom away from me of course.

Diana said, perched up, "I'm not going to stand for this. Let go of him."

"You will tell me everything Ken, one way or the other."

He said, "I don't know what you are doing; you're hurting me already with your grip."

"Aha. Have it this way."

Leaning over him, still gripping him, I placed the screw thread at his anus with my right hand and, looking over his arse, started turning. He started yelling. Diana was at first, transfixed, her eyes bulging as she looked.

I said, as I screwed it in, "Ken, you *filthy filthy* man. Don't you wipe your arse properly?"

With these words of mine, Diana got up, clenched her fist, approached me, and punched me straight in the face. I shuddered backwards, releasing Ken. She was ready with her other fist, so I raised my arms in surrender before shifting backwards, slightly losing and regaining my balance.

Diana turned from me, and although I felt like kicking her, I didn't.

On his knees now, she put her arm on his back. She said, "Come on, stand up. I'll take it out of your bottom." With it still in, he walked awkwardly. She took him out of the room and into the bathroom.

I said to myself, "*Bastard*. He's not going to tell me any more now."

I could hear her say, "Your bottom is hurting, isn't it. She is a *nasty* woman. I'll wipe it gently."

At the bedroom door I shouted across to the bathroom, "Well, he is a dirty bastard!"

I sat on the bed, and they seemed to be taking some time - the screw thread must have been removed.

I heard her say, "Here we are, Ken. Oooh, out it comes; oooh, lots and lots. Look. Let's get the tissue paper."

"Diddums!" I called out, rather aloud.

Diana came in, her upper legs glistening with white opaque liquid. "If you carry on, Linda," Diana said, "I'm going to get the bathroom scissors and stab them in your arse, and then you'll know all about it."

"It's already been done."

"Keith? Adam?"

"Keith."

She returned to the bathroom. I heard her say, "There we are, Ken: all cleaned up off my legs."

"Ah, that's nice," I said more quietly.

"Come on Ken," she said, "Let's go downstairs; you can dress and take yourself home. But this has to have been the last time. Do not come back here again: leave her alone. She is very dangerous."

"This is the only time with you?" he asked.

"Yes, Ken. I am married."

I said, "Yes Ken, no Ken, three bags full, Ken." I followed them down and went and sat in the front room. A clothed Ken let himself out, not speaking to me.

A minute later Diana came in the room, still naked. "Do you want to fight me then? Come on. I've got fists."

"I noticed. You hit my jaw and it is bruised."

"Anyway, you've found out what you want to know. They have sex with each other, in this group."

"So what?" I asked, vaguely.

"Well, when you get your shopping invite, you're more than capable of going along with it and finding out some more."

"So I am."

"Blimey. You might even join them. Let me just look at that. I'm not going to hit you. Show me your bottom."

"You're mad at me."

"There's a lot of stress about. It sounds like Keith was cruel with you. Osis seemed to know."

I said, "He's adding two and two. Keith won't be part of that group."

After a pause Diana kissed me directly on my lips. "You're really far weltered. Try and sort yourself out. I'll see you later - after the ordination, probably." She went out of the room and back towards the larger lounge. "Ordination? Hah!" Soon the woman returned clothed, opened the front door and said, "You'll be all right." She closed the door with a whispered "Bye!"

Compassionate Diana realised that something had flipped in me and I felt quite disturbed.

Chapter 11 Wales and Temptation

Narrator: Linda *Arrival at the Family Farm* (To Thursday 20th June)

Tuesday night, Keith had returned to normal sexual activity with me. He made me orgasm and immediately wished me the best for the ordination - almost like a blessing. On Wednesday night, Adam returned to my bed with news that Ann and Labhaoise had approved of our relationship. Well, how reassuring. I had to make myself orgasm.

I was in the church for the Thursday morning service. Colin, despite his recent chill towards me, wished me the best for my holiday and then retreat. He would see me at the cathedral.

My bum hurt while driving, so I played myself a number of Steve Hackett tunes with that long-haired chap singing, and me singing along, including *Cinema Show*. I thought I could use *Take a little trip with Father Taresius* for next year's Lent. After all, I had raged like the sea and gave like the earth.

The car took me into deepest mid-Wales, finally down the longest narrow road one might find, with Llyn Clywedog and an old lead mine some miles off. My family were farming in a changed landscape for them. Four years it had been since their move to the hills, same time as setting off on my vocation. I'd been here with Keith two years back. It matters when your family don't like your spouse, because it forces a decision to defend the marriage and defend him. Earlier, around Serninsea, they didn't like me marrying Keith with what was *his* vocation then.

It was the first time I'd seen cats' eyes marking out the long private drive up to the farm. Along the increasingly muddy drive stood a figure I did not recognise wearing a sandy-coloured overall. I asked, "Is this the farm of Leonard Bode?"

"*Uhstad Bodaod Bacshog*," it sounded like. *Ystad Bodaod Bacsiog. Rough-Legged Buzzards Estate.*

I knew the responsive word and said, "Diolch."

(The name came from our Buzzard farm name in Serninsea Marshes; buzzards were seen on our east coast and not in Wales, and this was an attempt to sound like Bode.)

So I carried on driving over this hill crest and, oh yes, that was my father, bollock naked, except with wellies on.

"Hello daddy."

"Pity you can't drive with nothing on. Getting warmer now."

"Yes daddy."

"See you in a few minutes. Do you like the cats' eyes? Great for when it's dark. Local authorities are daft to get rid of so many, but good for us here."

The farmyard indeed followed, consisting of the now farmhouse family of my dad called Leonard, my mother and his wife called Elizabeth or Lilibet, and my younger sister Leila. In the annexe lived eldest sister Lucinda and husband Dyfed - pronounced 'Duved'. (Larry, our older brother, was never part of this farm and lived in London.)

Every roof other than the barn had solar panels across them, and there were three wind turbines. Vehicles were scattered about and my Ford Fiesta added to

their number.

I got out. By the kitchen door to the yard on a bench was my hanging breasts well-fed mother, naked, peeling potatoes, and alongside her was Leila, naked, being lazy.

I sat down with them on my left bum cheek only. I'd taken my own wellies but sandals as well for some outside and inside use. So sandals it was. Hello to them. See them shortly, after I found the downstairs loo.

On my reappearance, Leila told me that she was attending college, studying hairdressing. She'd also learnt Welsh further than our parents and Lucinda. I said there was over-supply of hairdressers in Serninsea and I hardly used them, but I might use one for the ordination. Mother groaned.

This all round nakedness was simply their normal. Warming air was drifting up the valley.

My mother was rotund, not wholly obese, gone grey on top and mousey-brown hair around her crotch. Leila had a bikini line from her trips to Mid Wales and North Wales beaches. Lucinda was as bald and hairless as me because she shared all my characteristics.

My mother asked me, "How is Keith?"

"I've some bad news. We're separating. He has found someone else he wants to live with, in Harwich. I know, you don't need to say it: you never liked him."

"Still doing what *he* wanted to do?"

"It's too close to pull out."

"It's never too close to pull out," mummy said. Leila started giggling.

My all-round hairy father was walking up the farmyard in his wellies with a sheepdog. I must have missed this accompaniment before. Daddy said, standing, "He was all right, Keith, but not with all that claptrap."

I thought I'd push my luck. "I wonder: would any of you like to come to my ordination?"

"Definitely not," said my mother. "We thought we'd brought you up *away* from the establishment, with some different insights into this world of ours."

I said, "Mine is an alternative insight; it is these days."

My father said, "It's establishment."

"I'm fairly dissident within it, you know. But I'm saying: it's almost despised now because it can't handle sexuality very well."

"No it can't," said my mother. "So why are you bothering? Anyway, why are you separating?"

"He has been having an affair, a woman he knew back at school. We've been drifting apart really because I became a deacon and he has been in this measuring job. Two years he has been seeing this Cheryl."

"Is she that lass Cheryl Mould?" asked my mother.

"You remember her."

"She had a right reputation. Her mother wasn't much better. I knew her mother at school. Her mother was a bully."

"Oh."

My father said, "This Keith became so full of theology funny talk. His mother used to interfere with him."

"You've said so before."

"He was a mummy's boy."

"These days my Church can be quite diverse. For example, some priest guy wants to pick up Pagans and have a church within a Church, like all sorts of old rituals. So it tries to reach out."

"Bollocks," said daddy, who pointed at my bottom for the benefit of my mother and then walked on with the dog, going off to higher fields.

"Lucinda is away seeing a friend," said mummy. "Have a coffee."

"I bet that's deliberate." I said. "I'm coming here: she disappears."

"She said you can stay in the annexe. Their spare is a bigger bedroom than their own. Get up and let me look at that."

I did so.

"This is snided out with stuff. It's wosserer than most. How did that happen? Do you know?"

"My new boyfriend bit me and then I sat on my old hairbrush; then I agitated the skin."

"Why don't you get rid of it?"

"Because it represents my continuity."

"Last time I saw it it had lost many of its little ball-ends and some of the spikes were bent."

"Entropy, mother," I said. "It can never go back to being like it was when I bought it."

"Don't be so clever with me. Dyfed's tried to get Luce to have a better view of you. Boyfriend, eh? You don't mess about. And a clergywoman."

"She still resents me and I'm forty now. It's ridiculous. By the way, I continue to go to the further Midlands club - Bever Wood."

"Keith's heart was not in it," said mummy. "Plus he was lukewarm about you: he only married you when he wanted to do your ordination. I liked Saxiclite - you met a lot of friends there and Luce is with one now."

"I don't mix with Saxiclites these days. I'll check out the annexe."

"They wouldn't want to mix with an Anglican vicar," she said. "I suppose your new boyfriend is an Anglican - probably some vicar."

"Not at all. He is an investigator. See you soon."

"Not George Wickenby? He's a perv and twenty years..."

"Not him. See you shortly."

Encounter with Dyfed (Thursday 20th June)

A man came into the annexe. I jumped back but did not cover myself. "Who are you?"

"Dyfed. Rwy'n byw yma." (His first name was pronounced 'Duved'.) "Dyfed Cadwaladr, at your service, madam: Lucinda's fifty years old husband I am."

"I thought you were away, visiting..."

"No no, Luce is visiting, isn't it. I'm here; so are you."

"Surely there's a spare room in the farmhouse, then, for me?"

"No no. Not how they are using them. There's a second bedroom in here. I'm in one, you are in the other."

"I noticed two. Am I in the right one? The furthest?"

"Yes, that bed is made up for you. Peid a poeni." He started undressing, to nudity, and took the clothes into their bedroom. Returning, he said, "I never took my clothes off like this before marriage. Ah. Rwyf mor noeth â'r diwrnod y cefais fy ngeni."

"Sorry?"

"I said I am as naked as the day I was born, isn't it."

"Well, yes, that's partly the idea in this family."

"Duw. You look so like your sister. You have her dimensions as well. But, er, she does not have that big mark on her bottom rear."

"No, it is a nuisance. So she is visiting her friend, and you are not."

"She is in Normanton-on-Trent, isn't it."

"It'll be that Saxiclite mate of ours. She got closer to her when I was at East Midlands University. Rosie Callow. Tell me about yourself, Dyfed."

"I am a furniture shop owner-manager in Llanidloes, our town nearby, and happy that I now have oversight of shop space I can use for tourists."

"You'll want something to eat; I could eat something."

However, at this point my mother knocked on the door and asked, "Do you want something doing about that bottom of yours?"

"I don't know."

She then said, "Well, while you decide on that, why don't you make yourself useful and prepare some tea for Dyfed? He'll show you all the equipment."

He then said, "Lovely, modern open plan it is, as you can see, but traditional furniture too we put in here."

"They rent this from us," my mother said, and promptly left us and went back to the farmhouse.

"Your sister," he said, "I don't know why she has a small opinion of you. That's why you weren't invited to the wedding."

I said, "Never heard a *word*. No idea when. That's the extent of it."

"20th April 2018. She was a daddy's girl, I gather, indeed. But she's on HRT and you are not - Lucinda and your mother told me that: your mother learnt from her mistake. Luce says you take everything she's had, but not the HRT."

"Daddy gave her much more attention than me when forced to take HRT and had a vaginoplasty. Thing is, more immediately, Dyfed, what do you want? I am a really crap cook."

"A cheese-topped fisherman's pie," he said. "I'm having a shower, now I am home from work."

"Yes, okay. Grated cheese on a potato and fish mix. Fisherman's bake."

"The fish is in the freezer, mae tatws ar yr ochr; mae caws y tu mewn i'r oergell."

"Cows?"

"You could use those cheese squares in the fridge. Hwyl am nawr!"

Next time I saw him with the cooking well advanced, he was dripping wet and rubbing himself with a towel. Hmm, a dripping male body and not a bad one.

"Luce once came into my shop and wanted furniture and she got me as well."

"So she now has a husband that I had."

"I can do something about that on your behind rear."

"It's been a bloody nuisance. I can reach it but can't do anything about it. Two mirrors I need to see it. My husband stabbed it for me but it weeped and has just

become worse."

"I know," he said, "I'll get a sewing box and some items. I'd like to do it you know."

"Again?" I asked.

"Duw, once is enough I hope."

"Again for me."

He arrived with a sewing box, a candle and kitchen roll. "It all depends how you do it."

I looked around, and found my (culprit) hairbrush. I'd brought with me (of course), and wanted my long hair straight and smooth before lying down as his patient. Out of this sewing box he produced a large and he said sharp needle. At least this time I knew what the operator was going to do.

The kettle had boiled already so he boiled it again and poured the water over the needle. Dyfed took a nearby box of matches and lit the candle, running the needle through it. He asked me to lie on my front on this old kitchen table, presumably from his shop. My bottom was facing up, my breasts squeezed by weight, my head unsupported.

"Now this will hurt," he said.

He gathered up my bum boil with his other hand and inserted the needle straight into where I'd wanted to get at it myself and *he kept pushing*.

I SCREAMED the bloody annexe down. The fact that I knew it was coming this time didn't take away my desire to scramble straight up the walls and hang from the ceiling.

"Duw, what a lot of pus! Let me gather my hand round this and get some more out.

He put that needle back in and turned it around too, like at an angle, and said, "You know, it's yellow and white, but a lot of deep deep red blood now."

My legs were shaking; I was shaking. He must have blown a volcano.

And then I thought, that was *wonderful*. After all, it had been with Keith's effort. Yes, I had suffered shock with Keith and became scared of him, but Dyfed had now done the same and I felt like wanting him all over me.

Mummy came in, half way through a subsequent mention of food, and saw what was happening. She stood and stared. "Use your finger nails to drive it all out. No, I have them - you don't. Let me."

So, now my mother went deep into the skin with the protruding nails of her index fingers, and pushed into the blood and pus from below. My mother then walked out of the annexe laughing. Dyfed brought over some kitchen paper.

He was squeezing at the lump and wiping pouring blood with the said kitchen paper.

She was back. She said, "This is witch hazel gel, Dyfed; rub this into the remains. After you've had your tea, put some more on. And can you get me some more from town tomorrow? Shouldn't really use it in open gashes," she added.

"Fuck me! Don't then," I said.

Off she went again.

He said, "Anyway, what this does now is ooze a lot and later like clear pus but that's not pus and we'll get that out as well." He was still wiping my bum cheek. Piece after piece of kitchen paper was covered in blood, becoming more watery. "And sit on folded kitchen roll if you don't mind, when you sit, eating our food."

"Put some antiseptic on it at least," I demanded, and he went to find some within the annexe and put it on neat with cotton wool. Wow, that hurt as well.

I got up from the table and he was fully erect. I decided to ignore his desire and return, uncertain at first, to the food preparations, thinking I ought to wash my hands first and did so. So he came to the running water as well. My arse was throbbing now.

I was serving tea, but he came over and wiped upwards on my left leg. When he touched the boil area with paper it hurt.

I turned around and he was semi erect.

"Sorry but I am excited. You are like your sister. Luce doesn't like it that you don't take HRT."

"I can't help that."

After food I said, "I hardly watch TV. We have a local TV station. It's not bad for some local announcements, and some local adverts for shops, but it's rubbish for anything else. And they've taken repeating programmes to a frequency never seen before. It is *shite*."

In the course of this Welsh viewing, with me sat on sheets of kitchen roll, and me doing pelvic exercises, he asked to see my bottom several times. Clearly he was getting excited from me. I told him to sit closer and he shouldn't be worried.

Then there was a telephone call from my sister to her husband and he told her I was staying in the other bedroom in the annexe. She did not even ask to speak to me, so I ignored her. Later he rubbed in some more witch hazel gel.

I said to him, "It should be quite possible for mature adults to be naked with each other and not have to think they must resort to sex."

"It's possible I suppose," he replied. "Let me see all of your bottom."

Dyfed in Town (Friday 21st June)

Friday morning, I made the breakfast. He was holding my waste from behind and was saying my bum might be improving but was unsure. He rubbed in more witch hazel gel.

"You are so like her," he said.

"But I'm not," I replied.

Suited for work, Dyfed even kissed me goodbye. He drove off. I thought I'd go and see him at work, and see the town.

The daft thing was the warmth and having to add clothes. So I drove into Llanidloes according to instruction (no sat nav). "Hello," I said, walking into his otherwise unoccupied furniture shop.

He said he'd show me the other shop acquired so cheaply, and added that now most of his furniture sales were not done from the shop customer at all. So he was quite happy to walk down the town with me - *Back in half an hour* was placed on the door. There was a Arts Centre and Fitness place nearby and he could exploit these with some sort of shop tourist connection. Gaming machines and even roulette was possible, via complex licensing.

I said, "No, please; we have a casino in nearby Serninsea and it can't do any good." He said he could sell Pagan, Buddhist and Hindu trinkets in the town for the

tourists by generating a myth of an ancient mystical past. He might combine the shop with limited refreshments. He also was thinking of what else he could do with the furniture shop, even though it was now the only furniture shop in the area. He said that sometimes the furniture he sold never even came to the shop at all: imported via Felixstowe and Aberdaugleddau he delivered directly. I told him Felixstowe was very near to where my "estranged husband" wanted to live in the future.

I had something of the hots for this chap. I had a very rare visit to a pub with him. *The Duke of Burgundy*, it was called, with a butterfly logo, and I drank a pint of lime and soda water.

"What's the local tippie in your area?"

"A brew called Thedde. Pale ale produced by two sisters."

The question was this: should I steal something else of my sister's, as she saw it, or should I stop the cycle? I should resist. After all, I was getting ordained in some days: just because I was outside my usual environment didn't mean I should behave differently.

Then I thought, I *had been* behaving differently. I'd undergone a lot of stress recently, and things had been spiralling downwards. Now was a chance to stabilise.

At the farm and in this town, I didn't feel like a deacon at all, never mind the priest I was to become. I mean, who was I? We walked back to my car, and he gave me a hug. I'm not usually one for hugs. Back in the car I brushed my hair. I wanted the conquest of my sister's choice, but I knew I should not, even if I was losing my husband and my sister still had hers. I drove back to Ystad Bodaod Bacsiog.

My older sister claimed that he was yet something else I'd taken from her but she got her own back when I'd returned from university.

I cooked a meat pie and veg for tea. Actually, mummy had prepared the pastry and indeed had the meat to fill it and did that part too. Really, my cooking was warming up! The thing was, his hands were free and easy with me, which he may have confused with naturism, and he rubbed in more of the witch hazel to my actual great pleasure. But, when it came to it, he went to their bedroom and I went to the extra one.

I did masturbate and think of him, and thought of his rock solid erection in reaction to my screaming and flowing pus and blood.

Walk with Daddy (Saturday 22nd June)

Saturday (third day, second full day) we didn't have breakfast together. Dyfed wanted to start early and eat in a town cafe; so I went and had a rather hefty chucky and checky and more with mummy, daddy and Leila in the farmhouse. Leila was clothed because she was off shopping.

Daytime then and I was in the farmhouse. I wondered why I wasn't staying there. Upstairs was this enormous bedroom and it had an ensuite and a walk in cloakroom, and these were all Lucinda's. Even though she lived in the annexe, now, she reserved these rooms for herself. Leila's bedroom also had its own ensuite and that alone was as big as a bedroom. In fact they'd expected Leila to have moved out by now, but she hadn't. There was a spare room for Larry. Mummy and daddy had

their own double bedroom and huge ensuite and cloaks. I had no room. Anyway, I made use of Lucinda's reserved toilet. I just put my presence in her shit house.

So afternoon came again. My father said he was getting used to everything to do with sheep. I heard him say, "Come up and see my hilarious sheep."

"Why? Are they funny?"

"What are you talking about?" he asked me.

"Well, presumably they have characteristics that make you laugh."

"Stop being a pie can."

"You said, 'Come up and see my hilarious sheep,' so..."

"No! Stop being so smockravelled. Come up and see my *hill areas sheep*. They are sheep..."

"Oh daddy, something we never had in the marshes."

"Wazzuck! Like to come up the hill to see the sheep? I'll get the dog out and we can go."

Interesting that the dog, Arthur, did not live in the house.

So two naked humans, except for wellies for me and boots for him, plus the dog, went out of the farm and upwards. Father described the ground as a bit 'slape' or slippery. We rose up and walked along a hill crest to find some sheep.

He said he had learnt much about dog handling - neighbouring farmers had been very helpful these past years; this was quite a change from the predominant but not completely arable farming back at Serninsea. I told him that there was more emphasis there now on reversion to wetland and there may be an environmental and visitor land use centre. We might have a seals place. In uncertain times it was unclear how it would be funded.

"Daddy?" I asked him up there, looking at sheep.

"What?" and he simply urinated in front of me, rather like the dog had done several times. He used to do this back at Serninsea Marshes.

Even before he'd finished his forceful piss I was asking, "Why were you closer to Lucinda than you were to me?"

"You only thought this," he said, "about Luce."

"She had 'cuddle time' with you, even as a young teenager. You didn't have cuddle time with me."

"She had what you went through but your mum did differently with you, you know. She was our first. We think we made mistakes and mum were snotravelled. I didn't have cuddle times with Leila either," he added.

"Leila's had none of our problems. What was cuddle time, daddy; what did you do?"

"Cuddle time was a nice time for her. That's it."

"Larry thinks..."

"Larry wasn't there."

"No, he wasn't. And I wasn't."

"Anyway, Luce polished my boots. When did you ever polish my boots? I'd come in from the marshes, and she would polish them to reflections. And she washed my clothing - made a point of it. Even my underpants, when I needed them."

Now I needed a pee, as we were walking on. With him ahead, I squatted, but I was peeing when he turned around.

"You've never stopped being jealous of her," he said.

"I was envious, daddy," I said, looking down. I stood up from my pee, dripping

a bit. "I was envious because I wanted what she was getting."

"I cuddled all my daughters. I'll cuddle you now."

"But not *cuddle time*."

"Yeah. Luce had surgery. You didn't. Have you had surgery since?"

"No."

"Anyway, *mummy* doted on you. You didn't have surgery thanks to your mum. Why are you asking all this now? She doesn't get cuddle time now because she has a husband."

"Indeed. Coming here, I'm feeling the absence of Lucinda - and now she has a husband who is a very nice person."

"Ever thought she was envious - as you put it - of you getting married? Fortunately Luce found that local man."

"So you don't have cuddle time with her now."

"Of course I don't, me duck. Do you want a cuddle now?"

"Yes. Why not? Give me a cuddle now."

"OK, come here then. You might be 40 but I said to Luce once or twice, 'You're never too old to have a cuddle from your dad.'"

I squashed myself into my daddy, and felt very good about it. He ran his hand down my back. He kissed my forehead. I held on to my daddy.

"Why have you gone erect, daddy? It's pressing into me."

"Thinking of things. Sorry. Bit cleggy, aren't we?"

My dad released me from his arms and his penis pointed rigidly to above distant hills. He now used his arms from our viewpoint to show the extent of the land holdings. We walked on further, until some large stones were jutting out of the soil and grass, enough to sit on them. He'd gone soft again but then he farted. He said he was following in the footsteps of Andy Goldsworthy, an artist, in trying to make shapes with his sheep folds.

He said, "See that barn, right over there. The dog and me are going over there and we've got some fence repairs and to get the bloody hill areas sheep on the right side of it. You might want to go back now, unless you want to work."

"Yeah. I fancy a long bath. I might use Luce's ensuite - that bath is very large and right in the centre - yet she has also the annexe."

"I'm sure she won't mind you using it. Me new mucka Sion Jones should be coming: if you pass him on your way back tell him I'm going to Ty Ichaf and then that fence nearby needs repair."

So I went back the way we'd come. An aircraft went overheard fairly low - I wondered where to and from - and I looked up.

This farm labourer did approach, in overalls. He gave me a head to toe look. I said to him, "My father has gone to Ty Ichaf."

"Very nice to meet you at last," he said in his thick Welsh accent. "'Bout time we did that fencing," he added. "So you are..."

"Linda. Linda Jupitas. I stayed around the east coast when most of my family moved here."

"You've got an elder brother in London as well."

"Yeah. Larry Bode."

He said, "Leila wants to move away, but is now at a local college. Nice lass. I hope she shows interest in me. I can't imagine Lucinda moving away now that she has moved into the annexe. The previous occupants started bed and breakfast in

there ten years back. Sometimes they accommodated six people in there, before your folks moved in. Lucinda is older than you, isn't it?"

"By a year. After she was born, they had me quickly."

"Your dad says you and Lucinda are their 'special daughters'."

"Yeah, but Lucinda is a bit more special. She was first."

"I'd better be going," he said. "Very nice to meet you, wrth gwrs, and I can see the likeness between you and your sister in a number of ways."

Yeah. I know what he meant. More than just our faces: being tall, hairless body, large hands and feet, lean hips, long legs. I walked on back.

Once he'd gone ahead far enough I had to squat again for more than a pee. And when back to the farmyard I went into the farmhouse and was told I could use an airbed outside in a suntrap if I wanted to sunbathe.

Yes, but a bath first, and with just warm water. I usually showered at home.

Funnily enough for a naturist I was not a sun worshipper. I'd stay behind glass, like when at Patricia's with Diana. But I was being different here.

So after lying in Lucinda's bath and contemplating, and realising the whole was a wet room (the bath could spill over), I was later naked in the farmyard when daddy, his pally worker and the dog came back.

"Oy!" I said to laughs as the dog licked me in a sensitive spot. I recoiled, I think, because of assumptions about Adam's neighbour.

Minutes later Dyfed returned, driving in from his Saturday opening. I said hello but not much more.

He got out of the car and said, "Oh hi Linda. I've done some shopping. How about cauliflower cheese?"

"I'd thought of a good curry, but nah," I said. "Your idea is better. I should not eat curries."

"O Duw, keep it simple," he said.

Soon he was naked again and looking closely at my bottom inside as I stood with these simple ingredients.

I asked him, "Is Lucinda a good cook?"

"Luce has come on leaps and bounds," he said. "Of course I accept we won't have children, but I didn't want any anyway."

I had not asked that. I said, "Well, I think I'll make this my last night tonight. I only came for a brief break, and see if any of the family would be at my ordination. I've enjoyed meeting you but I don't want to queer Lucinda's pitch."

"No, stay longer, feel free," he said. "Your bottom is still seeping a little. There is a head on it again, but only a bit. I'd like to remove it really."

So for a second time I was front down on the old kitchen table in there.

"It only needs a little prick this time," he said. (I needed a 'prick' of any kind, I thought.) "It's nowhere near as angry as before."

It didn't matter. When he put the needle in, I could have hit the ceiling. I more than yelped. This was the third time now my bum cheek had received a severe pricking.

Now he was back in with his fingers, pushing out pus mother style. He was just enjoying this. "It's good; you've done very well," he said.

Now he was rubbing my shoulders, and moving his hands down the sides of my back, like some dry massage. And his hand brushed my anus and pubes. Naughty boy.

He went off for some disinfectant, and when done with it he said, "I'm going to leave it now - well, witch hazel a little later."

The box cooker was one that pinged and switched itself off. So we ate at the table where moments earlier he'd pierced my arse, although I was finding it difficult to sit.

He explained that, "Sometimes we go over to the farmhouse and all have a meal together. Your mam is such a good cook. And their one worker, Sion, he sometimes stays for meals, though I have a problem with him"

"I met him, yeah. Why?"

"Because I believe he and Lucinda had more than a walk up into the hills."

"He fancies Leila."

"He can *cachau bant. Twll tin.*"

"I'd better not enquire," I said. I changed the subject. "When north of Serninsea we used to have a farm shop, and I worked in it for some years. It wasn't a lot but better than being on the dole. I take it there's no point having a farm shop up this remote valley."

"But I said to your mam to open a stall in the market if they do more with this farm. If I open another shop, we can put some possible produce in there."

After tea the television was awful, and the news was depressing. Nothing was right regarding Europe, America, Russia. Dyfed liked the journalist Huw Edwards, whereas I just wished he'd say things more efficiently.

I said to Dyfed, "Nationalism is rife: the god of ethnicity, language and religion. When religion went into the vernacular, nationalism got a boost; people combined their tendency to tribalism with national boundaries."

He looked dumb - daddy would say a 'wazzack'. It did not stop Dyfed leaning on me on the sofa. He was clearly stroking my shoulder and down my arm.

But I thought I cannot. At some point the war with my sister had to stop. "Thanks, Dyfed. I feel much for you. I'm separating from my husband and I have a boyfriend, and you are Lucinda's husband. Her surname is now Cadwaladr."

"Even though she was and is a bit free and easy herself."

"Yes."

Then we had a problem with a butterfly getting in. We were jumping about, and having fun trying to catch this thing. He did get it and we released it and I wanted to capture him.

Of course I slept in the other room overnight. In the morning I said, "This brush was never Lucinda's. It was always mine. I've kept it ever since."

He said, "I like long hair. Luce's hair is long as well. Pity you're going. She's back overmorrow."

"I am going tomorrow, and see you in the morning," and I kissed him directly on the lips for some seconds, and he pulled me in to him for my breasts to squash on his chest.

I looked at him.

"If your dad can do it with Luce, then I can with you."

"Yes, it's *very* innocent," I said.

Bever Wood Club and Surprises (Sunday 23rd June)

I'd seen to it that Dyfed had a good breakfast. No, I was not going to a Welsh Anglican church, or any other for that matter. Then I did something particular. My father had gone into town, probably to see his mates in The Duke of Burgundy, and so I found his boots. I polished them, and put every effort into shining them. I left them in the window for the light to bounce off them. I said to mummy to say bye to daddy for me. I kissed Leila as well, and asked them to tell Lucinda that I missed her.

"What do you think of Sion Jones?" I asked Leila.

"He wants to get into what he can see."

"That's your decision, of course."

Before I went, mummy gave me a supply of witch hazel for my leaky bum and put a plaster on it because I'd wear clothes. I assured her I now had a strategy regarding my apparent incontinence.

My final kiss with Dyfed in the annexe turned out to be a longer one than the night before and my prostrate gland was very busy wetting me where I wanted to be dryer.

He gave me a CD for the journey...

Before I could change my mind to stay and fuck him senseless, I drove off. The Cat's Eyes' music included the wonderful tracks: *The Duke of Burgundy*, *Coat of Arms* and *Requiem For The Duke of Burgundy*. I felt so sad, hearing them several times, and became almost depressed. I was thinking of Dyfed; I just had desire.

And then there was daddy. I'd approached him about cuddle time. That was progress. He'd given it an innocent interpretation, or as innocent as possible. Larry had once said that father was fucking daughter, and I never wanted to believe it because I loved daddy and thought Larry was a brute.

So instead of driving directly from Wales to the convent in Wytham, I had a night in my naturist club. My membership meant that, if there was a room, I'd stay there like in a gentleman's club of old. Serhat and Judi Ahmed were coming to the end of their notice. I whipped my togs off and after dumping all bags in my room and dumping in the opposite room I went for a swim in the indoor pool.

Still so close to midsummer, here I was with the sun coming through the glass roof and wishing I could stay. It was bright and warm and the day was long. All you have to do to join a club is sign and demonstrate through nudity your membership. You also join the national body. But why not some sort of ceremony, if not quite laying on of hands?

The objection was what Marx had called *superstitious authoritarianism*, and groups with excessive ritual were giving way to more rational and democratic type arrangements. Eric Hobsbawm once wrote about ritual in his *Primitive Rebels* book. It came out before the 1960s - well before my time.

Having had my swim I went via the shower to the outdoors and the sunshine (if cooler - we are hardy types), and said hello to some folks I knew.

And then I spotted a familiar face: Jeremy Symes. So I couldn't quite forget our profession and its superstitious entry requirement.

"Hello," he said. "*She's* left; I'm on an enforced leave and I have to see the Bishop - Bolingbroke, of course - who seems to have everything devolved to him these days."

"Tell me about it," I said. "I remember Emily's concern. I'm sorry about that."

"I'm not sorry," said Lindy Peacock, walking up behind me.

"Nor am I really," said Jeremy. "It was inevitable."

"Hello Lindy," I said. This was a second recent hug with her, on her initiative (but none with him). I said back to Jeremy, "I know John Barman is busy this week. He's made a point to be at the retreat: interviews, teaching, the lot, by the look of it."

Jeremy said, "There's a church in Church Warsop, Cuckney. Did you..."

"You went there?"

"No, I'm having a Sunday out."

"Well, so am I," I responded.

"Except you are getting ordained as a priest. You should be more enthusiastic."

I said, "I'm surprised I'm not suspended. I can't preach for toffee, and I'm continuously in trouble at work for getting things wrong. So, Jeremy, have you ever heard of a group calling themselves *The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players* - they go around wearing white badges with a black 'B' and a goose image on them."

"Absolutely not. I'm not interested in the theatre."

"I don't think they have anything to do with the theatre. I think they relate to the bishop, somehow. Something is going on," I said. "I can't make head or tail of it. Perhaps I will find out more soon. Have you heard of the Reverend Christine Vine?"

"Er... Wasn't she one of those involved in the bank robbery - stood up to the threat?"

"Yes. But that's all?"

"I've heard she owns some property."

"Right. She gets ordained too. I was going to say that my marriage has had it as well. Keith has found someone else, who lives in Harwich."

"We know," said Lindy.

"Really? We are supposed to be putting on the appearance of normality."

"Unlike Emily," said Jeremy.

Lindy said, "We know because your husband is here, and he sure looks intimate with a woman. She is called Cheryl," said Lindy. "Mole," I think. As in Adrian."

"It's Cheryl Mould not Cheryl Mole. I'm surprised he is here; I am more surprised that she is here."

"Lindy said, "Presumably, you don't want to meet her."

"No, I think I can, this side of knowing. A school friend, she became his colleague, and began an affair. I found out and we had it out and we've sorted it out. She's more for him than I am."

"You are remarkably calm about it all," Jeremy said.

"I am puzzled, though. I thought my husband was a reluctant naturist, only following me along. It explains why he did not want to come and see my family in Wales - well, partly. I am going to lie in the sun. If they turn up, I'll say hello, but I am not going to seek them out."

I applied some sun blocker cream and Jeremy and Lindy helped with getting some on my back and bum, noticing the spot that was at least starting to go down now.

I recognised his voice, saying, "Hello Linda." I opened my eyes, and looked up at these two naked folk, both holding towels, but he was doing the concealing. It was Keith and, indeed, Cheryl Mould herself. She did look like she'd looked after

herself recently even without her clothes on. She had a full growth of pubic hair - most interesting, given my husband's intimacy with my vulva.

I said to her, "I think I need to congratulate you, Cheryl."

"What? Seriously?"

"Genuinely. I hear you are expecting. No sign yet, obviously."

"Thank you."

"You don't need it but you have my blessing."

Jeremy and Lindy were still alongside (I didn't know!). Jeremy said, "Now this *is* impressive. How to do it?"

So I turned to him and said, "Well, what other way is there to do it? We all move on."

"Appreciated," said Keith. "We've just come from a group of people playing Pope Joan. Was that your fault, Jeremy?" Keith asked.

"Yes, got some card game varieties going. Actually, it is my set; they have carried new popes high to check the undercarriage since Joan. If popes were naturists, it would solve the problem."

So here there were five: four having affairs and me. Adam Magellan would have made six. I explained I had come from the farm a day early, after receiving reluctance about my ordination from the family. (I didn't mention escaping Dyfed.) Five with our towels went to dinner, together.

At the table I said to Cheryl, "It is a long way from Harwich."

Cheryl said, "It's my holiday and I wanted to try this, and he is a member and so we came here."

"I told Cheryl it was just possible you might be here," Keith told me. "Break up your journey from Wales to Wytham. How is sister Lucinda and the rest of them?"

"Luce went to see a friend."

"And how's her marriage?"

"She left him behind. I stayed in the annexe with Dyfed."

"She must have changed; she must trust you."

"Well, if you mean what I think you mean, she had every reason to trust me. And him."

Cheryl said, "Is it like I used to be 'the other woman' - but I'm not now?"

"There was nothing untoward," I said, "but, no, you are not now."

"Linda. I would like Keith to move to Harwich, if there is a job there. I don't want him to take a lesser job, so he might have to wait. But there are all sorts of rumours going around about Serninsea closing," she added.

"Better not discuss those," said Keith, "and, in any case, I don't want to discuss work."

Cheryl remarked, "I like this going about with nothing on. I wanted to see if I could do what you two have done."

I said, "Being here suits you. You do look lovely. Not that it is a qualification, but you should have no body image fears."

"She's less nervous than me," he said. "Her towel is purely functional."

I wanted to be positive. "Come here again or another club nearer Harwich when you are fully pregnant, Cheryl. There is nothing lovelier than a fully pregnant woman, naked and confident, glowing."

Keith then said the words I wanted to hear. "I'll be in Wytham for your ceremony."

"And me," said Cheryl. "He wants to show me the historic city."

"Oh yes. Do come along as well. That would be good. You do know it is the last time I want Keith to act as my husband."

"He is your husband," said Cheryl."

"Well, we'll separate, perhaps under the same roof while his job is in Serninsea. You'll know all this. Keith and I want what will be a good divorce after appreciating a good partnership."

Departure & Arrival (Monday 24th June)

Before I went, on Monday, Cheryl found me and had one more thing to say: "I love the way you look. I said to Keith, 'I'd like to shave like that,' but he doesn't want it." She added, "I like it here. We could all come again some time in the future."

"There'll be a club near Harwich. Join it. I'm about to dress and go now. Is Keith around?"

"He's somewhere. You want to see him?"

"Nah." At the reception I was asked by Lindy (standing in?) if I would be the model at the art group meeting. I said I would but I'd rather get going, even though it was possible to do it and arrive in the evening. Then I changed my mind. I would do it if it didn't involve deliberate photography.

The only reason for my restriction was because of the ordination and being a priest: once photos are taken, they can end up anywhere, including Anglican land. I then wondered if *those pictures* were connected with the AmDram mystery.

So I did a number of quick and long poses, and found it rather tiring.

This was the point of my departure. I bumped into Jeremy, who wished me the best, and I packed my luggage, got dressed, with a bye to Lindy, and went to the car.

I drove directly to Wytham, presenting at the admission desk in The Anglican Cenobium of Saint Deyanirah, where the retreat was being held. I was asked by a Sister (not Pope) Joan to hand in my mobile phone, to be returned when we left. This was to ensure a religious attitude of no distractions. Sister Julianne took my suitcase and my I took my shoulder bag - to be kept with me at all times - to my cell bedroom, on a corridor of six of us. Once deposited, in my room with just a sink, a bed, a bedside cupboard and a wardrobe, I went to the bathroom as needed. I was determined to manage my bowels.

Returning, I recognised Christine Vine, in black cassock, in one room, her door opened. I smiled, but I went directly out for a walk into the marginal countryside at the edge of Wytham. I so wanted to remove my clothes outside.

This retreat was a women-only gathering, with men staying elsewhere. Dress code was black cassocks, as if we were near to being nuns. So, when back, I undressed and put mine on over my naked body. We went to dinner, where a Mother Superior Morana asked us to eat in silence; we then proceeded to Compline, and then were told to return to our cell bedrooms to pray before lights out. We would be allowed to put our own lights out, but early rising meant recommended early sleeping.

Me being there was surely crazy.

Chapter 12 Retreat and Ordinations

Narrator: Linda Christine *Vine* (Monday Evening 24th June)

I was sat naked in my retreat cell bedroom. I was not praying, but thinking how I could get out of being ordained, and what else I would then do in life. I gave up thinking, and started to masturbate.

There was a knock on the door, so I reached for my black cassock, and put it on. In came Christine Vine, also in her cassock, with black shoulder bag, closing the door behind her.

I was sat on the bed, and the blonde (like me) sat alongside on the bed, and we shook hands.

"I am Christine. We've met. I bet you put that on to talk to me. I hear you are a naturist."

"You are right. There are times and places for being naked, and now isn't one of them."

"I just thought you might be more comfortable without it. Listen, I wanted to meet you properly."

"Yes. We may have things to discuss. So you're not a full-time deacon?"

"A UVM, but I am based at Wheaton. It's north of Eslaforde."

"Unpaid Voluntary in a wealthy an evangelical area?" I asked. "Are you one of their evangelicals?"

"Eslaforde gets a lot of London money, including Wheaton. I have a different theology. Prosperity theology or anything like it is detestable."

"So what is your secular job? You buy and sell..."

"I'm an escort."

"Pardon?"

"I am an escort."

"I heard you. What do you mean, you are an escort?"

"I give men and women hospitality."

"Yeah, I know what an escort is, and I know what they do, but I'm asking why you are a deacon and will be a priest when an *escort*."

"For a start because I am a Christian, and I believe I have a calling for ministry, which is what I do now in the secular world."

"Yes, but, I thought, with all the jobs the unpaid priests might do, being an *escort* is not one of them. Anyway, you deal with property."

"I do that as well, assisted by the money I make as an escort."

"Look, I'm very pleased to meet you but please equate these with me: how you can be a priest and sleep with people for money? Presumably the bishops don't know this."

"Both suffragan bishops do know this. I equate these because I reject Augustinian theology."

"Original sin?"

"Listen: the body is an original blessing. Surely you agree, being a naturist."

"Actually I do agree with you - on that. But, er..."

"Sex is a good. Sex is an energy that is positive, however it comes about."

Surely you agree with that, Linda?"

"Well, yes."

"Give me your hands," Christine said. "Please." I did so. She lowered her head and raised each hand to her nose. She inhaled through her nose each time. "Not sure. You've been masturbating?"

"So what if I have?"

"You must have a very delicate odour."

"The Reverend Christine!"

"Well, it shows that at a time of contemplating you are generating sexual feeling."

"I was - in *private*. I am here to contemplate, as you said, and presumably end with me being ordained."

"But the reason you were masturbating, working your clitoris, no doubt, and inserting your fingers, was because you were contemplating not getting ordained and whatever else you could do."

"Are you some sort of mind reader or something?" I asked her.

"I masturbate when I want to relax, or have been frustrated."

"Or presumably had a bad fuck from a client."

"The best act after bad sex is good sex."

"Well, what I want to know is: you may want to be ordained, but how come you've got through the selection process?"

"Because I had support from the Bishop of Margate, who has some influence as the Archbishop of All England is often otherwise engaged. I know the Bishop of Folkstone acts as well for Rothach, but, well... Listen, the advice was to move particularly from Ebbsfleet to the Diocese of Wytham, where a great deal is delegated to the suffragan bishops. Then the interviewers approved my training."

"As an escort?"

"You said I deal in property. What they also didn't know is that many of my properties have call girls in them. I get them off the streets; I work with the police. I don't earn from their prostitution, I earn from them paying rent."

"And you have a white badge, with a W and an elephant."

"Let me show you it. I have it in my shoulder bag. Here."

I held it; I looked at it. It was a simple, straightforward, plastic badge. "What is this for? What does it mean?"

"It means if I see a badge like this, or one with a B and a goose, or an H with a black stag, I know I can rely on the person. The W for Wippedsfleott is for my area; the group effectively stretches from Worthing and Brighton through to London and Ebbsfleet across Kent. The operative bishop is at Margate. The H is Hereteu, sometimes Hasland, although the Suffragan Bishop there, Sarah Deimos, has nothing to do with this. The diocesan has an H and Stag badge: Elizabeth Huett, Bishop of Tees, even though she is based in Middlesbrough.

"Tees of the Diocesans. She is involved?"

"Yes. Listen, I have a bra and knickers on, only, under my cassock. It is quite warm in here. Do you want to undress?"

"That's what pisses me off. I come inside, it's warm and I put clothes *on*."

"Take it off."

I pulled my cassock over my head. So I said to her, "Take your underwear off as well."

She did this but came and stood in front of me. Her breasts were moderate, her pubic hair managed and blonde. She'd never been pregnant - but there were marks. She said, "Actually, I've nearly said what I wanted to say. I will just mention about authority. What do you understand about authority? What is it to be a priest?"

"We are an arm of the *diocesan* bishops. Christine, you have marks on your body."

"I'm pleased you've said what you have about bishops: you follow Catholic theory."

"Of course. Priests do the Eucharist ceremony in place of the bishop; the bishop cannot be everywhere."

"I am so pleased. The point is, Linda, that we have a crisis of authority, but also with Augustinian theology. Eastern Orthodoxy doesn't follow original sin; Judaism doesn't see it either. Protestants were very strange, by and large, in taking it into their systems, but then they are full of errors."

"Have you been beaten?"

"Are you listening to me?"

"I'm listening."

"I'm going to bed very shortly. We need a *vanguard*, Linda, and we have a Vanguard of bishops who know where we need to go, and remove the sexual distortion from our very ecclesiastical bones. The badges, Linda, identify the Vanguard. We are also moving into the Welsh Church, acquiring bishops in South Wales. Linda, your task coming up as a priest is to obey. You agree with us on sexuality and it makes you a very important person. You do not believe in original sin, and you do believe in the body. The body is essential to being Christian."

"Yes. Bodily resurrection and so on."

"Absolutely. Listen. The Vanguard bishops are wise bishops, but they are wise because they follow inherited and developed apostolic theology. However, wisdom isn't the essence: it is essential that they are bishops. We have our debates but they decide. The marks you see are evidence of me being sacrificial. They are a sign but few have them."

"Sacrifice and service are at the core of it," I said. "Though I'm not sure about those marks."

"There are various ways to do sacrifice and service," said Christine. "But you bring joy to my ears."

She put her hand on my head, almost like she was blessing me.

"You seem by appearance to be very smooth. Your pubic area is so clear, and that tells me that you are someone who pays good attention to your sexual presentation." (I stayed silent on that.) "You must advise me some time on achieving that level of beauty. Our bodies are theological, Linda, and are to be used in service. Our brains - our minds - are our bodies, and please don't talk about the soul as if it is something disconnected."

"I don't."

Christine was putting her knickers back on, and her bra on by fastening the rear clasps at the front and swinging the bra around. "There is a direct relationship between ecstasy from God and sexual ecstasy. These are very old ideas, Linda. The orgasm is therefore its very essence." Her cassock was back on and she restored the collar.

I said, "The bishops interview us tomorrow."

"Two ordinands at a time are interviewed in separate rooms. I look forward to seeing you tomorrow, Linda. We are all stuck with each other; how will we survive with no mobile phones until Sunday?"

"Easily," I said. "Sleep."

"See you tomorrow. You can resume what you were doing before I interrupted you."

"Maybe not," I said.

She went off, and so many questions had been answered. But I had no way of telling anyone else. So, instead of masturbating, I did some dilating and pelvic exercises - could be similar to masturbating - and went to bed.

The Retreat Opening Interview (Tuesday 25th June)

From Morning Prayer in the chapel we moved to the dining area and had a silent breakfast. The crockery and cutlery were cleared away by staff. The diocesan Bishop of Wytham himself, accompanied by his wife Louise Imperial, came in and welcomed us all. They'd already been with the men in the monastery for Morning Prayer and breakfast. The suffragans were still there. He told us that the retreat was for preparation in prayer towards our transformative moment, when we would become Eucharist-presiding "servants of God in Christ" and to be at the service of others for evermore. Then the couple left. That was quick!

A little later Christine came across to me. "Listen. I have told you a number of things in confidence. Remember, a vanguard approach to our Christian witness requires confidential approaches. We select people, naturally, with compatible stances. What I should say is that there is a very broad theology, from Liberal to Catholic to Evangelical, but we all agree on the basis of bishops' authority, confidentiality. Oh, here they are."

The two suffragans came in together. So we had a presentation at the breakfast tables from the Bishop of Scredington, the Right Reverend Julian Worsley. He told us roughly what the "shape" was for the rest of the week. Lots of services, private prayer, moments for theological reflection, conversation, some talks and, importantly, interviews. There would be an ecumenical element to the week, especially on Friday. This Tuesday morning was for our initial interviews; the men would get theirs in the afternoon. The interviews, two happening at any one time, with final interviews at the end of the week, were to be private and not to be discussed afterwards by any of us to each other or outsiders.

So we were in a lounge to wait around, with interview rooms off it, and Christine was mingling. People started introducing themselves to each other. I think my outsider sense was because Serninsea was out of the way and there was a core Wytham and nearby group of women.

Coming over Anna Ozga said she was evangelical; Deborah Wilkinson joined her and used the same label.

"I'm more liberal."

They both pulled their faces. So I made an effort to move. Cait Williamson said that her chakhras were in harmony and her body was felt to be in balance, but the layout of the room disturbed her. So she was positive about the body but I

wondered if she was in the right religion. She sought harmonic patterns and Jesus was the prism that distributed the white light into many colours. The Eucharist connected your body to his body and improved your spiritual sight. Crumbs. Perhaps she liked church windows? Oh she did: both plain and coloured. I think Christine might have approved of her positivity about the body.

Another called Ruth Forbes seemed quite orthodox but animals mattered, and her main debate with herself was whether to admit animals to communion. She said higher animals probably did sin, socially, and if they did then they needed salvation, ought to have the sacraments, and would be restored to glory along with human animals. This had an internal logic to it.

The more Catholic types carried with them the all-important *Common Liturgies* book. I overheard Christine say, to one, "Sacrifice works because sacrifice comes within the bosom of the Church. Everything must die, must actually die, for real liberation to be realised."

However, while sitting again and getting bored, I was called over by John Barman for my interview. And he was in this small room and behind a desk, stinking of perfume, and he asked me to stand behind the seat.

"Why should we ordain you at all?" he asked me.

When I breathed to attempt an answer he shook his head vigorously and I paused, starting to clamp my bottom.

"Let me cut to the quick. You have over the past months been having an affair with a local investigator and old school friend called Adam Magellan. He was with you when you refused to answer the door and your upstairs light was on. You've lied denying that. Your work with him and Systematic Measuring Services has been highly dubious at best - lies told again, I suggest. No, I am speaking; do not interrupt. On one occasion you were seen almost hanging out of his upstairs window, by that nice elderly woman who was later in hospital. You weren't exactly looking at the view. At the same time, your husband has been seeing a woman who was his friend at school, and work colleague, and is now staying with her and intending to be with her, if he moves to Harwich. Furthermore, although he won't tell me anything I ought to know, you and your friend have teased the Reverend Kenneth Osis to extract information and no doubt fed him with nonsense to the extent that he resigned from the role I still want him to perform."

I was going freezing cold and starting to lose my balance, still clamping my bottom.

After a pause, he asked: "What do you have to say for yourself?"

"I have nothing to say for myself."

"And I know that you have just been on holiday. You have seen your parents in Wales, where they live now, and you bumped into Jeremy Symes at a naturist club where you met your husband and his affair partner, and clearly greeted them as if you completely accept their relationship."

"Is he your spy or something?" I asked, starting to shake.

"Who?"

"The Reverend Jeremy Symes."

"Ah, well, for his behaviour, which is not unlike yours, I have suspended him. Clearly you and your husband have come to some agreement, and you are acting as if you are still married, presumably until you get this ordination done that we cannot then reverse."

I was shaking even more now, and had to grip the back of the seat in front of me with both hands. But then, I thought, I'm not having this.

"Did my husband tell you all this?"

"With your shabby agreement? Are you pleading guilty? You don't realise..."

"Guilt regarding what?" I asked. "What you saw from your 'control booth'?"

"Got it in one. Were you a material part in the break up of Jeremy Symes' marriage? You were cavorting naked with him when his wife came in."

"It was entirely innocent and if you know so much then you'll know *that*."

"And so tell me about meeting Kenneth Osis. What did you, and you and your friend, do to tease him so much?"

"There is nothing to tell about Kenneth Osis and me or about my friend."

"I beg to differ."

I paused. Then I said, "I differ also. I differ in that I am going to my room, to get my luggage, and I'm going to my car..."

"And is this what you are going to do: for your misdemeanours just outlined you are going to throw away a whole life's orientation of service for others?"

"Hey?"

"You see, we take the bad as well as the good. Let's take your naturism. Apparently, you changed your naturist club membership: you moved to one even further away from Serninsea - from Saxiclite to Bever Wood. That's good."

"Yes I did."

"But what worries me is you probably believe in your Pagan naturist interest more than in the faith to which you are about to seal your life's commitment."

"That's... Pagan?"

"Apparently I've heard it said that you regard naturism as second nature. Well, if you do, undress."

"I don't believe I am hearing this. There is a time and place for everything. I said that to Christine."

"Christine has spoken to you?"

"Yes."

"I want her to accompany you but she's had no authority to speak to you beyond chit-chat. What did she say?"

"She described the group, about which you lot have been dropping hints for a while now, telling me how compatible I was with its purposes."

He paused.

"Well, your reaction pleases me."

"What?"

"Your... You heard what I said."

"Are you having a rethink as to how to address me?"

"So the good news is this. Let me put it like this. Do you know why Jeremy Symes was suspended?"

"I can guess."

"Because he made a public spectacle of himself. He so upset his wife, and carried on with... What's she called, Lindsey Poldark?"

"Lindy Peacock. You obviously don't know everything."

"Whereas, in your case, not even your training incumbent really knows of your continuing indiscretions. This is good because you have tried to keep up appearances. He thinks your denials may be true, that your dallying has stopped."

"I'm not so sure about that."

"At least you admit to them to me."

"No, I admit nothing; I said I am not so sure that he thinks my denials may be true."

"You see, no one is perfect, but we need people like you, who can both transgress and keep the transgressions in the crossover, or the wings."

I looked at him. This was staggering. I decided to do something counterintuitive, especially as I was having to resist my lower reactions. I took off the collar and removed my cassock over my head, putting it over the seat back in front and laid the collar on to the seat itself. (I wasn't wearing underwear, as ever.)

"What is this about?"

"I've undressed. You told me. Now you see me."

"Yes I do. Presumably, nothing to hide. Stay like this then."

"What, outside as well?"

"No, in here."

"Oh. Do you *enjoy* my body?" I enquired.

"It is one of God's greatest gifts. I see that you obviously give it attention."

"In what sense?"

"No pubic hair."

"Oh dear, oh dear."

"Someone like yourself *should* be one of the ordained. You should be ordained and be on the team. You can, as we put it, stage things, act roles, and inhabit parts that others cannot."

"Oh? Prompting the actors, perhaps? Bishop, can I have a badge?"

"Ah, the badges. Well, people who *commit* wear them. Turn around please."

"Is this some form of casting?"

"You could say that. Talent spotting, although that's left to others"

So I did this.

"Trim. And a noticeable spot on your arse." Then he said, "Turn and face me again. Come and sit down. Put the gown and collar on this desk. Hmm."

"Would you like my legs open?" I asked him.

"I don't think it is necessary."

"Would you like to look into my *cunt*, Bishop John?"

"Sit down with your legs together and stop being silly."

"Are *you* going to strip off?" I asked him.

"No. I am interviewing you, not you me. So, to resume: you *have* shown discretion and control, and you have shown this when I have telephoned you as well. You have your nudity interest, by which you are so obviously unembarrassed. You have also shown theological sophistication when preaching, and I like that."

"Even *I* think I am shit at preaching, Bishop."

"So I want this week to work for you and I want you at the cathedral. Meeting Christine has my approval, by the way. Work with her."

"So you said. Are you going to look at her naked body as well?"

"I hardly think it will be necessary. She has a mission to prostitutes."

"I know."

"She was brave during that bank robbery. She is skillful, like you. Well, get dressed now. This interview, like all others, is in strictest confidence."

"I bet it is."

"Be discreet, as you have been. Don't tell everything to Christine, and definitely not about this interview. Theologically, she is a bit rigid."

I was now stood up, retrieving my collar and cassock. Slipping it back over me I asked, "Are you suggesting other pairings?"

"Possibly. There will be pair activity on Friday. You do yours with her. I have watched your progress carefully. I think I am *impressed*. I think we can work together into the future. I'd even like to see you get your first own ministry in the eastern area of Wytham diocese. So benefit from the week and the good outcome at that cathedral - your second beginning. See you around. Go now."

I stared at him and said, "I am astonished. Perhaps Christine and yourself should co-ordinate better."

"You might be right, there: but, remember, I am a bishop and she is a lowly deacon. Though I think she is destined for high office and, for that matter, so are you. Interview over. At the end of the retreat, you will be interviewed again either by me or Bishop Julian."

I left the room staggered, and just wondered what the next woman would hear. I needed the khasi, best one on my cell floor away from everyone.

Sitting, I reflected that for everyone else, if perhaps not Christine, this retreat would be quite normal. Christine Vine was being interviewed by the Bishop of Scredington. I wondered if he was in on this or not.

For before and after interview, there was a rolling programme of trying out meditation in a room with seats and cushions placed around its walls. Arriving there and joining in, one effort was purposefully walking around the room, whereas another was sitting with breathing exercises (I combined this with pelvic movements), and another was to concentrate on a candle in a bowl in the centre of the room. Meditating drew some resistance from some, but Sister Julianne led us in what we might do while keeping in mind the Spirit of God.

I went to my cell-bedroom where my hair took a pounding from my dangerous hairbrush. The lunch was bland and the afternoon was tedious, and nothing of interest happened with anyone. Piety and seriousness was on display afterwards, whereas I was bored and not a little angry.

These bishops had vanished. What would they do regarding interviewing the men? Were any men being lined up for special treatment? I did see Christine and she was dutifully silent about her interview.

However, I had to speak to Christine. "These interviews, Christine, are confidential. Well, abusers need confidentiality. I won't say what he said, but he did everything to undermine me and then the opposite."

"I hear you," she said. "Being a bishop does not guarantee competence."

"You are all stitching me up, aren't you?"

"Don't make me any more furious than I already am," she said.

"He is bad cop and you are good cop, but perhaps he has forgotten that you are good cop."

"Listen: I think he has forgotten a number of things, like the whole point of it."

"But you said you have to accept the bishops' authority, and he has authority over you."

"The dilemma has struck me for some time, Linda. The fact is the authority structure is correct."

"You are a lowly deacon and he is a bishop."

"That is true."

"You and I could rise to high authority, Christine."

"If you are leaking what was said in your interview, then you are breaking confidences."

"I'll shut up then," I said. "But you and I are supposed to get on together here. You already know that we do."

"Linda, please, keep your eye on the goal. Listen to me. We both need to be ordained, and you and I will get along very closely. I already like you a lot, and this does help, but the point is God."

"I am going to consider further whether or not to collect my mobile phone and drive away fairly soon."

"If you do, it would be tragic. You have so much to offer: you are the future, Linda."

"Am I?"

"Yes. Evensong. Are you coming?"

"No," I said. "I will be at Compline."

"Your absence will be noticed."

"Along with everything else, recently, it seems."

"Let me talk to you about that, some time. There are other things I want to mention."

"If I am so wanted then I will skip Evensong and he will still want me, won't he?"

"See you at Compline, then."

So, what did I take from that? She thought he had been crass, and had handled his discoveries about me badly. And he thought she had acted out of turn, beyond her station. It's the old one where they weren't singing from the same hymn sheet, and indeed I wasn't singing at all. I went for a walk. They did at least allow us to go outside.

Later on I was in my cell bedroom again, actually staring out on a sky residually light at 11 pm. Every emphasis was on going to bed early to get up early, whereas I normally drifted into the night and got up later. There was a knock on the door. So I slipped on my cassock and unlocked the door. I had expected Christine but it was Bishop Barman.

He asked me, "What are you doing?"

"I was staring out of the small window here looking at the view. Street lights, you know, until the grass grows again and the trees resume reaching out."

He closed the door. "Let me see."

As we stared towards the window, he put his right hand on my right shoulder, and it started to slide down my arm.

"What are you doing?" I asked him.

"Just a gesture of being friendly, supportive."

"I like to think of us as in a limousine. There's a front seat and a back seat but a window in between."

"I saw you naked. Why not give me a hug?"

"Though we are riding together, we must remember our places."

"But lots of clergy end up hugging: it is a sign of affection."

"I'm not the hugging type," I said.

"I discover you to be cold and not amenable," he said. "I once wrote about

clergy being more intimate with each other. Do you not want company for a short while?"

"No she doesn't," said Christine outside. "You go too far, Bishop Terry."

"These could be useful words when I'm walking out of this cell. I forgot to mention Margate earlier."

"We know she impressed Bishop Jonathan," Christine added herself.

"Oh God," I said. "Please go, both of you; I like my own company."

Christine just used her eyes for him to leave. She shut the door from the outside, and I locked it from the inside. Even in convents we should sometimes lock the door.

A Drive (Wednesday 26th June)

It was a dream if only because I was interviewed by three bishops in the parish vestry, all crammed in. I'd prevented Derek Imperial from getting his seat in the House of Lords, Julian Worsley said it was my duty to support my husband and John Barman wanted me to stand naked in the middle of Wytham Cathedral and allow people to grope me.

Thus, when I woke, in my convent cell, I went to the loo, dressed into mufti, started packing, and as people were getting up I went downstairs and placed my luggage at the reception. With no one there I rang the bell, and Sister Hilda came. I asked her for my mobile phone as I was leaving. She said she had to go and get it from secure keeping, but when she came back Christine in her black cassock was with her.

"Listen. Can we talk? Linda, please, can we talk?"

"I want to leave. I don't believe what I should believe; it's all castles in the air."

"Can we talk, perhaps in your car? Give her the mobile phone, Sister Hilda. Let's take your luggage to your car. Sister, can you wait until I come back? I'd like to talk with Linda before she goes. Can I sit in your car, Linda?"

"If you must. Then I will drive home, and I will make plans to vacate the curate's house. I'll probably move to Wales."

She sat in the passenger seat, and I was in the driving seat.

Christine said, "Listen to me. Let's go for a drive. Just into the countryside."

It was less than five miles once on a B road to reach Christine's base, Wheaton. So we walked into the church, as she had a key. She locked the door behind us. Walking to the pews, she bowed to the altar table. I did not.

"Sit!" Sat alongside me on a left-side pew mid-way down, Christine said, "Let's just go over what we agree about. Original blessing, and the body. Right?"

"I don't know any more. I came here having lost belief."

"But you haven't, have you, because you still have touchstones. Do you want to be secular, out into the cold world?"

"Keith went there."

"No he didn't. Keith is still theological."

"When he admitted that he slept with Yojana, I thought he could well be in your group, but didn't quite believe it and I cannot understand how she can be in your group. She is a Hindu."

"Because the group is generous. From a Hindu perspective, she celebrates the body and blesses the body. And so do you. She comes within the group because Catholic is another word for Universal. Tell me, do you not think that the Church should be a properly ordered vehicle that gives way to the breaking out of the Kingdom of God?"

"It's all a kind of theory, Christine. That's the trouble with it: castles in the air. Don McClean sang it:

*"Tell her the reasons why I can't remain:
Perhaps she'll understand if you tell it to her plain."*

"Linda, in societal and cultural terms I am a platonic postmodernist. Describe this to me."

"You have a view of perfection but it lives in a kind of relativist place."

"From the *outside*. I'm trying to see it how you see it. We have structures and authority. We keep and live within those, to realise what they offer. And that realisation - whether it can happen - is a form of hope. Is this not so?"

"Yes. You'd hope the theory is true."

"I have heard, Linda, that your theology is very liberal. Colin Cromer has about given up that you can be orthodox. He wants you to be be centrist in terms of inherited Christianity. Perhaps he is in a bubble. Linda, I'd accept all your arguments about historical uncertainty, but the issue is purpose in the context of authority. Listen: this is what the Vanguard stands for."

"Maybe.

*"For I can not be part of her 'Cocktail-Generation Partner's Waltz,'
Devoid of all romance."*

"Oh no, it is romantic too. Linda, tell me: are you a bisexual?" Christine stood up and faced me from the side - the pews in front prevented her from standing in front of me.

"Yes I am."

"Listen. I am a *theosexual*. Do you know what that means?"

"You're God?" I answered, looking up at her.

"No no. My body, my vulva, is in the service of God." She touched her crotch area with the flat of her hand.

"Blimey."

"Don't say 'blimey', Linda. I am Christosexual and a Spiritsexual as well. Look at my face." I did. "So let's take Yojana Asthana. She is theosexual as well. She is, though, Krishnasexual. She opens her vagina and the universe is in there. Raise your head to me. I will kiss you."

"I suppose your lips are theosexual." She kissed my lips very gently.

"All of my body; all of your body, Linda. Stand up and come with me into the aisle."

She did have a magnetic presence. "What are you doing?"

"I am, quite obviously, removing my collar, cassock and my underwear."

"Christine, this is a church!"

"Listen. It is the best place to do this." And she continued to nudity revealing

blonde, fluffy pubic hair. "Stand by me and I will remove all that for you."

"Are you mad...Well, you are obviously serious. What do I care now?"

I became naked too, in her parish church. "Don't worry. No one can get in. We'll take our shoes off as well. Bare feet."

Our clothes on the nearby vacated pew, and shoes removed; she held my hand and we walked up the aisle towards the altar table.

"Listen to me. This is stone," she said, approaching. "It's four vertical slabs and one slab across the top. It will easily take our weight." On arrival, Christine removed the cloths, revealing the slabs.

"You are kidding me. Christine! You can't do this. It is completely sacrilegious!"

"This is precisely what it is not. Face me."

I did not know why I was even doing this, but her hands on my waist meant using my hands and arms to push myself up and drop my bottom on to the cold slab. She then picked up my legs and swung me over so that I laid on the slab.

Now the woman climbed up herself, and pressed her body over mine.

"Christine, what are you doing? You can't do this."

"Widen your legs." Having licked her right hand fingers, her right leg made my legs widen, and she was working on my clitoris. She said, "This is the most sacred thing we can do."

"Oh shit. No no, I can't respond."

"You are and you will. Open your mouth a little. "She quickly sent me into a dreamlike response, with accompanying kissing. This was a woman highly skilled in the act of slowly and persistently working me so that the sensations went through my whole body.

She said, in between kissing me, "We are Christosexuals, Linda, you and me, and you are not submitting to me but to God. As you come to orgasm, think of God, think of Christ, think of the Spirit. For thousands of years, men and women have been married to the Church, and ecstasy has been in the name of the Lord."

Now she escalated my sensations, and I was very wet, and simply through her fingers and touch she sent me over the top. I shuddered, vibrated, and I said, "My God, my God."

Christine kissed me and held me. "Listen hard. We are children of God, Linda, and you must give your life to God. The Spirit entered your vulva, Linda, and you are now purely a woman of God."

We lay together on the hard slab, and eventually sat up, got off and stood together. Pausing at first, she replaced the cloths, and she held my hand walking together back down the aisle. It was like marriage. She said, "This is not a relationship with me, but with God; now let both of us become ordained priests, and I will help you with your task ahead. I will mentor you, Linda."

Thus we dressed, with shoes back on, and left the church, locking the door from the outside.

Behind the wheel I paused, and breathed out. Christine said to me, "Well done."

"All right. We'll go back," I said. "But may I ask you? Do you have a personal view of John Barman, or are you not allowed a personal view?"

"Hmm. I think he is crass. But there we are. His overall purpose is right, but he is crass."

I thought she was being honest. So driving back, I said, "I suppose you know what happened between me and Jonathan Eyre. I just fell for him."

"Well, he is skilled. At that time people had wondered about your potential place in the group. But we heard about your time in Margate, and with your response we knew that you believed in your body. Your husband had promoted you and recommended you all the time since he came to us. He was and is right. He never lost his faith: he is quite theological. Your place, Linda, is indeed in the Church and now you have given yourself to God."

On arriving back, I handed in my mobile phone again to Sister Joan - I had not used it - and took my luggage back to my cell bedroom. I stared at the white walls, and placed my hands together in prayer.

Lectures

I went back to the meeting room for dining. I was present alongside Christine, for lunch, and continued to be alongside her for the first Wednesday talk. (The men elsewhere had theirs before lunch.)

In came the Right Reverend John Barman and the Reverend Kenneth Osis himself. John Barman told us that Ken had resigned from his counsellor role, that he wished he hadn't, but he was still able to talk on the priest's diary writing for self-evaluation.

It was hardly original stuff. Ken said that the diary had to be secure and completely private, and we might want to disguise who is whom. It should be an open-ended A4 book with time given to write. The diary is like having a counsellor or confessor: it should involve reflective writing, writing with a spiritual attitude. Also every priest should have and preferably choose a confessor, a confidant with whom to discuss all the ministry tensions. Nevertheless, the confessor is not entitled to hear confidential details from pastoral encounters, only directly the emotions of the person himself or herself.

I acknowledged Ken. He said he was pleased to see me, but he didn't know anything about me nearly leaving. He departed, and later a Bishop Niall Ifan came in, Suffragan Bishop of Casnewydd. Bishop Barman introduced him.

In a strong Welsh accent - harder than Dyfed's - he told us that Christ as a source for pastoral practice had to be checked against biblical criticism and the historical Jesus. And tradition should not have its own way, when the Spirit moves us to new insights. "Science and the rigours of history teach us more about the self past and present. 'Did Jesus really do this?' This has to be a question for all our normative assumptions. And tradition was new, once.

"However, we are not Pelagians, intending to pull people up by their own efforts. Pastoral theology is a method based in revelation and tradition about service and sacrifice, and the confidence to serve, and the confidence of giving one's whole self to the other. The biggest 'other' is God.

"Christian pastoral theology should not be abstract but rooted in the real, as in the Incarnation. It should also be rooted in a sensual practice, and I say sensual advisedly. We have the duty to be closer to our - I hate the word - clients, in a consensual more intense pastoral relationship than the secular counsellors. Why?

Because we ask the client to engage in prayer and a prayer that involves the all of us."

Bishop Barman said that Niall Ifan was staying with him, and he'd also given this lecture to the men. For the bishop, consensual meant that closeness but that we did not 'Lord it over anyone'.

Afterwards, Christine got into a chat with chakhras-promoting Caitriona; Megan Bentley joined them, the latter interested in liturgy. I came alongside as Christine spoke. "Listen. Sex workers give all. They die to themselves, to try to carry on living. But what if we at least guide them? The Church, as perfect peace, perfect ethic, must organise and create a place where we replace their dependency on drugs, which is a cry of help. Why can't the Church get more involved? Get rid of the pimps!"

Cait called this a risky ministry.

"Christianity a such a sop, the way it is misapplied," Christine declared. "The Church must be involved and say, 'We will be with you in your pain and your redemption.'"

Anna Ozga came along and said, "Jesus actually died on the cross to save us; they can be saved by believing in Jesus."

"You completely misunderstand," Christine said. "We realise truth, through the imaginative freedom we are given, to say that we can apply the narrative ethic that was in the cross and in the transformation of the resurrection."

Cait said, "You make it all sound like a novel."

Christine said, "This is irrelevant. You say, Anna, all they have to declare is Jesus saves them and that will do. It won't. It is almost the opposite. As soon as you *want*, you've lost; as soon as you give up everything, then you *receive*. You have to give yourself, and give even more. All of it. For the hell of it, and let heaven decide itself. That is Christ on the cross, and you do it, and the hope is transformation."

I said, "I agree with Christine." Christine looked at me and smiled. I said, "We are servants that *do* and doing matters from priestly availability."

Anna said, "One word: *works*."

"Yeah, it works," sneered Christine, in a positive way.

After the Eucharist and evening meal we had visitors for a further lecture. Bishop Derek Imperial himself was doing the honours.

"We are pleased to have here the Reverend Alan Lindsey, accompanied by his sister, professionally still a General Practitioner, the Reverend Doctor Andrea Lindsey, originally both from Dorset, and her new husband, the Suffragan Bishop of Sumorsæte, Lynton Plimpton. Alan's latest book is available on the tables at the back. Alan, please tell us about the isolation of theology."

"My brief lecture is the basis for my new book on sale, where it is all developed in some detail. This is the sort of lecture you should have heard at theology college. Before I consider the isolation of theology I'll consider when it was not. By 'isolated' I mean where other disciplines ignore theology even while theology draws on them.

"Take the friendly Middle Ages. The revelation in the Christian message and its absorption into new and standing institutions was the basis for knowledge. People lived by saints' and holy days across the agricultural calendar, and often in Europe the monasteries organised the economy and the welfare system, at least here until Henry VIII abolished them as a power base and resource and this led towards local

government welfare.

"The Bible was the teaching action of God. It guided doctrine, it guided knowledge. What you did - how you lived - was reflected in the Bible itself. The Bible was a means to describe reality. But it also described oneself in relation to God. It still does these things, but it was more easily seen to do these things in past times.

"And then there were the people, the community, the *koinonia*. We were never individuals in the sense that we have become today, but part of the interplay of the community. We are to this day still tribal, with in-groups and out-groups, but in this admittedly idealised past - but for a few - we were all one big in-group.

"The danger was that this became a cloak to wear rather than being an encounter, and this is what happened in the Victorian period. Throughout industrialisation, and throughout the rise into greater consciousness of alternative explanations for reality, there was still a Christian consensus even based on the cloak. But identity and how to know your being are not the same. And you become priests at a time after that cloak became worn through and eventually fell off. I am a priest and you become priests in what are 'interesting times' and hostile times for us.

"The working class were never churched, and the middle class fell away afterwards. What were intellectual ideas challenging the Christian view of reality became ordinary ways of thinking. If we have a problem then it is solved by technology. We became practical humanists.

"We are forced into theological strategies, because we are devoid of a cultural place. Perhaps that is a good thing, but being devoid of a cultural place also means a difficulty with communication. How *are* we to set up a culture-free argument, or at least the most culture-free we can manage, treasuring and witnessing the revelation we have as knowledge?

"The point here is not that we have given up on knowledge, or faith, but that the cultural base and ordinary thinking practice has moved on such that we have to communicate differently. This is the place of what is called dialectical theology. This means pitching opposites against each other, within the world of the text.

"Clever and not so clever lay people will say that biblical texts disagree. And you might say, yes they do, and accept this. The danger here is individualism. Another approach, possibly individualistic as well, is a *lectio divina* approach that you simply read and read again and then get moved by the Spirit. It might need people together and some discussion to overcome individualist inspiration. Or you might say there is a higher principle across the texts - for example as people do who are for gay inclusion. The danger here is a cultural Christianity, even imposition. But it is not a new method; Peter Abelard, who died in 1142, aimed to get agreement from texts that did not agree. Bernard of Clairvaux did not like it, and got Abelard condemned. A third approach is working one text against the other, just as they are, and this is the dialectical approach.

"The Reformation produced a right wing and a left wing, and the left wing, some being Socinian, relied on reasoning from direct reading. And the National Church had its latitudinarians, and some Arians, and even Socinians from over in Poland, via the Netherlands. All these movements were assisted by the printing press.

"After the Reformation and its left wing came the Enlightenment. Reason beats the guidance of tradition - you might arrive at a collective reasoned position but you might not. Well, to enchant reason we had Romanticism and even the Oxford

Movement leading on to *Lux Mundi*: didn't these run to the rescue? No, because they produced little but the ambiguity of symbolism in a gloss of religion. That's why so many ran off to the tough institution: Rome.

"The beauty of the dialectical approach is that it does not deal in such external reason. It stands within the kerygma of the text, and seeks to uncover the text, by pitching it against itself.

"Reason gives way to faith and this is how it is done. The transcendent God comes through the text bashed against itself: via its opposing forces.

"The key person here is Karl Barth. Look at his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, from 1919, if you get the chance. He opposed religious culture. We are sinful and need the judgment of God. He might have said: religion is human, bottom-up whereas faith is encounter, top-down, and often unpredictable. Religion is syncretistic, but faith debates the opposites into self-revelatory stances.

"Nevertheless, this carries a freedom of enquiry, and was done by Barth regarding Christ, and of course how the Church receives revelation. But what if the Spirit is so examined? What freedom we would see there!

"From the perspective of the world, it is postmodern, because it occupies an imaginary space permitted by the plurality of culture; but, from the believer, we are within. Some make a similar argument for the Church, but Barth never would, because of the danger of the operation of a bottom-up religion.

"However, the price of this theology is its continued isolation because it is so exclusively self-referential. To join the debate, you have to be an insider and learn the language first. For a parish priest in a National Church - one that must engage with the culture - this may be too high a price to pay. My book expands on this point further. Thank you"

I made the point in plenary discussion that Karl Barth was as much cultural as the rest of us. "He had a time and place in world events and culture, and represented a point of intellectual change after a crisis of liberal theology. No one can escape this; he would not have produced this theology a hundred years earlier. The New Testament itself represents a time of Roman occupation and a cultural cusp between expectant Jews - of which Jesus was one - and Greek culture more generally. Paul was essential because he was cross-cultural, otherwise Christianity would have stayed a Jewish sect."

After a few female gasps, Alan's response was that this carried the danger of extreme historical relativism from which no Gospel could come, "...and I am sure you have faith that stands in contrast to such a position."

I responded, "Faith means trust, and trust comes from critically examining the truth no matter from where it comes." The diocesan bishop was nodding at me vigorously before I had even finished.

Christine also spoke. She said, "Listen to me. Barth does not have a sufficiently robust view of the Church. After all, the Church wrote the New Testament and subsequently developed tradition under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The essential Church writes the scripture from the standpoint of perfect peace, and it becomes the resource to guide us simply because it is *the* source. It is an institution, but just because it is outwardly human does not prevent it being divine. Is this not the divine and human Body of Christ that it - the Church - declares?"

His reply was that Christine's stance time-travelled to the Middle Ages; but now: "This needs you to be cut off from everyone intellectually, claiming a Platonic

delivery of perfection, and the historical evidence is against you, as evidenced also in the contradictions in the biblical text that show a diverse Church."

I declined a purchase at forty-five quid, but some, I think, felt obliged. Christine could afford it, but did not. Anyway, I was willing to attend Compline, and go to bed.

The Explanation (Thursday 27th June)

Thursday came, hairbrush tapping in my hand on sitting on my bed. I dodged my way in a towel to the bathroom toilet, but didn't (as usual) need the shower room.

Outside, Anna Ozga was also wrapped in a towel and said she wanted to write to Colin Cromer, to consider going there. "Do you know the address?"

"The Vicarage, Saint Sernin Parish Church, Greylag Road, FO12 2QZ. You want a job there?"

"Won't you be leaving? Isn't he retiring?"

"There might be a lot of competition. It is a single church parish - compare that with Serninsea Marshes' eleven. Anyway, there's no announcement."

I asked Christine, after Morning Prayer and breakfast, "Do you believe in resurrection then, like the one resurrection, or it as general and begun; was it appearances, or thought to be, or literary, or something else, or nothing, or the tomb, or what?"

She said, to this, "What does it matter what I think? I teach what the Church teaches. With that cross, death showed its universal significance, and life follows. Some indeed call it the kerygma: the heart of it, the claim of it."

My only response was, "Oh, I'm a bit more pragmatic than that."

She said, "Listen: pragmatism is a secularist ideology. Instead one should land in the bosom of the organising Church where that kerygma is proclaimed."

She asked me to come to her cell bedroom. She had her own cross on her bedside table. First she took off my collar and cassock, and her own, and her underwear to her blonde hair below.

"Are you seducing me - again?"

"No, but I will kiss you. Look at me." She kissed me. "You approve, don't you?"

"Of course I approve." My collar and cassock came off.

"And of being theosexual?"

"I like the concept."

"Then sit with me as I have information that you need to know." Her right hand pushed my left breast up "I first draw your attention to Luke Chapter 8 verse 17 by reading it from my *New Revised Standard Version*:

"For nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not become known and come to light.

She released it. "What we have is the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati*

admissis in Ecclesia Anglicana Nationalibus. This means the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the English National Church. This is the name of the vanguard group into which you will come. We have a working name, in Serninsea, that helps keep it autonomous and secretive for as long as necessary. This is the Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players. This name was Ken Osis's idea, and other groups have adopted their own names. Now you understand the theatrical metaphors."

"I knew it wasn't about the theatre; I knew sex was involved - somehow."

"Well, the metaphors and name, like having talent scouts and actors, came about because the Casino in Serninsea used to be a theatre with a proscenium. And above the casino, that used to service the theatre, is where the group has many of its meetings."

"I get it now."

"I will mentor you, and one of the bishops will initiate you, because you will be a priest. If you want a female, I suggest the Bishop of Tees, Elizabeth Huett, and if a man perhaps you'd prefer Jonathan Eyre, since he has had sex with you already."

"Initiation is sexual?"

"Of course it is and must involve liquid exchange and mutual orgasms. Personally, I don't like the initiation within the Body Eucharist. I want this Body Eucharist to be our standard service, but in fact we practise the standard Eucharist. I'd like to write a 'Mass Turbation', where 'turbation' is as in the mixing of sediment. The Body Eucharist involves a physical exchange of fluids and so you must have regular gynaecological health checks."

"It would have to involve my own gynaecologist."

"The group needs to remain secret, and this is why we have our own, but I'm sure there can be an arrangement. Why do you need your own?"

"Special reasons that I do not share."

"We do allow for essential personal, pastoral and commercial confidentiality, but beyond these, we expect your openness within the group. Ken Osis, for example, never told us anything of his counselling, although the bishop had you monitored, and him. We did know that he met you and your friend Diana."

"I was being followed."

"We have to be sure about your lifestyle. You are gifted, Linda. So at your initiation you can have sperm, urine, spittle or menstrual blood transferred from a bishop, whatever suits you."

"Not shit then."

"Well, I think we should, but no one has done this and it is not offered. We had a Buddhist who was too advanced for us."

"A *Buddhist*?"

"Yes, of a group similar to ours, but rather more seeing the body as disgust and yet how sensation is transitory. Our theology is more redemptive. You see the difference?"

"Certainly."

"After you are initiated, you'll become an initiator. I will be as well. We rely on females from Hartlepool and Middlesbrough - actually, where Elizabeth is based - for our females."

"I had no idea."

"Indeed not. I won't give names of participants yet, beyond those you can

guess and have seen wearing badges and the bishops I have mentioned."

"Jenny World, my dear friend, is one."

"She is. Listen: she is a true servant of God. You will become friends again. And the other thing is participating in the orgasm, and participating in the sexual based experience of serving and sacrificing. You understand?"

I said, "I've already involved Ken Osis sexually. Diana did more than me."

"I suspected so, but, Linda, that is pastorally confidential so you should say no more. He has not."

"I'm sorry. Of course. I should have said nothing."

"Keith will be at your ordination, and that's important for the outside world, and indeed someone like Colin Cromer, your training vicar, because he is completely uninvolved and unaware of the Confraternity and its Vanguard existence. He is an innocent abroad."

"At home, more like."

"Have you any questions, Linda?"

"No, but what you describe is known in sociology as 'superstitious authoritarianism' - a concept that applies to an indeed 'vanguard' group that is secretive and protects itself through initiating rituals."

"But this does not need sociological explanation; it is purely based on what this group is about: original blessing, and the blessing and service with sacrifice of our bodies with one another. We commune with God; we try in the Body Eucharist to orgasm because that orgasm is the vision in ecstasy of the Kingdom of God. We exchange fluids, but we receive the revelatory experience through our sexual receptors."

"That's Mauss."

"What mouse?"

"No, Marcel Mauss, the anthropologist of gift-exchange, like how to understand the Kula Ring in the Trobriand Islands: material sacrifice for spiritual gain. The equivalent is that sex is a form of material giving for the hope of love. I get that."

"But, listen again: we don't come at this from the outside but from the inside. Your clitoris is your means to experience first hand a vision of the Kingdom. It is the original blessing made real and received. The man has his penis and ejaculation. Come on, let's reclothe as there are more lectures to attend today, by the Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke and by the Suffragan Bishop of Screddington."

"You don't want to give me or receive an orgasm?"

"I do but there isn't time. This is what is wrong. We should be having sex, not listening to some speculation. I'm afraid it will stay wrong under this Bishop of Wytham."

"I thought you believed in the authority of the Church."

"Oh, I do. The Church as pure, when it is pure, but here is the corrective role of the Vanguard. Let's dress. When I mentor you, we will have a lot of sex; I'll take you to the heart of heaven and you'd better make sure I get there too."

"Wow."

Our collars and cassocks were back on. In recognition of me, she didn't first put on her underwear.

"You're on to something here. The drafts and openness are much better between my legs. I'll probably keep wearing a bra, though - but not now. Let's go."

Suffragan Bishops on Authority

The diocesan bishop, we learnt, was entertaining yesterday's contributors, including the one who had lectured to sell us his book. We had the suffragans.

Bishop Julian Worsley of Screddington kicked off. (Bishop John was then with the boys.) He said all sorts of introductory words before stating: "When you think about it, the theology of culture and the theology of the body's biology are one." We necessarily understand our bodily processes through language and culture. "This means the body is understood theologically using text.

"This is not to compromise science," he said to us, "into some weird non-realist construction that is somehow made up and contained within language. Rather, it is to say that science is not limited by description but wrapped up in meaning. You can still say that the body's primal concern is to be a parent and arguably a grandparent via the sexual act. Being a grandparent makes for successful homosapiens - two parenting generations allows one to be productive. But this cannot be the whole purpose, or be simply it. I would venture further that the culture of sacrificial and serving are part of our biological success. We give up and we renew, and on that we can turn to scripture and tradition."

"Is he part of the group?" I asked Christine in a whisper.

She said, "No," just as quietly.

I wondered why not.

When he had finished I had a more positive question. "I'm a naturist and when I thought theologically I knew the body had a theology." (This created some stares.)

"Naturism is a cultural act," said the bishop

"But I'm saying something about its reality," I said.

"You'd better explain."

"Flesh changes, flesh withers, flesh isn't always glamour, and it is real. But the flesh joins with nature and the environment..."

"Ah," said Bishop Julian, "I would warn against Eden interpretations of naturist behaviour as an inappropriate ideology from environmentalism."

"Hardly *Eden* is it? But it's definitely positive," I said to stares and muttering. "We can say, 'This is me: there is no other than me, but do not misread the body surface as all of me.'"

"Explain that," he commanded, with an almost irritated voice.

"Well, for example: a transgender person attempts to correct a misreading, a cultural misconstruction deriving from original appearance."

"Sounds like a Pagan and Buddhist view to me."

Christine said, "You're saying, bishop, that the Church is our directive culture, and provides *its* context of the withering."

"*Absolument*," he said.

Caroline Small lamented, "No."

"Let me explain, now for Caroline and Linda. In the wider world, we live in supposedly postmodern times. What that means is that the old, secular, Enlightenment view, has given way to a plurality of views without necessarily an ordering principle (as within the Enlightenment). So this is our chance as a Church to

reclaim the public space, and reclaim the cultural interpretation. In our theology the body is grounded in ecclesiology, grounded in revelation."

Caroline Small actually stood up to say, "The Eastern Orthodox say there is one revelation, and that is tradition, whereas we say there are three, scripture and reason being their own sources."

"They are not independent," said Bishop Julian, and we are entitled to emphasise how they are interdependent and interact - especially in the context of responding to the postmodern challenge."

I noticed soon afterwards Bishop Julian and Christine talked and left together. Perhaps she would attempt to recruit him.

Thirty minutes later, Bishop John's whiff of perfume announced his presence.

He was soon saying: "Kant is the great subjectivist route of faith, and is ahistorical; set against that is Hegel and the route to an ever higher collective spirit as an historical process. Hegel builds and builds so that the Kantian jump to it can last longer. Hegel is social but the price of Alan Lindsey's focus on text as text, and others on tradition in the postmodern setting, is too high: we are cut off. If revelation remains other, and the world is sinful, then faith is dangerously Gnostic; I always thought Karl Barth was dangerously Gnostic. The alternative to both of these approaches are Schopenhauer's 'will' that's dead in the water and we can do nothing with it.

"John Henry Newman is interesting, here. He moved from a developmental position that was Anglican, rejecting accretions, to then justify what Rome added on and thus gave a Roman Catholic position - whilst, really, he never stretched to its absolutism. But - and here's the rub - he did that change to objectivism via a subjective jump, even though he denied it. Everyone, surely, makes a subjective jump of some kind, unless you have such a very large theory of revelation indeed as some do right down to the available parking spot when you turn up and are lucky."

He looked at me. Was he thinking of Helen McPhail and me going shopping?

"The trouble then is that revelation slips into magic, and supernaturalists ought to avoid magic because of unethical and me-me implications."

Christine said to me, "Utterly inadequate." She spoke up, "Are you advocating Hegel?"

"Wait and see. There was a strong view in the early Oxford Movement days that English civil society was a delicate even failing beast, held together in a feudal-inherited regime of Church and State, Whigs and Tories. The Whigs had won, of course: the Tories were post-Whig after the elites had changed the monarch. Our Scottish Anglican brethren were slow to adapt, Jacobites against William! The capitalists were a new thing, however, wanting freedoms in trade to replace mercantile privileges, and used an Enlightenment ideology to boot. Kant, perhaps, Locke certainly. The people of emergent denominations were largely middle class and wanted reform that might well undermine the old regime, using the toleration of William and Mary, and Anne, after previous failed attempts at comprehension. The older dissenters were the pushiest, really. While John Henry Newman jumped to the more authoritarian ship, his brother, Francis William, also a one-time evangelical, became ever more liberal in dissent and indeed lost his Christianity.

"It's interesting that F. W. chose a pure Hegelian spirit, and J. H. chose a Church of power; and we Anglicans should choose neither. All right, Christine? We say that we pray and let our liturgy act as a regulative filter, using our interlocking

authority system, and thus we obtain our Church as society. We have rules and regs, of course, and Holy Scripture, but the characteristic is to listen to our liturgy. But, oddly, we are comprehensives under a State regime of toleration. We became a throwback at a time of toleration.

"We are not slaves to scripture, which has various views within it, and about it, nor even to the Church; but we take the whole as a basic defence: our authority system is credal and people say the creeds, and we listen to them too; I'm actually with J. H. Newman on this: that for the mass of the laity, it is enough that they do not set up counter-statements of their own."

I noticed various people shuffling, perhaps rather predictably: identified evangelicals and some Catholics. Many had blank faces.

"I'm sure the diocesan bishop could develop my points."

(Ah, I thought; he was matching himself with our diocesan in his theological speculations.)

"The relevance here is that I take the view that all priests are indeed in situ for the bishop, not just in the Eucharist but in preaching and indeed ethically. But we are not Eastern Orthodox, one of autocephalous Churches and bishops in and out of communion with one another.

"All I would say is that the more precise the revelation, in historical moments, the more is the need for leadership, for priests as arms of the bishops. That's it."

Caroline Small, sister of Cadenza, said, "We've had nothing practical or contextual, nothing about actual ministry."

Imogen England said, "No Richard Osmer."

Caroline asked, "What, the *House of Games* man? Smash a picture of a theologian into a question about congregations?"

Imogen said, "Not *Osman*. Practical theology. About context. In a congregation."

Bishop Barman said, "Our lectures this week have not given instructions on how to do ministry. You had these in college and as deacons in your parishes. We are encouraging you to read, think and stay theologically informed. The diocesan bishop lays a very high value in creating an ordained theological force. But, whilst we may inherit comprehension, we cannot deny that toleration means there are others.

"And so what I'd like you to do, tomorrow morning, is to let you out a bit, into that wide and wild world, perhaps in pairs or threes, and see, as Anglicans, what other denominations or groups are doing. Beyond the Friday coffee mornings, I've asked one or two others to have their churches open and people gather, so you can go inside in your cassocks and look around. Look at the architecture; ask how people are loyal to where they are, if they are. This time avoid Anglican churches. Oh, and one group should go and see Rabbi Maurice Neptune at the small meeting place the Reformist Jews use - I have the details about my person somewhere. Contextual at last!"

I thought about seeing the rabbi, after the school encounter. I'd go for pot luck instead, with Christine.

The bishop said, "We'll follow these visits with discussions, and connect our theology to ecumenism and possibly the secular urban space. Always theologise on what you have seen. And each and every one of you will be attending your second interview in the afternoon."

At which point Cadenza Small, sister of Caroline, stood up and said, "We've

had no female contributors, no female theology, no feminist insight, not a thing."

"Well, find it on your travels," said the bishop. "Do interpret from a feminist theological stance. Over to you!"

With Bishop Barman's lecture over, Christine said, quietly, "Come with me."

I wasn't sure what to expect, but I asked if she wasn't sympathetic to Eastern Orthodoxy authority, given all that she has said.

Not yet answering, she took me into the convent library, and there were a range of books that had Christine's approval - all Catholic in stance, Anglican and otherwise.

"Yes," she said, eventually, "But he only made a passing reference to need, so the more the need, the more the authority. I think we can turn the Western tradition to make it more Eastern - goodbye to Augustine's ethics, emphasise the Church while allowing the Scripture and reason its own revelation still, but we are a vanguard."

Asked to go to her cell bedroom, she removed her cassock to her knickers only and asked me to rub cream into these red streaks across the front and back of her body.

"Why?" I asked. "Who did this?"

She said they reminded her of the need to sacrifice.

I asked, "Do nuns here do this?"

Her only reply was that nuns do have relationships: Sisters Martha and Joanne had an ongoing lesbian sexual relationship, for example. She didn't answer my question.

I attended services and ate with others, and retired to read about the Oxford Movement founders.

Meet the Unitarians in Wytham (Friday 28th June)

We were 'let out' on Friday, the fourth full day. Christine and I took a bus into town in our cassocks, collars and shoulder bags.

"My breasts are stinging today," she said.

"I can attend to them again."

"What makes you aware of your body, Linda?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Yes, I do."

"Needing to have a shit. There you are: I told you."

"Evacuating is a sacred act, Linda."

"You are kidding me."

"Not at all. It's a matter of holiness. Focus and meditate when you lose what you have made. We all look back at our shit. You should wipe your backside, or spray it, with a gentle prayerful attitude."

"Christine: wiping my backside with paper is a burden. You really are bonkers."

"Why do you mock me? Don't mock me, Linda. Some see a connection with giving birth."

"And God is present at both, you'd say."

"Of course. Why do you even ask this? Linda, if you think otherwise, then you are 'bonkers', as you put it in your disparagement of me - and of God, more importantly."

"I hear that some women giving birth have an involuntary shit. God must be doubly pleased."

"Will you give birth, Linda? I won't. Anyway, we have a church to find."

"I hope they have toilets, then."

"They usually do. Let's get off here and walk around."

Here was a random search for some chapel, having seen male ordinands already in one that we passed. Eventually, there was a place with an open door set back with a coffee morning notice outside.

Christine asked, "What's this place?"

"Perhaps it is one the bishop asked to be open for us. *Landview Road Chapel 1672* is hardly informative."

Through this porch and opened plain door we could see maybe twenty people in total sat about and at a stall. People were serving and consuming teas and coffees and a small selection of cakes and biscuits. In the gloom of the porch we saw a poster - *You grow when you think freely*. We paused, outside, looking in.

I said, "Oh, it is Unitarian. So they *do* exist and meet in Wytham."

"I think it's of some Victorian Ecclesia isn't it?" Christine assumed. "They must keep it going here. I don't think the bishop arranged this one."

"1672 is not Victorian! Never heard of Unitarians until I met my friend's apprentice. He looks at their webpages. They might be Pagan now."

"Really? Well, obviously, I don't know," she replied. "Weren't they the ones who did social and educational stuff in the 1800s and probably died out?"

"Clearly, we need to ask. Something interesting to report," I declared.

So we in cassocks entered. Inside there was this ginger-haired and bearded thinnish chap with a few others at a table, including a black woman with an American accent. This chap stood with an open-necked ordinary shirt collar up and came over to us.

There was a space with individual seats, and four rows of dark shiny pews at the back left.

"What's the origin of this place?" I asked. "I mean 1672 is ten years after the Anglican Prayer Book, the original."

"It's not the original," he said, in a highish pitched voice, rightly correcting me. "English Presbyterian Puritans they were: those who fell out in 1662 from that Prayer Book and waited for toleration for themselves. An indulgence from James II allowed them to open in 1672. As he spoke, there was some disagreement on the table whether they were then Unitarians, but the dominant voice was that they weren't then."

"Well," I said, "if you were Puritans then you were definitely not Unitarian, surely nothing like Unitarian. And anti-Pagan."

"Quite a change," said Christine. "Their ecclesiology must have become unhinged."

"And you are clergy?" another thin, white-haired, elderly chap asked, introducing himself as Colin Petty.

I said, "We are Anglicans on walkabout, looking in on other church life. We are both about to be ordained priests in the Anglican tradition - thus the garb. Who's

on that old photo?"

"Sir Roy Fultz. A former trustee. Very dour, very serious. City Mayor."

"Oh right."

"This is my first appointment as minister." said the younger redhead. "At one time our liberals and yours influenced each other. Read Wigmore-Beddoes, published in 1971."

Christine said, "Up to five minutes ago I thought you *were* nineteenth century."

One keen bulky middle-aged man replied, "We were Unitarian by the nineteenth century; the Magyars were able to be Unitarian from the later 1500s, helped a little by the Turks being strong nearby."

The minister identified him as Adrian Moore, and added, "For all your history, he's the man."

A younger woman said, "All the coloured glass here is from the nineteenth century, and they turned the church around by ninety degrees."

The minister added, "Very factual is Joy Smith. There was once a three decker pulpit, but a smaller one ended up at the side and a table took central position. And your Oxford Movement was distantly involved, or rather romanticism. Ministers were then often very learned and perhaps aloof, but it is not like that now."

"What, on both counts?" Christine asked. "No longer aloof, no longer learned?"

"Often."

"So did you train to be a minister?" I asked. "We are Christine Vine and Linda Jupitas."

"I was here first on a placement. Charley Darley. We have a college based at York."

I noticed that his trousers were rather tight and frankly stretching as if on a female. I said, "I'm confused about these influences on to former Presbyterians."

"And there were also Unitarian Methodists in Lancashire, and Unitarian Baptists in various places."

I asked, "Is that why, historically, a Baptist, like one known to a colleague of mine, might be hostile?"

"Historical legacies rumble on," he answered. "General Baptists went Unitarian, many then merging into the Presbyterian stream."

Christine asked: "Would there be a Lutheran phase, or something like that?"

"No," he said, scratching his red beard. "Calvinist, Arminian, sometimes Reformation-style Arian, then Unitarian."

"Worldwide was that?" I asked him.

"Nope. Lutherans among the Icelanders in Canada. The Icelander Lutherans were liberal and Canadian Lutherans more mainline. So the cultural Icelandic Lutheran Church in Canada became Unitarian. These Hungarians in Romania: their bishop went from Catholic to Lutheran to Calvinist to Unitarian."

I said, "Keep the Bishop, change the Church."

We were handed coffees that were luke-warm and easy to swallow and no payment required.

Christine said, "So it is still alive." She seemed to be wandering off.

He said. "Alive enough to keep going."

"Nationally?" I asked.

"Very diminished," he said, "but still a coverage of sorts. And the Internet, of

course. Americans do much better."

"And what does it stand for now? A particular inheritance of Christianity? Denies the Trinity? What's this Paganism someone I know sees online?"

"Well, still liberal Christian, but also Religious Humanist, Eastern, neo-Pagan: the Church changes as individuals join us with whatever they bring."

I said, "I can't see a liturgy working like that."

"We're flexible," said the older white-haired man.

Christine was stood staring at the windows and walls, some stones with statements about their illustrious dead, the more portraits.

A different woman came up, saying, "We were hoping he might be our minister, and we were quick," and walked away again."

The minister said, "That's Rose Barnes, our Secretary. The trick is to encourage each person with their own search, and we can discuss each contribution."

I asked, "What do you actually say in the pulpit? Does what you say go?"

"It's not for me to impose," he said, "or anyone else."

Christine, now looking back at us, quipped, "Well presumably you think *something*. Or what does your Ecclesia think?"

"The Church," he answered, "is creedless. So the seat of authority is the individual. You can use general terms, but it gets more difficult to use some terms that derive specifically from Christianity. We don't do the Lord's Prayer anything like as often as we did."

"What you say seems anarchic to me," I commented.

Christine agreed, speaking away from us: "It completely follows the secular normative."

He responded, "You can guess that my 'contextual theology' reflection is rather different from some other students in mainline denominations, if any are mainline any more. Scratch those individuals and they don't affirm as they do on the surface."

"That is so," said Christine from afar. "They affirm but continue to negate."

I asked, "Well, put it another way then: where do you get your theology from?"

He said, "Some of it is inherited, like forms and words to use, and you see this in the debates from the 1960s, say, which we shared roughly (if using different emphases) with other Churches, and some of it comes from social sciences and the arts."

"Exactly my point," said Christine looking at another stone.

"So," I was drilling further, "the Victorian period and then the 1960s and maybe 1970s? There was a counter-reaction on our side after that."

"I try to use feminist and green and more philosophical liberal non-realist theologies. Doesn't always suit our inheritance. You'll know the work of John Hick - a different kind of Presbyterian! He does suggest a high theism beyond religious packages, but we can also cut into and join up parts of religious packages."

"Hegelian theism," I said. "One of our bishops rejected this in a lecture yesterday."

"What about postliberal theology?" asked Christine.

"Not identity theology. Some do, inevitably."

"Oh dear," said Christine. "I don't understand why the Radical Orthodox label themselves so: a definition to affirm by continuing to negate. Just a mild criticism."

"Ah. Are you Mediaeval?" he asked across to Christine, rather perceptively.

"Hmm," was her first non-reply. Then, walking back towards us, Christine said, "The Church is ageless until the parousia. I do believe society has lost mutual obligation and duty. What I have serves you, what you do serves me. God wants that."

The new minister said, "I do know a postliberal minister in our denomination because he's an atheist and wants to use Christianity and philosophy - a very university type - but it imposes a definition and limits plurality. So, in a way, our conservatives do have their own versions of post-liberal conservatism, with a hyphen. Postliberals, without a hyphen, and the Radical Orthodox are about maintaining frozen definitions. We allow change, by individuals."

I was getting confused at this point.

"You've not got any cake," said Colin Petty, pointing at me. "Let's fix that. Doreen!"

The minister then said, "Let's just say that 'post-liberalism' with a hyphen ought to include the liberal as it moves on, not its rejection from the line of inheritance."

Christine said, standing close, "Hey, what about subordinationism? That's like touching on Arianism - doesn't it deny the Trinity? - and that's evangelical."

"I've preached on that," I said. "Rather badly."

A black youngish American-accented woman said, "That's all angels on the head of a pin stuff - and no hyphen is involved. Hi. I'm Meg Richards."

I asked her if she was visiting, if she connected the British and Americans.

"No, Lovey. I'm from Boston, location of the King's Chapel: Anglican in origin, liturgical, Arian in theology, or old fashioned Unitarian at least. Minister James Freeman revised the Book of Common Prayer along Unitarian lines in the late eighteenth century. I went to a more regular Unitarian church in the city. Plenty of choice. I lecture here in Engineering."

"There are Anglican theological and institutional connections in England too," said the minister, "But earlier chapels like this were preaching boxes, and later more elaborate chapels were European and clearly not Anglican, until they did copy the Anglican."

"You were always Unitarian?" I asked.

"United Presbyterian Congregationalist. They have breadth but not enough for me. I have a friend who comes over from Serninsea, a UPCC minister: Georgie Smith, growing her hair a bit longer these days."

"Is she liberal?" I asked.

"No. But she is rather ignored by her own folks in the Presbytery."

Christine mused further, "There is some doubt in our system, but perhaps you're specialists."

Charley said, "It isn't a system. Doubt assists mystery. Individuals can't know it all."

Christine kept pushing, "Listen: if you allow individuals to make it up, then presumably some could be trinitarians."

"Yes. Sure."

"That wouldn't be Unitarian," she claimed.

"Yes it would," he said.

I asked, getting more confused, "On what basis?"

"That Unitarianism is an evolutionary, largely subjective faith."

"Evolving where?" Christine asked. "It's just this secular terminology over and over again."

"We evolve to wherever. Doreen Sharp, my love, where's the cake?"

"Come on!" I said. "Not the cake - sorry. I mean, *come on* you're not standing *for* anything."

"We do, because people make positive aspirations with hopes and fears: about humankind, the interconnectedness of life, making a community."

I said, "There's no mast - where do you nail your colours?"

"What colours?" asked Christine.

"Rainbow," he said. "The ship still moves, but we discuss our progress. There's many a corner of activity and the captain goes around and brings the crew together - if there is a captain. We land, we explore, we get back on the ship."

Doreen, a silver-haired woman, arrived with two plates and chocolate cake. "Sorry for being slow."

"You weren't," the minister said.

We placed down emptied cups and saucers to a table and took the plates with cake, both of us expressing our thanks.

She asked, "Do you believe orthodox things like you are told to believe them?"

"What about the sacrificial, giving up, losing all?" Christine asked the Reverend Charley Darley, neither of us giving Doreen an answer. "Presumably sacrifice is a worthless activity."

"We still take risks," said Charley.

Doreen was waiting for an answer, so I said to her, "I think we represent what the Church believes. It is and will be our job."

"But do you?" Charley asked. "All the supernaturalism and the dogmas?" Doreen took the cups and saucers to the kitchen.

"The importance of everything having to die," said Christine, "within the bosom of the living Holy Church."

"The atonement?" asked Charley.

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"You tell me," he said. "I don't believe in it."

"I mean, well, he's a model for self-sacrifice," I said.

"No, no: *he's* supposed to be unique," said the minister. "A model stands for something bigger."

"Unique enough for me," I said.

Christine was looking up and down our conversation partner.

He asked, "What's 'unique enough' when it's at home? The Trinity; fully man and fully God, the incarnation and resurrection?"

"Well, hang on," I said.

Doreen Sharp, rejoining a table, said, "They say what they are supposed to say."

"Why hang on?" he asked. "And on to what?"

"You have to unpack it."

The American woman asked, "Why do you carry such heavy suitcases in the first place?"

He said, "Go on then, unpack your suitcases in front of us."

"Em..." Suddenly I had to gather a position. "Yeah. Em... So Jesus, like, gives us a clue to what God is, and in his full humanity he shows us God, and then just add in the Spirit, which is like the dynamic motivating bit..." I wanted my hairbrush, but not in their sacred church.

Christine started to walk away again, eating. I took a bite.

"No," he said, "It's supposed to be uniqueness, not a clue. I'll go with clues: because I and you and all of us have full humanity so we *also* show what God is, perhaps, and God is already dynamic and moving - so we can change the terminology to Holy Spirit."

"Well I agree with that," I said, "But... There is a but. Er, Christine?" I filled my mouth with cake.

Invited to help me, she turned around and said, first swallowing, "We don't achieve God. God achieves us. We don't unpack terms; we receive terms. We don't even have to open the suitcase."

Yet another old chap said, "A bit useless carrying a suitcase that you don't open."

I said, "I do open mine, and I do sort out the clothing."

The minister said, "One item of clothing is the resurrection, Linda, and so can you tell me how Jesus defeated death? He did die I take it?"

"That's the contrast received," said Christine, drifting away again.

"Yes it is a contrast," he said, "but give me the science or history or what makes all the difference regarding Jesus."

I said, "That's ridiculous. There is no science or history to it - you can't do that."

"So it is not real then! Actual death has not been overcome. There is no miracle, no backbone, no uniqueness."

The American woman said, "I have heard many American Episcopalians wriggle like this."

"We're dealing with a story," I said. "The 'what' is in the story."

People were smiling. "A novel, then?" Charley asked.

"No," I said, "because a community - there you are, a community - grew up around the belief that he was the incarnation. Well..."

"That he was the messiah, and the saviour figure for Gentiles."

"Yeah, okay, we agree."

"No we don't," he said, "because they were just beliefs, culturally set."

"Then we do," I said.

"We don't," said Christine, who had received a folded leaflet from a man and opened it.

Charley said, "I'm talking about a man who died, who supposedly regained consciousness in a transformed body, who therefore had defeated death, and was ascended afterwards."

"So we are *talking* about that," I said.

"No, you are supposed to be *affirming* that," he insisted. "Remember, it's your job - you said so."

Christine responded, "What else are we supposed to talk about? We are the talkers. Listen to me: this is the centre of our talk."

Charley said, looking about and finding a biscuit nearby, "But we also add anything else, too, that constitutes positive religious stories."

Christine said, "Wasted effort. The one strand guides."

He said, mainly looking at me, "But uniqueness implies that this did happen. Did it happen? Do you as individuals think it happened?" He bit off half of his biscuit.

The American woman said, "Here's my video camera in my cell phone. Take it with you going back in time. He's resurrected and meeting his disciples. Video the scene."

I paused, with cake that I finally finished and swallowed. "No," I said. "Not with a video camera. I don't think it did happen like history or biology. It's not about video, it's about text."

Charley said, "You try to eat your cake and have it, except you can't. You two chose to eat it."

"Very tasty too," I said, regarding the chocolate cake still tasting within, as he swallowed the other half of his crunched biscuit.

Christine agreed, "That's true, very tasty. But what difference does a useless thought enquiry make?" She had finished her cake as well.

Doreen came and retrieved our plates from our hands, with dual thanks given.

Charley, biscuit consumed, looked directly at Christine and stated, "I bet you do know the difference. You *do* know." He then looked at me. "Well *you* know. You know it didn't happen. Human brains rot fast."

"They do. Yeah it didn't happen biologically so, sort of, what did? Shit. Gosh. Oh, I'm sorry for my language in your church."

"So, to be human," he said, "his brain must become incapable and rapidly."

"Because," I said, "if he did die and then regained consciousness in some reconstituted body then he's not actually human any more. I see. So resurrection could be a kind of imprint to be picked up."

"What?" he asked.

"Speculative physics - like at the edges of black holes regarding information."

"Very speculative," he said.

I said, "Well, there is no historical method - means - to say he is unique. It is just a doctrine to proclaim. But there is theoretical science as a kind of parallel thought experiment. Oh, she doesn't..."

Christine said, "Follow the transformed witnesses to the Christian revelation and proclaim that."

"Proclaim it if you want," Charley said, "But I don't. And because I don't, and I want to be positive, then I proclaim a lot more. I'm not forced to be narrow."

"I want to be positive," I agreed. "Look, er, we'll look around a bit more and look at some of your stuff."

"Take some leaflets," he said.

"Better not," Christine said. "Nor you Linda - not where we're going. But thank you for offering me this one which I shall give back."

The minister said, "Well, look around at the Victoriana, an unchallenging activity."

"I'm not chicken! So what's the difference between you and the Reformist Jews?"

"Judaism doesn't handle and deal with the New Testament texts." He then said, "I've met Maurice Neptune, the Reformist Jewish Rabbi here. The Orthodox do have rabbis debating, questions, plurality. Remember *The Dignity of Difference*? It came from Orthodoxy. Unitarian Universalists in the USA do interact with Liberal

Jews a lot, and we did here on issues like equal marriage. But that Bishop was accused of being too like the Jews, by Faustus Socinus."

"The historical one you mentioned?" I asked.

"Yes: in the 1500s, in Transylvania."

"What, vampires and that?" asked Christine, with a smirk.

"You'd love that!" I quipped to her.

Charley pointed out, "We're referring to Hungarian ethnic communities. In Hungary the Austro-Hungarian regime quashed all the chapels. The Transylvanians hung on. 1660 and Jesuits forced those other Unitarians out of Poland: incredibly nasty."

I remembered something from the retreat talk. "Do you know anything then about, er, Newman, the brother of?"

"Francis William?" he asked.

"Yes, that's him. F. W.."

"Yep. He was a theist, a vegetarian when it was pioneering, and important with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. He didn't believe in the moral superiority of Jesus."

"So was he one of yours?" I asked.

"For the most part. Started as an evangelical. His brother went Catholic and he went liberal."

"That's interesting, Christine."

"Sort of," she said.

"Hang on," I said. "Someone mentioned someone called Canning and was it Eddie?"

The American woman said, "*Channing* was one of ours. Jonathan *Edwards*, a Baptist, was opposed to us. Edwards was a predestination type, Calvinist, and it offended Channing and his idea of a loving God. But Channing went further and created a Unitarian Christianity in a sermon in Baltimore, and about two hundred Congregationalist parishes became Unitarian as a result."

"When?" Christine asked.

Our from abroad informant said, "1819."

Charley said, "We came from Presbyterians, Americans came from Congregationalists. And Congregationalists in the US didn't like the Anglicans. But, as you've heard, the first Arian-Unitarian Church in Boston was Anglican. The first named Arian-Unitarian church here was run by an ex-Anglican, in London. So there you are. Do please take some leaflets, if privately."

"You wanna shut your eyes to it all?" asked the American.

I replied, "Not that: we're being interviewed by one of our bishops. We're getting ordained. Who ordained *you*?"

"No one," Charley said. "We go on a Roll of recognised ministers."

"Lay ministers?"

"Not quite: professionals, perhaps. Nothing unique about us either."

Christine said, "We become representatives of the bishop - like an extension to his or her arms. And they might be gesturing us back now. We ought to be off."

"Oh, gosh," said the minister. "We're too diverse for you. Good chat."

"Sorry about not looking at your windows," I said. "Can I borrow your toilet before I go?"

"Through there."

"Thank you Charley," said Christine. "I did look at them. I'll wait for my colleague, if I may."

Once back, we gave our goodbyes. Everyone speaking had seemed remarkably well-informed, although most did not speak.

I said to Christine, outside, "They know their stuff, but I can't see how it works. It might have done when this Channing was pulling Christianity apart but not when it's anything and everything or nothing."

She said, "They show the danger of your theology. You were but a rice paper from them: you both accept the same theological epistemology."

A bus approached that would get us back, while I was brushing my hair.

"You're attacking your hair, not brushing it," Christine told me. "Don't faff, I have both fares here."

I put my brush back into my bag. "Tell you what, it's something to report," I declared.

"By the way," she said, "he had some tight trousers there. He had a camel toe instead of a camel tail."

"You are lowering the tone, Christine."

"I bet he's full of tattoos: to compensate for his weak voice."

"Christine. Where's your theosexuality now? Concentrate on him being thoughtful. As I said, plenty to report."

"You're reporting that it doesn't work," she said. "You'd better say so clearly."

"Seriously, I can't think he'd say much week by week in his sermons. Good thoughts and apple pie or, rather, good cake."

She said, "They can't really be sermons, can they?"

"Not like the Reformist Jews: they have a tradition. They'll have sermons: sermons from stories."

We got on the bus, and sat together.

I said, "I like them. I like their ethos."

Christine said, "I think I need to take you in hand."

"Christine," I asked, "would that please me or disappoint me?"

"You are so subjective," she replied. "Perhaps a few lashes would underline objectivity."

Presentations

So we arrived back at the retreat to start discussing, like other pairs, how to give our presentation. The Right Reverend John Barman was in charge of this, but the right Reverend Julian Worsley was listening. The ecumenical element came from two Methodist ministers, the Reverend Denny Mullins and the Reverend Celia Coggan, and one Spaldwick United Presbyterian Congregationalist Church (UPCC) minister, the Reverend Sasha Dein. All three wore trousers. We had females to respond!

The Reverend Deacon Christine Vine said to me, "We'll emphasise that it has lost its Christian anchor and we don't think it can work."

I responded, "But there were obviously people there. Let's present a united stance." Yes, I had to be careful in suggesting any sympathy or agreement.

Folks kicked off. There were a number of pretty obvious ecumenical

commentaries from those visiting the Methodists, Baptists and UPCC.

I pricked up my ears when 'Chakhras Cait' of the UPCC visitors said that Serninsea was part of the Presbytery but the Reverend Jeremy Wass never travelled over there. Sasha Dein smiled.

I was more interested in the three who'd descended on Rabbi Maurice Neptune: Anna Ozga, Caroline Small and Deborah Wilkinson. By now there was a habit of applause after each presentation.

Anna said, "We visited the meeting place of the Reformist Jewish er Schul, I think they call it. Well we think they are like in-betweeners, so you have super-orthodox, Orthodox, Reformist and Liberal. Oh, and there are Conservatives and then there are those who would reconstruct or something."

I kept quiet but I looked at Christine Vine, who looked at me.

Caroline Small said, "We think that the Reformist and the Liberal come from America and have come over here, certainly they are big in America and a lot of their theology comes from there."

Struth. Talk about error! Then Deborah: "We think of Judaism as giving way to Christianity, but obviously Jews stay loyal, although it is no longer united. So we pondered, 'What roads are there to at least some acceptance of Jesus among the Reformist and the Liberal?'"

I was getting annoyed and looked at the bishop. He noticed me. Plus, when were *Christians* ever united? Hadn't she noticed the groups as portrayed in the New Testament?

"And we directed a lot of questions about Jesus to him." Deborah continued: "We find it odd that they just regard him as a kind of wandering holy man among others, which is hardly what happened. He was a... tsaddick or righteous man who represented a nuisance to authorities, and a crucifixion was like decapitating a movement. But we said the movement continued and grew, whereas he said the perhaps main Jewish side of it died especially with the further actions of the Romans. But then the Jews didn't accept the Messiah. He said many Jews through experience became distrustful of messiahs - well no wonder Jesus didn't get through to them and doesn't."

I thought this gloss of hers was shit and possibly offensive. What did she study at college? How can you get your Christianity foundations right if you don't do at least a little bit of reading on the varieties of Judaism?

Anna took over, "At least he was prepared to consider the possibility of Jesus. The resurrection, he said, should have been general and widespread, and the fact it was not gave rise to his 'severe doubt' that there was any such regarding Jesus himself. The messianic tradition heralds in rapid change, and our Paul believed that too, he said, though Paul was making his Gentile appeal."

Caroline added, "We said 'we *believe*' and he said that was good. There was a bit where he said the Jewish authorities, not unlike compliant Britons, were aiming for stability under Roman rule, whereas we see them as collaborators in killing Christ - but not to say that of all Jews, of course. That would be wrong."

My blood was heating up; this was Christian bullshit and I wanted to say so.

Deborah now: "There was something in his use of time too. You know we have the solar calendar and the lunar calendar, like the Muslims have the lunar calendar and their year shifts backwards. Well the Jews must always have a clock daily calendar too. This is because everything in years can be placed on the clock.

He said yes everything can be in the twenty four hour clock. Like this year could be a time."

The bishop looked at me. Christine next to me said, "It's a joke! He was pulling your leg. Did he tell you the joke about the synagogue garden?"

Anna took over, "No? But he said, 'Give my best wishes to your Bishop Terry Barman.'"

"Ah yes, my middle name. Thanks back to him. What is the joke?"

Christine said, "I'll leave the rabbi to tell it. A Reformist synagogue garden starts to get a makeover. No I won't tell it: go on!"

Anna continued: "All right. Christians down the ages haven't been very good at persuading the Jews to convert. We didn't do it by persecution, and he referred to some key dates like half past three, no er 1492 - that doesn't work - or the nineteenth century pogroms in Russia that gave rise to demands for a State of their own. Oh, he said Britain once considered Uganda as a place for Jews to have a land of their own, but the British actually weren't keen. Is that a joke?"

I said to them all, "It's not a joke."

"Er," said Bishop John, Terry, or whoever. "You've read about this stuff, Linda?"

"Uganda was considered."

Anna again: "We wondered how that would have worked out; Jews were travelling themselves to the Middle East and did so quickly when Germany became cruel to the Jews. He said about Jewish theology post-holocaust and some of it is rather atheistic or naturalistic because the supernatural theology has to justify God either not acting or having Hitler as an agent of God, which seems very strange. But then the Jewish God in the Old Testament is cruel."

"Do we have to?" I asked.

"Have to what?" she asked back.

"Have recycled Christian-biased myths."

"God is different in the New Testament. He said about someone called 'My-dinner-ease', like our Thomas Aquinas or even Hooker, and then about recent ideas. But why would we take theology or philosophy from the Muslims? He said some of them overlap with our theologies."

"Because we had the ignorant Dark Ages and then opened their libraries," I said.

Deborah said, "We are loyal to the Church Fathers and the Bible that has all salvation in it, and still he said that was very good of us - but obviously not good enough because he won't use the canon like we have of the New Testament. Anyway, that was it."

Applause followed, but not by me and only a couple of claps from Christine.

Christine said to me, closely, "What a load of absolute *shit*."

The bishop said, after some rather positive comments, like seeing a Jewish branch from our perspective (surely that was the error!), "We have a critic, a *negative* critic." He looked at me.

I said, "Reformist Judaism isn't a simple liberalism of Orthodox Judaism. The Orthodox have people who debate, and so do the rest."

Christine said, "Listen. She's right. Anyway, I've met Maurice Neptune a few times."

"Yes you have," said the Bishop.

I had more: "It's true that within Reformist and other branches Judaic laws can be revised. Sometimes the Reformist, Reconstructionist, Conservative, are more loyal to what they maintain than many Orthodox, who can pay lip-service to the whole pile of laws that remain. There there might be parallels with Catholics and Orthodox Christians 'carried' by their Churches, and those more discerning and committed choosing their Church. Positive interfaith attitudes stretch right across all branches, and such as *The Dignity of Difference* comes from the Orthodox. Jesus as messianic is indeed a problem for Judaism, if only because active messianism failed to materialise anything and has led to repression. We forget that we are inheritors not of the Jewish or Gnostic groups but the Hellenistic that contains only traces of the other two."

Anna said, "Perhaps you two should have gone. You seem to know enough about it."

Deborah then said, "Well, we are Christians. And the resurrection was followed by Pentecost and the Church, and saving through faith. Surely we believe that."

Christine said, "I've met Maurice Neptune and done the history. The Reformist tradition comes from the Enlightenment and especially a Germany that was identifiably progressive into the mid nineteenth century. After some Jews had compromised with Christianity; the Reformist was a synodical movement re-examining traditions and looking for the core essences in respect of biblical research and modernity. And, from a Jewish view, and not mine, Christianity is an inferior religion because incarnation compromises the purity of the Jewish concept of God."

I liked *her*. Go for it babe. Probably I was in love.

The bishop said, "Well, study is one thing but thanks to you three who engaged in conversation, one faith to another. And whilst, yes, Reformist Jews and all Jews are entitled to view Christianity from their perspective, we are entitled to view Judaism from ours, so long as we learn from our mistakes in the past."

There was a lot of head nodding, as people do to those in authority.

"Well the people we've not heard from regarding their own encounter are Linda and Christine here. Both of them tend towards the intellectual: why, I suppose, I asked them to go together. And you'd better be accurate! Off you go, or, rather, where did you go?"

Not fancying to talk immediately, I looked at Christine, who said, "We stumbled across a Unitarian chapel."

"Oh dear," said the bishop. "Is there one?"

She continued: "Obviously. It was having a coffee morning open to the street. We spoke with its minister, and he and they were very well informed. It changed a lot from, mainly, what was Puritan. What would you say Linda? Rational and Romantic religion, and free to follow subjective insights? Ethnic Hungarians were the first Unitarians."

The Bishop of Bolingbroke said towards Bishop of Screddington, "Not ecumenical, is it, when stumbling on a group of heretics?"

I said, "The main identity was changing views and now diversity, not a theological assumption derived from the name. Unitarians can even be Trinitarians! The chapel noticeboard didn't exactly shout out their denomination. So they have become, er, Christianity inherited, and also Humanist, Eastern, Pagan."

Caroline said at us, "They're not Christians, and they mislead people if they

think they are."

I responded, "Well, as I said, a variety of stances, apparently, and not having a collective creed. Is that right, Christine?"

"A sort of *via negativa* of doctrine. Absorbs the zeitgeist."

"Surely something identifies them," said Megan Bentley.

"Landview, isn't it," said Bishop Julian.

I said, "Yes, Landview Chapel 1672. Charley Darley. He is the minister."

"Charley Darley, pudding and pie," said Jayne Bowland, an ordinand who confused that with being a comedian, and well worth ignoring.

"Carry on, I suppose," said Bishop John.

"He's female to male transgender."

Some started chuckling, led by Jayne.

I said, "I don't know what's so funny. They do have a history, changing themselves, thinking, being diverse. I suppose the question is of maintaining some sort of institutional memory for continuity. Well, *you* may not like it but we are giving our summary."

Christine said, "Listen: if I preach, I represent the Church, while they represent themselves..."

"Or," I said, "the Church is the diversity of all of them." I thought I'd at least try to impress the bishops. "I asked about the brother of John Henry Newman, and Francis William was indeed a progressive thinker in their movement among others."

Christine came in there, whereas I wanted a response: "So 'Dah-vid' was a bishop in Rumania. He kept chopping and changing his position."

Bishop John Barman said, "It's just based on heresy, from beginning to its end."

"What was he?" Christine alongside asked me.

"Em: Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, Unitarian. 1500s."

Julian Worsley said, "Bit of an odd and unstable bishop if you ask me."

So I said, "Well, I suppose it has its own integrity - like Reformist Judaism."

"No," said John Barman. "Reformist Judaism is a tradition integral to religious observance. What you met is denials of core beliefs. Outside the Church, heresy leads to denial leads to drift. Do you concur, Bishop Julian?"

"Yup. *Absolutely.*"

Christine said, "Reformist Judaism is selective about the Bible."

Then Bishop John asked his suffragan colleague: "How does it relate to organisation theory, in which you have some expertise?"

"Well, like this I think. Churches can be charismatic, that is forward-thrusting and under powerful influences of individuals; or they can be traditional, that is decision-making based on traditional sacred forms and looking back. Healthily, we need something of both. The new and the old. There is a danger of drift to bureaucracy, and thus we have to acquire Saint Paul's insight of many parts to the whole - across as well as top-down. But what you two describe has individuals all over the place: human relations in organisation and authority, or lack of it, has nothing of the divine in it at all."

"I would raise an objection about using secular organisation theory," said Christine. "With humility to you, I am surprised."

"So long as it fits in with Catholic theory," the bishop reassured her.

"Anglicanism includes Reformed Protestant," I said.

"In a constrained way," said Bishop Julian. "It was never Henry VIII's intention."

"Let's pursue this," I said, given I'd heard this basic material from university Sociology. "Institutional memory is vital for any institution, and thus reference to traditions, and therefore the liberal turn can be part of individuals cohering over time. Whether they do..."

"Sounds like you approve," said Anna. "Like: are you in the right place, are you *one of us*?"

"That's a bit personal," I said. "I do know a young talented chap with Buddhist and Pagan views who goes on a Unitarian website. I don't know much else."

Bishop Julian said, "I hope you have had opportunity in your ministry to persuade him of the error of his ways."

I continued, "Seeing as you are plastering me with the same brush, we are also selective about the Bible and there is no one Church doctrinal line in the New Testament, no doctrine of the Trinity either." (I needed my hairbrush!)

"Baptism in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," said Megan.

Christine was looking at the ceiling.

I said, "It's late in Matthew and the economic Trinity at best. Come on, we know all that."

Deborah said, "But the right biblical approach leads to supporting the doctrine, and that's what came about. You do sound like one of them, or a Reformist Jew."

Christine said, "Individuals interpret the Bible all over the place: simply by individuals reading it."

Maggie Ashdown, who I'd noticed often in prayer, declared: "It depends if you are a believer or not, for then biblical study supports doctrine. Pray in our fashion and prayer defines your belief."

The bishop said to me, "Presumably you agree with Deborah, Linda. You must agree with that."

"I don't think they rely on the Bible alone either."

"Well they wouldn't," said Anna. "They wouldn't bother, obviously. But we do. Or perhaps you don't."

Christine at least partially came to my rescue: "Linda can speak for herself but she too thinks that there is some core that has to have your loyalty. Mine is from Mother Church. I also conclude that they don't understand the sacrificial. Atonement means nothing to them."

I astonished people by saying, "I'm working on what the core is, yes."

"Well," said Bishop Julian, "best of luck with that. The conclusion here over all is we are not the only ones, and that the Methodists, Baptists, UPCC all have their place. You even use liturgy in Spaldswick."

Sasha Dein said, "We reject bishops, but Reform theology in *The Book of Common Order for Worship* tackles the same issues as *Common Liturgies*."

The Bishop of Scredington decided to conclude the session. "So, there we have it. Once we were hostile to other denominations and faiths but now we can be friendly and seek ecumenical and interfaith agreement. You can, beyond your groups, carry on talking about what you've encountered and what is distinctive about our approach, and speak with our minister guests. And don't forget the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox."

These two bishops left us.

Denny Mullins came over and she said, "Keep it quiet, Linda, but I agree with you. We have everything to learn and nothing to fear. Charley has undergone a lot of struggle."

"Do you share any ecumenical arrangements with Landview Chapel?"

"No, and neither does Georgie Smith from your neck of the woods."

However, the rest of the people were looking at me, as if I shouldn't have said what I did.

I had arrived believing nothing, and, after my attempt to leave, Christine had lifted me somewhat. Now I was thinking of staying as a Reverend Deacon again. I was among a bunch of tribalists.

In the evening before bed Christine arrived at my room in her nightie only, to tell me to get into bed. She removed her nightie and already some marks were healing. She got in. There was mutual warmth and flesh, and she worked her fingers through my hair.

"Don't worry about today. Listen: those ordinands are ignorant. I have a high Church doctrine approach, but I still have to learn about the others and describe accurately. People prefer to make assumptions and play the person and not the ball."

"They're heretics but rather nice heretics," I said. "I liked Charley Darley. He was well-informed."

"We and he had three vulvas, Linda. Thin, deliberately, and small breasts pressed in."

"You reckon?"

"And your body is lovely and warm. My breasts are still tender. You and Keith didn't have children. Why not? I can imagine those breasts delivering milk to new life."

"Didn't happen. Why not you?"

"I have often thought I should have a child, but I give myself to the Holy Cause."

"Can you give yourself to me?"

"I want to get all of my hand in."

"I said you cannot do it."

"I have never failed to do it. Is that cannot or will not?"

"Please, Christine: either way it is no."

"Again, you are denying me. I will ask you a third time."

"God knows my secret."

"You do have a secret, eh? I'm trying to think what it is, knowing that you cannot be transgender. They're so brave having him as a settled minister. I want to look at you, carefully, in detail."

"Please stop it, Christine."

"I'll leave you now."

"You are going to make me cry."

"You have my unending love, Linda, but it is only possible because it comes from the Holy Spirit."

I said to her, "I want you to make love to me."

She placed her finger just inside my vagina and removed it to taste her finger on her tongue. "Hmm. Sweetness. It's so tight but is it actually tight?"

"Stop it!"

"Yes. Your sacrifice tonight is to do without."

"I do have a clitoris, Christine."

"Then you can still bring yourself to orgasm, when I have gone. If you do, praise God. Sometimes, Linda, we cannot have what we want. But it is vital that you do get ordained, for without that you won't be able to make the offerings that count. Remember, I am also denying myself the beauty of your body. By denying, I give."

"You don't have to go. I want you. I *want* you."

"You must not want. Interview tomorrow. Don't mention the Confraternity: it's not part of this. So sleep well."

Christine got up, dropped on her nightie and left, and I felt a shattering unfulfilled desire. And I had the agony that my breasts could never, ever, give milk.

Interview (Saturday 29th to Sunday 30th June)

The men were interviewed yesterday evening. We were being interviewed in the morning, two at a time, and then in the afternoon the bishops were away to churches for the ordinations to the diaconate.

After Morning Prayer and breakfast it soon came to my interview with the Right Reverend Julian Worsley.

This time I sat down from the beginning. Yet this bishop started with a shocker. He said, "If you want to pull out now, you would be treated with the utmost credibility. You do not have to go through with this. It is quite respectable to continue as a deacon." Then he stared at me, with wide and unblinking eyes.

I simply paused. My beliefs were blank and I was now being associated with a group of heretics through apparent sympathy. However, Christine last night said I must go on, and there was my coming place in the Confraternity, which I was not to mention.

"Your response?" he asked.

"Er, no," I said in my weak delayed reply. "I would not, well, I don't. No."

"No you don't what?" he asked.

"No, I mean: no, I want... to be ordained. Surely."

"What on earth were you doing yesterday morning?" he asked.

"We went into a chapel holding a coffee morning."

"A Unitarian chapel. Tell me, how did you defend your theological position? I assume you did defend your theological position."

"I don't see how theirs can work," I said. "A minister, if they have ministers properly, can't really say anything."

"Presumably none of them defend the Trinity."

"We asked about that in the chapel and individuals can."

"You defend it."

"What, the chapel?"

"No. Defend the Trinity."

"Now?"

"Now will do. You were invited to preach there last Trinity Sunday and you are enthusiastically going to evangelise the Trinity."

"I did that at St Sernin's. It wasn't very... Well, we believe that..."

"That won't do. I want you to actually make the argument, not describe a position. Make it."

"Not a contradiction?" I asked.

"Pardon?"

"As in the *Monty Python* sketch. He comes and pays for an argument and all he gets is contradiction."

"Oh dear. You were the one being paid. Like Judas, possibly. If you like you can tell me what you said on Trinity Sunday."

"Em, Okay. Er, I've forgotten what I said now."

"Presumably you can still defend it with a click of my fingers." He clicked his fingers.

"Er... The biblical account is one that demonstrates that God works through Jesus, and did so consistently in his life and service, in healing and preaching and teaching, that he surely must be identifiable with God, and after that he joined back with God in the non-earthly sense so that we are motivated by God and through prayer with the Holy Spirit."

"That's no good. That's not the Trinity."

"I could give a more biblical..."

"*You* were the one who told us that the biblical account does not give us the doctrine. Let me help you. We say the Trinity is the correct interpretation. Why?"

"Help me?"

"You want me to help you?"

"No, you said you were helping me but that wasn't helping me."

"I am asking you for the correct interpretation of biblical findings. Rather late in the day, I grant you, but I would like you to open the gate."

"Er, because it brings out the, em, biblical account in its fullness. Yes, that."

"I'll try it your way in then. Isn't it history? The body died, the body rose. History? The Spirit descended. God acted in, what, history?"

"Are you more conservative, Bishop Julian?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Em, well, we have historical clues and probabilities but you won't find the Trinity there."

"Why not contact Reformist Rabbi Neptune and ask to be part of his synagogue? Better than these Unitarians, surely: there's a consistent position with him. They have female rabbis."

"No, because I do refer to Jesus and use the New Testament and can interpret its questions, its directions. Although I would like to meet him again and have a good exchange of views."

"You would argue with Jesus?"

"No, with Rabbi Neptune. Though that would be fascinating."

"You don't seem to be answering any of my questions. I'll move on. You came to this conference on Monday. You weren't at church on Sunday. Perhaps you went to Landview."

"I didn't go there. I booked a holiday: to see my family before the retreat. I went to my naturist club."

"When every other candidate was in church. You have heard of Sunday? It comes before Monday."

"It was important to see them, clear my mind, be mentally ready."

"That's the function of this retreat," he said. "Everyone at your church is saying, 'Yes, we wish her well, but where is she?' You see the problem here."

"It was agreed."

"Only because you proposed the timing. It's just your lack of *commitment*. Well, let's move on again. Your husband is Keith Jupitas. How is Keith?" he asked.

I wondered if that was it, suddenly, regarding the theological examination. Had I passed? Was it good enough? Hardly!

"Er... He's well."

"He supports you? Bishop John tells me he doesn't attend very much at all. He used to be helpful to Colin Cromer, your training incumbent, and now you are alongside this vicar of the parish pretty much alone."

"Keith will be at the cathedral."

"I should hope so. But does he support you and your Christian ministry? There must be some doubt about that, seeing as we are forever talking about doubt."

"Yes, but he is in lower management in Systematic Measuring Services and is quite busy."

"But he still could turn up on a Sunday, at least. Once a week! But he doesn't, apparently. Ministry can be a two person activity, and normally the spouse needs to give full support. I remember that he was turned down for ministry."

"Bishop John is single. You are..."

"You're evading again! It's not about us, it's about you."

"I'm sorry. You are confusing me. I find Keith so loyal and supportive," I said.

"You say - maybe he says - he is loyal and supportive," the bishop stated. "But where's the evidence for the rest of us?"

"He is at home," was my weak affirmation.

"According to Bishop John, he *is* supporting you *after a fashion*. Anyway, referring to the interviewing panels. Too many people, I think, regard the interviews with the selection panel as the final stage. It isn't, as you can see this week. Those on the panels who interviewed both of you thought you were the sharper one, according to Bishop John. Did you deliberately correct Keith's mistakes?"

"I don't know what they were."

"His answers lacked get up and go, apparently," said the bishop. "Someone who does have get up and go is Jenny World. I heard from Bishop John that you know Jenny World. She was from your neck of the woods, wasn't she? She is coming to the cathedral."

"I knew her at school," I replied. "I'd be delighted to see her."

He said, "She's evangelical. We like a good spread. Around your neck of the woods she could be one of Jim Wilson's merry men."

"Or woman."

"Thank you for pointing that out. She could join you all and be prophetic. Do you think in your ministry so far you have lacked the prophetic?"

"So is she thinking of..."

"And your colleague here, to whom you seem to be attached at the hip: Christine Vine is intensely theological. She proclaims the Church as the vision of peace, reconciliation, service, and not to mention sacrifice. You don't."

"I thought we were discussing me," I said.

"Yes we are. It's the contrast. You have nothing prophetic; you are all over the place. Answer that."

"Well I am more pastoral, priestly, perhaps: I like to listen and be available. I like to analyse, discern."

"But this is so 'social work' and so passive. Why not instead get at those Unitarians for being so wrong?"

"I've only just noticed them. In a meeting place, like."

"Do you see my difficulty here?"

"Can I help?"

"It's not *my* difficulty, is it? Tell me about naturism and Christianity. Pagan naturism. Bishop John thinks you could be somewhat conflicted."

"Roots in Germany. I'm not conflicted. I'm not going to frighten the horses, bishop."

"It interests me that you have this alternative idealism."

"Family," I replied.

"Sun worship. You have no problems with the body beautiful. You heard my talk."

"I have an accepting attitude. I have little interest in the sun; but I did sunbathe when last with the family before coming here."

"Naked. Among your mother, father, sisters, brothers."

"Yes, of course. It's what we do. Mother, father, one sister, brother in law, last week."

"I said biology we understand through culture; culture we determine according to tradition and revelation. You don't say this."

There was a knock on the door. Bishop Julian said, "Come in? Ah, Bishop Derek! Do come in. Ah, the Reverend Lindsey as well."

"Who is it we have here?" asked the diocesan, Bishop Derek Imperial.

"The Reverend Deacon Linda Jupitas, who is a curate at St. Sernin's at Serninsea, Bishop. Her training incumbent is Colin Cromer, who's been there - gosh - a *long* time. I rather think that Ms Jupitas has been his last great task."

(Crumbs! 'Has been' he said, too.)

The diocesan said, "Oh yes, Linda Jupitas, and a most excellent candidate too, Alan. I hear nothing but good reports about her. She must have read your books."

(Hey? I hadn't read any of his books. Jeremy Symes had offered one. But what were these good reports?)

He went on, "I don't mind saying that you impress many with a keen, detailed, theological mind. Very close to the subject, works matters out critically. We need more like you, like Alan here, right in the heart of ministry."

"There is an argument," said this suffragan Bishop of Screddington, "that we need more lay theologians, where they are freer to examine doubt, uncertainty and a wider range of theologies. Bishop John says we need them in the auditorium as well as right in the proscenium."

"Oh I do hate these theatrical analogies he occasionally uses. Do you, Mrs. Jupitas? I sometimes think I am in the Big Top like some isolated ringmaster whom no one really notices. I need to write more, like you, Alan."

His suffragan said, "I was merely talking about the need for more lay theologians, Bishop Derek."

"No doubt that is true," said the diocesan, "but here we have a deacon to be ordained, and I think we need critical theological insight at the heart of ministry, to be

a resource to serve and lead others. I've heard the odd recording of your sermons sent to me by Bishop John, with your deep thinking; I've been told of others. They are all quite impressive and, no, I look forward to seeing you at the cathedral."

"I was just saying about Linda's somewhat naturalistic background."

"Indeed. I hear that you actually *take your clothes off* in selected company. And you are dedicated to the cause. Yes, we have so many clergy that do this, so secretly, and some on holidays only, and are not as dedicated. I like dedication. I like those who can reach out to folks with whom we don't normally make good contact. You see, so often there is no one who can connect with alternative communities. Well, now we have such a person."

(Hey, looks like I'm in! I was thinking.)

"We were going over her husband Keith not being accepted."

"I think we made a mistake over him. Bishop John regrets this now. I would encourage Keith to try again. Now he has secular employment, he could be a worker priest indeed. We need married couples like that. We must admit our mistakes. I have prayed about this, with this diocesan investigation and report coming along."

The interviewer said, "I suppose, Bishop, we are worried about propriety."

"But," said the diocesan, "every evidence is that she has shown pastoral intelligence. She doesn't exactly whip 'em off in the street. She's not sort of naked under the cassock, are you? You don't flaunt it. But where you do it, you can engage them in discussion."

(He was wrong. I was naked under the cassock and collar.)

"Can't even be naked in the back garden," I said, adding a smile. "It's overlooked."

"Quite," said the diocesan. "Restraint. But what an opportunity! And even without this, we need intelligence and discernment. Well, we'll go and see who Bishop John is interviewing at present. See if I know of them as much as I have heard about you."

He went.

Bishop Julian said, "Well, it seems that he approves of you. So does my suffragan colleague, frankly, and the diocesan responds to what Bishop John sends him. So it's two more years with Colin. Do you get on with him?"

"Yes. I like him. Tells me so often that I am doing well." (I wasn't above lying.)

"His support for you has been weakening, by all accounts. But, with Bishop Derek saying what he just has, we hardly have any choice. Anyway, Bishop John is worried about you but has a soft spot for you. Something like that."

"I'm sorry that you seem to be so sceptical about me."

"Hmm. Bishop Derek in the manner of Bishop John has encouraged me to consider the theology of the body, as you heard. Give me *your* theology of the body. You must have thought about it."

"Yes, of course."

"Of course."

"It is our temple, but as it exists - not as idealised. And this includes the mind. Sometimes the mind says the body ought to be different. If the mind is clearly sorted, the body may have to be modified. I would support what that trainee minister Charley Darley was doing. I have no hang-ups about my body, bishop."

"Well, you look like a standard female to me."

"If you say so, bishop. Is that relevant?"

"It avoids conflict with some. So, let's conclude this then. Do we think you are ready?"

I gave a reply, "I hope so."

"I'll let that go. Are you excited about the Cathedral?"

"I am, yeah," I said, coming out with a more needed reply.

"Read this aloud so I can hear it," he said. A paper was passed to me, which at first I read through silently.

I, Linda Jupitas, do swear by Almighty God that I bear true allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, Defender of the Faith. I will pay true and canonical obedience to the diocesan Bishop of Wytham, the Right Reverend Derek Imperial, and his successors, and to Bishop John Barman, Suffragan of Bolingbroke, and Bishop Julian Worsley, Suffragan of Scredington, and any other bishop set in authority over me, in all things lawful and honest: so help me God.

"Say it," he said.

"Who wrote this: is it standard?"

"This one is for you. Bishop John especially wants you to read this. Read it to me."

"I, Linda, do swear by Almighty God that I will pay true and canonical obedience to the diocesan Bishop of Wytham, the suffragan bishops, and any other bishop set in authority over me, in all things legal and honest."

"That was a bit truncated. But you said the essentials. So you do?" he asked.

"I do what?"

"Affirm what it says, as it is written."

"I just did. Yes I do," I answered.

"And you do live a godly, ethical life?"

"Yes." My fingers were crossed.

He then said, "What you will tell us at the service tomorrow is this: that you, Linda Jupitas: *do so affirm, and accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the National Church in England bear witness; and in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon.* You'll say that and mean it?"

"Of course."

"You'll feel different," he said. "Want to feel different?"

"Others have said how different they've felt after ordination. I did becoming a Deacon. They felt the power of the Holy Spirit upon them..."

He paused and looked at me directly. I looked at him. Did he think I'd descended into cliché-land or something?

"Then I wish you all the very best for the day. It'll be wonderful," he said, "a day like no other and you and everyone will beam their smiles."

"It is exciting thinking about it," I said. "I have a future mission."

"You do? Well, why didn't you say so earlier? Never mind now. Come to it humbly and let the ritual happen and deliver. Don't expect; just let it happen. God will look after you."

He stood up, so I stood up. He pushed out his right hand, so I shook it. And yet, when I left him, I felt a darkness descend.

I sat back in the large room among the others, brushing my hair, going over the interview, and I felt worried and puzzled. John Barman had given good reports upwards to Derek Imperial. Was this related to the Confraternity?

After some time the diocesan bishop walked towards me, shaking his head, with Alan Lindsey, and now the Serninsea Ings Rural Dean, the Reverend Grant Trapp. The Diocesan, on seeing me, gave me a warm smile. Gosh. I had no idea he so supported me.

They all paused. Grant asked me, "Missed you with running after so many. Did you say, da di da: revealed in the Holy Scriptures and catholic creeds and stuff, da di da: historic formularies and all that about only our forms of service, you know, and also about obeying Bishop Derek, the other two, and so on including their successors?"

"Yes."

"Good enough for me."

"And me," said Derek Imperial. "Move on squad!"

Christine went to see John Barman. She'd sail through.

When Christine left her interview only some ten minutes on she came past me and chucked her white badge, with the black elephant and a white W on it, at me and it bounced off my cassocked chest.

"Hey!" I picked it up quickly.

"Listen. You have it. I'm done."

"What did he say?"

"Bye, Linda."

I grabbed my shoulder bag and ran after her: she was in a rush. She called back, "You don't know the half of it. He's in it for himself."

Christine banged the bell at the reception. "Phone!" She said, "You wait here: I'll get my luggage. Ten minutes."

I said, to the back of her head as she went, "I'm staggered. You can't tell me to go through with it and not do it yourself. Oy!"

I said to the arriving Sister Joan. "Christine is leaving. She wants her mobile phone."

"So it's not you again."

"No! The diocesan wants me ordained, and so does at least one suffragan."

Christine appeared with her suitcase, and shoulder bag and looked at the nun holding Christine's mobile phone. "Listen. *He* didn't care about where we went yesterday. Those Unitarians. His opposition was just a performance for the benefit of the others. To use the Osis lingo, Linda, you're watching the play and missing the stagecraft."

Christine took her mobile phone.

I followed her to her car. "I'm really sorry about this," I said, as she didn't look at me.

Anna Ozga was now behind me. She said, as Christine put her suitcase in the boot, "Of the two of you, we thought Linda here would have gone."

"Actually, the diocesan has a high opinion of me. Oh, *Christine!*"

Before she got in the car, she said, "All the best with tomorrow, Linda. Love you, a lot. Love God. Bye." She got in and drove off.

"Joined at the hip," Anna sneered. "Are you a lesbian as well?"

"Fuck off," I told her, very face to face, using my available Christian charity.

In my cell bedroom I was pulling at my hair with my hands. I gripped my brush; no I must leave my hair alone. What of the Confraternity now?

I missed her. Theosexual or not, she had taught me a lot. The night was just black in the cell bedroom. I was becoming full of doubt and worry.

My lack of deep sleep was why I could remember this dream on Sunday morning. The Bishop of Screddington took me to the apron of a theatre, jutting out into the audience, and stripped me naked, and told everyone to look. They were told, "She isn't even who she appears to be." I had to sit, legs apart, vagina exposed, and these lights were focussed right into me, the man directing the lights being the Bishop of Bolingbroke.

Screddington said, 'This woman is an *actor*. She is a *fraud*. She is wearing a mask for a body. She hasn't even got a cervix! Her breasts will never produce the milk we need. She fails to believe in sacred evacuating.'

Christine did not appear in my dream, but as I ran away from the theatre into a flat landscape with cut drains and raised banking, a naked redhead appeared with a canvas and said she would paint and then seduce me for the glory of God and that I would become, immediately, like her, a cosmic bishop. Except, I woke up at that point.

I started my preparations for submitting to ordination at the Cathedral.

Narrator: Keith *Christine Coming?* (Sunday Afternoon 30th June)

I had arrived outside the cathedral as a final act of supporting my wife. However, Terry Barman almost physically dragged me to meet up with Jim Wilson, Connie Wilson, Ken Osis, Jenny World and Fatima Tamuz (well attached to her young daughter Akemi).

He said, "Christine walked out. Unless she turns up, she won't become a priest. It's disastrous."

Connie asked whether she was receiving any calls, and whether she was at Wheaton, in London, at home in Ebbsfleet, or with parents in Rainham?" Terry did not know. Her phone was switched off and landlines did not find her. He said the woman recently acquired a helicopter and pilot.

I asked Bishop Terry what had happened, and he said he interviewed her and did get on to Confraternity matters. Christine told him that he was incompetent. She claimed that *she* had secured Linda, whereas he'd have lost her, seeking pleasure for himself, a charge he obviously denied.

So I said, "Linda is effectively recruited, then. The thing is, the last good sex we had showed me how tough she is, that if she resisted we'd really have to lay it on."

Jim Wilson said, "Indeed."

But Ken Osis said, "We shouldn't think on these lines if Christine had reported her secured. That means she's theosexual, Christosexual and Spiritsexual. We welcome her in."

At this point Maurice Neptune joined our huddle, as he'd come to see Linda get ordained.

The bishop told us that Christine had decided herself that she would mentor

Linda, whereas he'd said this was a decision for the bishops, and she knew it. Terry even thought that Christine might have poisoned Linda's mind against him. Christine had told him that he was a "buffoon" and his lecture was terrible, a display of ignorance. He'd courted the popularity of the mob against Linda, letting everyone attack her over a Unitarian chapel visit. Linda and Christine both concluded these chapels could not function successfully, but Linda was dangerously sympathetic. He knew Christine would help to secure Linda, which was why he'd wanted them together.

Jenny said that she would still like to keep her own distance from Linda.

Maurice asked if we had we ever thought of inviting Charley Darley into the Confraternity group? The trainee minister was a female to male transexual and could offer (unspecified) unique services. After all if he and (absent) Yojana could join, Charley Darley could be initiated.

Connie stated that Christine had become too big for her boots and that, as Linda was going shopping with herself, she'd test Linda's responses - especially if Christine did not return.

We nevertheless agreed that if Christine turned up now we would get her ordained. This had been the Confraternity bishops' decision. She might come at the last minute.

I also asked if we could now talk freely to Linda about the Confraternity and we could, to slowly introduce the participants.

It seemed that Christine had seduced Linda a number of times, so I said, "She'll have fallen for Christine like she did for Jonathan. She's like that."

Ken said we should not forget Linda's friend, Diana, but some of us thought he was wishing for his own pleasure: Diana de Groot had no management position and no position in any religion. Ken said, "I wasn't on Confraternity business when I saw them, and I object to being followed."

Bishop John then said, "You know that the Confraternity must come first."

The group dispersing, I met Linda, arriving with other women outside. She'd had her hair done, but was otherwise in a straightforward black cassock and collar - plus shoulder bag.

I welcomed her, gave her a kiss on her cheek, and said, moving her away from nearby people outside, "I hear that Christine Vine has disappeared. I hope she comes."

"So do I. You're an arsehole, Keith."

Asked why, she said I was a member of the Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players, and that it was under the Confraternity. I agreed. She said that I could have asked her to join, knowing that she affirmed the body. I said it was not up to me; I was asked not to talent scout, as we called it.

"You have lied to me for years."

I told her that I had no choice about keeping silent.

"You lied to me about Cheryl, and you lied to me about screwing Yojana."

"I didn't lie to you; I didn't tell you. Yojana is in the group. She isn't here."

"I know, and you let Adam Magellan conclude you weren't screwing Yojana."

"I wasn't screwing her; she is, what we call, theosexual - and so am I. The Vanguard is the way forward, Linda."

"You lied about that! You led me to believe you'd lost interest in Church and theology. You stopped attending church and yet you're in this Vanguard!"

"I - we all - must protect the Vanguard group. Yes, it was a stance, not attending, but I couldn't raise Colin Cromer's suspicions too obviously in this direction. You know via sociology that vanguards are often secretive."

She said, "Superstitious authoritarianism - all the secret rituals. Well, Christine was going to mentor me. I do hope she turns up. Something's gone badly wrong, unless this is another scheme you know about."

"It's not a scheme. If she turns up, she will be ordained. Linda. I'll support you here. I support you personally, but mainly because you will be an asset for the Vanguard. You know that."

"Well, don't expect to fuck me just because I'd agree to join Christine. Some say Christine *will* come. Barman has said to some ordinands that she is stroppy and often comes back."

I responded that Christine often fails to obey authority.

"He's just responding to the mess to the ordinands. If the leadership is wrong, and she is right, the whole thing will be wrong. And I'm not sure I'll be interested."

I asked her not to say that. There are other men and women she'd enjoy, like the McPhails, but it is about service and sacrifice as no doubt Christine had told her. I said I did not have anything like the influence Christine has had. She had a lot of sex with you at the convent?"

"She's wonderful."

"Specifically theosexually, Christosexually, etcetera?" I asked.

"Christine has it all worked out. I agreed with her so I decided to join it - even if it includes shits like you."

"Christine is only one of us."

"I know that. It doesn't look like she's coming. Colin is coming: say hello."

Cheryl was keeping her distance from me, so that Linda and I were the visible couple. Linda gave a concealed low down wave in Cheryl's direction, and Adam Magellan was approaching Cheryl.

Narrator: Linda *Ordination & After* (Sunday Afternoon 30 June)

I told Keith outside the cathedral that he was an arsehole for conducting a marriage of lies, and I intended to join the Confraternity Vanguard, having had sex with Christine on a theosexual, Christosexual and Spiritsexual basis. Of course, I used this in part to conceal my personal warmth (or the hots, more like) for Christine. I saw Cheryl and Adam, keeping their distances, and I waved at each of them in a way Colin Cromer did not notice.

Colin Cromer welcomed us. He said to me, "It will be a wonderful experience because through ordination you will be transformed by the Holy Spirit and guided to be naturally more effective. I'll be around for photographs afterwards. But, on Monday, I'm off to the Lake District. I'm not going to miss out on my holiday."

"I won't do anything you wouldn't do," I assured him.

"No, you won't."

With him going in, Keith asked me about the interviews. "John Barman's was most unusual, knowing everything and praising my propriety in public; Julian Worsley was hostile; but Derek Imperial came in saying I'm just what is needed intellectually."

"Hope he survives the investigation and report, then. Oh, yeah: after you left Bever Wood, that Emily Symes turned up, and very unpleasant she was, and was going to report everything going on to your suffragan."

"I'll go over there and see Adam."

"Is that wise?" Keith asked. "I'll come with you."

So I walked over, with Keith, as others were walking in different directions outside pressing the flesh, so to speak. We were all using Mr., Mrs., and Ms for introductions in case anyone overheard us.

Adam said, "I've had an interesting conversation with Ms Mould out here about a certain trip I took to Harwich long ago, and Cheryl insists she never saw me, *but...*"

Cheryl said, "It's all worked out for the best."

I asked, "Is Peter Marshall present?"

"No and I didn't stop him from coming," said Adam.

I then asked, "Is Diana here. Keith?"

"No, and I didn't stop her from coming."

Then I heard a once familiar voice: "Oh - it *is* Adam, er Linda, and I recognise Cheryl Mould."

"Hello *Jenny*," said I. "And who is your friend?"

"This is Fatima Tamuuz, vicar of my parish, and Akemi is five. I have been her curate since ten years ago, after Judith Short."

Adam said, "Hello Jenny, after so very long."

"Hmm," she said. Jenny's eyes widened as she spoke to me, for the first time in years, "I've come down here to see Anna Ozga get ordained. Linda, you've been on some journey. I was told you were being ordained priest today."

"Yes. I have discovered a lot, lately. Is Christine coming?"

"I doubt it," Jenny said. "So why are *you* here, Adam?"

"For business and old friendship reasons."

"Are you a Christian then, now, Adam?"

"Er, no."

"That's a shame. I say that's a shame."

Adam said, "We discovered your whereabouts at Hartlepool after the bank robbery. You and this missing Christine were very brave."

There was a pause, and I could see Jenny's face crease.

Fatima said, "Jenny. Let's go inside and find a seat. Anna is probably inside. Be excited for her."

Jenny surprised me, really, when she suddenly said, "Right, well bye Adam, bye Linda, and perhaps you'll continue to leave me alone." And off they went.

"Oh dear," said Adam. "Some issues, I think."

"She had a funny turn there," I said.

Keith said, "Adam and Cheryl: do sit together in a corner inside."

I said, "Yes. Let's go in. My husband and I are going to join my colleagues."

In fact, both Keith and I went to the loos. Reunited, I asked Keith, "Why would Jenny know Anna Ozga?"

"She was a lesbian charismatic who saw the error of her ways, so Jenny leaned on her. Anna has retained her behavioural rigidity, while Jenny has definitely lost hers. They've kept in touch but you still raise Jenny's hackles. Anna is exactly the kind of person we cannot attract into the Vanguard. Ah, there's Ken, Linda."

Kenneth Osis was approaching the seating for Serninsea Ings deanery clergy. He nodded acknowledgement.

Hey, there at the very back row was Charley Darley, the Unitarian. He waved across and shouted "Hia!" in his almost falsetto-sounding voice.

"Hello, what are you doing here?" I called over, and I left Keith to make my way to Charley.

"How could I resist this spectacle after your visit?"

"Have you come to tell me I'm doing wrong?"

"Far from it. Go for it."

"Christine, whom you saw, has walked out. She won't be here I don't suppose. We got into a lot of trouble over visiting you and reporting back. They said I was sounding like what you sound like. I mean in content, not pitch."

He smiled and then said, "I thought I had seen Christine here, but I'm not great for faces. My voice pitch has deepened, and is dropping."

As I returned to find Keith I saw - no, surely not - Dyfed. It was. And Lucinda? Really? I waved; I smiled. I called over: "Hey, you two came here! All the way over! That's fantastic. I'll see you after. I have to join my colleagues."

That was so pleasing, I thought. Reconciliation? When back to me, Keith was grumbling something. Colin was about to sit nearby, but when passing he asked me, "What is that Adam Magellan doing here?"

"I don't know. Sitting with a female friend, I think."

"I *know* Cheryl Mould. Something funny's going on here. I don't know. Just... just get on with the ordination."

I was in place. Up front there were dignitaries. One was the Mayor of Wytham, the Tory Candida Hayes. (I thought of Giant Haystacks!) There were three Members of Parliament: Stephen James Davidson, Tory MP for Serninsea and Eastern Foss, Paula Mason, Liberal Democrat MP for Wytham City, and Geoffrey Hindley, Tory MP for Eslaforde. I recognised Gethin Layne, Serninsea Councillor. We also had the aristocrat Lord John Scott of Pedwardine. Judge George Thomas of Wytham was present. Of course there were the suffragan bishops, and the diocesan who'd so given me his approval, and they were being assisted by Bishop Meela Geels of the Old Catholics in the Netherlands. Oh good, our ordinations were underlined as valid (ha ha).

I wanted to let the service work upon me, if it could. The *Common Liturgy for Ordinations* started. I forgot distractions, including Adam's presence; I cleared the mind; I danced with the music.

The Netherlands bishop gave the sermon, with a single sheet of paper, but in a proper controlled English that we Anglicans like to develop, though her accent was hard to follow:

"People will only want to know what you know when they know that you care. Every relationship should be based on trust, and this means pastoral care, person management, shanging things.

"Don't forget to say sorry and thank you to others at appropriate points and yourself. People like that and it helps develop trust.

"But don't go in just shanging things. When you get your new place, look at the worship and embed in that worship, and schange only slowly.

"The vision for the parish is in the congregation as it stands, as it develops. Don't impose one. Rather, identify what it is and make it explicit. That's ministry."

Her advice was not to concentrate on the minority who do most of the work: everyone deserves attention, the least getting most. Get friendship outside the congregation, away from the concerns within. Find someone to discuss reactions to the strains and stresses, keeping confidences. Keep the family close and take exercise.

I wondered if this sermon from Meela Geels was a repeat from one given to those who became deacons.

Nevertheless, I was somewhat swept up in the greater liturgy. And when it was my turn, with hands laid on my head, I did somehow feel a shiver down my back to my rear.

It was significant. I had been changed, and I smiled like the others. I let myself enjoy what had happened, once it had happened.

That feeling maintained itself and I tried to let it grab hold of my mind. I tried not to label it but I still thought, this must be the Holy Spirit. Indeed, I no longer believed nothing.

So the music and procession afterwards was a joyous moment to share; I was now a priest.

And afterwards there were photographs taken outside by a roaming photographer: of Colin Cromer the training incumbent and me, and then of Keith alongside us, and then the unusually unsmelly Bishop of Bolingbroke, John Terence Barman, making four of us, as this bishop moved around. There were more pictures with my various priestly retreat colleagues.

I also got Cheryl to take a quick picture of Adam with me, and then scarpered. I noticed Colin leaving altogether, surely the first to go.

Bishop John Barman reappeared; he told Keith and me that I would be expected at the diocesan's lecture at the University Chaplaincy's Annual theology Lecture. Upon his rapid departure I shook my boutique-improved hair and I thought that the absence of desire for my brush was some sort of sign and miracle.

Jenny, with Fatima outside, said to me, "It's a different life now; you and I are both properly dedicated to Jesus Christ. Is that not right? Anna!"

"Yes, that is right. Can I see you? I'll travel. I'd love to find out what you've been doing and I can tell you about my road to here."

She paused. "Yes, I suppose so. Anna!"

"That would be so good," I said. "Do look after yourself." Anna approached. I said, "Well done, Anna. It was good."

"Hope you *enjoyed* it, Linda. Jenny, Fatima, please come and see my folks."

Looking behind me, I returned to Keith now some yards away. The diocesan Bishop of Wytham, Derek Imperial, came and shook my hand and Keith's, "Well done Mrs. er em Jupitas, and do not forget my lecture at the Chaplaincy on the main campus, you know. I'm going to be talking about Christian expression and bodily movement. John wanted me to tackle this. You're the theological woman, yes, and I really want you to be there."

So a photograph was taken of us three by the roaming photographer. I wondered about my own impending bodily movement but I wasn't desperate (another miracle?) and it could wait until later.

Emerging out of the milling crowd, Lucinda appeared, with Dyfed just behind her. "He persuaded me to come, now you've become a nun. Oh, hello Keith; still with her then?"

"I'm not a nun," I said. "I'm so pleased to see you two, really pleased. Especially you, sister. We really ought to - well, we haven't always got on have we?"

"I'm not the sister: you are," Lucinda joked.

Keith remained silent.

Dyfed said, "We've looked around Serninsea. Saw the farm as well. Da iawn, isn't it. We've got to gyrru back," he said."

"Hurry back?" I asked.

"Yes," said Lucinda.

"Drive back," he said. "Yfory (pronounced 'uhvory') - tomorrow - I'd prefer, though we've stayed overnight already. The receptionist said Luce looked just like somebody she knows - how about that, isn't it?"

"I'm presiding first time, this evening. Come to the service."

"*Byddwn mynd.*" He nodded.

Lucinda said she and he would like to look at the cathedral itself. Keith then wandered off alone at some speed as I noticed Connie Wilson approaching. I wondered if that was significant at all.

She said, "Reverend Linda, what a wonderful day for you, and we must, we really must, get together for shopping and there's so much we can do together now."

I noticed that badge on her, first time I'd seen it, as ever half concealed, but now I knew what it meant. I'd probably get my own.

"You're wearing that badge."

"I am. Now did you have a good retreat?"

"A lot of time spent with Christine. Very thoughtful."

"Yes, but you may have to forget her. The group may have to neutralise her."

"*Neutralise?*"

"She is the source of some conflict. I will be in touch. I must find Ken Osis for a one-to-one."

I remembered that she had 'relations' with him. As for Christine, I thought that when people leave the equivalent of vanguard groups they do get airbrushed out at best.

"Oh, Rabbi," I said, as Keith came back to me with him.

"Maurice Neptune," Keith stated. "I rushed off because I thought he was leaving."

The Rabbi said, "But let me say well done Reverend Jupitas."

Keith said, "The rabbi here told us in SMS about mathematics via the Muslims and the Jews, don't you know, and where numbers come from after the Roman system."

I said, "From the Hindus and via the Arabs."

Maurice agreed: "And the Jews too. They lived in Arab and Muslim places."

"And supposedly heretical Christians, in those lands," I added. "They were allowed to be scribes and to do some interpretation."

"Look at them," said Maurice, as Charley Darley now came along. Maurice was referring to Connie Wilson talking to the Reverend Osis, almost as if she was laying the law down.

"Worrying," said Keith.

Charley said, "I'm going now. All the very best. We might invite you to preach, if you're allowed."

Maurice said, "I might ask her to preach as well."

"Thank you for coming, Charley," I said.

"Corrosive, those Unitarians," said Keith. "I don't think Connie was too pleased about Ken joining Diana and you. Diana kept away today."

I was now staring at Connie and Ken; Ken noticed me looking and he then walked away from Connie rather rapidly.

I said, "Kenneth does seem unhappy."

"She's a bit strong for him," said Maurice. "But you and me - we met so briefly before. I'm sure that our theologies are mutually beneficial. I'd meet you personally as well as the group thing - you've no objection, Keith?"

"Not any more. Time to go home."

Maurice left, and Keith and I left the cathedral car park in my car.

Something was wrong within the group under the Confraternity, I thought, and not just over Christine. Perhaps Ken had upset some of them. I decided to see how the land lies. There was also the parish to consider, in that so far it had not been exactly brilliant there.

The New Normal?

I pulled into a lay-by on the road out of Wytham. Adam Magellan drove in behind us in Keith's car. "Back to fully comp now," Adam said to Keith. So I had Adam as my passenger and Keith was back with Cheryl. In another car was Lucinda driving with Dyfed.

"Amazing. He hates my guts but practicality wins against all."

So what could I tell Adam about the Confraternity? Not much. So I said this, "That group I was investigating, with the badges and all that. Well, I got to find out all about it at the retreat, so I am no longer investigating it any more, and so you don't need to help me. But thanks for what you've done."

He said, "All I did was throw some confusion in George Wickenby's direction. George got his own back, telling Diana not to go to the cathedral."

"I'm not happy about that at all."

"Do you want to know what happened?"

"Go on."

"While on your retreat she received note with a message through her door and the name 'Channing' alongside it. So she realised it was a grid reference in the text, like I'd done with you, and took a trip and found a chalk mark and a package and placed a pin. She came back with this new note, entered the enclosed web address, and retrieved an online message. This is what she printed out."

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'Channing' deciphered it.

Christine Vine has been making love to Linda Jupitas several times on retreat,

successfully, and Linda will join the Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players. The orgasm is the supreme revelation sign from God. Ken Osis will make love to her often. Do not go to the cathedral ordinations.

"George Wickenby was playing games?"

"Yep, it was him. Retaliation against me, really. She passed it all to me, so I thought I would go along. So you are fine now about being followed?"

"Not really. They were checking me out. They won't be doing it any more."

"Why? Because you have indeed joined it?"

"Not necessarily that."

"Ah, Linda, the 'not necessarily' answer. I thought at first that he was making it up. Have you joined it?"

"If I had I could not say, but the answer is no. I have not."

"And will you join it?"

"I refer to the answer I gave some moments ago."

"Very good politician's answer. So one of your deacons was missing, the very woman herself."

"Yes."

"The other brave one in the bank robbery."

"Yes."

"You can slow down a little, Linda. So I noticed you were looking out for her, and she didn't come. She was at your retreat. She had sex with you in reality, then."

"How did you get to Wytham, Adam?"

"With Keith and Cheryl. He could have brought Diana. They were going to drive to the cathedral from their holidaying, but Cheryl wanted to see her mother. I was contacted so that Keith could demonstrate to Cheryl that he and you were splitting."

"I see."

"To return to my curiosity: I think this Christine persuaded you to join this group, although you have yet to do it, but you are concerned that, well, either she has walked out or they've excluded her."

"She walked out at the retreat after a bad interview, Adam. Are you investigating me now?"

"No, just *curious*. So that was enough for her not to get ordained at all, whereas it wasn't enough for you *not* to get ordained. Because you were a bit doubtful when you went."

"I was, yes. But enough people - including the diocesan bishop no less - wanted me to be ordained priest."

"So this Christine was getting ordained simply in order to function in this group. Therefore, being a priest must be important. Because she is secular in her money making: she buys property from Ann and Labhaoise to rent out, and what is really weird is that she is some sort of escort."

"Yes, she is, Adam, so perhaps she is going to stick to the day job. She is - or was - based at Wheaton, which is a set-up that gives - or gave - herself some space from the town evangelicals at Eslaforde."

"How did your holiday go? I suppose you weren't followed there."

"If they did they were wasting their time. The farm is isolated. I left a day early and stayed at Bever Wood Naturist Centre. And who should be there but Keith and

Cheryl, and indeed Jeremy Symes and Lindy Peacock. Fortunately I missed Emily, his wife, who went there afterwards and created a stink."

"The news is that he is suspended."

"It is a mutual agreement; suspending is far more complicated than that."

"He is mutually suspended whereas you are not: indeed, you've gone up a peg or three."

"Yeah, well you and I are discreet, Adam, and now I am 'up a peg or three' Keith can do as he wants and I will do as I want - with you.

"There's a lay-by there, Adam, and woodland. I need to be like a bear. I'm sorry, but I still have inadequate resistance when nature calls."

"What?"

"What do bears do in the woods, Adam? I've got kitchen roll in the boot."

"I'll wait. No, I need a piss myself. Saw you two go and we missed going to the loo."

So Adam was 'up-wind' and I could see his golden arc. He finished, made a shake, put it away, zipped up, looked at me with my arse out mid-process, and he went back to wait. I carried back a lot of used kitchen roll.

Back in the car and driving off, he said, "Say this group, that you may or may not join, has an opinion on you and me, given that Barman doesn't like me and Colin Cromer definitely doesn't, who has precedence? The group, or you with me?"

"It does not necessarily follow. It's hypothetical. I couple as I please."

You're good, you are, Linda. You really are. That spot was still there, I noticed, but might be going down a bit."

He had no more to ask me about the group, and we were in relative silence nearer town.

After some five flushes down the bog, before the others arrived, the time available at my curate's house was limited, because an evening Communion would follow, the first one with me presiding, and where someone else would express my doctrinal commitment.

Over rapid drinks, with Adam, Lucinda, Dyfed and Cheryl, Keith announced: "I have news. I have a job soon starting in Felixstowe. It's a sideways move, not promotion, but it is what I want."

"Of course," I said. "Perhaps you will be promoted later. Good news isn't it, Cheryl?"

"Yes. And with me expecting - we are expecting, everyone."

I asked Keith if he would see the day out. "Are you observing me this evening?"

"No. So the other news, everyone, is that Linda and I are now separating. Cheryl and I will be in the second bedroom. I'm afraid, if you two are staying here, Lucinda and Dyfed, it'll have to be the small bedroom. Either that or it has to be a bed and breakfast. I know a good place by the coast a little north of here."

I thought, hang on, this is my house, but he was ordering the bedrooms!

"We are already staying there," said Lucinda. "Marsh Coast Maa Skelter Guest House."

"Linda: I have an increased number of visits down to Harwich and then it's a permanent move to Felixstowe. Afterwards I could be coming up here from time to time for contact reasons. Would you then want me to use a hotel?"

"No. You can bring Cheryl."

Cheryl said, "Again, you are very kind - a true Christian."

He said, "Sometimes I might be coming up on my own, so I could stay in a bed and breakfast." "Bring Cheryl," I said. "There is always room." I knew what he was coming for - the group - and it meant he would be concealing from Cheryl and lying to her from now on.

"I'm so pleased, Linda," Cheryl said, "that you've been so friendly, you know, starting with your overnight stay at the club. Emily was terrible. I never remember you getting angry at anything. Keith, you don't either."

I said, "As for the church, Colin Cromer will have to adjust to Adam as my partner. Now, there could be quite a crowd there this evening, so I am going to have to go early. Colin will have arrived back from Wytham earlier, so there is some preparation over there."

"We're coming," said Dyfed.

"Really? You surprise me," I said.

"Oh I can't miss this," said Lucinda. "Coming to see you do your magic tricks."

"I'm staying here, like Keith and Cheryl," Adam said, and Keith patted Cheryl's backside.

"Who's preaching?" Lucinda asked. "You?"

"We've got in a Lay Reader from a nearby deanery."

"Pity."

"Colin is off on his longer holiday early Monday and wasn't doing it; I have been busy, obviously. Presiding is the gig. So, come in my car, Luce, Dyfed, and let's go."

Lucinda said, "Dyfed can drive; we'll go in fifteen or twenty minutes and sit at the back."

"I'll go alone, then."

First Presiding (Sunday Evening 30th June)

Peter Marshall was in the evening congregation and took this opportunity to congratulate me, and I directed him to sit with my elder sister and her husband once they had arrived.

I expected another rise of inner enthusiasm. This service, to celebrate me becoming a priest, had a sermon by this known evangelical chap Colin Titan. Colin Cromer and I sat alongside each other on the choir stalls listening. The Rural Dean, the Reverend Grant Trapp, sat opposite us.

After his Trinity loyalty bit, Colin Titan began, using no notes at all. "Let's be clear: the Creator God in my life is as real as the people I meet. Non-Christians make the mistake that just because they haven't experienced the work of the Holy Spirit, they think that God isn't real - but it is they who are missing out because they don't want Him. Yet they need Him. How to receive Him? *Read the Bible*."

"The truthfulness of the Bible is objective. Unlike the subjective, postmodern humanists' and atheists' notion of 'truth', the Bible gives actual knowledge. The Creator God sent His supernatural guidelines into human nature: there is the good and the bad. Yes, it is binary."

"And the ugly," I muttered, with Colin tapping my nearside left leg on my

cassock.

"This is why the anti-Christian woke theological lefties hate Christians so much: we have the objective reality to live by and they cannot dilute or explain it away with their fake 'truths' in the plural. The Bible is the measure to determine, yes, in the binary sense: right from wrong, good from bad, moral from immoral, love from lust. This is distinct from all relativity and situation ethics."

What bee was in his bonnet? I wondered.

"Therefore human marriage reflects the spiritual marriage between Jesus Christ (the Bridegroom) and the Church (the Bride). Changing marriage from solely between a man and a woman, to man with man or woman with woman, breaks the guiding symbolism of the marriage between Jesus Christ and the Church. Of course it is a complete abomination to think that Jesus would dump the Church and marry another Christ (as if there was one), or if the Church, if it could ever would dump the Christ, to marry another Church (as if there was one)."

I could now see where this was going.

"Biblical Christians, meaning *Christians* after all, can therefore make no alteration than having a one man with one woman marriage. Even transgender marriages are excluded, because that's like Jesus pretending he is the Church or the Church pretending that she is Jesus. It makes a mockery of marriage.

"God then has the authority to do what He wants with creation and this is what He wanted: He laid out his rules for living. We should therefore never be ashamed of our faith in God and our trust in God's Word, the Bible. In contrast, human reason is a disaster, evidenced by its shameful mockery, put-downs or intimidation of biblical Christians. Homosexuality is a blatant act of defiance to the Creator God along with human-reasoned evolution theory, the big bang theory, One World Order, world peace humanism and climate change, and then all the other constructions they call religions, and their denials of true religion. God warns us about ignoring Him and leaving his narrow path, and yet He displays great pity on those who rebel against Him: thus the charitable words: 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Given the world-wide ignorance and sheer defiance of God's Word, you'd think He would want to destroy us, but we are allowed to carry on and show our worst.

"But a mention here, that our new priest here, still the curate of course, did know what she did earlier today: she has, as a priest, within the enveloping consummation of the Church, *married* Christ, and has, for all eternity, given *her life* to Christ."

(This sent a shiver down my spine, and it was cold.)

"When a man says, 'I don't believe the Bible...!', he, in his defiance, believes in something else. Everyone believes in something. Secularists must have faith in where their false ideology will lead. There is but one authority leading to salvation, and it is represented in the Church, the very bride of Christ, collectively, for which Linda Jupitas here is forever an embedded representative, and now Christ is her lover, partner and friend, and she will obey whatever he wants from her. Amen!"

Why was I associating with this utter bilge?

"Bit of a robust view there," Colin Cromer said to me, as this chap descended from the pulpit.

"I am appalled," I said.

"Freedom of views," he said. "We don't often get it quite said like that."

"Colin, it is not acceptable."

"Yes," he said louder towards the Rural Dean.

What normally follows the sermon is the creed. But before this came my specific declaration for the home church.

I stood facing the few faithful and my visitors, and the Rural Dean alongside me said, "Your curate Linda has been examined and found to be of godly life and sound learning, and she has duly taken the oath of allegiance to the Sovereign and the oath of canonical obedience to the diocesan Bishop." (He didn't add the suffragans!) "She has affirmed and declared her belief in 'the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the National Church bears witness'."

Yes, but not belief in the crap this bloke had just spouted.

Presiding at the Eucharist was something I only could think about for a year. Now I was doing it. I did ask: "Can everyone hear me?"

I heard someone say, "No and we don't want to." The entertaining ones always choose their moment. As a female I was told to expect some negativity. However, I gave the liturgy of the binding ritual, and this Lay Reader received his just like anyone else.

And then there were refreshments, at the bells end of the church, with the congregation, with me pressing the flesh, so to speak.

Dyfed said he was looking to enjoy some brief visits to places on the extended route back to Wales tomorrow. Then he asked, "Is yours like a tied house then?"

"Yes, for all the time I am here."

"We're lucky about the farm and the annexe house we have," said Dyfed.

Then Lucinda said, "We've come here - you wanted to, Dyfed - to see how you fit in with such as that utter shite in that sermon."

"I'm so sorry. It was appalling and I promise you it's rare and of course I never say anything *like* it."

"Ah, did I hear sermon criticism?" asked a voice, that of Colin Titan. "I'm always interested in comments about my sermons," he said.

Lucinda wasn't out to offer criticism. I know my sister. She was going to tear him to pieces. "Ah, how to be ignorant," my sister told him. "All what you said is predicated on clear, binary, sex differences."

"Indeed it is," he said. "God introduced them."

Colin Cromer was now coming nearby.

"Well, I was born genetically male," Lucinda said directly at him, "but the androgens which make you have active testosterone and thus make you male weren't recognised in my body. So I am female and I did marry as female."

"That's simple," he said, "you are a man."

"Have you seen the size of my tits?" she said at him, pushing them as Les Dawson once did when playing Cissie.

"It's like being a transsexual," he said.

"I am *not* transsexual. I haven't had to do the slightest thing to look the way I am. Furthermore, if I had Swyer syndrome, the other way to have male chromosomes and become female, I could even take tablets and have a baby."

"So you can't then?"

"I can't. It's like a hot water tap without a boiler."

"So you are a man," he said.

"That hot water tap is my c..."

"Colin Titan isn't it," I said rapidly to him, merging the cs. "You are biblically misinformed anyway, as well as offensive."

He said, "The truth cannot be offensive. And I know my Bible."

"And so do I," I said, "especially on this. So the Genesis binary pattern on which you depend does not hold up. And do you know why? Because rabbis circumcised infants and would find some who were of in-between sexes, even when they knew nothing about producing females when their genetic origins are male. Isaiah says he'll give houseroom even to eunuchs, better than sons and daughters: an everlasting name which - joke - will not be cut off."

Lucinda said, "Yeah, some others are inbetweeners."

"Still male then," he said.

"Not what Jesus said," I stated, drawing the usual trump card out of the pack. "In Matthew he says something like, 'Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by people, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.' So only those who *can* receive the binary teaching actually receive it."

"All that means," he said, "is that some are incapable of marriage because they have congenital defects; others because they have injury or restrictions imposed on them by surgeons and the like. But there are others who don't do marriage for the higher service of God, as Paul states in his first letter to the Corinthians."

"Not at all," I said, pointing my finger. "It is a statement by Rabbi Jesus in a time of limited knowledge that there are others around than the male and female of Genesis - that some are born this way, some become this way, and some do it in order to give devoted service."

Colin Cromer said, "I think this is for a discussion group."

"No, Colin," I said. "This man has made offensive ignorant remarks in a public space and he isn't being informed by his own sources to correct his own prejudice."

"But we don't make this into a public spectacle," said Colin.

My sister then said at Colin, "Your failure to correct him is exactly why your institution is going down the plughole. He is ignorant to the facts. I couldn't care less whether it is in the Bible or not. He is just ignorant."

"Far from it," the preacher said. "You have made my case. Neither you nor our new priest here believes in the Bible, the only source of truth."

Colin Cromer said, "Er..."

I said at him, "It's half-ignorant *itself!* It is not a medical guidebook."

Colin Titan said, "I suppose," he said, "it is not a history book or science book either."

"No it is not," I said.

Colin my boss said, "This conversation has to stop now."

This other Colin said, "It is the original, the only, the complete, *the* reliable, source of truth."

Colin my boss then said, "This conversation must stop here! It is becoming over-heated. You are all entitled to your opinions."

Then Lucinda said, "But he is not entitled to be offensive to me and those like me on the basis of misinformation. I am not a man; no one would ever regard me as

a man, and long before anything regarding transgenders and birth certificates, anyone born like me would be counted as female. And he offends my marriage, which is here to my husband Dyfed."

"Only by appearance," said the fundamentalist. "And did anything Jesus say contradict Genesis?"

"So what?" I asked. "Why would he?"

Colin Cromer said to Lucinda - so naively, "I'm sure the offence wasn't meant."

"He keeps calling me a man," she responded. "This is offensive now, and proves it was offensive when he said it from that wooden box. He has attacked what is a heterosexual marriage, one that your Church in its prejudice recognises."

Colin Cromer then said, "Look, we are becoming a spectacle. This is supposed to be a day of celebration for Linda here, having presided at her first Eucharist, everyone having been told by the Rural Dean that she is of godly living."

The Rural Dean, Grant Trapp, came along and said, "Linda, you should obey your senior priest here, and you are both representatives of the bishop."

Lucinda then said, "But I do not have to obey some purple-head. This man is an ignorant git. I have the female phenotype, even if I have male chromosomes."

"God's reproductive mechanism," said the Lay Reader. "Male and female, and binary."

I said, "There were no amphibians mentioned in the Bible, never mind no dinosaurs."

"Oh I think there were," said Colin Titan. "Dragons?"

"I must... I must go," said the Rural Dean, acting like a coward, and he headed for the vestry.

Colin Cromer then said, "I insist now as *Vicar* of this parish that this conversation comes to the end. Mr. Titan, you are a Lay Reader and you preach in this church on my say-so and that of the bishops. I shall report back on this episode to at least the Bishop of Bolingbroke. I want a copy of your sermon, in whatever form, and I'll also want a word with you, Linda. And, may I say, positively, your sister, is very..."

"And her husband," I added. "Husband according to the old rules."

"Yes, well my point is that you are both welcome in my church, in my bishop's church."

"Well that's not good enough," said Lucinda, "because the welcome has to be demonstrated."

Then Colin Titan said to me, "I wonder if you two are the same; I suppose being a *male* priest could be some compensation."

My mouth was open.

Colin Cromer now said, "That's it. Please leave, Mr. Titan, at the earliest opportunity. Collect your things, and leave immediately. I will have the bishop contact you in due course. I insist upon it."

And thus he we watched him disappear down to the vestry and presumably use its door out.

Lucinda said to me, about to leave, "I'll see you later."

Colin said, "Stop a minute, Mrs. er..."

"Cadwaladr," I said.

"No," she said. "Come on Dyfed. We'll wait for the creature of this church to

return to her temporary home."

There was soon some arguing happening outside as we shook some hands. "Stay," said Colin Cromer to me, who went out to the arguing between Mr. Titan and Mrs. Cadwaladr in the street.

With the disputing parties broken up, Colin Cromer then returned and, waving at others inside, ordered me to the vestry and shut the door.

"Even if she is your sister - and definitely not your brother - you must guard against creating a public spectacle. One of our tasks is to smooth the waves."

"Ugh," I said to my immediate boss.

"When do they go home?"

"My sister and her husband are staying overnight at a bed and breakfast."

"Look," he said. "Other than this, it's been a good day. I'm proud of you. You looked good at the cathedral. But something is missing tonight. Or, rather, someone."

"Go on."

"Your husband, Mr. Jupitas."

"Because, actually," I said with some bite, "he is walking out on me."

"Well, he's not exactly been here much."

"He was reducing his attendance before. Now he is leaving me."

"This town is not some vacuum, you know," said Colin Cromer. "The woman at Wytham cathedral was Cheryl Mould and is in fact your husband's lover."

"Yeah."

"You seemed and seem remarkably cool about it all. Presumably because Adam Magellan was there, and he is still *your* lover."

"I have not been with him recently. Go on."

"Linda. We are not fools. You have been on such thin ice there is every probability that you will fall through it. But, I do praise your sisterly solidarity. Oh, go home: we can have a staff meeting about all this later."

"It is not simply solidarity: I am the same as her. I have exactly the same variation."

"Really? Gosh. I'm so sorry."

"I am not sorry at all. But I would ask you, because of exactly the sort of prejudice just seen, not to spread this information to anyone else. Not even the bishop - *especially* not the bishop."

"No. I won't. Gosh. Have you ever been counselled?"

"Colin, I do not need to be counselled. I am male genotype, female phenotype, female gender, and bisexual."

"Bi... sexual. And your sister?"

"Heterosexual. Probably."

"I don't know what to say."

"Try and say *nothing*, Colin."

"I won't have him back. So you could have been born male."

"Colin: only if the androgens had been recognised. I have a younger sister, who is female across the board."

"Could you, say, fall in love with a woman as you presumably have with a man?"

"Yes."

"So, as a naturist, you are tempted..."

"Colin, *please*. Heterosexual naturists still mix with the other sex. I fall in love with those I fancy and make a relationship when they also fancy me."

"But do they know about your male genes?"

"All they have to know is that I cannot have children like Lucinda. They will get to know that I have no periods."

"Oh, em..."

"They will get to realise that I have no body hair other than on my head. I very rarely smell when I am sweaty. I have undescended testicles, Colin."

"Do I need to know all this?"

"Lucinda had hers removed and is on HRT all her life. I won't have a menopause. Anything else you'd like to know?"

"Nothing. And I should reassure you that the bishop has no right to know this. Please now tell your sister that she was very brave to tackle Colin Titan. In fact I will want him off the preaching circuit in the Serninsea Ings deanery. Em... Have your usual day off tomorrow even though I'm off on my proper holidays and you have to hold the fort. Just be around in case of emergencies." He locked the vestry door.

Heading for the front door I said, "I won't leave town."

"Yes, but try not to empty the church. See, I do need a break and, by the way, I'll be thinking about my own future."

I drove home rather angry, and then tried to change mood arriving at the front door.

Lucinda Confronts Linda

When I arrived home, not only were Lucinda and Dyfed back to join Keith and Cheryl, but Keith had let in Diana and Patricia. He distributed wine and juices. Adam was not there.

I was angry. So I whipped off my collar and cassock and sat down among the rest. "Deal with it," I said. "Where is Adam?"

Keith said, "He left. He'll talk to you later. Diana and Lucinda looked at me and each other.

I asked, "Can I have some support, Diana? I hear they've been playing games with you. I wanted you - and Patricia - at the ordination and you were told to stay away."

"Others join Linda and me?" Diana asked, as she started unbuttoning.

Lucinda said, "I suppose we should clag," and followed on.

Cheryl looked at Keith. Cheryl pulled off her clothes. Dyfed followed on but Keith did not.

"I'm quite capable of being like this alone," said Patricia to Diana. Or with Keith."

"I'm just showing my male body," said my sister to me, "according to your joke of a preacher. My tits are bigger than yours."

"Well, he'd say it's because of the drugs."

"I'm not sure that is a very pleasant thing to say. No wonder Adam has gone," Lucinda said.

"Well, why *has* Adam gone?"

Keith said, "He went after a certain identifying conversation happened. He didn't give a reason."

Lucinda said, "I'm not hiding my identity from him or anyone."

"Well, Diana? Are you going to walk out? In May we discussed my features - nearly all the same as Lucinda's.

"I looked up the possibilities, intersex being one. Perhaps your sister is more forthright."

"Well, well done Luce for standing up to the lay reader. He deserved everything you said. Just to say, he'll be barred from our church in future, and it looks likely the bishop will discipline him. But what did you say here to everyone?"

"That you stopped me telling the cunt that I have a cunt."

"I still don't see why Adam left."

Diana said, "Because he's a chicken. Lucinda told us everything."

I went to the kitchen to prepare something salad-based for everyone to eat. In there I called Adam and told him to bloody well get himself back to the house. He agreed, but wanted to talk to me afterwards. I went back in the lounge with eats to add to a now naked Keith's drinks.

"What we want to know about," said clothed Patricia, "is what you believe now, Linda? You were so doubtful before you went."

"I think I'm happy, other than about the idiot who preached here."

"So what happened to you before tonight?" asked Diana. "I'm talking about nearly two weeks."

"No more than I went to the farm, stayed at the annexe while Luce was away, had a problem boil on my bum dealt with - it's improved as you can see, went to Bever Wood, met Keith and Cheryl there unexpectedly, and others, and then went directly to the retreat, where I passed two rather examining interviews, and a rather friendly and purposeful colleague walked out."

"I obviously read about Bever Wood," said Diana. "Tell us about these final interviews."

"Well, I can't really, other than one bishop's interview was a bit strange and the other hostile, but the diocesan coming in made clear his approval of me and my theological approaches."

"Ah, all that sophistication," said Diana. "So which bishop was strange? Presumably the one we see around here."

"Strange in the sense that he could have been usefully employed by the former East German Stasi."

I collected some glasses for the kitchen and Dyfed followed me in and asked me, "I've come for a better look at your bottom."

"The witch hazel gel helped but I have a few old antibiotics here. If it doesn't clear up completely then it will be evidence of a bad time."

Lucinda came in saying, " Don't prepare anything more. Dyfed bursting your boil with a boiled, flamed, needle was a very silly thing to do."

"It has lost all its anger now," I said. "Unlike me." There was a ring at the door. I said, "Let him in, someone."

Patricia went to the door, and Adam came in with Peter Marshall, accompanied by Kathryn and Kathleen Wickenby.

We three relatives made our way out of the kitchen and already both Kath's were stripping. "We have done modelling. He's a chicken," said one of them.

"Like his boss," said the other Kath.

Keith puzzled people by saying, "Many eggs could be laid here."

I said to Adam and Peter, "If Keith can do it, so can you two. Come on, it's not as if this is some orgy."

So Peter joined in, assisted enthusiastically by a twin, but Adam dismissed the aid of the other twin.

There was a desire abroad for a much bigger Chinese meal. It was fine by me. The orders were made. People still had the salad.

Dyfed said, "You've got a casino here, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"I've missed the chance to see inside it, probably."

Peter said, hands clasping his genitals, "It operates a bit irregularly, I gather. There's an upstairs too."

Keith said, "The upstairs is closed off but the downstairs opens throughout summer."

"Just looking for some ideas for my new premises in town," Dyfed added.

"I hope you don't introduce gambling," I responded.

"Just peripheral things, perhaps, with a cafe: a place to read and use a computer."

Diana asked me to go back in the kitchen. "Did a woman ordinand made love to you several times?"

I explained that the note she decrypted was accurate, accidentally or otherwise; Adam's rival George Wickenby was getting his own back.

"This was in a convent?"

"A cenobium. Yes, we made love - in a nearby church as well, on the altar table."

"You don't exactly do things by halves, do you?"

"But she's run off and this group has a dark side."

"Adam's learnt himself that this decrypted note seems to be true."

"Look, I haven't signed on the dotted line. I need to investigate this group further: about why Christine ran off, and where is she now, how many groups are there..."

"It said *why* - orgasms with divine messages or something bizarre like that."

"The ecstatic in religion, really. But it's all been news to me; and consider that Colin Cromer is in constant touch with this bishop, and Colin hasn't got a clue."

"So they deceive people."

"That is worrying, yes. Secret and ritualistic."

"I'm going to mingle again. Linda, you stretch people, like your real friends, to the limit."

"I don't see why you should be offended. You've denied me over and over again."

"Fuck off, Linda."

Back in the lounge the Wickenby twins were unsure what had happened to Barman's great location advert, as they saw it, the Serninsea Cross brooch. The Cambridge lab had not received it and therefore had not tested its Anglo-Saxon credentials. Anyway, after much chit-chat we ate Chinese dishes. Somehow we girls got grease and soy sauce on our tits and then were a bit deliberate about it.

But soon the twins wiped their fronts, and with Peter returned to their textiles -

and they left.

Patricia went. Diana decided to go, dressing in front of me in the hallway. "So it's Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome."

"Yes. Perhaps the Holy Spirit worked through the appalling preacher we had to release the truth."

"You believe that crap now?"

"Good that I can. Bye."

Those who remained after the departures were Keith with Cheryl, Lucinda with Dyfed, and Adam with me.

"I feel all alone now," said clothed Adam among the naked. We looked at some television late news, for me to catch up with the world (after losing contact with the world).

So United States President Donald Trump regarded the Saudi crown prince as a personal friend doing a 'spectacular job' and he'd meet dictator Kim Jong-un soon. Meanwhile, Boris Johnson visited farmer John Garnett and the dairy cows on Ackenthwaite Farm, Milnthorpe, Lancashire, in a publicity effort to become the new leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister.

It was time to sleep. Adam and I would be in the main bedroom, Keith and Cheryl in the second bedroom, with Lucinda and Dyfed to avoid the small bedroom by returning to the Maa Skelter Guest House. First I went into the kitchen for more clearing up.

"You *can* stay!" I told Dyfed alone, as he came into the kitchen.

He said, "I'm telling Lucinda I did nothing but burst your boil. Your mother thinks it's hilarious funny. I warn you I'm not sure Lucinda is in a believing mood."

"Hill areas," I said.

"What?"

"Sheep. Oh never mind."

"Gwirionedd!" he said.

Lucinda appeared. "Dyfed, leave!" He did and she shut the door.

We were standing facing each other. Then she pressed her similar body into mine, with the table blocking my way backwards.

I said, trying to pacify her, "Thanks about that preacher again."

She asked, "Why do you think I've come here?"

I didn't get a chance to reply.

She carried on, "Mummy once said I had to share everything; my stuff became your stuff. But you took it anyway. At least daddy didn't give *you* cuddle time. Keith was mine - yes he was - and you even took him. So I had him when you two were back, fucked him, because he's pathetic."

"We move on and things have worked out recently."

"But it doesn't mean you can have *my* husband."

"What? All he did was to be good enough to get at the boil on my bum."

"Don't come all that. I know you fucked Dyfed because I saw the stain on my sheets."

"No! He was in his room, and I was in mine. Anyway, there'd have been pus as well, even some blood, surely."

"You'll have washed that off. *Semen*."

"He had a wank! I told him: 'The war between us two has to stop.'"

"Try the truth," she said. "You couldn't leave my husband alone. He drools all

over you."

"But it doesn't mean anything happened. Look. Him giving me such *divine pain*, is one thing, but doing something extra is another. And we did not."

"I know you. It's all about advantage. Keith hesitated over me, so you took him instead. You are not having Dyfed."

"Well, let me tell you something. You did well not to get Keith. He is a consistent concealer and liar. He has had an affair with Cheryl for two years. He is screwing another woman as well, and Cheryl doesn't know it. You might just have seen her, recently. On the basis of religious ideology, he is having sex with loads. Why don't you ask him to add you to his list? You might come to shit and swallow very easily."

"And this Adam Magellan: 'Hello, I knew you from school - give me one!'"

"Adam's an old friend more than you know and I care for him. After all, if you knew what happened at school, you'd have jumped on him as well."

"What happened at school?"

"That's for me to know and you to wonder. Anyway, I might put my sexual skills to good purpose elsewhere."

"What?"

"You wouldn't understand."

"Anyroad, you leave my husband alone. He's a sweet bloke and he doesn't want kids and just wants to make a living and get on with the people he knows in town. He said you and I ought to make up, being smitten with you. No we don't. And remember you have those Ten Commandments: do not steal and do not fornicate with others' husbands."

"I'll absolve you of your sins and mine - I'll give you a blessing."

"Oh, sod off," she said, opening the door, and her husband had already dressed. So she did, and left with him to stay in the house of one of Keith's lovers.

Once I'd finished in the kitchen, I went upstairs. Adam was in the bathroom. I got into bed, and I grabbed my hairbrush.

He came in. I said, "Adam. You are stood there naked looking at me. Why couldn't you have been naked with my friends around?"

"Because it is different with you. You're doing that hairbrush thing again. It's far more than needed."

"Adam, get into bed."

He didn't. "You and your sister look so alike. You know, when we were teenagers, I didn't know what I was looking at when I looked inside Jenny and I sort of looked inside you. You didn't pull yourself open like she did."

"Ask the fucking question, Adam."

There was a pause while we heard Cheryl start to yelp and Keith grunt.

"Are you then a man? Did you tell Jenny you were really a man?"

"I am *not* a man, nor was I ever a man. I am a gender woman and phenotype woman. I am what Lucinda labelled us: a Complete Androgen Insensitive Syndrome intersex person. Jenny knew I had no cervix. Keith knows. I'm telling you, because you are now my partner. I would have told you, but Lucinda got there first - as ever."

"Huh. I knew you were 'in to sex' but I did not know you are intersex."

"They discovered at puberty that Lucinda was that. She, like me, never has periods. She, like me, has no reproductive side. But the doctors removed her gonads, what in men drop and become testicles, or would become ovaries in

reproductive women. So she is on Hormone Replacement Therapy all her life. She had a vaginoplasty. When it was my turn, my mother told the gynaecologists 'no', despite the pressure they applied. The risk of cancer is overblown, she decided. I am still resisting gynaecologists. They think HRT would benefit me. I had one short time when I took HRT but stopped."

"Are you in danger?"

"Marginally, and there may come a point of surgery."

"So explain why you look like a woman."

"When the androgens aren't recognised, the male features do not happen and therefore you get testes where the ovaries sit. The clitoris is usually small, but mine isn't. And there are other aspects. We're hairless below the head because of it. We don't smell when we sweat. Our teeth are longer, our hands are bigger, our feet are bigger, our legs are longer, our hips are less rounded, and we are taller. These are generalisations and we do fall within the female range. I am also female in my head, Adam."

"I don't know what to say."

"My vagina is shallow because there is no cervix or womb."

"I don't know what to do."

"Adam. At least sit on the bed."

He did, back to me, feet on the floor. "You didn't tell me."

"Adam. I was about to tell you. Keith of course has seen me using my dilators, and he has fucked me without a problem, but his work on my anus and throat has left my sphincters damaged."

"You baffle me," he said. "Keith shopped you to your bishop. Does he know?"

"I have every reason to believe that he has kept my one big secret, the one you learnt tonight. Adam, please get into bed. I was looking forward to an ordination night fuck, though nothing needs consummating. Look, I've something to show you."

"What, your lack of a cervix?"

"No. Look at this badge." I took it from the bedside cupboard. "It has this elephant on and a big W. It is one of three kinds. The one around here has a goose with a B on it. There is another, with a stag and an H on it. Look. They are all this size, they are all white and all have black animals on."

"Christine's?"

"It was hers."

He looked at it. "You did have sex with Christine at the retreat."

"Yes I did. I've discovered that I am theosexual."

"What's that?"

"Sex from a God-orientated perspective."

The noise became louder from the next room. It was rhythmic in grunts and yelps.

"I think I'm going crazy with your mad life."

"I must be very dangerous to any supposed ordinary life."

"That's a cultic group - that's what it is. They've got you. And you'll suck me in."

"Adam, I do *not* like the group. I liked Christine, because she was honest. I share some of her ideas. But Keith is not honest, Barman is not, Connie Wilson is a bully, I think, and Ken Osis is terribly compromised. It is supposed to be highly secretive, but I am telling you so much more than allowed."

"Allowed?"

"In Margate I had sex with a bishop called Jonathan Eyre. I had a crush on him. But he wasn't honest either: he was fucking me not because he fancied me, but because he was demonstrating that I am sexually responsive. Christine going has shown me all is not well. You don't need to investigate the group any further, but I am going to play it carefully. At the cathedral Jenny was being closely looked after by Fatima Tamuuz of Hartlepool, as much as Fatima was looking after her own toddler. Fatima was even controlling access between Jenny and Anna Ozga. I don't know why. It could be Jenny's mental state, or it could be that Jenny wants out. And about Fatima's daughter: who's the father?"

"I could try and find Christine for you."

"She's likely to buy more property from your Ann and Labhaoise. If so, you don't need to try. Whose idea was it to inseminate both women to give them two children at once?"

"What's the relevance of this?"

"Only that you and I, Adam, are unusual and suited to be together. I am definitely a woman, Adam, but for the genes. Kiss me."

He put the badge on to the side table on the other side. He leaned over and kissed me on the cheek.

"Okay," I said. "That was pathetic."

Adam said, "There's a lot to think about."

"Adam. I was never a man. I grew up a girl. I am a woman and I am a woman with needs."

He said, "I want to sleep. I'll sleep alongside you."

"I'll suffocate you with my breasts if you do not fuck me." He looked startled. "Look at them, Adam. Female. Oh, go to sleep. Yes, let's sleep. Just listen to him banging her."

"Leave my knob alone, Linda."

"Arsehole."

Narrator: Linda *The Operations Refused* (Monday Morning 1st July)

"When was it?" Adam asked, lying alongside me, the duvet cover off.

"Thursday May 4th 1995."

"Where?"

"Wytham Hospital. Being naturists helped, because my father, mother and all daughters were present in the room peopled by several specialist doctors and nurses. Alice Peers and Mabel Thorp were young nurses then. Doctor Imelda Stoughton was a specialist up from London, as was Doctor James Macmillan, with Doctor Peter Todd from Manchester. I thought they might publish a book on us."

"You remember their names."

"I can tell you more because it was a big event for us. Number one was John Lennon: *Imagine* and it was the Chinese year of the Rooster, and American Zodiac Goose."

"Blimey."

"First up was Leila. 'Born 10th January 1981,' Dr. Stoughton muttered. She'd only recently started to menstruate, so her legs went up and wide, with a speculum

inserted, Adam."

"I've got the picture."

"The necessary cervix was there, of course, and she was declared with ease female: genetically as well as phenotypically. So, Adam, the three doctors took it in turns to look in, a fierce light making her pink flesh bright. Daddy and mummy were also allowed to look."

"Her father?"

"Why not? So next on the chair and legs up was Lucinda, declared born 3rd February 1978, and she was about a year on from her gonads removal and vaginaplasty operations. The speculum opened her human-built canal, that meant she could now enjoy deeper sexual intercourse. They'd also given her a make-believe cervix, but it went nowhere. It was a little dark indent on a bulge of skin. Mummy and daddy were impressed."

"Can you *Thomas the Tank* me, Linda?"

"Okay. The doctors wanted me to look too, because they wanted the same for me. It was either that or a lifetime of dilators, as you've seen. I was next, up on the chair and legs out. With a drop of gunge, a speculum was inserted into me and the strong light directed in.

"Doctor Todd said that as I was born in the second of April 1979, and reached sixteen, I could withdraw consent, but parents mattered.

"I remember saying that *I Will Survive* by Gloria Gaynor was top of the charts."

"You obviously looked that up."

"Dr. Stoughton said, 'Let's hope you survive *and* thrive.'

I then said, to laughs, that, 'Mummy and daddy most likely fucked for me on June 23rd 1978.'"

"You did the maths," said Adam, getting stiff.

"Daddy said he'd have to look in his diary for the word 'shag' on that day. Mummy told daddy to look at me and he said, 'You're not a nipper now! But there's nothing there, Sweet Pea.'

"He said Lilibet and he agreed that Luce had been through a lot and needed support. He said I would get the same support.

"But mummy was having none of it. She said, '*Kramer vs. Kramer* was on the year you were born; let's hope we're not having 'Bode vs. Bode' here.'"

"Oh dear," said Adam.

"Lucinda said I should have the operations, to stop me being a right mardarse, so I told her that she was the mawnging twat."

"You loved each other then as well."

"I'll just lick some of you pre-come. Right. So, Dr. Peter Todd asked me for my opinion and said, in response, that lots of people take tablets all their life.

"Mummy had a long look and said I'd got maybe four centimetres push-in and a big clitoris, so I would not lack a a sex life, if I wanted a sex life. Daddy agreed about the size of my clit. Dr. Stoughton referred again to the cancer risk reduced by removing the undescended testicles. But mummy said I got me oestrogen from them and that was it. Daddy asked about the vaginaplasty and it became clear that they wouldn't do a vaginaplasty without removing the gonads. So that was it.

"Oh, yes, Dr. Macmillan did ask about Lucinda's sex life with the benefit of a vaginaplasty but she didn't want to speak."

"Understandably."

Mummy referred to this CAIS support group but that doctor said they transmit a little bit of knowledge and a little bit is a dangerous thing."

"Were your legs still wide at this point?" asked Adam.

"Yeah, and everyone kept having another look. The directive light was affecting my eyesight. Daddy tried to get them to do a vaginoplasty alone, but mummy didn't trust the doctors to do only the one operation. So Luce wondered if they'd all made a mistake with her, and so daddy promised her a 'special cuddle' later. Leila wondered if her periods would stop and she'd grow old. Mummy said not until she was old.

"With my legs still up, Dr. Macmillan sent Nurse Thorp to find student nurse Jenny Planer to look at me. Miss Planer subsequently arrived to be told there were us two in this area and two girls more out west in Foss. She was invited to join the team going to Hartlepool and see a girl undergo an operation to receive an extended vagina and have her gonads removed. The student was asked to look inside me. The speculum was finally removed and she put her fingers inside me and then pressed around to the upper side of my pubic area, locating the undescended gonads."

"I'm coming," said Adam, so he spurted on his stomach and his chest.

"The student assumed my mother would consent to the operations but she still refused and told me to get dressed. They could ask me when I was eighteen, but if I had any sense I'd refuse them. Doctor Todd said I'd see my own gynaecologists but this was the point for their withdrawal."

"I need some of that kitchen roll," said Adam to me.

Chapter 13 The Plan in Action

Narrator: Linda *Connie Shopping* (Monday July 1st)

Adam dressed and went to work and Lucinda with Dyfed called in before going back home. I kissed Lucinda on the cheek. Dyfed shook hands with me, obviously in fear of his wife's reaction to more. I wished them a good journey.

It was my day off, and time to sit in the bathroom and contemplate these last few weeks. They'd left me apparently committed to a group where I disliked many of its known to me members. I'd revealed my very personal secret to Colin and to Adam, thanks to a crass preacher and the presence of my older sister. Christine had made such an impact upon me, and now she was gone.

Keith and Cheryl were getting up; he had the day off. He asked if I was going into the church, Colin going on holiday. "Apparently there is some lady of the Lakes."

"I genuinely have no idea. How do you know?"

"Bishop Terry told me. And he'll visit the Priory Church of St. Mary and St. Michael in the hamlet of Cartmel. It's got monumental Norman arches, vaulted ceilings and towering stained glass windows, a place used by monks, pilgrims and other travellers over a long time."

"What's he doing telling you?"

"Making privileged conversation."

They went out; I think their travels included a view of Foss as far south as Eslaforde, and Cheryl seeing her parents in Serninsea.

My day off was no barrier to Connie Wilson: we could go shopping, she said by telephone, and: "No time like the present."

"Where?"

"Nottingham. My car. You drive to the McPhails and we'll go from there."

"The McPhails - you mean the plumber and jewellery maker at Ingle Barrow?"

"The very two. I'm just chatting with them now but when you come I'll be outside."

"All right. When?"

"It takes less than half an hour so arrive here in one hour."

"Fair enough," I said.

I left Adam a message about where I was being picked up, by whom, and where I was going.

When I arrived and had parked outside, Connie emerged from her car.

"Hello again!" she called out. "Helen and Stephen were going out so I stayed with them until about ten minutes ago."

Connie was rather well dressed, with a good whiff of anti-sweat perfume about her. (The bishop just overdid it.) With no time to waste she drove us westwards.

Driving along, Connie told me that she had been married before and had settled well from the divorce, because her first husband had been a sales manager with a hefty income. So I said about knowing Keith a year above me at school, of our university togetherness, his failed Anglican ministry candidacy, and discovering his affair. I had the impression that anything I said she would already know - but I had to

say something.

She was aggressive with her overtaking, especially after Wytham as the roads became busier. She only then told me about her "obsession" with this suburban younger clergyman inheriting a large congregation. He was going places. She bedded this evangelical and so she separated from the sales manager.

"So... It was your fault but you got a good settlement."

"When I intend to get something I get it."

Since marrying Jim Wilson and moving east, she was now more involved in Church affairs including the Confraternity work as the Serninsea administrator.

"How were you involved in religion in the first place?"

"By accident, a sort of place to go to socialise." She said, "I've always been eager, but ever since I met Jim I've enjoyed an excessive sex life."

"So did your first husband do anything wrong?"

"Not really. I like material things, but I like tough men better. And although many clergy are wimpish, Jim isn't. He is tough in word and actions. So, about you! You were finally introduced to us by the wayward Christine."

"She didn't strike me as wayward or wimpish."

"We want people who say yes to life and say it abundantly. Yes? Positive about their bodies, and all bodies. Did Christine tell you about how the Confraternity got started?"

"You tell me."

"It was born of a revelation."

"Do tell."

"Two bishops as friends - when one wasn't yet elevated - and an affair. So the friends are Terry Barman and Jonathan Eyre, who were fortunate to be together in the same Gravesend Theological College. This confuses people because it is named after Richard of Gravesend, 1258 to 1279. If you go to one of the Oxford theological colleges, you'll know about all the gay affairs that go on. Well, these two were the heterosexual equivalents, within the college and the university. And then, after Terry became a bishop, before coming to Wytham, he connected with priest Liz Huett, at some gathering or other at the end of Hadrian's Wall, where they had the revelation. The orgasm is the insight to the Kingdom of God: it is so good, it must be good."

"Rather than if something is good, it must be bad."

"The damned Calvinists," said Connie. "And they are damned not saved. Nothing good ever came from Calvinists."

"Christine dislikes Calvinists but not their sort of authority, surely."

"Christine Vine and Jonathan formed an attraction. She gave him ideas, often during the sex act itself. It was her approach that formed the basis of the group. She was a lay person, but the best place for her towards ministry was up here in Wytham. Fortunately, as a working escort, she had money and flexibility, and took a house in Eslaforde. It is puritanical evangelical down there but Terry Barman got her into Wheaton to its north. The ideas given to Jonathan are all mainly hers, including episcopal authority, but that is the seed of her problem. She simply forgot who she is. She can advise - we can all advise - but only the bishops make decisions."

"It's not very Anglican," I said. "Eastern Orthodox?"

"But it *is* vanguard: the Vanguard. We want to do nothing less than overturn the theological inheritance of sin. It has ruined Christianity for too long. Look what happened when Western Christianity went to India. All those beautiful images at the

heart of Hindu worship were turned into embarrassments. Good for Sanjay and his niece Yojana, with us, recovering a Hinduism free of all such guilt. You know that Keith mentored Yojana."

"Oh - I see. But aren't they fucking each other because he *enjoyed* two affairs?"

"Why shouldn't they enjoy it? That's the whole point. But they are not having an affair. A few weeks back Tess, that's Liz, Elizabeth, took Yojana around South Wales. They were intimate all right, and both Yojana and Tess had further intimacy with the two South Wales bishops coming on board. Three women and one man. The question is, Linda, are *you* committed? Keith is and Christine was."

"Hmm."

"So, the question is, who will mentor you?"

"Er, it was going to be Christine."

"Christine had no authority to make that decision."

"I don't want John Barman to make that decision."

"He has done nothing against your interests or your welfare, Linda. Anyway, the decisions on mentoring and initiation are taken by the bishops, asking you, of course, and seeking advice. I would like to mentor you. What do you think?"

"I don't really know you."

"You will if I mentor you."

"I wanted Christine."

"But Christine is gone. Terry says he will try and find out what she is doing. She seems to have cut us off. So how do you see yourself contributing?"

"Only that I got ordained and want to make a difference. I want it to go somewhere. The parish is fine, but it's not where I am performing the best. Christine gave me a purpose. I'd come to my ordination doubting why I was doing it at all. I was a bit conflicted, and maybe I am still, but there was a turnaround and she and the ordination did rather zap me."

There was a pause here. Connie put on the radio, and thus we had some pop music on. Although irritating, it did give my brain a rest from Connie's talk. Except a report came on later in the news about police arresting two men in Harwich (of all places) after staging a robbery in Serninsea. They used movement between a party of people from their firm's head office to its branch at Serninsea to give them cover for a robbery of a small town bank. CCTV and road side cameras had connected vehicle use in the area and commuting.

The music resumed. I looked at these roadside cameras on our trip. They were put there ostensibly to monitor traffic, but a camera is a camera is a camera. After all, back in the days of the North of Ireland troubles police knew IRA movements. Mobile phones also do the same job.

Connie said, "The bank robbery could have been embarrassing. It's how you learnt of Christine and Jenny World being in our group. We cannot control everything. Nor did we plan for you to bump into Helen McPhail." Putting the radio off, she continued, "I know you don't like deception. Sometimes you have to do it. To move to Wytham, Jim and I had to assure the then diocesan bishop, the Right Reverend Lord Daniel Dimpleby, that we had no relationship before the divorce. John Bolingbroke didn't care, frankly, other than it *appeared* there was no relationship before the divorce."

"I have heard of this tactic," I said. "Appearances."

"It's how we manage information. Fascinating topic, information."

"Ah, I'm looking for a topic for a sermon."

"You're supposed to follow the lectionary. Jim does always."

"I'm allowed to do topics."

"Colin Cromer is too flexible."

"That's not how I see him. But - yeah - I'll preach on 'Information' next Sunday."

"Do not mention the Theatrical Players."

"Of course not. Like once I didn't mention badges. So lies are all part of managing information. That's not very good - not very evangelical either. Or maybe evangelicals deal in delusions: delusions of history, for example."

"Regardless, with the suffragan's backing, we were able to move in to the neighbouring parish from Colin Cromer's and yours."

"So you moved from a successful urban..."

"Suburban."

"...church, built up presumably with a band, good audio visuals..."

"Yes indeed."

"...and all that, to what can only ever be rural churches with small congregations. Doesn't he find that frustrating?"

"It's a challenge. But people have cars these days, and he can build an attraction for people to come from all around. Parishes can be so different. It is still a challenge but also relieved from previous gossip, which can be quite destructive."

I said, "Dimpleby left the diocesan operation in somewhat of a mess. When the shit hits the fan, it should not all be Derek Imperial's fault - although he is no better. But it is going that way."

"Over the fan and all over the bloody room," she added.

The roads improved as Nottingham grew closer and she said, "Come on then. Spill the beans. You're a woman with a reputation generating rumours. Adam Magellan: he's your old school mate. Old times between the sheets."

"I rewarded him for his investigations. I like him a lot."

"He might be a contrary influence, Linda. If he becomes a contrary influence, you must drop him. Otherwise: enjoy."

Connie knew where she was going and was in a stop-start accelerating and braking mode between traffic lights. Being someone who reads detail, I did consume many Advanced Driving manuals after I passed my test, and, although I didn't take the advanced test, I like to think I am a smoother and non-aggressive driver.

She arrived at a multi-storey car park and negotiated its ramps with speed and brakes until a queue had formed behind cars trying to park. Finally we were in a space and able to get the lift into the shopping area.

Connie showed a fluency of going into one clothes shop after another, trying items on. I participated by looking at her and trying on a few items myself. In the process I saw her badge clearly: the goose and the 'B'. Soon I just decided to sit down and wait.

In the end, I emerged from a multiple of shops with a useful black blouse, given my usual braless preference, whereas Connie had purchased three combination suits, three blouses and a five packs of underwear garments.

"You haven't got much," she said.

"I'm not much of a clothes person; I'm not into fashion or anything like that."

"You don't dress to impress, ever? Oh, you'll need to dress to impress at times."

"My plunging with slits translucent dresses are because I don't like dresses."

As if this wasn't enough, Connie entered a large supermarket and was filling her trolley high, including a large selection of wines (I bought one red and one white, in case of parishioner demand). I did have some frozen food among my purchases, which might have been a bit daft.

At this point I wanted to get in her car and go home, but Connie clearly wanted to return to the shopping area.

She seemed to have even more energy when she bumped into someone she knew. This person had a house extension built and Connie heard all about it. She must have said hello to about five people and one asked after Jim's whereabouts. "We're very near the eastern coast," she told him. "Wytham diocese."

"Is that where that Serninsea Cross thing was found?"

"Yes it was," she said, "And Terry wants it to become the very symbol of Serninsea continuity."

Next, she made a bee-line to a lingerie store. "Come on," she said, "Get something for your man as well."

"You mean Adam," I said.

"Yeah. My man's into bright blue: that's unusual, isn't it," said Connie about lingerie. "Appear to appeal," she said, so I sat while she was selecting rather more than one set of these items. In fact she purchased six of these, and they were different sizes. No way were these sets for her alone. "Surely you do a bit of slap and tickle," she said to me.

"Nah. You're doing the buying again," I said.

"Mind if we go into the sex shop?" she asked.

"Well I suppose there isn't one in Serninsea."

"There is, actually," Connie said. "But I'll leave you to your innocence on the matter. This one has more choice and is considerably cheaper."

Suddenly we were out of the main stores and going down some back streets. This shop had windows lacking any display.

"This looks like the real deal," I said.

"A much as you can get in the UK."

I thought, hang on, I'm with the wife of an evangelical clergyman, being a clergywoman myself. Welcome to her world.

"Don't like rubber suits," she said, inside.

"Rubber ducks is more my thing," I responded. "Or Adam's assistant will be into ducks that can select playing cards."

"Hello Chloe," she said to the slim, female assistant, with bare arms and a braless t-shirt on and cut down jeans into shorts. "How's life? Had any strange men?"

"One or two."

Connie bought some strangely mushroom-shaped plastic devices I assume not available among the shopping centre lingerie extras. I'd have put them in the kitchen for displays, although they had curvy pointed ends. Crumbs she even purchased some DVDs, and this slim woman serving with nipples prominent through her vest gave her an "extra one" for free stimulation.

Connie told me, "The extra one is the real deal. It is *disgusting*." Connie

purchased a large dildo not available in the high street, and five rabbit vibrators. "These are the best." Then she said to me, "Go on, get something. We can put these on expenses."

"Honestly," I said, "I've got everything I want."

"What about that double dildo over there?"

"Too big. Anyway, why on earth would I want a double dildo? There is no one for the other end."

"You never know," said Connie. "Chloe Mee, this woman has a swallowing technique second to none. She takes it all and she never chokes."

I stared at Connie.

Chloe said, "You sound jealous," to Connie.

"You bet I am. Too much and I throw up. I need lessons."

"We do have a DVD guide," said Chloe.

"Well, I'm hoping my friend here will teach me."

I stared at her more, but not surprised that Keith must have told her.

"Is it the collective account?" asked Chloe Mee of Connie Wilson. It was, via some card.

Back we went to the supermarket, because she added a fifty inch High Definition television to her purchases for hanging on the bedroom wall. Staff sent a youngster to carry it for her on a special trolley. It was laid on the back seat, covered over with a rug. Other items were added into the boot.

At last, this woman on super-alkaline batteries had finished and we drove off.

"And is Keith going to leave for Harwich?" she asked.

"I should think so," I said. "Felixstowe. Sideways move."

"We think we will have to start a group there, but we have no bishop. Margate is so inconvenient. The badge for there is Ebbsfleet - Christine again."

The radio was back on. This meant she wasn't talking, and I felt tired.

Oh, she was talking, somewhat later on. "Tell me about deep-throating. How do you do it?"

"Oh God."

"We'll do that later. Come on, I can't do it."

I decided to give a quick lecture. "It's just that you have to get your pharyngeal reflex under control. Some of us don't have much of one, and some - perhaps you - have too much."

She said, "The reflex when something touches the back of your throat."

"And nearby. So you have to desensitise it by training over time. That's what I did, with Keith. You can use a finger or the handle of a toothbrush or, say, something phallic: it must be clean and not cause damage or get stuck."

"Or stop you breathing."

"Well, as you choke, accommodate to it; you breathe through your nose. After all, the man will be blocking your mouth and the nose is essential."

"How long for?" she asked.

"You train up to, say, ten seconds a go, holding the object steady. You do it several times a day, each day, and it does desensitise. And, as this happens, you introduce motion, slowly moving the object off and on the reflex area. You just have to persist. Eventually you can take a dildo deep into and out of your throat and it doesn't result in convulsing or coughing - not much and later nothing."

"What about things to help?"

"The thing about trying aids, from earplugs to laughing gas or even acupuncture, is that you won't use these during sex!"

"Unless it's kinky."

"Believe me, eventually the reflex becomes very slight or gone. It is also a form of numbness, and thus it is not working as a defence. If the reflex still happens, swallow. Keep up the swallowing motion like when the object is there."

"So you can take a man's knob in. Like Jonathan's."

"Is the whole of my sex life known to you, Connie, and I suppose everyone in this group?"

"You know we know about Jonathan."

"That's just the issue, isn't it? I fell for him, like I fall for a number of people. I thought he was interested in me, not just whether I was available and suitable."

"Well, stop falling for people, and just enjoy. Become more disinterested, Linda. So I'd have to learn to take in a dildo in and move it about."

"Okay. First time in sex, he should remain still and you do the moving. I then learnt to do it with *him* moving, and Jonathan was almost violent. Open your mouth wide with tongue forward. It helps also to get the mouth and throat aligned, like being on your back with your head over the edge and mouth wide open."

"Off a table, off a bed. Look we're getting close to Ingle Barrow."

"It also depends on how curved or straight is his member. You use your hands to press against him and control the entry. When you can do it, make the best of it. Lick his balls. That also keeps him still."

"You are a proper expert; we knew we were right selecting you."

"But this needs to be delicate, or you could bite him. Another thing is saliva: I stopped even producing lots of saliva. When you do, it's a good lubricant, and sloppy-messy, but the gunge does have to get out of the mouth. You don't want it going down into the lungs. Same especially with sperm. If he climaxes while in your throat, you must be aware that lacking a spasm can lead to sperm going down the wrong way. So you must be in control mode. If your sphincters are weakened, control is more about awareness."

"Did you know I once won an antiques television programme competition?"

"That's a change of subject."

"£4,400 I won. I might show you the DVD recording, and it would look good on the new screen. This could sound a bit odd, but the McPhails have seen me arrive back knackered before, and you look tired. So their huge house has a room for us, and we will literally just lie down and drift off to sleep."

"I could go home."

"Come in and you can drive back when you've rested. Honestly, our hosts will let us rest. I have to drive around Serninsea and to the north, and I am knackered."

Connie had her own key. I had a limited number of items to go in their freezer.

"Come on upstairs and we can rest," said Connie. "Surprising as it may seem, I don't want to talk any further."

I followed her, and into this room we sat on the double bed, and she became naked and lay down. The cue was for me to do the same, and so there I was, alongside the big woman, my clothes off as well, anticipating something, but she turned away with her big bottom on show, and she did actually start to go to sleep.

My eyes were kind of going shut, and I must have slept, as an image of Adam Magellan holding his over-enlarged penis outside of my front room window gave way

to the physical presence of more than one body next to me. Through peripheral vision and semi-shut eyes I realised that Stephen was on top of Connie, and furthermore that Helen was stood close by. He was thrusting Connie and worked her with penetration and stimulation to the all important orgasm, assisted by Helen's roving hands. Bloody hell, I thought.

"You're awake," Connie said, still lying flat, breathing heavily, as Stephen got up and approached Helen, pushing her up against the wall.

"Er, yeah." I turned and looked at them.

"Good to see you again, Linda," said Helen, being pressed and then entered against the wall. "We arrived back about half an hour ago."

"Er...What time is it?" was my innocent response. Approaching six o'clock, it was. Now I sat up, making Connie visible at length. Busty and hairy she certainly was. I stated, "Well that was an interesting day."

"Want to get fucked?" Connie asked.

"Er... Maybe not; still tired. I'm not shocked or anything."

"Do show us your party trick," said Connie.

I realised what she meant. "It's not a party trick."

"Helen, go and get the dildo I showed you."

Stephen released her and she left the room, returning with Connie's new wobbly thing. So I took it into my throat and showed just how much could disappear. Most of it went down. I then removed it. They actually gave me a round of applause.

Connie said, "Isn't she wonderful? Look, the bishops haven't decided on your mentor, yet, when all your obligations will be known."

"I must be going."

"Me too; they can finish off."

I collected my frozen foodstuffs and we both went to our respective cars.

At home Keith came in alone. I told him that I'd had a busy day with Connie. Cheryl was with her mother until later.

"You had time with the McPhails?"

"I see," I said, "It was, of course, intended. They offered but I didn't have sex."

"Good, because you need mentoring first, to understand what happens, including personally. You'll get initiated, and then there's more mentoring."

"Before and after?"

"It's in order to work on your obligation for service - to connect the sexual with the divine. I can suggest some theological reading. Our bishops have produced private papers too. They'll decide everything in the next few days, using that you have shown willing. The decisions are about who initiates and who mentors. You'll be a lynchpin of the Theatrical Players."

"Local girl doing local things."

"There's actually a suggestion of you travelling up and down the country forming new orgasmic groups. It would need follow-ups from the bishops to initiate clergy. It could be very exciting but you would have to become sexually strong."

"I thought I was, thanks to you."

"Fucking for the British Isles, Linda."

I nodded and smiled because showing willing mattered.

What mattered, also, was to describe our shopping to Adam in a matter of fact way.

Adam's Visitor News (Tuesday 2nd & Wednesday 3rd July)

Next morning, Adam brushed his teeth, but when I went in and sat on the toilet and leaned forward, Adam headed for the door.

"I'm told this is a sacred act," I said.

"Who by?"

"By whom. Christine Vine."

"Tosh." He went downstairs to sit at the breakfast table.

When I entered the kitchen wearing nothing I asked him, "Why do you like a 'Thomas the Tank'?"

"It keeps my bollocks busy. A pretty girl on Goosechat, and no one else need be involved. I do like it when someone like you holds my todger."

I grabbed a bowl and tipped in some Strawberry Crisp, then poured milk from a six pint carton "You stumbled across Goosechat?"

"George Wickenby went on it when his nieces tried it out. He told me about Goosechat."

"Incestuous stuff. So you met a fellow wanker."

"His nieces soon came off it."

"Incestuous."

"There's a lot of it about; sometimes I even investigate it."

"You going in?" Keith asked Cheryl pushing past him in her own search for other cereals.

Cheryl said, "I will go home - Harwich is my home now - tomorrow?"

"Fine," I said.

"Come and see your old mates at work, today," said Keith, "and with any luck I'll get a quick decision so I can come down to Harwich for a few days tomorrow."

Adam left just after they did, with a kiss for me, and I was alone.

I'd told the churchwardens that they could open up for private prayer - no Morning Prayer. I did do some visiting and met a man who talked tourist statistics and made me think about my sermon to come.

Eventually Keith and Cheryl returned from work, and indeed Keith had gained permission to go to Harwich the next day. Thus they slept together that night, making their usual noises, whereas Adam was 'busy' according to his message. So I slept alone. Keith didn't go at it for this long with me, I thought - not in recent years.

I had a different idea about early mornings, and stayed in bed on Wednesday as well. So Cheryl left with Keith, and I was left alone in bed. I decided to do sod all. The Holy Spirit kept my head on my pillow. Where was my enthusiasm?

Adam was in my bed, turned to face away from me. And through the open door, opposite the bed, came the Bishop of Scredington. What was he doing here? He had nothing on, but was holding a crook. The crook's curly end straightened, and pus was coming out of this straightening end. He removed my duvet, and this bishop was going to insert this crook, my legs widening. So I started bashing Adam with my right arm, to get him to wake up. I was hitting the empty bed.

I got up at midday and wore mufti out to the shops. It was time to go to Adam's, and find out if he was avoiding me. I simply went past Peter's occupied reception room and looked into his empty downstairs office. So I went upstairs.

About to speak, Adam said, "Shush."

"Why?" I answered a little aggressively.

"Because Ann is here talking business." Oh, she was sat behind where the door opened.

She said, "Glad you're here. Adam's wife's daughter Yootha Ann is coming up to Serninsea on a compassionate basis, and perhaps with her mother."

"I remember Agota," I said, thinking of something to say.

"Yes. Her name was Agota Annabella György. Mary was Mirela Annabella György. György was her first married name. If you change your surname to 'George' then why not the other names?"

"Her mother's maiden name?" I wondered.

Ann said, "Ardelean. It means forest: Hungarian for it is erdő."

"She's got a forest?" I asked.

"Unlike you," joked Adam.

"Ho ho ho. Sorry Ann. He is referring to the absence of hair around my vulva. Just thought I'd let you know."

"I can recommend it," she said, as sharply. "I suppose I should have let you look, Adam, when I had it done properly on Saturday."

Despite being astonished, I blurted out: "I don't shave, it doesn't grow. He thinks I'm a bloke because I've got a hairless fanny."

Ann gave a puzzled look but did not respond. "Anyway, Mary Ann George was soon Mary Ann Magellan and Yootha Ann stayed as George until she also married."

I said, "Come on Ann. Let's compare fannies. If you were going to show him, show him now, and let's compare one that's hairless with one that's depilated."

Ann stood up, lowered her trousers and lowered her knickers. So I lowered my trousers.

I said to Ann, "Can I feel around it?"

"If you must."

I said, "I can feel the presence of growth. It's not smooth. Adam, have a feel."

So he did, around Ann's lips.

"Feel mine, both of you."

"It's very smooth," Ann said. "Well done."

"I told you. I don't do anything."

Trousers pulled up, Adam said, after blinking multiple times, "Do you know why she selected 'Yootha'? You called her 'Goat' when she was on the neighbouring farm and she realised that her name was no good here. She saw an old comedy on Colin Cromer's television set and, given her own surname had Ys in it, she took on the name Yootha, also because she was interested in Aborigines and their art, and because she worked for Mr. Yannis Youell, who is the one presently dying of cancer. He is terminally ill and Eliana, his wife, wants a visit."

"I didn't know this. Yes, he was running the next door farm. I'm going to have to visit. Oh dear, dying of cancer. Aborigines?"

Ann said, "Yootha the name has Aboriginal origins. And Aysher is Yootha Ann's married name since living in Reading."

"I hope she comes and gives comfort to Mr. Youell rather than bringing him to a premature end."

Ann only said, "Your humour does you no credit, Linda. I'll let myself out,

Adam. You two have things to do." She left and went down the stairs.

"What do you have to do?" I asked Adam.

"Work. Perhaps you should do your pastoral visiting."

"Are you avoiding me?"

"Ann says I should give you emotional support."

"Does she now? I don't need emotional support; I need fucking and you keep running away."

"We all need emotional support. Ann and Labhaoise do give me emotional support as well as business support.."

"She shows you her fanny."

"I did give her a child - and Labhaoise."

"Be in my bed tonight, Adam. Everyone has gone, even Colin has gone on his holiday. I suppose I'd better go home, put the cassock on and go and see Mr. Youell. That might be different from how they sometimes saw us in the fields. My daddy kept up good relations with our farming neighbours."

Thus I began what would have to be a series of visits to a very ill Yannis Youell, eighty, and his wife Eliana, seventy-seven. When back I wrote a sermon against labelling and racism, with something about Christianity becoming universal. Then I realised this Sunday I'd told Connie I was preaching on information.

As for information, that evening I decided to close down all of my online interactive messaging and any debating. Why? Because I had collected these responses to becoming a priest and, for fun, corrected the atrocious spelling and put them into alphabetical order:

All these women! The Church is capitulating to culture.

Are you a virgin? [Hardly!]

Are you going to get a lesbian haircut, minister?

Are you in fancy dress?

As your brother in Christ do re-consider taking this pastor role in the church as it is prohibited in God's word.

At least you're easy on the eye.

Did you lose your virginity before you got married?

Do the manly thing and resign.

Do you kiss the blokes when they leave your service?

Does your husband do the cooking?

Even if you had tattooed on your head 'PRIEST' you wouldn't be one.

God would not call you - being a woman.

Have you thought about your earrings when you lead worship? Could be distracting. [I never wear any!]

Hello vicarette.

How attractive should a female priest be?

How can you possibly do this when you're a wife and a mother? [I'm not!]

I'll give you this - you'll be much more pastoral as a woman.

I've got a good fundraising idea - come to church, ogle the vicar and give generously.

I've seen you for real - gorgeous women distract the congregation.

I bet your voice is too high.

I don't want to hurt your feelings.

*I refer to what St. Paul says about a woman preaching.
I see that around town you dress up as a man. [Often in a cassock!]
If we call priests Father, what do we call the women?
Intellectualism does not become you.
Is your husband interested in theology?
Is your husband ordained too?
Isn't your husband ashamed that you didn't put his vocation first? [I did!]
Jesus called only men.
Jesus was a man.
Let's try the four fuck-offs: Female, Fat, Forty and Fick.
Ministers like you should sign that they won't get pregnant while in post. [I can't! But I would not.]
Ministry is incompatible with your duties as a wife and mother. [I am not a wife or mother, of course.]
My colleagues can't find a job because women are taking their place and some won't share an altar with a woman.
Next time God will call the best man to be the bride of Christ. [Interesting.]
No debating from me as you will get too upset.
No one can receive communion from someone who paints their nails. [I don't paint my nails!]
Preach about cooking.
Serninsea needs another man when Colin goes.
She's thinks she's clever.
Should a lady vicar be wearing that?
So who does the cooking in your manse?
Tell us the dates of your periods so we know when not to take communion.
[Of course, he doesn't know.]
The children will like you.
There's plenty you can do without being a priest.
What part does a bra take among the vestments? [I don't wear bras!]
What role do knickers play in clerical dress? [I don't wear knickers!]
What's the betting you've got suspenders on under that cassock?
When you move on you'll need to apply for churches that men wouldn't want.
Who will men go to if they have a difficulty?
Why is someone so attractive acting like a vicar?
Will people ever take you seriously?
Women should be nuns not priests. [My sister said I'd become a nun.]
Wow. You're a cleavage in a cassock.
Yes, sweetheart.
You're a blonde vicar with a cracking rack.
You're a blonde vicar with a racking crack. [Same person as above.]
You're a good girl.
You're not the leadership type.
You are a liberal and a slut.
You are a naughty girl.
You could come as the strippergram.
You have a much trimmer arse than [removed] in Foss. She has the better proportioned tits.*

*You have some nice jugs.
You need to wear more make up to be more professional.
You would have been such a good mum.
You're damaging the Gospel.
You're doing the work of the devil.
You're gorgeous: why aren't the people flocking in?
You're just a faux-priest.
You've been a busy girl, haven't you?
You've taken on a lot for a woman.
Your church will grow with a sexy vicar like you.*

Adam came in, read these and smiled. He said, "Obviously, according to these, you are not a bloke. Comparing fannies, you're not a bloke. I didn't think you were a bloke, but I have had to mentally adjust."

"I enjoy sex as a woman, Adam. Perhaps I over compensate. My body is my temple, but it misfunctions. I have issues: I do know this."

I decided I'd get up the next morning for Morning Prayer.

At the Diocesan Bishop's Lecture (Friday 5th July)

Clever Colin Cromer had arranged his holiday to avoid the diocesan lecture! It meant I had to be present. The email said each of us had two seats, one for a partner. Adam, back in my bed and doing sex again, said he was uninterested but I could "take the lad" - which meant Peter. He agreed to go. So I picked him up from Adam's place.

He was a lively passenger, and he told me about getting on with Kathryn very well. Why her and not twin Kathleen? Well, Kathryn had made the move.

Being somewhat naughty, I asked Peter, "Mary Ann George, or Mary Ann Magellan, was at SMS. Why did she leave so quickly?"

Peter said, "Before my time and above my pay grade."

"You're not paid by Adam," I said. "Ann Dromeghda interfered in the marriage, *didn't* she?"

"I'm the monkey and he is the organ grinder. You know better than to ask me, Linda."

"A brass monkey."

"All three, Linda."

So instead I told Peter about visiting the Unitarian chapel during my retreat, and getting into a lot of trouble over it. He said he had never even seen one, never mind been to one. He liked the Pagans but not their magic, and he liked the Buddhists but not reincarnation, and so had settled on Unitarian Universalists online.

"I can imagine a lot think like you," I said. "So what about, say, Christianity without the miracles?"

"But it is all about miraculous intervention."

"Oh dear," I said. "Well, perhaps we'll find out tonight. Remember I mentioned a magical presentation? I want to make a point. Like the Lent show but close up and for discussion."

"You are a good shape for fitting in things," he told me. "Can I saw you in half?"

"Which half would you like to keep?"

"Can you start to exercise and become supple?"

"I *am* supple, laddie. Okay, I will start exercising immediately. I mean, when home."

"You need to get in and out of small spaces quickly and efficiently."

"That's what Adam has to do. Has Adam told you about this group, The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players."

"Something."

"What does he say?"

"Linda, I'm not allowed to talk about work."

"Why is it work? I told him to stop investigating."

"Perhaps he has; he's not mentioned it for a while."

The lecture was not given at the Cathedral as usual but at the University of Foss, a series of buildings all circling around a long lake and a railway station just opened along the way.

I drove us to one of the university's car parks. The park and ride on the bypass was for daytime only. We got out and it was a fairly long walk to the door.

"University for a theology lecture by your bishop," Peter stated. "Is he a professor?"

"More likely a dogfight between the Bishop and the Dean and Chapter of Wytham Cathedral."

"Tell me more."

"There's a Council of lay people meeting twice a year to advise the Chapter and a College of Canons including Dean Alistair Jackman for setting the agenda. He's been accused of poor financial management by Bishop Derek Imperial while he accuses the bishop of being incompetent regarding administration."

"Oh dear."

"Perhaps the Bishop wants to deny the cathedral income from our presence, or perhaps Dean Jackman has made the bishop unwelcome - although, properly speaking, he cannot."

"The cathedral is full of treasures," Peter asserted. "Pinkepinke." [Sounds like 'pinky pinky' - it means getting and holding on to money.]

"The big drain is the huge cost of repairs, but plenty of running costs too, at the cathedral. Staff redundancies were on the cards with the cathedral losing nearly £100,000 a year. Attendance for worship has grown, especially among midweek services, but Bishop Derek dislikes the visitor entry fees. Money comes from legacies, donations, selling off assets, and grants from the Lottery. There are National Church Commissioners who help towards our pensions."

"But not Christine Vine's," said Peter.

"Oh," I said. "Tell me more! Have you two been doing work on her?"

"I spoke out of turn. She doesn't get paid like you do. You know that."

"I'm what's called an FPS, or Fully Paid Stipendiary. She is a UVM, or Unpaid Voluntary Minister, of which there are many Lay Readers, Deacons and Priests. We have RVM or Retired Voluntary Ministers. UVMs effectively decide their own workload, but they establish a pattern by which they are reliably available. Many hold down jobs."

"So is your cathedral going bust?"

"The cathedral hopes to charge more for filming dramas around its estate. It hopes to use the building itself for more corporate dinners and fashion shows - the nave is alike a giant catwalk. I wonder what we can copy for St. Sernin's. I would remove all the pews, but Colin will not. The cathedral, after all, uses seats. We could have corporate dinners too, given the links Bishop Barman has generated, and be an alternative to the main hotel."

"Hmm. I would stay clear of him."

"He is the diocesan bishop's serving bishop; we can hardly say no. Keep walking quickly: we're nearly here. Both Bolingbroke and Screddington have gone on courses that are like microscopic MBAs. My boss Colin Cromer reacted that they ought to train more in theology, liturgy, pastoral and community needs: not to mimic being executive officers. Let's save this conversation now we are here."

The lecture was entitled *Christianity as Movement: A Linguistic and Bodily Approach*. The Bishop of Screddington, Julian Worsley, sat on one side of Derek Imperial, while John Barman, Bishop of Bolingbroke, sat on the other side. And it wasn't properly a Church do, but a University do with a connection to the chaplaincy and, well, normally, use of the cathedral.

A chaplaincy position in Higher Education would be so tempting, if I could get one.

I was rather chuffed that the diocesan recognised me and gave me a wave. Once again, he was approving of me. Given his approval of me at the retreat, the least I could do was be there and listen, accompanied by the keen Adam's apprentice.

Within his speech there was a lot of tedious "What I am going to say?" and "What I have said was..." that frustrates me. Just say it, and say it clearly enough.

"Christianity is nothing *if not bodily*," said Derek Imperial, "centred around a divine-human person and the Church is seen to be indeed *embodied* by that divine-human person. But that is simply to say the matter formally, and is rather like the headlines."

We were told that the mind is of the body and the mind makes sense through symbol, and symbol is embodied in ritual and ritual involves movement. At the heart of this is language: language by the widest definition, however. He went into several theories of language origin among humans, including the bow-wow type theory, which is the discredited early words-like-the-noise-made, to a newer one that language has come from the ability to appreciate music and is to represent things artistically. These were fundamental symbolic appreciation methods to map the immediate universe. But he returned to the bow-wow theory with others in mind: he has a pet dog.

"I can now say 'walkies' in *any tone of voice* and the result is my dog will jump up, get its lead and wants to walk. It is excited. I don't need to *cry* 'walkies' as I once did. Nor do I now over-express it's time for your *teeeee*. Saying simply 'it is teatime' is enough for the mutt to go mad around his bowl."

A further point was that his dog ignored all music. It had no necessity in its life. On the other hand, even with its necessities, the dog still had no grammar, no construction of sentences, and no symbolic extensions. "Whereas, for us, 'dog' the word has enormous and lengthening meanings, even arriving at the present use of the word 'dogging' which, I am reliably informed, means having sex with strangers

usually around a collection of cars in some lonely place. Please, no one leave to go and check out the car park: it is floodlit and it is not lonely."

Peter found that quite funny, although others weren't sure if or how to laugh. I remembered the trip to the woods on that non-participatory basis with Keith. He hadn't wanted a dog in case of long term commitment - because, of course, he was having an affair and didn't want to get attached to a dog if he was going to live somewhere else. Keith was crass when trying to be innocent about the word 'dogging'.

Derek Imperial was continuing. "The fact is that since Ludwig Wittgenstein and William James, expression has made reality; we build reality in the mind from those collective agreements of wordy expressions. Indeed 'the fact is' is simply established by my expressive power!" (A few chuckles were heard.)

I groaned, not because it wasn't funny but because this was dangerous existential territory.

The bishop told us that there are language games, and he thought they varied between maths and its attempt at symbolic precision, physics which did the same but had inventive names and expressions for particles discovered and assumed, chemistry also "welded" itself to substances arranged on the periodic table, and biology was underpinned by the evolution narrative - "And it *is* a narrative," said our Christian leader digging a very large black hole for himself.

"Religion, seen this way, is perhaps the most expressive, the most subjective and very much like art," he said, "But we try to ground it by drawing on narratives from science and history, and not always very successfully. History is very disciplined about the primary document, no matter which school of historiography then uses them, as is archaeology about gathering evidence - but sometimes expert driven; and science after Popper is very demanding about falsifiable experiments. Too often religion sweeps its way around these uses without taking their lessons seriously.

"We have to *maintain serious work* on the Jesus of history, as it has been called, the rabbi Jew who gathered leaders symbolising the twelve tribes of Israel, who perhaps preached a 'coming one' that may or may not have been himself transformed. We have to *examine scrupulously* the Easter narratives, not just for their anti-semitism, for which our locality has a sad history, but for their reliability. Would Jesus ever have been sentenced by Jews for claiming to be a messiah? No, surely not, and my view is Pilate would have taken little interest in yet another trivial trouble maker come to town. Stroke of the quill: a demonstrable non-citizen to be crucified. Messianics with followings were trouble makers. You see the problem, in that our gospels are post-Easter narratives, and all that follows-on. Narrative is a historical method, of course, but narrative of primary documents is located in the Early Church and not before."

Peter looked at me wide-eyed. I said to him, "I know. But it's a lot better than a fundy preacher we had recently."

"But where religion is *especially* grounded," our diocesan bishop said, "is in the anthropology of bodily movement, the bodily movement which supports and underpins expression. Anthropology is very clear that people who come together and exchange, do bind themselves as one. It is true in sex, in the economy, in conversation, and it is *fundamental* to the Eucharist as both expression and movement. In sex together one finds the gift of love, in the economy one finds the

progress of added value, in talk we find the richness of conversation, and in the Eucharist we make the material effort and transfer tokens for a spiritual gift, and these tokens involve the fundamentals of eating and drinking.

"The model is 'take, bless, break and give' from the apparent model of the Last Supper, *but* I do not subscribe myself to the Last Supper being the Eucharistic model. I don't because, although Jesus had a final meal, we don't know what meal it was or its intentions. Maybe it was a seder. In Corinth Paul was saying that the Eucharitic tradition goes back to the Lord. But did it? Because, Jesus's last meal, I'd argue, fits in with previous meals about the bounty of the coming Kingdom. As for how we do it - the Hellenistic Eucharist liturgically developed - the tokens of exchange are insignificant in themselves, although the Catholics say they embody in all reality the Lord himself in the transference to breaking and the crucifixion. And in a way, *they are right*," he said with added emphasis, as if he had become Bishop John Robinson in the 1960s.

Peter said, "And in a way it's all talk and shuffling along."

I replied, "Yeah. Or come at it from both ends. He is in dangerous territory."

The bishop wanted to turn to Buddhism, he said, "...not because I am a Buddhist but because it acts on the edges of language. The Buddhist does not want to talk, but empty the mind of all noise, the emptying leading to non-distractions and therefore an end to the sticky, messy, samsara that Christians call sin."

I wondered about this. Really? Is samsara what Christians call sin?

"But we notice there are texts to guide the activity, and symbolic body stances: for example, to be properly positioned in front of a statue of Buddha is as if that is Buddha himself. There are of course mid-way conditions and states, such as, in some traditions, helpful deities; *but*, unlike our God, Buddhist deities are temporary and of our world. And then, also, look at the sutras, where language is pushed to paradox. Nirvana and samsara become one. If you desire nirvana you are still in samsara. Is it not a case to live along with samsara is itself a kind of nirvana of attitude?

"The Western equivalents to this, though less 'real', are the postmodernists and poststructuralists who say that every binary end expression contains within it the other pole. There is no purity of expression, no binary finite position."

I thought, goodbye Trinity, goodbye Unity, it's all contradicted within each and the other. Gordon Bennett.

On he went. "Here I want to have a *crack* at our scientists. I mean the Al Khalilis, the Dawkinses, the Coxes and the de Sautoys, who have been all over the television screens. Using history to explain science is to use a narrative story; to talk in terms of wonder is to be expressive: many of the terms for particles are suggestive, and television summaries use music to evoke responses. At any level, science is expressive - but I won't go as far as some to try and suggest equivalence between the scientific method and the religionist method. Religion really is expressive; religion *really is like art*. What I will say to the scientist is, 'Be careful,' because beyond the facts we have dependent narratives, and the offered facts about dark matter and dark energy are creating contradictory problems deep in the narrative. Whereas religion can maintain a tradition because it knows it is a story, science has to change its Kuhn paradigm when the facts falsify the story. When a scientist tells me this is the fact of the matter, I'm asking what part is a fact of the matter. Expression?"

"So language matters, but what religion does is overviews it all via movement, via ritual, via symbolising the given. Yes: art does that too, but we attach to this religion narratives like our own post-Easter interpretation. God, as they say, in the beginning, was and is the Word, and that is the *brilliant insight* of our religion in its construction of words."

Hang on, he hadn't finished.

"Let me say on religion. Of course, I'm grounded *in the grounding of Christianity*. But the Word and wisdom come from Judaism, and we see use of language and bodily expression in the submission to God in Islam, and we see what we have discussed as transitory in Buddhism, and of course Hinduism is nothing if not the narratives of gods and the broad God. So I have no intention here of being exclusive: religion is that symbolic insight of our symbolic selves, but in our case we have the post-Easter narrative of a real man and claimed deity, who actually moved bodily, and used words creatively and employed stories himself, with layers of ritualistic meanings, and of a Church we know as his body extended into our symbolic oversight. *Thank you* very much."

There was a good applause from the three hundred probably gathered. Peter said, "Given by an atheist."

Suffragans Bishop John Barman and Julian Worsely were looking for questioners. Contributors should give names and location. I said to Peter, "Go on, ask him a question."

One question from Peter Beardsley from Wytham was, "How do you, bishop, see more precision in Christian expression given that you said we were, as Christians - as actually the postliberals say - bound to rules of language performance in the identification of a Christian people?"

I took it that this person was a disciple of Lindbeck and the like.

His answer was: "This is precisely it. The expression makes the truth grounded in the rules of performance, although, as I say, we try to ground Christian expression via other methodologies. In the end theology can only draw on tradition, on pre-statements: on loyalties to reflective scriptures, liturgical books and confessional statements, and try to relate them outwardly. I'm convinced today that there is no such thing as natural theology. It is all dogmatic in one way or another, and that is both a strength and a weakness."

I said, "Go on Peter. Go on, go on, go on, go on," as 'Mrs. Doyle' might have expressed it.

Brilliant! Peter's hand went up. John Barman himself pointed across and a microphone arrived. "Peter Marshall from Serninsea. Isn't this the emperor's not very new clothes? What are *you* wearing? At one time, they said, God sent his very Son and self to save those God knew would be saved. Yes? Now it is all expression and human movement, and what's spoken out of our mouths."

"Good one," I said to him.

The bishop's answer was staggering. "We cannot escape what the philosophers have said, what the psychologists and social anthropologists have found. And it is quite liberating, really, because it has huge interfaith implications. And there is a real dialogue with humanists too. But we Christians are saying something else too. We are saying that it is in the body, and we are *the body people*, we are *the body religion*. It's not a oneupmanship, it's an insight, a central insight, *the* central insight. You see, whichever way you understand the Last Supper and the

Eucharist, whether diverged, converged, or mixing the two, it is dramatic theatre combining the body and the culture."

"It's non-realist," said Peter. "Your God and doctrine has given up on reality."

(Oh, Peter, you are wonderful! I was enjoying this.)

"Oh no it's *not*," said the bishop. "It's left the question of the real *open*, like the Buddhists have the real and have it in paradox. It is *grounded*, grounded in several places, and maybe thanks to other disciplines, but we then make our expression about bodies and do it in movement. It is real, but an expressive real, nor is it a *reductionism* to language pure, but an *expansion* through symbolism wide. I don't doubt the difficulties regarding precise doctrines as direct descriptions, but what we can do - according to the Most Reverend William Blair Rothach, our Archbishop - is get into the detail of these descriptions and do history-like work upon them. Nevertheless, these are always post-Easter descriptions and that is what makes the difference, I think."

"Someone else," said Julian Worsley.

"Yes, but a well appreciated question," said the diocesan. "This is what we want, and I note that the young man is sat next to one of our brand new priests of a deep theological appreciation herself. She must be doing a brilliant job in outreach."

"Smoke and mirrors," said Peter to me.

"Brilliant," I said to him. "The emperor's not so new clothes."

"I get all this stuff online," said Peter. "I ought to come here to study but I can't and won't afford it."

"Quite," I said. "Our shit governments devalue education. Everything is 'training' these days."

"Anyone?" asked the Bishop of Bolingbroke. "You see anyone, Julian? Oh yes. Fire!"

"James Lauder of Eslaforde. How do you regard the virgin birth and bodily resurrection then? Are they just expressions?"

Here we were again, with tick-box credal Christianity.

"Virginal conception is of course a *paradoxical expression* at the heart of things. It has to be divine making it impossible as human - but he was human. It comes from several sources, and particularly grounded in the Greek translation of Hebrew scriptures and thus seen as prophetic; and virginity is a significant expression regarding prophetic characters in all sorts of religious settings. The narrative story in its detail is then about the special *uniqueness* of this person as a chosen one which can be examined now in the textual detail as if in a history-like and science-like manner but neither as history and nor as science. As for resurrection, well, yes, it has to be bodily because we are bodily, thanks fortunately to the body beliefs of the Jews in burials at that time and place, and of course affirming the material body (and not just some spiritual experience) becoming then an affirmation of the real, the actual, and the *restoration of goodness* over time with human effort assisting the divine plan. Again we get the significance of the post-Easter faith by examining the details of the stories of the tomb and the appearances as history-like and science-like, as before, in other words taking the texts at face value and without losses, and so mining them all for the significance of say authority in the Church, proper ritual and the development of the fully rounded trinitarian account."

I asked Peter, "Did you get that?"

He replied, "What he meant was these events didn't actually happen."

The bishop was keen to carry on. "You know, we forget how potent beliefs *were* in other times. Have you ever thought of the keenness, even, of the Mediaeval and early Modern English to chop people's heads off or event to have them chopped off? These Catholics, Protestants, really did think that if you chopped someone's head off then the deceased walked straight into the next world, showing who was correct. No wonder, then, that they developed sophisticated means like being hung, drawn and quartered to make death painful. So these Jews and Romans at the time of Jesus weren't revised humanists or something, and why Romans had this thing called crucifixion for non-Roman citizens. Make it cruel."

I said to Peter, "He really is all the fun of the fair."

I thought it was time to ask the question to end all questions. My hand raised, I asked, "The Reverend Linda Jupitas, curate at Serninsea. The orgasm is nothing if not bodily. How might you see it as an insight into the Kingdom of God?"

The Bishop of Bolingbroke had a stern expression on his face, staring at me, then asking, "Is that a serious question?"

Among the laughter in the crowd, I answered, "Oh, definitely, linked to religious ecstasy and all that."

"No no, John," said the diocesan, "I can see that this is a very serious question. This is extended thinking. The mystics, of course, many in confined absolute institutions, as the sociologists would say, do get into states of ecstasy that they associate with Christ, as lovers of Christ. To be really risky, it brings prayer towards, indeed, masturbation, but if you think about it - and this is fresh, on the spot thinking here - it cannot be masturbation. No, this is very insightful. Masturbation is inwardly directed, seen as a diversion, even wasted activity. But it is not here, is it, because prayer is communicating. I think some prayer in communication with the divine could be so intense, so imbued with the Spirit of Love, that it could indeed have a sexual product. I know there are papers written about past mystics on this, but with use of psychology and psychotherapy there is a whole theological landscape here today to connect prayer with ecstatic and sexual responses. Hmm."

Peter asked me, "Are you a theological terrorist?"

"He wasn't injured in any way at all."

Julian asked, "Any less controversial questions?"

There were other questions, like Jason Wells of Rasa Market asking about how to relate Wittgenstein and William James, with an answer about expressing that becomes the real, and another from Ian Wigley of Bolton cum Heckoring about paradox in the Trinity that gained an answer I just couldn't fathom because I don't think Derek Imperial then knew what he was on about.

"The one that isn't one, the three that could be more..." (Hey?) "The subordination that cannot be accepted, human and limited but divine and unlimited," said the bishop.

It was surely very paradoxical to the point of being nonsensical. I think he was starting to clog up himself. A woman (!), Dorothy Strachan (pronounced Strawn) of Wulfstan, asked whether his God was 'personalist', and the bishop said that the God encounter was indeed in the I-Thou but he wasn't himself opposed to systematic theology. People were always getting Tillich wrong, he thought, "although Tillich might have been confused himself."

(Really, bishop, you don't say.)

With the fog thickened I said to Peter that there were drinks in the car and I wanted to get away very soon. Peter might have stayed to debate with individuals.

However, in the notices, we were told that Gretta Cox-Jenkins would be lecturing in the next week on *Rejuvenating the Church*. He hoped as many here as possible could return. This would be at the cathedral, suggesting that the diocesan bishop himself and Wytham Cathedral were at war. Gretta was also looking for someone to show her around and give her an overnight stay.

"Good lecture!" I said at Jim Wilson while heading for the door and arm locked into Peter to drag him along.

"Well, was it?" I heard him reply.

Connie Wilson came towards me fast. "Your question was near the knuckle."

"Near the clitoris," I said.

"You know what I mean. Too public."

"Pubic," I said. "Come on Peter," whom I kept linked to my arm.

"I need the loo," said the lad.

"Can you wait for a lay-by or must you go now?"

"Now."

"Shame. Okay, I'll go as well. I might not last."

Out of the loo, Peter was at a distance and Connie and Jim were waiting for me. She said, "Keep your mouth shut. The bishops will have a mentor for you soon. And you obviously need mentoring."

Mo McArden and Tom Bowler had come along, unknown to me. Mo said, "You and your boss. I can see why you are a priest, now. I'd no idea."

"I can offer you some theology books," I responded. They seemed uninterested and wanted to move off.

A certain Kenneth Osis was heading my way and blocking my return to Peter: "Can we chat, now ye're post ordination? Wasn't that a good lecture? Who's yer clever man? Oh, look, the top bishop has found him."

"He works for a friend. I suppose I'll be seeing you again after all."

"Yes indeed. Bye. Now's yer chance to get close to the decisions, make a difference." He seemed to avoid Connie as he left.

I said, "Peter. Hello Bishop again."

"Wonderful young man. A *Unitarian*? How exciting! Transfer him across with his theological sophistication. We could do with that."

"I could try," I said.

"Encourage him in his endeavours. All the very best to you both. Did you understand me?"

"He encourages me and we both understood you. Come on!"

I grabbed his arm and dragged him off.

Out on our own he said, "You and your orgasms!" Peter started laughing.

"Deadly serious. Serious question."

"You really are unique," he said.

Peter asked to go to to Inglemire and his father's house. I dropped him off there. It had many rooms.

Adam was inside my house. I told Adam that his apprentice ought to be treasured.

"I thought he might like it, and he thinks you're an interesting woman."

"That's right, Adam: a woman. I want an orgasm, tonight," I said, doing some

more pelvic exercises as a kind of warm-up.

Preaching Information (Sunday 7th July)

It was time to preach on Information. Colin Cromer was still on his main holiday. It made using the vestry loo so much less stressful!

My sermon was written rapidly but inspired by a pastoral visit on Tuesday to a retired man who had been one of a small number of employees in a tourist statistics business. All this business did was make tourist activity reports for local authorities and commercial bodies. It did it by collecting supply-side statistics on hotel and guest house room availability and reported percentage usage, and made use of related attractions on the demand side. He'd said that often the statistics did not equate, or were not provided, so the firm just filled in the gaps. It did not matter because the authorities needed externally referenced reports with the display of 'objective' statistics in order to make policy. So money was being made by the firm not wholly through the gathering of information but by its generation.

Peter Marshall continued his recent theological engagement by coming into the church.

At the appropriate liturgical setting, I rose to say (for Peter's benefit, given his dabbling in other religion via his work computer), "May the words of my lips be acceptable to our God. Amen.

"Now, I want to talk about incarnation, crucifixion-resurrection, and information. You see, information is now understood to be significant factor of existence in the universe. I don't mean information in a narrow sense, like today is World Naturist Day in the northern hemisphere. Just thought I'd mention that news. I mean it more in the physics sense of making and carrying information. The speed of light is the maximum speed of transferring information, excepting instantaneous quantum entanglement. I suppose we have become more aware of information in this supposed information age, or entering what is sometimes called an information economy. Information is a commodity.

"Talking about information is directly related to talking about energy and matter, because with information you can manipulate energy and matter. James Clerk Maxwell, the famous Scottish physicist, who showed us the difference between artists' subtractive primary colours and those of additive lights, imagined, in a thought experiment, a demon who could so arrange faster and slower moving molecules that therefore heat could be made to increase in one compartment and reduce in another, based on the information in the demon's observations."

I noticed the absence of attention in some of the twenty plus mainly elderly people.

"What Maxwell didn't quite work out, was that it takes energy to sort and activate such information. We would call it memory as in memory in a computer - this requires effort. Even allowing for ease of information in, there comes a point where memory reaches capacity if one thinks of the demon acting freely: achieve capacity and then you have to move stuff out to move stuff in. You cannot have something for nothing.

"The other crucial point is that information to be realised has to be rules-based and embodied. It has to be ordered, and only within a medium it can be transmitted to be made useful.

"I want to give an example of embodied information. One would be a pianola, a piano-like instrument that plays using a roll of paper with holes in it. Rather like the punch cards for an old-fashioned industrial loom, such holes are binary on-off information that instruct work. The information is embodied in the paper with holes, following rules, and putting the paper to work gets you a tune. We can call these holes 'data' contained in the paper and the question is always the minimum amount of embodied data to release a certain amount of information.

"At the same time many of us hold secrets. But secrets are also information, and to hold information is an act of work, and work demands energy. Secrets are definitely embodied, and they are organised.

"Now those of you who are theologically insightful can see where this is going."

I took a look at utterly puzzled faces. Oh dear. *Keep Calm and Carry On.*

"Christian theology is all about the Word that is embodied, embodied in a man and that man is therefore our deity and our data.

"In technical terms, information must be subject to the laws that say entropy always increases. What this means is that over time we lose the organisational order of things, or the ability for energy to do useful work. Entropy rising means deterioration rising.

"For example: build a sand castle in a desert with its wind and that castle of high organisation and low entropy will deteriorate and end up as part of the high entropy shape of sand dunes maintained by the winds across the desert. The castle was the information, the sand the embodying the data, and the data is concealed into the sand dunes. Or think of a car engine. It always goes from good towards needing repair. Its entropy goes up. You don't buy a poorly working old engine and find that it changes itself to being as good as new. It is so improbable it is ridiculous. What we do as information-bearing people is do work to organise and embody information within a created lower entropy structure."

I thought, 'Oh shit, this is terrible.' I'm not transmitting any information. *What a Carry On.*

"So, for example, we do work in cooking to use the breaking down of food towards its higher entropy to feed ourselves and use that food ingested to make ourselves become structured with embodied information that we can then transmit."

"No? Back to theology!"

"Jesus Christ is," I said, "the data representing God's effort that dynamically manipulates the increasing entropy of the material world and converts it by his work into embodied divine information. Being incarnate is like being a chef. Yet he shares in the world's entropy. The greatest moment of entropy is the crucifixion itself, the whole agony of the passion that results in his death. And yet that entropy is used: used to do work in the divine sense, and out of it comes the utterly transformative resurrection and signal of redemption for the whole material world. You see, the information died, of the highest entropy, and died with Christ's death, but Christ went down to hell, and when he was raised - when the work was done - he was raised with information embodied and the container was the resurrection body. So it is utterly dynamic."

I looked at Peter. I could even see his widened eyes. There was even a broader modicum of interest, if not quite the nodding heads Pusey had discovered in Germany whenever Christ (and here the resurrection) was mentioned, despite the incomprehensible radical sermon then being delivered.

"I note that the Baha'i faith talks about the manifestation of God and makes a distinction between that and the incarnation that we have. Why? Because it inherits from Islam the necessity of a stricter monotheism. However, Christianity is surely correct to emphasise the body, and the material, because the information of the Word is embodied within the material body of Christ the human, lost in his crushing, and yet, in the transformative energy of the resurrection, is newly able to transmit the information that is the redemption of the world. Entropy was used and reversed in the resurrection. And so here is our incarnation, our crucifixion and our resurrection. Amen."

I went on to preside at the Eucharist, but Peter stayed in his pew despite a prompt from the churchwarden Gertrude Carter (fully recovered, thanks to entropy-lowering medicine) to go and join the short queue to partake.

After the service Peter waited to talk after I'd shaken some hands.

He said, "Manifestation is also a formation of expressed energy. So you can have information manifested."

Crumbs. He understood it? I hoped so.

"But the spiritual is just containerless," I suggested. "That won't go."

"You're saying two persons of the Trinity are containerless. You must be."

"No, because they are embodied in Christ," I said.

"But for you the Holy Spirit does its own work."

"Through humans, animals, created things. My point is it's all via the material, including Christ."

He said, "I want to think about that."

'Back of the net!' I thought.

"Anyway," he went on, "the Muslims might be right to send Jesus into resurrection while still alive. If he dies, you've lost the information. But you cannot lose the information."

"No, you cannot lose information."

"But maximum entropy - death - means the embodying brain is dead."

"It's like Saharan sand all made smooth. The brain has all its past in it, but death makes it inaccessible. I'm not saying his brain switched on again but it was transformed."

Peter said, "I suppose the analogy would be with a black hole. Imagine a book lost down a black hole forever. But, as the book goes in, the book leaves an imprint on the horizon, and that radiates out - radiation happens because the black hole has a finite entropy and therefore you have positive temperature and that radiates."

"What?" I asked.

"I'm trying to work out how information works via crucifixion! Your crucifixion cannot be crucifixion: hence the Muslims' case."

"The point is that as soon as he is a transformed body, that has the information. There is, like in creation," I said, "a dispersal into something re-cohered, but you have continuity and discontinuity. Remember Christ is as wisdom, actually doing the creation. Creation is information. So there is an added insight here..."

"There must be a flaw in your argument," said Peter. "Hmm."

"Nothing is lost, only changed."

"It still doesn't work," he said, "not if crucifixion is death."

"The resurrection draws upon the imprint..."

Barbara Legge nearby then asked, "But did the resurrection actually happen, curate?"

"That we don't know," I said. (Oops. I wasn't supposed to say that.)

"Then what are you on about?" she asked, and walked off and away.

Peter said, "I'm still not happy."

"It is retained by God," I said.

"No, because you said information must be embodied. Clearly it is not embodied after the crucifixion. He is dead; it is maximum entropy. If it is held by God, then it is manifested - the data that holds and then transmits the information. That's like the Spirit."

Some final leavers were rolling their eyes.

"I think he's got you there," said elderly Janet Watt. "Think of someone who dies and all that knowledge and experience has gone. Percy Thrower, Geoff Hamilton."

"Yes, it is a puzzle," I said. "Perhaps we will all be transformed."

Peter said, "It proves my other point: Christianity depends on miracles. It has no logical basis without miracles, to get itself out of its own traps."

"Maybe," I said.

One person hanging back, Charles Rowland, told me that he dealt with Information Communications Technology, but not whether in school or business. "Sounds about right, what you said, but not sure it transfers to religion." Off he went, avoiding an argument.

One person who might have understood my sermon was the diocesan bishop. I took Peter into the vicarage, using my temporary possession of Colin's key. I went on the computer there and grabbed the sound file that had recorded my sermon. I put it on to a USB stick and sent it to Derek Imperial in Wytham, with a note that Peter had heard the sermon.

"This information is embedded in an .MP3 file, held on a USB stick," I said.

"No miracle involved," he commented. Off he went.

In the evening I preached against labelling people and racism. I referred to Jesus's story of the Good Samaritan, of course, and how the Samaritans were labelled. I also said Christianity was intended to be a universal religion, rather as became Islam. Paul was cross-cultural, and probably radical about women too. Koine Greek was an international language, spoken by Jews and Gentiles across the Roman Empire, and it contributed to a wider view of society than the tribal groups.

Of the sermons, I preferred the first, but more understood the second one. Mrs. Carter said she did not miss Morning Prayer now that I had neglected it. Neither did I.

Recording in Church (Monday 8th July)

Just because Colin was away didn't mean I lost my days off - except when the suffragan bishop decided to telephone me, waking me up. Adam was alongside me.

"Bishop John here. Are you still zinging after your ordination? The diocesan thinks he must pursue literature connecting the orgasm and theology. Sorry to criticise you in public, there, but you know why. He likes your sermon on information."

"It's my day off, Bishop."

"But you are holding the fort. It seems no one is on duty at present except Doris Clumber, the volunteer Secretary. Mentoring: Let me suggest names. Connie Wilson."

"No."

"Jim Wilson."

"No."

"Jim is very strong on 'take, bless, break and give' and these are of a Godly model."

"Still no."

"Keith is obviously a no. Stephen McPhail?"

"Possible."

"Helen McPhail?"

"Could do."

"Neither of the McPhails are ordained, of course. Jenny, Jonathan, Tess, Fatima, are so far away."

"Jenny would be great, but she might not think so."

"Maurice Neptune - wrong religion - but he is mainly in Wytham. Maurice might want to be involved with you personally."

"Really?"

"Well, what *about* me?" he asked.

"Maybe not."

"I suppose you wanted Christine."

"Definitely."

"No one can find her. I cannot imagine she has simply walked off and lost interest; she could be up to something. I'm sorry you don't want to go with me; I'd have willingly found the time. We need at least two bishops to physically meet to make new sacred decisions on you - they will be binding."

"I'll wait for you bishops to make your decisions."

"Two bishops may come on board same time as you are initiated. Now, let's change the subject. One of Colin's responsibilities is a woman called Laura Kingswood. Her address details are in the safe. She is now fifty-one years old. She's suffered abuse from her father, husbands, even her brothers and an all too recent boyfriend from whom she needs protection. That brings us to an intelligent ex-firefighter chap called Andrew Walker."

"Walter. His surname is 'Walter'."

"Colin has mentioned to me that he is worried about Andrew. Not because he is violent, or anything, but because he could be misleading a rather delicate person. Can you visit her please? 3 pm tomorrow."

"Yes."

"One final thing. I received anyway recordings of your sermons. Colin will hear them when back. Is that chap Peter, the apprentice, still with you?"

"He's not 'with' me - he attended the morning service yesterday."

"The microphones were on and recording when you are chatting to this Peter."

So I have that to the diocesan."

"I didn't know other sound was being recorded. The conversation with Peter should be private."

"It's in the church; the diocesan will really like it. So, be in touch very soon. You can work your magic on that young man with my blessing. Goodbye!"

"Shit," I said, once he'd gone. "I knew the sermons went through but all the bloody talk in there is recorded as well!"

"He'll know about Lucinda."

"He might know about me! Make love to me, Adam."

He did, and when done I rolled over, got up, washed, and went downstairs. Adam followed and had breakfast with me.

Later on, Adam, Peter and I went into the vicarage and looked at the computer. As I knew, there was a sermons folder within the church folder. There was a Talks folder - news to me. Both contained hefty sound files. It seemed that any noise inside triggered the recording. The minimum file was five minutes. We found the one with Lucinda arguing and Colin Cromer telling Colin Titan to stop.

"I want to erase this," I said.

"It's too late," Adam said. "It goes through, obviously. Leave things as you find them."

We found nothing from the vestry. Perhaps this is why Colin spoke to me in the vestry often?

Although the computer contained the means to start and stop the settings for recordings, we thought that there must be a switch inside the church itself.

We went into the church. Inside a metal box at the end of a wire was a line of switches. A red one said 'Sound' that was in the 'On' position.

We dropped Peter off at their workplace and then, after looking inside the northern-most house of the terrace, Adam and I went out to sit in my car at Ingle Park.

I opened his flies and my mouth gave his grower attention.

As I swallowed and wiped my mouth, he said, "You're going to be mentored?"

"Yeah. I can do it - to find out stuff at least."

"Who has a personal interest?"

"The rabbi in Wytham, apparently. There you go - I need to find out what's going on."

"You join a cult and dump me for him?"

"Absolutely not. Bishop John knows I liked Christine but she has vanished."

"You'd dump me for Christine."

"Rest assured. She doesn't do personal relationships, even if she is around."

"Christine is a lynchpin for you."

"You could look for her."

"No, this is your thing, your project. I'm not going to look for her."

"I did ask you not to investigate further. I realise I've to investigate and I'm to decide. They can't force me, after all."

Laura Must Move (Tuesday 9th July)

So, next day, with Adam off to work, I went in to the church in my white cassock and, getting her number from the vestry safe, I made the appointment to see Laura Kingswood that very afternoon.

First I went to visit Mr. Yannis Youell for half an hour, who seemed stable but rather feeble, helped in the basics by his wife Eliana. For pleasantries she recalled seeing my father especially and me. I presume mother was in the shop.

I wasn't sure if I would meet Andrew Walter at Laura's, or meet her recent aggressive boyfriend, or what her state would be. Before I got out of the car, I gave my hair a good brushing. It was getting hotter out there.

Her flat was in an old building. I assumed that some housing charity had acquired it and done it up. She'd be subject to all the benefits and clobberings of renting social housing.

"Tell me who you work with," Laura said at the door. Thin Laura was wearing a tee-shirt and nothing behind it, with her belly button exposed, and cut denim shorts with browning legs.

"Colin Cromer."

"What about it?"

"I rang you."

She said, "Does Colin Cromer work for Terry Barman?"

"Yes, if you put it that way." It did seem strange.

"And you are?"

"The Reverend Linda Jupitas."

"Sorry. I can't be too sure."

"Dead right too for asking," I said. She let me in.

After some pleasantries, I asked her about this accommodation.

"It is not registered as social housing," she told me, showing me around. "My landlord is kind, and does do the repairs. Ms Vine. She owns the building. She knows Terry Barman. She advised me to know Colin Cromer locally."

I could tell that Laura was in transition, to move out. She said that it was really important that her ex did not discover the next accommodation, and Christine Vine had said she would find her somewhere else. Friends would have to keep quiet about where.

I said, "We have pastoral rules about confidentiality."

"The chap I'm staying with temporarily knows about confidentiality." she said.

"Andrew Walter," I said.

"See, you know who I'm staying with. I've been told that you are in The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Players."

"About to be. Are you?"

"About to be."

"Are you sure you want to be?" I asked her.

"It has confidentiality, Reverend Jupitas."

"Well, the Church has its pastoral rules and we don't tell. If it reassures you, I can tell you that your address isn't even on the vicarage computer. It was placed in the safe."

"Andrew Walter is in The Worshipful Company. He is disabled."

"He is also intelligent, philosophical and has rescued people. I met him with his rather advanced views on psychology and counselling theory. His life is changing."

"My ex-boyfriend, the bastard, discovered - and I don't know how - where I live. I went ballistic after he rang me and he told me he knows my address. And this after I managed to get a good landlord."

"Use the police. This man obviously worries you."

"I told him: if he comes here, I'll call the police. Andrew and friends will help. Christine has helped me a lot. But we have a problem, Andrew and me."

"What is that?"

"We can no longer have Christine advising Andrew. The bishops met yesterday afternoon. She was not my mentor, but because Andrew is a new member she has checked he is mentoring me properly. It can be challenging."

Now this concerned me. Laura was clearly troubled and left in a delicate state. I didn't like the idea of Andrew mentoring her at all, and nor did I like the news that they were caught up in the group isolating Christine.

"How has Christine treated you - I mean, under this Confraternity thing?"

"Andrew has listened to her. I'm caught both ways: I wanted and gained her oversight, but now I can't have it; but how can I stop her when she is my landlord? She got me moved. Terry Barman says deal with her as a landlord but not as anything else."

"This situation is not good enough," I said.

"Come on, we must go to Andrew's. I only stay here briefly."

"Perhaps I should have met you at Andrew's. (This was arranged by Barman; I hoped he wasn't putting Laura in danger.)"

She took out her phone from her bag. "Andrew? Yeah, I've got a Reverend Linda here from the parish church."

"I know her. Come together."

She told me, "Christine is also his landlord."

Off we went, Laura locking up. I said, "Let's use my car even if we can walk. So I drove the short distance to the property I'd seen before, and she gave Andrew an embrace and kiss. I put out my hand for a handshake, which he took."

"Still doing the psychology?" I asked, in order to say something.

"Oh yes."

Laura told us, "I'm nervous there. I've got to move fast, Andrew."

He said to me, "We'll drink tea now, but we'll have sandwiches later. We would have had a mentoring event with our coming guest, but I have to tell her we must stop."

"Then I will overview it, if you want."

"You're not yet in, though, are you?"

"No. And what of Christine?"

"She'd have to ask and repent to come back in; Christine would have to obey very closely. She is formally excluded by orgasmic decision. I'm charged with telling her."

So we had green tea and he said, "Gestalt is so useful. Fred and Laura - Laura again! - Perls, after the First World War. Laura knew Paul Tillich and Martin Buber, the I-Thou man. Do you know them?"

"Not personally," I joked.

"I want to use these with you, Laura. So Gestalt's origins are Freud, obviously, Reich on the body, Buber himself, and a number of Gestalt psychologists before you get to the therapy."

Laura asked, "What does Gestalt mean?"

"Patterns," he said, "that make up a coherent shape. Phenomenological, I think. Anyway, er, Goldstein, on a sort of equilibrium and actualising, and you've got theatre, dance, Eastern ideas, existentialism. Er, I think that's it. Well, was avant garde at the time."

"So it got going," I said, only half listening as I was contemplating Christine's arrival.

"Well, it had to disperse out of Germany, and then there was South Africa and USA - the human potential movement, and part of the general humanistic approach to actualising oneself. Now the problem with it was a reliance on Fred Perls as a founder, people picking bits from it, and the lack of systematic approaches."

"A problem with cult religion as well," I said. "Dependence on a founder. So has it lost its place?" I asked.

"Now it is more holistic, longer term, but practical, and deals with processes; but is a bit playful perhaps and postmodern too."

"And so it has established itself," I supposed.

"It bubbled up in London, Manchester, Edinburgh; well, first there were Americans and workshops, then people did more training and sort of set up a profession. What was radical and experimental has been somewhat shaped by professional needs, apparently."

I asked, "So is it relevant?"

"It is, for what we are doing here. We explore, develop, change, become. We are both biological and social, so we embody holistically what goes on. Culture we embody. We react and respond."

"This follows," I said. "Theological parallels too."

"We organise ourselves into patterns, and we adjust as the environment shapes us creatively. Some are even creative in hostile environments."

Laura was wide-eyed and very attentive. I said, "This sounds a bit like the diocesan's recent lecture in Wytham."

"Let me have a copy. But we also have 'disturbance': the inability to respond creatively. What was once creative and been achieved becomes inadequate. If healthy we can respond positively, but if disturbed we can't. And being disturbed can be just as simple as being overwhelmed by a situation. Laura: you were overwhelmed by your boyfriend and struggling to respond. Your responses have been fear and flight: fixed Gestalt responses that are inadequate, from which there is therapy to put into place responses that are more self-confident. Chaotic times that we have do not help in gaining a good equilibrium to function in life. Basic needs can be undermined, compromised. Basic needs obviously come first."

I wanted to be positive about this over-theorising (something I did myself). I said, "I don't know why we clergy don't do more with this stuff. We might be too assured of our own speculations."

"He's very clever," Laura said. The doorbell went. "I'll go!"

He continued: "So lots of Gestalts and life cycles are coming and going. But some Gestalts like violent urges should be interrupted, and you need flexibility. I mean. Going for a shit is a solitary activity but so much else involves others."

Christine it was who spoke: "You talking your psychology stuff; you ought to invest your mind in some theology."

"Well," I said, "I think we can use..."

"Hello, Linda," Christine said to me. "So what are you doing here?"

"I wonder myself. Ostensibly, visiting."

"I recall that Colin Cromer is away."

"Yes, John Barman suggested I come."

"At a time that is regular visiting by me, combining landlord and mentoring oversight duties."

Andrew tried to speak.

I said, instead, "Obviously he wants me to find out what you are doing."

"If he thinks you and I have some sort of connection then he's wrong, Linda. I was doing Confraternity matters at the retreat. That's all it was."

Now Andrew did speak, "Bishop Terry also contacted me, and I'm charged to say that you can't do oversight of us, Christine. This makes things awkward. The bishops made an orgasmic decision: you are formally excluded. To come back in, you must plead, repent, and must agree to obey in detail."

"Predictable," she said. "I have accommodation for you, Laura. It is fortunate and unfortunate that it has 'Goosechat' Internet workers upstairs. But it is bigger than your existing flat and I'll soon have something better, your own place."

"Goosechat?" Laura asked.

"Sex workers: no actual clients on the premises, Laura, and they're nice women in their fifties, doing an oldies' service. Andrew, I've arranged a woodworker to do some alcove shelves for you, for all your books and media beyond the shelves you've got. Does that meet your requirements?"

"Yes, it does."

"Don't worry about the mentoring oversight. I'll leave before you two get busy."

I asked Christine if I could talk to her alone. She agreed.

"I'm a bit concerned that Laura should be involved in this anyway. This turns on a sixpence into abuse."

"I know it does," said Christine. "I was happy about Andrew joining and he has joined now, but not Laura, who was his suggestion. That's why I argued that I should overview the situation. I got the bishops to agree, but he's an intelligent chap and can follow the procedures."

"So who's to overview them now?"

"Obviously I don't know. You?"

"I'm not in yet. Anyway, I might go heavy on this, regarding Laura, as her parish priest."

"That won't go down well, in direct conflict with your new Vanguard."

"But what are you doing now? You are still a deacon in the National Church?"

"No, I'm not. The letter has gone in. Barman will know today."

"No longer at Wheaton?"

"I went there for the purposes of the Confraternity group, to be ordained for its purposes. I owe them nothing and they owe me nothing."

"What happened to all that obeying bishops and apostolic authority?"

"I still believe it. But I would say this to you, Linda. This 'inefficiency report', let's call it, is going to be a nasty matter. Barman may not survive it, nor Worsley, and especially Imperial, and if this Confraternity comes to light you'd better not be in it. It will sweep everyone away who is in it. If the public get to know about it, your concerns for Laura will be exactly how the public view the whole thing: secret, wrong, exploitative, cultic."

"You must have known this: you encouraged me to join."

"Listen: people in the know told me only yesterday that this report is very bad, and, secondly, I had some ideas for us going underground more. Trouble is, Barman can't stop being a salesman. That Serninsea Cross brooch is an obvious con, but he can't let go. It isn't a Confraternity matter, but it attracts attention, and he did say it was a 'find' when the twins knew it wasn't. And then, on a selfish angle, I wasn't employed by the Church and you are, so I don't lose if it all goes pear shaped."

I asked Christine if we can keep in touch. She wanted to keep her distance, knowing full well that George Wickenby would be following her, like he had followed me. She had properties to buy from Ann and Labhaoise so would be seen.

She returned to Laura and asked her to go with her instantly to the new property. Then she would get a removal firm to shift her goods over.

Christine said to me, "I look after my tenants; so these are my theological principles in action. There'll be no time for mentoring today."

"Yes. Good."

So Christine went off with Laura, and left me with Andrew.

"She's delicate, is Laura: you understand that, Andrew."

He said he'd do nothing to hurt her. Then he kicked off his theory, again. "Initiations done properly can be Gestalt, Linda, and I think ours are. Psychological disturbance is where a Gestalt is dysfunctioning or can't be completed and what happens is habitual and ineffective. It's as if you should go through the cycle again with new sensing, awareness, action and understanding, so that the matter gets resolved. So, via initiation, change is about becoming who you are and by running the Gestalts you run better." Andrew had not stopped: "The client is assessed in a sense for the level of disturbance and what can become more positive. And then therapists focus on client bodily awareness, maybe via meditation, or focus on what is missing - sometimes that you are doing this in a binary sense so therefore you are not doing the other."

I thought at this point that this man is unsuitable to be mentoring. His head is so full of theory that he cannot see the simple problem that Laura is not substantive enough for, basically, sexual acts and intercourse inside a religious ritual. Even I would be challenged.

This was all too easily abuse. In fact, Christine's exclusion had just saved Laura from a group-based fucking, and Laura did not need this.

Meanwhile, surely, Barman would expect me to report back.

Concerns Expressed to the Bishop

Adam was with me at home when my mobile phone rang. I asked Adam to listen in, but stay absolutely silent and keep it confidential.

"Bishop Terry here. Did Christine Vine visit her tenant?"

"Yes she did."

"What's she doing?"

"Her secular work; she was dealing with Laura."

"What about her institutional religious life?" he asked.

"She said she still believes it."

"Such beliefs about obeying bishops and apostolic authority have to be realised somehow."

"Something else, bishop. Why is Laura being mentored at all? She is wholly unsuited for it."

"That's a decision we took; we did have a position where Christine was offering oversight."

"Well, there's no one doing that now and, anyway, Laura is too delicate: it can amount to abuse."

"We've discussed all this. Regardless, I'm ringing to tell you that you will benefit from Stephen McPhail's experience as mentor and I will initiate you. His mentoring is both sides of the initiation."

"I don't like this one bit - about Laura."

"It's not your decision. You are a priest under apostolic authority selected by the bishops of the Confraternity. You come under our authority now and you must show your obedience. When you were ordained priest, that was it: you became an extension of the bishops, doing what the bishops can do in the full ritual sense."

"I gave and give obedience to the diocesan."

"The Vanguard takes priority."

"Really? You can't enforce it. The group is existentially vulnerable."

"We can enforce it. Don't consider getting hostile, Linda. We want your parish life to be harmonious now. Vanguard groups can hide, dissolve and resurrect. We do not lay down trackable evidence. With your ordination, do you not now have a purpose and *believe* in that purpose?"

"It must be honest and it must be right. Laura is fragile."

"We listen to advice and we have good procedures. Stephen - yes, as mentor - will tell you about protections and reporting back. Laura will get oversight very soon. We can take effective action."

"Have you received a letter from Christine," I asked.

"She told you that. Yes, she has resigned the office of Deacon. We'll let her go, but we are not losing you. You have your purpose to develop the original blessing of the body. Ken Osis had second thoughts. As a priest he is also under our authority, and he had no right to change his mind. And he thinks positively again. On this positive note I will end this call. You must see Stephen McPhail when he calls you to Ingle Barrow. God bless and goodbye for now."

I asked Adam, "What do you make of that?"

"Well, I wondered how long it would be before your blinkers came off."

"What do you mean?"

"Joining a cult."

"I happen to think that their basic point is right, and we can work to that purpose."

"You went all misty eyed with your ordination. Given your upset with the parish and your doubts, you latched on to this purpose. You forgot that they were following you around, concealing, lying, and playing around with plastic badges. And they are still doing it."

"That's what vanguards are like! They end up being secretive when their purpose is perceived as contrary to their host institution. They're ritualistic with a strong sense of knowing insiders and ignorant outsiders."

"Look," said Adam. "This bishop made you that timed appointment with Laura,

so he is still manipulating you, to find out what Christine is doing, and also gave Wickenby the opportunity to follow her."

"Adam, what do you think I should do?"

"Why ask me? You do what you want, anyway."

"What would you do if you were me?"

"I'm not you."

"You know what I mean: strategy."

"Hmm. I tend to play along, evaluate the situation more, and choose a good moment to get out."

"You would see Stephen McPhail."

"Play along. Don't reveal your contrary opinion - if you have one. You learn more."

"This is sexual stuff, Adam. Do you object?"

"I'm not in love with you, Linda. You're like a good mate: I enjoy you. You might have been obsessed with Christine, but I can see that you're not obsessed with me."

"I'm concerned about matters, yes. Thanks for your advice. I do appreciate it. I am prepared."

"I can see this will test you."

Seeing the Nurse Again (Wednesday 10th July)

"I need to see you regularly," said Sister Alice Peers. "This is Christopher Richardson, in his first year of training, so can he observe?"

"Of course."

"Undress everything below. I have a dilator here, and I am going to place it in your rectum. What I want to see is you try and squeeze on it. Christopher, all these online notes explain how the Reverend Mrs. Jupitas has a tendency towards incontinence caused by damage inflicted from more than twenty years ago by her now husband using various metal devices on a consistent basis. It has become a matter of inconvenience in her work."

I bent over, felt it go in and tried to squeeze on it.

She asked me, "Clearly, there is some improvement. Mrs. Jupitas carries out regular, simple, pelvic floor exercises when sat down. Do you feel stronger after your exercises, Linda?"

"I think I do."

"And how do you evacuate recently, Mrs. Jupitas?"

"I go regularly. I try to get ahead of the curve."

"Good."

Christopher asked, "So there is no need to examine one of her stools?"

"She knows what foods to avoid. Linda, I'd like to look in your vaginal area."

So now I sat on the resting couch, and brought my legs up as she inserted a speculum.

"This is the contrast," she said to Christopher. "We want this deeper and wider, and the anal area narrower. Are you still having anal sex, Linda?"

"My new partner isn't interested. He'd rather go in the front way."

"Best to keep him uninterested. Christopher: this is very rare. Hold the torch."

Christopher asked, "Jupitas is your married name, but you have a new partner?"

"I'm using the surname for now."

"See, Christopher? No cervix; her clitoris is obvious, her urethra is below, and then... there is nothing. Christopher, how much difference has all this pushing with dilators made?" she asked while he was directing a light to see between the metalwork.

"It's created a shape." Christopher asked, "And what about when your new man ejaculates into you?"

"It runs out."

The nurse said, "I'll take this out. Dr. Gujjar said he did not have a chance to examine your throat. You said this was affected as well."

"I have lost the reflexes I once had. Same time as my anus was stretched."

"So if I put my five inch proctoscope into your throat, to look, you would be able to take it."

"Yes."

Leaving me bare below, she said, "Open your mouth wide then." The nurse pushed the proctoscope in and then removed the obturator, a light shining in my throat. She said, "This is too unusual. Look, I can move this around and push in further, and you are not reacting and you are quite dry to it as well. Take a look in, Christopher." A moment on she removed the item. "Do you need a drink?"

"No."

"Did your husband interfere with your breasts, or anything else?"

"Only some slapping. He took part in the dilating I did for a time."

"Do you examine your breasts?"

"Not too often."

"May I examine them?"

"Yes."

"Take off your top and..." I did. "Why aren't you wearing a bra? These are large breasts, Mrs. Jupitas, and they need support."

"I don't wear underwear."

"Being braless is not recommended, especially when you're exercising! Those with larger breasts, like you, should feel more comfortable in a well-fitted bra."

"Right. Bras get uncomfortable after a long day, especially any underwires. The constricting sensation of wearing a bra for hours can impede blood circulation to the chest and back, which can lead to aching back muscles. People use bras when they need better posture and back support from seats."

"That much is true..."

"Bras sit against the areas that perspire. Bras absorb sweat and dirt from the skin and can cause skin irritation and even acne. Clogged pores are no joke! No bra means you sweat less and dry faster."

"Bras cannot prevent sagging with age, or make breasts perkier."

"Going braless is a step towards demystifying the female chest. Once you get used to being braless you have comfort of the natural body. You get a better night's sleep too."

"Thank you for your counter-lecture," said the nurse. She pressed around my breasts and I raised each arm. "Hmm. Hairless under your arms as well. Of course,

you will be. Christopher, do you see? Feel under her arms. As I said, Mrs. Jupitas is an intersex person, of about one in about twenty thousand. Maybe. This surgery used to examine her elder sister, who is the same. Don't put that in your report. You can see how her features vary from the average. I think you have a lot of writing up to do, here, but you must not identify her name of course nor her profession. Many nurses never get to see an intersex woman. Mrs. Jupitas is genetically male, phenotypically female, gender female and..."

"Bisexual," I said.

"Are you completely bisexual, Mrs. Jupitas?"

"I could have fallen for a woman very recently. A female ordinand on retreat seduced me. I loved her but I can't now."

"Ah. Christopher. This is information you must handle with care. Having sex with men and women affects Mrs. Jupitas's sexual health and her career. She is in Holy Orders, after all."

He said, "May I ask, are these regular partners?"

"Er..."

"I'm not sure you should," said the senior nurse. "But do you want to answer?"

"As well as sex overnight with my new male partner, I did have intimate sex with this female ordinand, and I think I'm about to have regular sex with another man and some others and, I can guess ahead, an ordained woman lecturer."

The student's eyes and mouth were wide open.

Nurse Peers said to me, "Please practise safe sex, Mrs. Jupitas. You are clearly very sexually active. There was nothing untoward in your recent blood sample. I think we'd better take a swab and can you pee at all?"

So it was back with my legs up again, and the student watched while the nurse inserted another speculum to take a swab, popped the swab in a plastic container and wrote on the label, and threw the speculum in the sink.

"Do you want me to pee here?" I asked.

"No, put your clothes on, go out to the toilet, and while we write notes we will wait for you to come back. Here is a container. Pee into that."

"I want to... You don't want me to evacuate?"

"Can you?" she asked.

"It's what I'm saying."

"Then let's take advantage. Here's a card and some throw away spatulas. Use a spatula and smear on to these three areas, and fold the tabs over. The lab only needs the tiniest amount under each tab."

"What do I shit on?"

"Put some toilet paper on the loo seat and go on that. Smear from there, and then drop your waste and tissue into the bowl and flush. We'll disinfect the loo seat afterwards."

"Can he help me? I don't want to make a mess. Once I go I go."

"Christopher. Accompany Mrs. Jupitas to the disabled loo and use this consented experience to your benefit. You can put it in your report."

The upshot was that he did all the actions other than the actual shitting and pissing. On my advice he held up two overlapping paper towels for my dump. As he held the container, I apologised for peeing on his fingers, which he washed of course. He checked my arse and wiped it. Outside the cubicle, he presented the folded card to his trainer and she directed him to the envelope needed and pointed

to the bin for the paper towels.

"Anything else, Mrs. Jupitas?" Nurse Alice asked me.

"No."

"Carry on with the exercises and establish a clear routine. Evacuate regularly. And please practise safe sex with all your partners. We know you can't get pregnant but you can catch all the nasties. And get yourself a decent bra."

And that was that. I was pretty sure that Christopher had a boner, but he behaved impeccably. I went directly to Patricia's, to lie naked with Diana, who heard all about my experience with Sister Alice and student Christopher.

Diana said, "*Honestly*: 'Please help me, I might make a mess.' Poor sod."

Stephen McPhail and Jenny World (Thursday 11th July)

The call came to see Stephen McPhail, and so, based partly on Adam's advice, and with my own plumbing inspected, I went down to Ingle Barrow and its spaced row of posh houses to meet the Bishop of Bolingbroke's plumber.

Helen his wife was present, and the first thing was a welcome from both and then we moved from their kitchen to their large lounge with glasses of wine and a juice for me.

Stephen told me that they have a mentoring programme to take initiates to membership with The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players and then beyond for a short period, after which the person becomes a full participant. The Vanguard was its purpose, directed by the bishops in the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the English National Church, or *Principatus Theocratici Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Anglicana Nationalibus*. That was them; we were 'under' the Confraternity. "We don't have Anglican authority in this set-up: there is no lay membership, the authority is purely episcopal, the Eucharist table is open."

"What concerns me is the apparent compulsion."

"The lack of choice concerns priests only. This is because of their special ontological change, as the bishops put it. By the way, we make a point of calling the Wytham suffragan Bishop Terry. Jonathan is still Jonathan. We call Elizabeth a variety of names, but some call her 'Tess' which we get from her being Tees of the Diocesans, like Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. You get a badge at initiation, and it is having that available that can tell another member that you are in one of the linked groups, currently three, soon to be five."

"I know all this," I said, "but I was concerned about one of the initiates."

"You had a disagreement with Terry."

Helen said, "I will now oversee Andrew and Laura. Laura achieved the lowest rung of retail management, even though now she isn't working."

"Reading between the lines, she's been raped several times by a violent ex-boyfriend, who found her change of address. And I am telling you more than I should."

"This group isn't only for the very fit and able," said Helen. Jenny, your past friend, has issues and why Fatima keeps her eye on her. Jenny loves sex, and that's the difference. She would really like to 'turn' Anna Ozga her way, when once Anna turned Jenny her way. Anna, despite now being a priest, is not a candidate of ours.

Laura, however, has said she loves consensual sex, though one of those she manged became obsessed and violent. She says she is happy with Andrew. Some who have been raped do have a broad sex life, before, after or both. I was raped."

"The danger for many of us," I said, "is repeated patterns of behaviour: relying on the next one along, who turns out to be just as unreliable."

"Well, Andrew is not unreliable," Helen said. "Look, the bishops came to a decision based on her job, experiences and willingness. Just as God is in suffering, God is in rape."

"That doesn't make it good. I suppose Christine addressed this."

"We obviously don't accept anybody and everybody. We select the capable and then make our approaches. Andrew offers his experience and intellect, his psychology and psychotherapy, and Laura offers her desire for sexual openness. But I will overview him, now. When he advises and acts, sexually, I will be there."

Stephen said, "You and I now need to begin our mentoring process. And we should start with nothing more than getting in the bath together as a kind of clean start, symbolically, and I'll go through the mentoring process with you."

"OK. Are you coming, Helen?"

"No no: Stephen is the mentor."

So we went up to one of their bathrooms, and he ran the water into the bath in the centre of the bathroom designed for two with central taps. The toilet only had a curtain to draw around it. On this occasion, if I needed to pee, I could do so privately, but he just undressed and pissed. I didn't care. Undressed myself, I sat on the toilet and peed noisily.

Stephen said to me that some items in the mentoring process hardly needed introduction, but nevertheless he had to go through them. We got into the water where the heat of the water in was controlled by an automatic thermostat. I might have had it cooler.

As it happened, Helen did come in to see us in the water, as she brought Stephen his forgotten laminated Mentoring List. "Enjoy!" she said to us, leaving.

"We have Eight Guidances. The First Guidance is to obey the bishops. They listen, but they decide. There are exceptions to immediate obedience. And the exceptions are commercial, pastoral and personal relationship confidentiality. So we'll do this in more detail soon, but you can claim opt-outs on these three demonstrable bases."

"If I was a Methodist minister, say, would I have a choice?"

"Apostolically ordained priests must obey so the opt outs must be demonstrable."

"The bishops then know..."

"'Demonstrable' does mean you give the area of concealment: it is very tight. Now, I have some bottled bath soap here and a sponge: you can allow me wash you after you've done some on yourself. Stand up."

I said, looking down at him, "Christine walked away as a deacon."

"The instruction - and it is relevant to obeying - is to forget Christine. Helen ignored your earlier reference. So I'm not answering. The Second Guidance is to be secretive outside and revealing inside. Bishops instruct who is to talent scout, and when you have your badge you reveal it partially only to those we target. We do by default conceal and by instruction reveal to outsiders. We are the Vanguard and must protect our existence and identity. We try not to lie but sometimes it is forced

upon us by necessity or for the greater good."

"As happened to me."

"Do your stomach and breasts now. Keith was secretive to you, but also he revealed much; but he did conceal aspects of your sexual relationship with him, on the basis of personal relationship confidentiality."

"What did he conceal?"

"We don't know! He claimed personal relationship confidentiality and he is laity. Otherwise he told us all about you. He said you have special circumstances of birth and upbringing. That was enough - we do take much on trust. We can often help one another, through openness."

"There was Ken Osis not letting on what happened with my friend Diana and me."

"Quite. The Third Guidance is that you must engage in rituals. Bishops and priests must not avoid them. You have a habit of avoiding Morning Prayer in your parish. We do have opt outs and variants for other religions and the secular, but with an open table we insist on participation in the Body Eucharist for all at some stage. Yojana uses Krishna, for example. At the moment, if you can't do the Body Eucharist, you can't join, because it is the initiation rite. We intend to use this ritual more often and it remains under development. Bishops and priests carry it out. You must join us and you must do it."

"Presumably without this it doesn't work."

"Do your left arm please. The Fourth Guidance is that you are obliged to have sex with bishops. Bishops will ask to have sexual access to your body, and outside ritual you can say no but you must say why and understand that saying no is contrary to openness. If a bishop wants to have sex with you, you should regard it as an honour and treat it in a holy fashion. When a bishop meets you pastorally, you may well end up having sex with them as part of that meeting. It helps us all bond together under authority. Right arm."

"Makes sense."

"The Fifth Guidance is getting happy with casual social nudity and enjoying broad sexual contact. It hardly affects you: I mean, you were lying on the beach with us and you have quite a sexual history. During mentoring you'll have regular sex with me and with people invited in. Gretta-Cox Jenkins is not a member of the group, but you will be hosting her after tomorrow's lecture."

"I assumed so."

"The bishops have decided and stated via me as your mentor that, if she wants it, you must offer her full personal hospitality as if she is in one of the groups under the Confraternity. She might get a group going in Canada. I'm also inviting Rabbi Maurice Neptune to meet you, and arranging a stranger to fuck you."

"I'm sure we will have a good time."

"Quite. Better not lift your leg, because I'll do your left leg. Just stand and wait. I think the complication with Maurice is he wants you to be his wife, but that would be up to you. We'd prefer him over Adam Magellan, and the question is whether the Reformist Jews would accept a priest as the wife of a rabbi. But we don't instruct on marriage or other partners, other than you retaining sexual relations with the rest of the group."

"I'm going to stand now and feel your body." He did as he said.

"Your legs are very smooth. The Sixth Guidance is on achieving orgasms and

learning the theology of the orgasm. You might think this is the First Guidance, but the fact it comes sixth is no more than logical ordering. So when you and I have sex first, and when you service Gretta, if she wants it, and have Maurice, and receive the stranger, we expect orgasms on both sides. It is not just enjoying sex with multiple partners but coming with each to the glorious state of ecstasy. If you orgasm first, do not neglect theirs. We simply reject all notions of Western Christian sin and restraint when it comes to expressions of love and ecstasy.

"Turn around, bend over and hold the sides of the bath. I'll wash your arse and legs. The Seventh Guidance is what to expect at and from the initiation itself. Both parties orgasm and should closely together if possible; you have to exchange body fluid from the initiator to the initiated, and this can be something like sperm, naturally made lubricant, spittle, urine, shit if you want, menstrual blood. If you give fluid back, it's all to the good, but it is the bishop's that must come to you, and you never send theirs back. For example, if a male bishop discharges his sperm in your mouth, you don't then kiss him so that he receives some back. You might offer back, say, menstrual blood, if you're on your period. So you receive their gift, and do receive it. By the way, we value women in the Vanguard offering sex when menstruating. After the initiation, there should be the opportunity to have sex with several others. How are you if I use my hand to wash your vulva now?"

"Fine." I turned and he began that action.

"It follows that, before and after the initiation, and regularly, you do need sex health certificates and can use birth control. Julie Manns of the Margate group wanted a baby, father unknown."

"It's Jonathan's."

"Probably. Fatima in Hartlepool had a child, Akemi, father is known. We really do not like barriers. We are all about exchanging fluids, so it also follows that, outsiders need sexual health checks. Keith, seeing Cheryl, got himself regularly checked. He is secretive with her about this group - she does not know about us."

"Ah ha. So he went to the sexual health clinic far more often than I ever realised."

From behind a soapy finger went into my vagina.

"Linda, you are incredibly tight. Keith did say this but to experience is to believe. He vouched for your sexual health before you went to Margate, although he activated relationship confidentiality on the actual gynaecology you undergo. In any case you were outside the group, so we took his word for it. Jonathan said you were tight. I think you're washed. Turn around and we'll sit back in the water."

"What's the Eighth Guidance?"

"Basically, you might want to raise concerns, say on a group member, or what is being done. A bit like you have been doing already. It's a safety valve, if you like. The Eighth Guidance is to raise matters of concern confidentially with the bishops. If unsatisfied, we have a Counsellor of Complaint, who is Ken Osis. He still does that role. Given where you are, would you like to wank me in the bath?"

"Sure, and I'll blow you too if you lift it up."

So this is what happened, and the plumber was responsive with his own pipe extended, and he experienced his pipe far down my throat.

"God help me; seeing and feeling really is believing," said the plumber.

Sliding his penis right out, I said, "Thomas again," and he went right back in, his penis pressing upward going down my throat. His body movements told me he

was about to ejaculate, and so I then guided that sperm upwards, and he saw it actually come out of my nostrils.

He said, recovered, "Helen can do it a bit, but it has never come out of her nose."

"As I said to Connie, it mustn't go into the lungs. So it has to go somewhere, and unless your knob is removed then up the nose is a good a place as any."

"When you are initiated, you can give us all a tutorial. Actually, that idea isn't mine. Connie on the phone suggested a tutorial. You told her in detail how to do it. We all could benefit."

"And you orgasmed."

"What else was it? Do you not want an orgasm?"

"Not particularly. Treat it as a gift, a theological concept if ever there was one."

"Wrong answer!" He put his finger curled upwards into my vagina and he did bring me to the right conclusion.

"Pray, Linda. You should pray."

"Thank you Holy Spirit for your gift of orgasm."

"Make it all more immediate next time."

"When we were dried and dressed, he couldn't wait to tell Helen what I had done with him inside my lower neck. Meanwhile, Helen had something to show me.

Through to her own study and on her desktop computer was a podcast. It was of Jenny World, the one-time Jenny Masters. She was speaking and it had all the delivery of a sermon. She spoke of a hanging man, and a hanging man could no more perform in his own unhangings as we could in removing our own sin. Grace was purely one way: as vertical as the rope and as one way as gravity. What an image!

Helen said, "She is being secretive, properly. She is the biggest sinner around!"

Indeed, it struck me as formulaic throughout. We ministers of religion learn to read between the lines, and look for nuances. So I was reading - or misreading - between her lines.

Jenny had said, God had decided salvation for individuals from eternity, and although we might behave well and show the fruits of salvation, we can never be sure: neither in history, nor in culture, nor in institutions. Yes, people showed one another signs of their conviction that they are saved, and produced a moral community, but only God knows.

This formula was age-old Calvinism. That might indicate a postmodern mind taking refuge in a bubble of the premodern, or it was of no modern mind whatsoever. What I'd expect is some reference to contemporary life, and there was none, other than, "...this includes us in Hartlepool," which was incredibly tame. A sermon that belonged in the Wee Wee Frees had no cultural 'way in' that contemporary evangelicals find: they attack contemporary culture and yet are happy to use it as entertainment for a hook. And this was not there. It would have suited only some remote Scottish Protestant island, once translated into Gaelic.

Jenny's preaching could not have come from the person I knew who once went into charismatic and evangelical religion fearing her sexuality. Obviously not, if now she liked plenty of sex.

I was surprised just how religious were Stephen and Helen. I left them being told that God had favoured me, and I would be purposeful under the guidance of the

Spirit.

Knowing the URL, I found Jenny's podcasts when lying in bed with Adam. He said to me, "I don't understand any of this stuff; it seems olde-worlde to me. She seems as remote as ever."

Adam confirmed that when she left him it was with a huge doubt about who she was sexually. He said this preaching sounds formulaic. She either depended on this stuff for mental stability or it was a front.

Adam in bed asked me about my view of the group.

I said, "I'm definitely going along with it for the time being. If I do have to extract myself, at some point, I might then need some assistance. I'm not going to tell you where I'm going or doing on a daily basis, so just let me see how it goes. But," I said, "I can list the Eight Guidances for you. Are you interested?"

"Yeah. Shoot!"

"The First Guidance is to obey the bishops with commercial, pastoral and personal relationship confidentiality exceptions.

"The Second Guidance is to be secretive outside and revealing inside."

"Unlike you now," said Adam.

"The third Guidance is that I must engage in rituals - the Body Eucharist and initiation, often together I think. The bishop gives you a body fluid to absorb.

"The Fourth Guidance is that I am obliged to have sex with bishops."

"Lucky them," he said.

"The Fifth Guidance is getting happy with casual social nudity and enjoying broad sexual contact."

"Lucky you," Adam added.

"The Sixth Guidance is on achieving orgasms and learning the theology of the orgasm.

"The Seventh Guidance is about the initiation.

"The Eighth Guidance is about raising concerns via the bishops and the Counsellor of Complaint."

"Who's that?"

"Ken Osis. But I'm not sure what he is supposed to do with such information."

"You tell me this but you don't want me to investigate."

"I'm just letting you know, as I investigate," I told Adam.

"You are having an each-way bet. You're a good mate, you are - good to be with overnight - and an ordained slut."

Lecturer of Many Greek Words (Friday 12th July)

Thursday later Keith had returned back home and slept alone in the second bedroom, grumbling about being back.

Friday and a text from Bishop Barman told me that I was expected to host Gretta Cox-Jenkins and make sure I introduced myself to her. I followed Adam to his workplace. I had a dark blue blouse on and a long similar blue skirt, one of the few times I wore a skirt. I did not wear clerical identification. I told Adam, in his office, "You're at your own place tonight - sorry - as I am entertaining this Canadian theologian late into the night."

Adam showed a level of displeasure: "I suppose we said this wasn't the usual sort of relationship."

"It was only some days ago you had difficulty even touching me."

"It's not about sex all the time. It's about how you and I relate to each other."

"'Mates,' you said. I want my freedom and I want to find out."

"When you're a fucking clergywoman!"

"I *am* a fucking clergywoman, and I'll have a quick word with Peter."

"He has a girlfriend. I even feel protective."

"Irrelevant to what I want to say."

So at the reception room with Adam following, I asked Peter, "Do you want to come to this lecture? It's by a Gretta Cox-Jenkins, a radical theologian. Might be your sort of thing."

"I went to hear your diocesan bishop. I don't know how he can say all those creeds."

"She's a Canadian, Lutheran now I think, but she once was independent or something."

"I can't come. I'm seeing Kathryn. Not that I won't go to another. Let me know what you think."

"See you. I am exercising still. I'm finding muscles I did not know I had."

"And using those you know you do," said Adam.

Peter said, "So this magic display will have specific religious messages."

"Yes. We'll consult. I may as well go to Wytham now and make it a day out. Colin Cromer is back Sunday evening. I rather wish he wasn't."

In fact I went first to see Mr. Youell and his wife. That done, I cleared my head by looking in on the second hand bookshop down Toulouse Street, just to browse. Sometimes they get something in, and I bought *Godless Morality* by Richard Holloway. I hadn't read this before. I went to see Jagjit and Gurinder Kapoor, buying some sweets for the journey and hearing rumours of SMS's demise locally.

Then it was off to Wytham, for time in the town as well as for the evening lecture. In the course of my wanderings, I spotted Maurice Neptune's Reformist synagogue in the city, so made a note of its location.

I took the car to near the cathedral and inside sussed out that the lecturer was this rather rounded five foot woman using walking sticks. The gathering was much less that it had been for the bishop.

I approached her, looking down on her head and oversized bosom (she was in mufti, like me), and said, "Hi, I'm Linda, and you're staying at mine tonight."

"Ah, you're the curate on the coast," redhead Gretta said with an expected Canadian accent.

"Yes. Just over forty miles, I'm afraid."

"Some of us commute that far every day outside Toronto."

I said, "Well, be my guest and thanks."

"It's for me to say thanks," she added. "I will see you after."

Ken Osis came by and said, "I would have hosted Gretta but you seem to be in favour these days."

The two suffragans said hello to me. John Barman asked after my thoughtful friend of the previous Friday.

"Seeing his girlfriend."

It wasn't that I would be without company. Rabbi Maurice Neptune said,

"Hello!"

I said. "I enjoyed our encounter at the secondary school, folks wearing these badges. Thanks for being at my ordination."

"A spot of talent-scouting at the school for later," he said. "Can I sit with you then?"

"What's your interest here?"

"See how independent radical Christian theologians put their ideas across."

"Stephen McPhail, my group mentor, says I should see you soon."

"I know. I look forward to it. I hope we can be a little more personal as well."

"Sure." (I was feeling like I'm anybody's, modelled on Keith.)

Derek Imperial stood and introduced Gretta Cox-Jenkins to everyone. The lecturer herself began in a booming voice for a small person, staying sat down, into the low stand microphone: "I'm gonna talk about *kerygma*, *diakonia*, *koinonia* and *eschaton* in remaking the Church - *Rejuvenating the Church* indeed."

Oh right, I thought, any jargon to confuse.

"If we're gonna rejuvenate the Church, and restore its reputation - because it is regarded as homophobic and backward, out of sync, increasingly sectarian - then our kerygma has to be liberationist, inclusive, and promoting the dignity and worth of everyone. We have to read this off the Gospel texts, and indeed study the texts of every liberationist that has stood up to represent a progressive Church. Kerygma means message. Rudolf Bultmann used it: the message of the text beyond what's possible with history. It is about the community message post-Easter."

So I got that and then she was rather repeating herself as she proceeded. I'd say less, but then few understand me.

"To rejuvenate the Church is to need diakonia," she claimed later," because diakonia is all about what you do for healing and reconciling, binding up wounds, yes, and bridging chasms. The organism is unwell - and sure it is unwell - and so we are restoring health to the organism. The gospel imperative is service, and ministry is service and diakonia directly means service. But I'm indicating that it means more than this. It means reconciliation. Now of course we do this service to society, but we must do it within the Church. We have many wounds to heal with the LGBTQI people, though I hate these categories, because these categories separate out all of us who differ in sexuality by degree not kind. So let's get the kerygma right, and when that's right, we can do diakonia."

Most interesting, I thought. It was hanging together.

"This is entirely consistent with Judaism," said Maurice Neptune.

"Before I go on," she said, "I've got some bad guts. If I have to pause, it's necessity, but I'm trying with medication to make it to the end uninterrupted."

Oh, lovely personal detail.

She proceeded, arriving at the next label: "Should we be doing the diakonia, we will then achieve koinonia. Koinonia is usually translated as 'fellowship'. Fellowship in the Church should be indivisible, and frankly, with the need for diakonia, it is not. We label, we separate. We have discussions between heterosexuals and gays, between ins and outs. No! There are no ins and outs, nor should there be. Our koinonia should be a visible demonstration of the kerygma achieved by diakonia. It is what the church strives for, it is hope realised, and we should not simply be hoping for something we can do.

"I'm shortening this... So this brings us eschaton. What is 'eschaton'? It means

living this day as if it is the last: the end is nigh, so to speak. It's a sort of expectation of completion, and it transfers itself into a 'get on with it'. Which I ought to do. If I fart I am sorry. What *on earth* are we waiting for - who is afraid of the other person? Again, Rudolf Bultmann of kerygma fame calls the Church the 'eschatological community'. It means living like the new era, and being ready to move on to something better. The least shall be the first, and all that: the ethic trumps everything else. I should choose my words more carefully. I can carry on. I did take some medication."

That sort of hung together, I thought.

She continued and arrived at her summary: "So here we are: the message must liberate, and we can get that message from texts old and new. We must enact that message in our service to others and ourselves, and that way we get koinonia where they become us in one fellowship. Yes - and that fellowship lives like it is the end time, getting prepared with the right ethic in place - takes us back to the kerygma of course. Well thank you very much. I'll be back in ten minutes."

Applause followed as her walking sticks helped take her to the toilets.

"What do you think, Rabbi?"

"Get the message, act upon it, gain the fellowship, live as if is the last moment fluidly and tentatively."

"Yeah, it sort of stretches across religions."

Derek Imperial gave a brief thanks (very brief for him) and asked people to think of questions and come back in fifteen minutes.

I went to the loo myself and I could hear her farting and uttering words of frustration. When she came back (I was sat; Maurice returned) the first rather tedious question came from an unknown to me clergyman: "Rev Christian Skidmore from Breadwick. I did not hear the word God once, Jesus Christ once nor the Holy Spirit once. What was this about?"

She was quick: "Sir, you didn't need to, because anyone could see that they, all three in one, are contained within there. The Godhead is exactly what these four stages are about."

He then came back: "But this could be any organisation, secular, heretical and ours."

"The wonders of the incarnation," replied Gretta. I was beginning to like her.

The bishops were looking for more questions.

"The Church is a lifeboat: we might be on the sea for a long time," proposed Jason Wells of Rasa Market.

"Yeah, and the sea underneath is dangerous, and you'd better live like it's your last day," she replied.

Another man (there *were* women present), Charles Wynne-Jackson of Spaldswick, asked: "Are we the vanguard, like the vanguard of the proletariat? Are we not asking 'What is to be done?' No?"

I wondered: was he one of the group? As I looked at Maurice he shook his head at me.

"Yes," she replied. "We are. Lenin had his message, and they carried out political action, and they made a fellowship, and every revolutionary lives like it's a new dawn - the last of the old, and make the new."

"But we wait for God," he followed up.

"Well, no we don't, because if we live like the ethic then we actually prompt in

the new dawn. Someone mentioned Jesus. He was doing the same, for what would come and transform; to be prepared and live the ethic is somehow itself to bring in the new dawn."

Someone was heard saying, "Pelagian." She ignored it.

Another man, Ian Wigley of Bolton cum Heckoring, asked, "How does anyone preach this?"

"Like I've just said it. Use the Greek headings perhaps but no more technical terms."

A woman, at last, Dorothy Strachan of Wulfstan, asked, "Does new wine fit into old wine skins?"

"These days we use bottles. We can change the packaging along with the wine. Okay, keep your dogmatic reference points. They are useful for identity. But let's get on with a liberating service and fellowship that lives tentatively and ethically - always ready to see the next step."

The diocesan stood up. "A great place to finish. I will make a comment on this and my own lecture last week in our next diocesan magazine," he said. "May we all thank - yes, I shall call her *Bishop* Gretta - Bishop Gretta Cox-Jenkins in our usual way."

"That's most generous of you," said the short once independent bishop, "though now I tend to reduce down references to these titles: I'm really plain Gretta and that's all I am. By the way, my arse is dancing and I really need to get to a safe place."

"Can't you put her up?" I asked Maurice. "You're nearer."

"I could. Ask her."

I approached Gretta once she was out of the toilet again. She said, "I'm now having difficulty going. It's there and it's not there."

"Rabbi Neptune lives much closer; wouldn't you like to stay with him?"

A recognised male voice and perfume from behind said, "I'm sure Gretta will enjoy staying with you." It was, of course, John Barman.

She said, "I'm sure there's be some hedges to go behind on the way - if needed. I'll go with you."

I went back to Maurice to report my duty. He said, "It's you I want to stay over at mine." He decided to go.

Bishop Derek shook my hand, saying about the lecture, "Something to build upon there I don't doubt."

"Quite. *Eschaton!*" I said with a smile, thinking of the near future.

And along came smelly Bishop John, again, "Good to see you with Maurice." He said, "Entertain our guest generously, won't you? Pity she is temporarily unwell. She can get up the stairs, by the way."

I acknowledged him but moved swiftly towards the theologian, who was seeing others.

So it was that I led Gretta slowly over to my car, she with a backpack and a suitcase that I had to carry. Her bag and suitcase went into the boot, mine on the back seat. She raised the seat belt over herself in the front passenger seat to get it to click in.

"Shee," she said, "this driving on the left. I still cannot get used to you folks driving on the left. I wouldn't drive here in the dark. Huh, I hired a car in Scotland and it was for daytime only. Same in Wearside: daytime driving only for me. Lovely

woman, that Elizabeth Huett."

Gretta's Guessing Game

So off we went, and I headed for the bypass road, and then the A road and then the B road for one of the routes to Serninsea.

Beyond the street lights, Gretta Cox-Jenkins told me, "Your bumpy roads are doing nothing for my guts."

I said, "My guts do nothing for my guts. But exercises could be helping."

"Do you ever find that you confuse scatology and eschatology? So immediate, so demanding."

"Never. Scatology holds me back. It's not like my last day; it's every day."

"We postmoderns play with the words with similar sounds."

"It's my arse that plays with me, Gretta. It's why postmodernism, as it is, can be so unappealing. I want some evidence."

"Oh, my, we have to be playful as part of re-enchanting things. Don't you have that strategy?"

"No. We find that the theological theory precedes, frames, even suggests events: a young chap whom I hoped would come tonight says any realism in Christianity depends upon miracle. Miracle is..."

"Evidence of failure. It's not history, it's not science, but tries to be."

"Postmodernism is evidence of failure, isn't it?"

"No. It's that truths exist in literary and artistic creativity as well. And institutions can be framed that way."

I said to her, "People are naturally realists: simple and straightforward. On that basis they were a bit quick, the questioners, to accuse you of secularism."

"Did they? Do you accuse me of secularism?"

"No. I don't. They were the usual suspects. Eslaforde and Spaldswick is towards the evangelical."

"Yeah! This is a big diocese you've got and I'm told there's a hotbed of fundies down the south end."

"That's where the money is, because, although rural, it forms commuting country for many into the capital. I think money and aspiration equates with charismatics and, yeah, fundies. We're only talking about Church life here: the world is just as secular."

She said, "I get the mid-morning train tomorrow because the early one is too darned expensive and seats are reserved from well down the line. Fine if you want to get off, but not if you want to go to London. I hope my guts improve. Not on this road."

"At the south end of the diocese the trains are fast, frequent and direct. Wytham improved recently."

"Prosperity gospel: you get that everywhere now. And where we're going, there is less money I take it. Your bishop - Johnny the suffragan - says there is a lot less economic activity than the government makes out."

"Yes and no. We are definitely on the forgotten east coast. There's tourism, and there is a small dock of sorts, with businesses. The archaeology is quite good."

"Your job is secure."

"I'm one of the most secure employed and well-paid in the area. We are supposed to serve them, but they are so much worse off by and large. We do have some managers."

"Johnny Barman said he wouldn't tell me much about you, so we had something to talk about."

"Really. What happened to openness?"

"Openness? Ah, you are referring to the secret Confraternity, the Vanguard."

"So you are in the know."

"But openness is for when you're *in* such a group. There are possibilities among Episcopalians in Scotland. The ecclesiology puts Presbyterians at second class. I'm considering forming a group in Canada. The one place I would not start one is here."

"Really?"

"But I approve."

"They are trying to start one or two groups in South Wales."

"They might get away with it."

"Tell me more."

"Perhaps I shouldn't. He thinks if I was here I'd join, but I don't think I would."

"Come on! You're clearly 'on the inside' already."

"I'm more interested that you are being let in."

"I suppose they think I'm suitable. Like you."

"They know my theological views and actual practices regarding partners, being gender-queer and all that to begin. What about *your* views and practices, Linda?"

"Apparently we haven't got any choice, we priests, once they curl the finger and beckon you in."

"What's the best cheese to attract in a bear?"

"Hey? Dunno."

"Camembert."

"Jokes are ways to avoid telling me more. You've clearly got objections of some kind."

"As you are now being mentored, perhaps I should hold my counsel."

"No, I want to know."

"Perhaps later. I want to find out about you, first. You're married, partnered, anything?"

"I can't believe he's not told you, or you've not found out. I'm separated but he is in the house. He's transferring south soon. He was lucky getting into the measurement of transportation business."

"You're a happy heterosexual, or you were, or could be?"

"He's definitely a man and I am a woman."

"Really. Are you a 'woman' compared with my own non-binary definition?"

"I wasn't passing comment on you."

"But you are a naughty clergywoman, given the way that group seeks people out."

"The suffragan bishop is a happy heterosexual; but he's never been short of partners. Never any males, however."

"Apparently," said Gretta.

"He had that affair with Elizabeth Huett."

"He *did*."

"Those two - with Barman's pal Jonathan to make three - made something of it; they called it the Confraternity."

"I do know all this, and now you are deflecting from telling me about yourself. But back to theology versus event. They say the event generated the theology - orgasms and then came the divine interpretation. But here too the theology framed the eventful findings of the Barman-Huett affair, and then Eyre making a threesome."

"So you must know about me."

"All I was told about you is where you live, that you are a curate priest and have an interest in academic theology."

"Really? So guess about me."

"You want to play *games*!"

"For a car journey. I'll tell you I'm bisexual."

"Oh, I gathered that. Ever heard of the late theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid? She studied bisexuals and Church identity back in Canada, though she became professor in Scotland. Indecent theology: where people are, really. Sexual liberation and all liberation run together."

"If it's liberation theology then the playing field is uneven; I don't think our little playing field is even."

"But let's play on it. So what can I tell about you? You're not wearing a bra for a start." She paused. "You're not answering either. Knickers? No knickers."

"One you have observed, and one correctly speculated."

"I'm afraid if we don't stop soon I could have a serious accident, knickers or no," she said.

"Do you want to stop? I'll stop carefully - a car behind me - to avoid a serious accident."

"Find somewhere - I'm holding on. I have knickers on and a bra: with these things I need a bra. So do you."

"No I don't, as I lectured a nurse recently."

"They won't look good in later life."

"Rubbish. I take the view that 'looking good' is a social concept to be overturned."

"Radical indeed! As a five footer with these hooters I need a bra, deary, however I consider myself by gender. So I would think you'd be a naturist or something like that."

"I'm also holding on. You know. Looking for a place to stop."

"Are you a naturist or sympathiser by any chance?"

"You already know, so why ask?"

"I do not know. It is genuinely a guess. Believe me please. It is not right to be disbelieved. Are you a naturist?"

"Correct. Where else have you been while in Britain?"

"I kinda said. Nearly two months travelling from Dublin to Glasgow airport, to St. Andrews, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Wearside and here. My next guess is that you do spread your partners around the genders."

"I can fall in love with women as well. It just happens. I suffer, it that's the word, from rapid feelings of attachment and desire."

"Insecurity?"

"Possibly."

"Rejection by, say, your father?"

"My current partner is an attempt to stabilise myself beyond such desires. There is a lay-by that I know, quite close now."

"You haven't fallen for *him*."

"He's an old friend with whom I was intimate long back."

"Can you indeed please soon find a place to stop?"

"There are copses all the way down here."

"That's the last thing we need."

"Quite useful I'd have thought."

"Hardly, and why would they be along this way?" Gretta asked.

"Well," I answered, "because the farmers maintain them I suppose."

"What is this? Rural crime or something?"

"Hey? No, 'copses' are small woods. See? Here is one with access at my favourite lay-by, it seems. Inside it is gloomier and we won't be seen so easily."

Having stopped, Gretta got out more quickly than she could manage. She was able to stagger to find a place in the trees while I took a kitchen roll from the boot of the car.

I said, passing her lowering her clothing in a rush, "I'll find somewhere else to squat."

She didn't squat, but, with trousers and knickers down, bent over near a tree.

I was only about twenty yards from her. I started to pee, but with her arse up she sprayed this tree with a reddish brown shit.

She called out, "I need some of that paper."

"Hang on," as I dabbed myself. Trouble was, her going made me think of going more substantially myself.

She said, "Be a dear and wipe me. I have such trouble twisting to wipe my own arse."

So, with a huff, I stood behind her tearing more pieces off, two at a time, wiping and folding, pulling her left bum cheek, doing awkwardly what she found difficult.

"Move," she said. She sprayed out even more, over the grass below this time. Some was running out afterwards.

"What *have* you been eating?"

"Can't you smell it?"

"It smells Indian."

"I think it was bad. Scatology is indeed related to eschatology."

So I wiped her arse some more, from the safety of by her side. Reddish-brown shit around red pubes in this lack of light needed a lot of attention. There was actual heat coming from her bottom.

"Thanks," she said. "I suppose I disgust you."

"It seems I *don't* need to go. I'm making progress. Are you going to shit any more?"

"I must be empty by now," she said. "I cleared the main blockage like a bung at the cathedral. How far?" she asked.

"From your arse to the tree was the longest." I replied, and started laughing. Wiping her some more to finish, I folded sheets into sheets, and I went to put them all in the boot.

Back in the car and driving along again, she said, "OK, I am sorry to have so embarrassed you."

"You didn't. I embarrassed a trainee nurse the other day, taking my shit sample. I visit folk who need social workers and nurses attend to them."

"And you, obviously. Useful to wear knickers. You're not wearing any."

"Diet, dear. I have a loose anus so my shit is fibrous but I could build Georgian houses with it. Knickers make no difference. You can have the washing machine on when I get home."

"I have some washing with me and some clean clothes. But don't neglect our game: what other secrets have you got? Naturist, for sure, but there is something else."

"I'm just too clean-living."

She spurted out laughter with spittle.

"Oh, I'm good at sussing people out. I can cold-read and plant suggestions. I can guess deep secrets, like your lifestyle. Now my arse should have settled I can concentrate on you better."

"OK. What secret do I possess?"

"Oh wow, this is fun."

"Well?"

"I'm thinking."

There was a long pause and I was driving rather quickly.

"I'm waiting," I said plainly. "You've gone quiet," I then said. I looked at her and she was looking up and down at me from so close.

"Not polyamorous, but maybe you are..." she was guessing. "Of course, that vanguard claiming group is designed to *make* you polyamorous."

"It's something else," I teased.

"I have met Christine Vine. She has more sex than anyone and now defines herself as asexual. Her last relationship was with Jonathan Eyre, at which point she decided to have no more. There's talk that she receives beatings."

"I think so. She says about self-sacrifice. Why mention Christine? You're not supposed to mention..."

"I'm not an insider. I know she walked out from getting ordained. That was, shee, extraordinary for her. Nothing was more important for her than becoming a priest. Some thought she was bishop material, and one of those was her. Right? And the basis of her walking out was her disagreement with Johnny Barman. I think she manufactured that walkout."

"Why would she do that?"

"Because, she's right, that he is a pleasure-seeking arsehole, but mainly because she knows what's coming."

"Have you seen her?"

"I haven't," said Gretta. "I'm interested in how these groups form. They rarely agree among themselves and the group has to have methods of enforcing unity. They can do it by being quite threatening."

"So she got out to protect herself?"

"Maybe it's more about the report on the diocese coming along. It is far far worse than the top dogs, including Barman, expected. The group will likely have to disappear for a while, but every time it expands it risks being exposed. If someone like you questions the group, then the group risks becoming exposed."

"I haven't questioned it."
"You are an argumentative type."
"I've run with it."
"And the media always shows added interest in the National Church, and reduced interest in others."
"So your advice to me is..."
"I don't give advice. I would not join."
"They say I have no choice. I must obey my bishop."
"Your diocesan. But he does not know."
"They have become my bishops, I'm told: those three, soon to become five."
"Soon to become two, or none, I would guess. As I said, Wales might just get away with it, but the National Church in England will not."
"Then they'd better circle the wagons. I'll suggest it to my mentor."
"You've really bought into this, haven't you. I need to ask you: do you love Gaad?"
"Love God?"
"Well, that was my question."
"Do you, Gretta?"
"Oh yes. I love Gaad so much that Gaad must love love."
"And sex?"
"That's the means to the end, as well as the end to the means. Are you gonna answer my question, Linda?"
"I don't know what 'love God so much' means."
"Oh well, if you ask Johnny, or Liz, or Jonathan, they all love Gaad a lot. All the concealing they have to do, all the deceiving, all the plotting: it really is because they love Gaad."
"And I don't?"
"If you did, you wouldn't speak as you do. Christine is besotted with Gaad. One reason she doesn't have personal relationships any more is because she has one with Gaad."
"Perhaps you have found my secret. That I am mystified by the mystery."
"No I haven't. No, I suspect that you harbour a deeper secret, my dear. So I want to make a bargain with you."
"What?"
"I will guess your secret as an exchange."
"Why do you suppose I have a secret?"
"Don't backtrack from what you've said. But I will go further. You are a person who conceals. You have manufactured all that you live by."
"This could be deemed as offensive: I'm supposed to believe you, and yet you regard me as a fake."
"Not a fake. I bet you are like the diocesan, theologically. You are burdened by it, all the Church stuff, and you are burdened by something related to that - which is your secret. It could be a deep secret. Like a death in your hands or a birth that was stillborn or something of that order."
"What is your bargain you want to make?"
"If I am right, before we get to your Sernin town..."
"Serninsea."
"I have the freedom to seduce you tonight exactly as I please."

"And if you don't get it right?"

"Then you can do me the honour of sleeping alongside me, perhaps, and I can only wish for what might have been."

"You would deprive *me* of my pleasures!"

"Oh, Linda, it's such an *act* with you. You're like a ball in a pinball machine."

"The Pinball Witch."

"You've played the silver ball? No, you are the reflective ball bouncing all over the place. So let me consider your secret. How far away are we now?"

"We leave the Wolds very soon, and then it is across low-lying flat land to the coast. You play by intuition?"

"Then, Linda, this road seems deserted enough. You can stop the car again, but leave the engine running and your headlights on."

"Why?"

"Get out and stand in front of the beam."

I pulled in on this down-slope, and with the engine still running put the full beam on pointing just off the road. I went and stood so that she could look at me lit up through the windscreen. In fact she got out of the car, took her sticks from the back, and moved close but to the side to look me up and down.

She said, "Undress."

"Out here?"

"Out here. If a vehicle comes along, just go into the field."

So I took off my two items of clothes (except shoes), giving them to her left arm while gripping that stick, and I stood in the cold enough air.

She said, "Turn around."

A car came along in our direction, but I didn't move. It hooted as it went by.

"That's the act of the dedicated naturalist," she said.

"You've already had that one. You say there is another."

She instructed me to put my arms in the air, with legs apart, and said. "Turn back again. May I touch?"

"You may."

She ran the back of her right hand around my pubic area, and looked up and down. Then she said, "I'm getting back strain stood still so here are your clothes. I need to sit down in the car."

She held on to the car doors her side to put sticks on to the back seat and negotiate herself back in. Dressed, I returned to the car.

So I asked her, "Well?"

She replied, "I'm thinking."

"No you're not; you are clueless." I drove off, and there was silence. I did look at her, and she looked at me.

She said, "I do want some intimacy tonight; I really fancy it with you. So I must get this right."

I remembered Adam saying I should effectively play them along. I didn't fancy this five foot woman, even if I might be called 'heightist' for my lack of desire.

She said, "You're definitely all woman, there."

"All woman indeed." I said to her, "Your bargain should cost you something if you lose. Offer me something if you lose, not just your abstinence and mine. After all, I told my partner to stay away tonight."

"You're so right. Let's see. Yeah. I will give you my bishop's cross, the one

that's still dangled around my neck now and I wanted no one to see. If I lose, you get my pectoral cross."

"No. That's too much. I want something like a signed card of lust, a confession, some informal information say about Elizabeth Huett - she is in Middlesbrough after all. You slept with her, didn't you?"

"You're already a kinda well-informed person."

"If I am well-informed, it is because I get people like you to tell me things."

"Look at this cross." She pulled it up. "I'm not really using it any more. One day you might want one."

"Rubbish. And if it doesn't matter to you, why is it between your breasts?"

"Well, that's the deal," Gretta declared. "If I am wrong, you have it, and, remember, if I am right, I keep the cross but I will ravage you sexually. So I *will* be right, and you *shall* have lost the bargain."

"So we have the bargain," I said, "and I think you are ready to guess."

"I'm thinking."

"You're still clueless."

"You forget the work I have done on genders and definitions, transsexuals and the like. I like being queer-gender."

The car occupants went quiet again, for quite a time.

"Gretta, we are well on the flat land and Serninsea is over there," I said. "You get one stab at this. Any mumbling, fishing around, and your bargain is lost. But I don't want the cross. If you are right, what intimacy do you want?"

"You pleasure me all over, including rimming, and fist me before I sleep and, by the way, fist me after I wake in the morning. By fisting I mean moving those fingers from a clenched position. But I won't want to fist you." She looked at me with a stare, and I kept my eyes on the road.

"Why not?"

"Well..."

I feared that she was on to me. "I am disappointed that only you want fisting."

"You are definitely a concealer and a deceiver, as I've already said."

"I've already said I am a clean-living woman." I started laughing again.

There was another pause and indeed rather a long silence.

With Serninsea but minutes off, I insisted: "I do need an answer."

"We've established that you are a naturist."

"Yes! So what else?"

"Oh, I think you're intersex."

Time to deflect. "I am definitely into sex," I said, whilst a cold shiver went down my spine.

"So it'll be *Complete*, won't it, Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome."

"Ah. Oh. Why you didn't offer to fist me."

"Indeed. I monitored the flicks on your face, even in the gathering gloom. So I win."

"Bloody hell."

"And Johnny Barman did not tell me."

"He does not know. Colin Cromer worked it out, recently, from my CAIS sister, but I think it is the one thing he won't tell the bishop."

"You tell your lovers, of course."

"Yes, because sooner or later they will find out. Jonathan Eyre didn't pull me

wide enough open, but he knew something was different."

"He treats women well only after the event. He held on to me like some zoophiliac holds on to a chicken."

"Ugh. What a horrible image. The lights are coming on across Serninsea, and we go to Sutton-on-Serninsea, where I live. Come to my house, and ignore my husband in the next bedroom, because you have won your bargain. And you keep your cross. So it's buzzers and bells and lights a-flashin' tonight."

"I will keep your secret," Gretta said.

"Thank you. It is becoming a burden. My sister defended herself from a ridiculous preacher. Thus my parish priest worked it out, and that led to me telling my partner of now. This is Titansea properly speaking so there are some minutes to go now before getting to my little curate's house. Sutton is the northernmost settlement of the three. Something to eat first, surely?"

"Sure. Oh yeah. My guts feel empty."

So we stopped off to see Bob Battersby's, and took the three times not very fibrous haddock and chips home.

Gretta Gets Personal (12th and Saturday 13th July)

Before going indoors I noticed the front sitting room light on. Once in I called out, "We're here!" I took the fish and chips portions in to the kitchen. Gretta struggled in with her sticks and headed for the lounge. Back out and in via the car, I then fed the folded soiled kitchen paper sheets into the downstairs toilet, flushing frequently to avoid blocking the toilet.

Keith came out and went to the car, bringing in Gretta's bag and suitcase. He sniffed and said, "There's a smell of Indian-flavoured shit here and in the car."

Going from the understairs loo to the kitchen, I said, "There's fish and chips for you."

"You'll need my knickers," Gretta called out, so she took her trousers off and then her soiled knickers and handed them to me. "Might need a scrub."

"Hello Bishop Cox-Jenkins," said Keith into the lounge.

"I need a pair of knickers."

"No you don't!" I said from the kitchen, having removed my own two items of clothing and kicked off my shoes. "Actually I'll have that suitcase here. Are you taking your blouse and bra off?" We have towels to sit on.

Keith brought the suitcase to me. Gretta further undressed and entered the kitchen to lean against the sink's draining board. I scrubbed her knickers and placed them into the washing machine. I then opened her suitcase for other washing to load. I added my own two items.

Keith now said. "I hope you wash your hands before you dish these out."

"Why don't *you* put them on plates and use the microwave?"

So clothed Keith gave each plate of food a two minute boost. He went into the larger lounge with his own. Once the washing machine was going, I washed my hands and we took ours into the lounge, dropping down towels to sit upon.

Gretta said, "You two seem civilised; I had wondered if there'd be a bad atmosphere."

"No," Keith said. "I'm going to my bed as soon as this is down my throat and I've had a drink. So keep the noise down, you two, please."

"Keith, I might have asked you the same with Cheryl. I'm sleeping with Gretta because I lost a bet."

"She did."

"I've told you before about gambling."

We were eating with our fingers and grease did drop on our chests.

And when he had wolfed his food all down, Keith went to the kitchen. "Coffees?"

Keith deducted a microwave minute for his, so he drank his quickly. So he went up the stairs lugging Gretta's bag and closed-up suitcase.

I said to Gretta, "Don't worry about any noise. Once he falls asleep, nothing wakes him; even the alarm only just gets through. He is history now."

"I'm pretty noisy when my oxytocin gets to work."

It was interesting seeing a large breasted small woman in my bed, her short legs wide. Nevertheless, my lubricated wrist vanished with my big hands into someone so apparently small! She didn't say if she had ever given birth. I was all right about her presenting her backside for my finger and tongue, despite earlier events. I'd lost the bet and obliged her arse with two fingers to the knuckle.

I mentioned my efforts at tightening my arse, and so she got me to orgasm through more standard clitoral stimulation after pulling my labia wide.

Gretta's extended orgasms really gave me some work to do because she wanted them to go on and on. When done she explained this was what she'd meant by referring to 'oxytocin'. The sheet was also soaked beneath her so I moved it to the side and laid a new one.

She nor I offered any prayers at our orgasms.

In the morning, the Saturday being mine, and my last day before Colin returned, I woke with this woman soon with my hand between her legs and I just did not know when I could stop. I was content with much less.

Gretta said, once she recovered, "I assure you that your secret is safe with me. I realise how precious this is, and how you've altered your physiology."

"Blame him, getting up."

"I noticed your absence of a cervix. It's fascinating to me. I took a huge guess about you, in the car."

"You could have lost your pectoral cross - but you wouldn't have because I wouldn't have accepted it."

"Your speech is so precise, so English," Gretta said to me. "I'll remember you, back in Canada."

"Do you think... Do you really think I should stay away from the group under the Confraternity?"

"I don't even think you're that committed to it. You're not, are you? It's not a fantastic discovery, and doesn't meet a personal need. You are gathering information, I think, but it's not the same thing."

"Do you do cold reading?" I asked her. "You could teach my lover's assistant something."

"I find the signs fascinating. Every eye movement, every tick, every side movement, and speech. You control your speech, but not well enough. Most English would regard you as 'posh' but, actually, you are a local girl with layers and layers of

paint over the top."

"I stopped using regional words but I know what they mean."

Before we went downstairs to breakfast, she watched as I laid another sheet on the bed. Two wet sheets came downstairs with me for another wash. She had fresh knickers to put on. We acknowledged Keith and had breakfast together.

Bringing her suitcase and bag downstairs, I helped Gretta pack. Then I drove her back to Wytham, with no stops, directly to the station. And then at the station, I went and called for assistance for her, to then return to Gretta.

She produced her bishop's cross on a chain from a pocket. "I want you to have this."

"No, you won your bargain fair and square. I enjoyed it. You weren't excessive either."

"You were a very pleasant and willing host. And driving me back and forth."

"The travel is on expenses. I'll claim them from the Church."

"Take this please. I think you may want to wear this in the future."

"But if I walk out of the group, as you recommend, when they say I must get initiated and take part, the suffragan will do all he can to frustrate and eject me from the ministry."

"Precisely," she said.

A man in uniform appeared, saying, "It's due in minutes." "I'll assist you from here."

"Goodbye Linda. Remember me." She pushed the pectoral cross into my trousers' pocket.

She was soon gone, on her sticks, assisted to the train with her luggage.

I drove homeward, paused at my favourite lay-by, and looked at the gold coloured item. Possibly its chain was gold. There were no maker's marks. I pissed at the tree where she'd shat the day before.

On the way in I diverted to Ingle Top Drain where I swam naked for about half an hour. After all, it was International Skinny Dip Day.

At home Keith was reading a physical newspaper. "Cheryl got me back into the habit of reading a newspaper. Nice walk to get one. It made me think that we should get a dog."

"We?"

"Cheryl and me."

"Of course. Yes."

Chapter 14 Recruiting

Narrator: Linda *Second Visit to the McPhails* (Sunday 14th July)

Sunday morning I gave an indistinct homily that seemed to be well appreciated, as I presided at the parish Eucharist. After that I was summoned to the McPhails at Ingle Barrow.

Welcomed by them, Stephen said that the bishops wanted my mentoring up to initiation to go quickly, because I was ready.

This time they took me to the play room where several devices were available. Stephen had just made one he wanted me to try out. It had an undulating table top, which prevented anyone getting comfortable. If your bum got into a hollow, your back hurt, or your bum was uncomfortable. There were four adjustable poles at the four corners, to be moved up and down. Undressed, I got on this unpleasant top and tried to lay on it. Velcro loops around my thighs and lower arms were each attached to chains and closed leather loops. The poles lowered, they were then pulled upwards through the leather loops. Thus I was trapped and exposed to whatever he, she or anyone for that mattered wanted to do with me. He said, "It's good for whipping around the pubic area."

Stephen removed his own clothes, and, looking at me splayed out, started masturbating. Helen smiled and left us. "You did take Gretta Cox-Jenkins home. How did it go?"

"Fine."

"I need some more detail than that. This relates to openness. You should tell me as much as you can, remember." His hand cupped over my pubic area, and he started rubbing. "I heard she's partial to some fisting."

"You heard correctly."

"She knows a lot about the groups; she may set up her own in Canada. What sort of things was she saying?"

"Not much to me, as a yet to be initiated. She said she was at Middlesbrough, so obviously with Elizabeth Huett."

"Did she mention the one we cannot mention?"

"She knew she's run off, that's all. I did see Christine, briefly."

"Yes. You'd better tell me about it."

"She was dealing with landlord business, and was prevented by her clients from doing any more overseeing. She wasn't surprised. I'll claim pastoral confidentiality."

"You can only claim it for Laura Kingswood and Andrew Walter on your parish business, not on ours."

"I was there on my parish business."

"But not regarding the visitor. And what is the unsaid person doing now?"

"Her secular work."

"We don't see how she could have gone from theological bigwig to nothing. Didn't Gretta say anything?"

"She said she was a woman of many formative ideas, but I knew that."

"So here, Linda, we have had an example of openness - Second Guidance."

Your claim to pastoral confidentiality can be challenged; I will pass on your remarks to Bishop Terry. Now, how are you on there?"

"It is starting to press on parts of my back."

Stephen was getting erect from the sight. No doubt in a passage from a BDSM textbook, he decided simply to put his manhood straight into my feminine purse, and push. The lack of lubrication was deliberate.

Speaking while thrusting, he reminded me of the Second Guidance on confidentiality and being secretive. This included Adam Magellan, he said, who is of concern. I was not to tell Adam *anything*, and not even use 'The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players' - and it was unlikely I'd be asked to talent scout for a while. He said, "Although there was an intelligent young man in your company the other week, and working with Magellan, we gather he is connected to the archaeology Wickenby twins. Gosh you are indeed tight."

I felt that I needed to protect him, so said nothing.

"You're not exactly flowing with information," Stephen said. "And, as for Magellan, you may be required to operate on detailed instructions from the bishops and keep to these. They're for the survival and progress of the group, and individual initiatives are not wanted. I'm sure you realise all this," he said to me.

"Of... course."

"Are you enjoying this?"

"You're a good fucker."

"I can't understand why you are impossibly tight."

"Good self training."

"There isn't a blockage, is there?"

"Nothing is being blocked," I said, which was true.

"The fun stuff is the Fifth Guidance. This is where Terry thinks you're already well ahead. Sometimes we have to coax a few into happy nudity and open sex. You haven't said in detail what you did with Gretta. How the hell did she fist you?"

"She didn't."

"Can I try?"

"You won't do it."

"Do you want to bet?"

"No, you won't do it. You could cause damage. Surely in all this openness I have a right to know my own body."

"I'm about to come."

So the conversation paused, and he came inside me. He said, on shooting, "Glory be to the threefold God!" Pretty much the lot ran out. So he opened me up, which didn't matter because his gunge prevented him from failing to see a cervix.

My response was, "Do I lie on this bloody thing all the time?"

"You haven't had an orgasm. I'll bend down to you. You know the clitoris is shaped a bit like a chicken's wishbone?"

I didn't answer. His tongue working on me prevented further delivery about the Guidances. He realised this and so transferred to his finger, using sperm as a lubricant.

"Sexual fluidity means having intimate actions with Maurice Neptune. He used to be a city banker, and had a change of career, but likes to live in comfort and kept his chauffeur. He has a live-in maid as well."

"How intimate are *they*?"

"The maid was, well, one of *her* self-employed workers. So she provides Maurice with full services."

"And is the Reformist Synagogue aware of her enhanced role, or indeed such activities as coming... I think I am com... ing."

I went into orgasm, and just the one.

"Praise and prayer!" he demanded.

"O God thank you for this my wonderful orgasm," I said, while thinking this forced verbal expression bordered on the stupid. Once I'd drifted down again, I was able to say, "Gretta is one of those lucky women who can multiple orgasm."

"Like Helen," said Stephen. "We'll have a session with Helen. If you do get to like Maurice personally, we'd all prefer that because you could then drop Adam Magellan. And we know that Colin Cromer hates to know you are with him. So you are already on to the Sixth Guidance of orgasm. I don't suppose you've read much orgasm theology."

"*Story of the Eye*. Georges Bataille. Can I get off this now?"

"Yes, that's one of them. You really are well advanced. I'll lower these poles and then you can get off. And you should read in the negative as well," he said, lowering each pole as he spoke. "We read what Augustine had to say to know that we reject it all. Read positively Matthew Fox and Miriam Simos or Starhawk."

"I already have."

"Fox writes, *We burst into the world as Original Blessings*, and we think the same."

"He's holisitc," I said.

All the poles were lowered, and my feet were released. "He says the sin is not to see all as whole. 'Creation-Centered Spirituality' is what we follow too. So we connect with the New Age. We had a talk from a Buddhist called Anong not long ago, in Hartlepool - ask Keith - and she said of groups derived from her's that went New Age. Fox is positive about the work of the Holy Spirit incorporating Wicca, Shamanism, and the Goddess."

"I believe that Anong has a theology of defacating," I said, getting off his horrible device.

"Yes. You are well-informed. The bishops thought we are not ready. Some find it difficult. There are rumours, however, about Gretta Cox-Jenkins."

"What like?" I straightened my back.

"Liz thinks she went to see Anong, arriving a day early before she met Liz."

"She didn't tell me that. She slept with Elizabeth Huett."

"She didn't try any scatology on with you?"

"She played on the words 'scatology' and 'eschatology', with little impression on me."

"All talk then."

"She had dodgy guts and shat at a copse, and I ended up wiping her arse."

"And how did that affect you?"

"I didn't affect me at all."

"Did it give you a sexual kick?"

"No."

"So why did she ask?"

"She can't twist around."

"I bet she does on her own."

With Stephen holding his and my clothes, we went through the house to join Helen at the kitchen.

In the kitchen Stephen said, "I was just saying about some orgasm-supporting theology, Helen. Matthew Fox."

"Yes," she said. "We learnt that he is like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin but criticises him for all that on self-denial and renunciation. Fox isn't opposed to 'ecstasy' at all."

"I've read both," I said. "What now?"

"Well, we're done for our direct mentoring session," said Stephen, but stay for some lunch. Helen, take your clothes off, love, in the company of a naturalist."

So I had lunch with them, but I made my exit to have more time to prepare for the Evensong. I couldn't quite work out my thoughts regarding Stephen.

On arriving and after some pleasantries, I discovered Colin's express disappointment that I had simply abandoned Morning Prayer. I claimed low attendance, but he said it was a witness to be made.

However, I wasn't preaching. A priest friend called Justin Brown from the Lake District was staying with Colin for a week. (Keith thought there was a female friend.) In a replacement of the Evensong to evening Evening Communion, I listened, with back ache, to Justin Brown preach:

"The oh-so-common spirituality of brokenness, often with a death of God or unreal theology, has created an inability to proclaim. This is the contrast between the wounded healer and the resurrected Christ. We need both to transform ourselves and then the world.

"The reality of the Spirit empowers us, and belief in the gifts of the Spirit help God to pour them on his people. Thus we should get away from secular language and use our own.

"I suggest we bring New Wine into this region. It can be evangelical and can be Catholic. It is unlikely to be liberal. Sorry about the ecclesiastical politics, but such politics is unavoidable. We are looking for energy and vitality in the New Wine. It is flexible but does not sell-out. It makes everything more responsive and more creative. That was secular language there because so much of our own language has slipped away through lack of use."

Colin was in full agreement with his friend. Nevertheless, afterwards, Colin said to us, "The suffragan bishops and the diocesan bishop will not let in renewal. We do have a heavy theology of brokenness. I think you do, Linda. Plus, your liberal sentiments get us nowhere."

Colin expected so little from me.

He and Justin went on to talk about Ambleside and ambling, and that at retirement Colin might go there for good. He was at least pleased there were no pieces broken by me locally to be put back together.

Limit Testing (Monday 15th July)

Monday was my day off but I was called to go to Ingle Barrow immediately.

I met Stephen and Helen again, and I asked her what the blood was down her legs, some reaching her flip flops.

"Free bleeding," she said. "Menstruation, of course. You should try it."

"I don't think I like the idea," I said.

Stephen asked me, "Are you due to menstruate in the next few weeks?"

"No."

"When you get your period," he said, "we'll make use of it as part of the ongoing mentoring."

This, of course, presented me with a problem, because they would either discover that I never did menstruate, or accuse me of lack of openness in that I had not admitted this. Somehow, to preserve my leaking but still held secret, I'd have to get out.

In any case, what more was there to discover? After all, I might think that indeed the orgasm, or sex in general, was good and godly, but I didn't need to turn into a group bicycle in order to have them manufactured.

Helen said, "It is part of being open and, unlike me, you can make more use of it as a priest."

Stephen said, "We want you initiated, so we're bringing this part forward. Today is about testing your willingness to go with anyone at an initiation or in a party gathering. Today you'll act with a stranger."

So I was indeed to be a bicycle today.

Stephen continued, "This person is in the group, but we think you do not know him. He is not religious. He has been health checked. He is very vigorous, and he does what he does to test your capacity in all the things we expect."

Here I was sanctioning, by my presence, someone unknown having access to my body. But it would answer the earlier question of who was in the group.

"What if today doesn't work out?" I asked, timidly.

"Further training would be needed - the whole point of mentoring."

Again I'd have to lie on one of his table devices, this one with a curved up end and with fixed poles this time not quite at the corners. Whatever happened to the standard bed?

Thus my legs were up in the air and my bottom was raised, and my position was projected forward so that my legs were back as well as high. I was to grip the poles with my hands.

Helen brought in a suited man, who undressed and said nothing. She called him 'Martin'. He was clearly well endowed and Helen made him harder and dripped a single blob of lubricant on his penis. This man simply walked towards me and forced it into my anus. I could imagine so many would find this very disturbing; I thought I wouldn't.

In fact I did, mentally, given his cold manner and increasing rapidity of in and out. I felt like I was being broken in. This man also held on to these poles - not my legs - to ram me, more and more. Stephen, who'd undressed out of my sight, came and pressed down on my ribs with his hands. Martin was developing quite a sweat.

But then this became worse, because Stephen started slapping and pushing together my breasts; he even slapped my face. He pressed his penis into my cheek. "Take it," he said. What was I to do?

This room was deep in their house, so if I screamed it could be all part of the event. In fact I shut down. I just went through with it, and I could take it given my physiological changes caused by Keith.

And then Stephen moved away, and Helen moved in, to climb over my face,

so that her 'free bleeding' came on to me.

Stephen said, "This shows you can absorb one of the body's fluids: Helen's reproductive cycle, her actual life-force. Take her life force into you, Linda."

In my shut down I realised who the man was: suited, not religious, and called Archibald Holborn. They used Martin Haralambos before. So I asked him, "Are you Archie Holborn?"

He paused his rapid rhythm that had created his running sweat. Stephen said, "She must know you."

Helen rubbed her messy thighs around my face.

Archie said, "I dealt with her SMS annual stress testing involvement, when she was finding out about her husband's affair."

Stephen's own orgasmic output - "My God!" - was rubbed into my breasts. Presumably he didn't want to mix his sperm with his wife's blood. She meanwhile leaned over my full length and hooked a couple of fingers up and under my clitoris and vigorously wanked me as Holborn thrustured, so I decided I'd had enough and faked an orgasm. "God bless!" I called out.

It had the oposite effect. The violence of Holborn's penile attack increased. Helen was smearing my body further down. Holborn finally ejaculated deep inside my anus, and came away like a cork ejected from a bottle.

I was unprepared and he received what he deserved. So he went off in a hurry to clean his penis. Helen got off my face and also left the room to wipe her hands.

I curled and rolled to get off his device. Stephen asked me to stick my tongue out. "Her blood. Look, go home," he said. "Get your clothes on without washing and leave the house. Go on: fuck off. Go back to that Magellan sod, until you dump him for one of ours."

"I need the toilet," I said.

"Go in the garden," he replied. "It suits you."

So, I carried my clothes to enter their back garden, and left them a present by the back door so they had to clean it up. Then I got dressed, over my sticky chest, and simply walked through the various doors to leave the house, to get in my car. I looked in the mirror, and took the bottle of water in the driver's door to swill my mouth from the taste of Helen's blood. Then I just drove home. At home I started to shake, and showered, and told myself to pull myself together. Into the evening I was calmer but still shaken, when Adam called me to go to his place to help solve a CCTV mystery.

Narrator: Adam *A Deposit* (Monday 15th July)

I had been to my brown bin, in the tenfoot, to put some card and paper in before its collection tomorrow, and I noticed on top of the rubbish inside a service order from Linda's ordination service. On the cover it had written in ink:

BJTB meeting JW CW Thursday evening. About S C brooch con. From C. Just Hold actually it right there.

I returned to Peter in the reception room and on my say-so we viewed our own outside the front door CCTV. "Tell me if you recognise anyone."

"They're mainly the tops of people's heads."

"Well, there is some face in each. The message has come from 'C' so we are looking for a 'C' among these faces. There could be hours of this CCTV, even if it is triggered by movement."

This went on a while. We could not recognise anyone, so Ann and Labhaoise came down in the evening. Linda came over after her day off, although she looked very strained. Looking for some twenty minutes of fast forward-and-stop video, Ann said, "Hang on! Yes it is her passing your front door. That's Christine Vine."

Linda confirmed this, and seemed emotional in response. So we had 'C' and therefore worked the rest out. Bishop John Terence Barman, Jim Wilson, Connie Wilson, the Serninsea Cross brooch, and, thus Christine Vine. She was likely to buy some more properties from Ann and Labhaoise. Linda had met her during a pastoral visit, set up, she said, by the suffragan bishop 'BJTB' with his intention of Linda reporting back.

Peter asked, "Why is Christine interested in that brooch?"

Linda suggested, "Perhaps it's a means to some end? As in *Just Hold actually it right there.*"

I suggested that we got the Wickenby twins involved. "They know about that brooch. It doesn't say where these folk will meet. We could follow the people mentioned to a meeting place. Perhaps we would see Christine; she has not left any contact details."

Meanwhile, I had reason to ask Linda, "Are you all right?"

"Rough day. I'm all right."

When Kathryn and Kathleen came in, they said this Thursday was within the time period of the brooch expected back from the labs. Christine would know this much. But the item didn't arrive at any of the labs. So this suggested that Barman might be going to claim it was tested and confirmed as historical and discovered, when it was surely not.

However, Peter asked to see the CCTV again, and noted an oddity. Christine's walking looked purposeful and was at the front and therefore not in the tenfoot round the back where the bin was kept.

Peter said, "I bet she's come round from the promenade and didn't go around the back at all."

I had to agree: we took so much notice of Christine that we hadn't then asked the next question - whether she'd actually left the note.

Linda asked me, "When are you going to start actually paying him a wage?"

Peter said, "This sentence is very odd. *Just Hold actually it right there.* Why is it reading awkwardly?"

I asked Linda, "Stop being half-secretive about this group and give us some names. The Wilsons are in it but who else?"

She said, "I'm only half-secretive because I've been trying to go along with them and I asked you not to investigate further."

"Have you seen most of the people in this Serninsea group?" I asked.

"No. I only see some of them before initiation. Anyhow, the aims of this group do not include the Serninsea Cross brooch. The Wilsons have a relationship with Barman that goes beyond the group."

I said, "We need to do some cross-referencing, in other words someone in this, and in that, who is also interested in the other."

Linda said, "That's precise."

Peter at a computer, said, "So it is clergy, SMS, to begin, and interest in, I suppose, archaeology."

Linda said, "That is precise."

Kathryn said, "We already know someone in SMS, living a short time in this town and adding her interest to our archaeology. Janet Hayes. Up from near Margate, once into selling model railways, she has been promoted to a national job: Marketing across SMS."

So I asked, "Is she in your group?"

"I don't know," Linda said. "Anyway, it is not *my* group - yet."

"Why are you shaking?" I asked her.

"I might be suffering from something."

"What other Venn diagram names are there?" I asked the twins.

The twins drew a blank. So I asked Peter to look on 'Personnel Link', a website by which managers and business people and even some clergy made connections.

Peter said, "Yes, archaeology is one of her interests: particularly Celtic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon."

"As round here," said Kathryn. (I knew it was Kathryn because Peter's arm was around her shoulder.)

Peter said, "*Just Hold actually it right there* - the 'H' in capitals, so it is actually Janet Hayes."

We decided not to approach Janet Hayes; after all, if she had done this, she did it anonymously. We would do the investigating on the Thursday by following Barman and the Wilsons.

Just as we were about to leave, and I was going to lock up and leave with Linda to her house, Peter was looking at the note.

He said, "It is on your ordination service order, Linda. Why?"

So we all stopped ourselves, sat down again, and tried to think.

The problem was that Janet Hayes had no listed interest on Personnel Link regarding religion. This meant we might be no further forward. Somehow she had got hold of this order of service, or someone had given it to Janet Hayes, but these seemed unlikely. We'd convinced ourselves it was not Christine, but now we thought it might not be Janet Hayes.

"Someone thought they had seen Christine when I was ordained, but she wasn't in the cathedral and the printed order of service wasn't handed out at the retreat," Linda told us. "Christine would have had no reason to have a copy of the order of service. Janet Hayes would be unconnected with all that."

Then we all dispersed, none the wiser.

When I got into bed with Linda, at her place, I said to her, "You've got to tell me more about this group."

"What I can tell you is that I have issues with it, but I like the basic message."

"So you will join up?" I asked her.

"Gretta suggested I get clear of it - get out altogether."

"Why?"

"Because she thinks the inefficiency report, let's call it, is going to blow up the diocese and this secretive group will be exposed. And the actions of 'Johnny Barman', as she calls him, will also likely expose the group. And she thinks Christine

manufactured her row with Barman to get clear."

"Then why don't *you* get clear?"

"I'm thinking about it. Priests cannot choose to leave; they must go through with it."

"Well that's bollocks. Were you with them today?"

"Yes, and they were unpleasant in attitude and actions. I'm supposed to be receptive to all so they roughed things up. I'm presuming they still need me, locally."

"But you don't need them," I said to her.

"And, even with me, the whole thing turns on a sixpence, when the positive becomes abusive."

"You've said."

Linda added, "I told you to stop enquiring," as she climbed on to me to satisfy her present insatiable need for sexual fulfilment.

Linda I liked: a mate, a fuck-buddy, but she was always going off the scale. If she was a caged bird she'd bite through the metal and get out. I liked her body shape, a much older version of 'Headgirl' online, and fuckable, in a way I couldn't ever with the perfection of 'Headgirl' (and not so long out of school, really).

Narrator: Linda *Walk with a Rabbi* (Wednesday 17th July)

Colin Cromer told me that the suffragan bishop had contacted him that I would do some interfaith work with Maurice Neptune.

I asked Colin, "How did this come about?"

"The bishop just rang me. Two days duration, starting immediately."

So my experiencing the group was continuing. I was determined to get on top of my mental reaction to what had happened - a test of access, excess and response.

I said, "I think Bishop John must have thought I could talk theologically with the rabbi."

"With your theology, perhaps he is thinking of a transfer." (Thanks Colin.)

"I refer to the New Testament too often," I said.

"Did you know nothing about today and tomorrow?" Colin asked.

"I knew something was coming. It's like a two-person conference," I said. "No doubt in-depth."

"Are you going to Wytham?"

"I might; he'll tell me if he's doing pastoral visiting here."

I called off the usual Wednesday afternoon naked lie down with Diana. Instead, at midday, I took a journey on the Caffin Line to the Inglemire station, where the rabbi had parked his car, allowing us the prospect of the extensive Ingle Park in the direction of Caffin Park. I wore a blouse, a sweater, trousers, sensible shoes. We had a huggy welcome. He said we would walk about, and perhaps go to the McPhails to eat, if this is what I wanted.

"Not sure, to be honest."

He said, first, "I understand they brought forward the challenging session."

"So it seems."

"That's all it was. It will be much sweeter with me. We can talk ideas and

intentions and compare theological notes."

I said to Maurice, walking alongside him, our equal heights aiding conversation, "So what would you say to someone who'd lost any specific Christian understanding of belief? 'Judaism is for you!' Perhaps not."

"I recall something similar in the school where we met."

"I was struggling before the retreat, but people pressed me to go on, not least those in these groups under the Confraternity. And I was surprised at the Hindu and Jewish membership, locally."

"From lowest rung upwards, the hierarchy is: secular business management, religious, Protestant Christian, and then we have the apostolic: Orthodoxy, Anglican and Catholic, Apostolic bishops deciding, and they understand 'Anglican' from the Catholic perspective. The lower you go the more are the exceptions: we 'religious' are expected to engage theologically at some level and make our contributions. Initiation has to suit us."

"I did get a boost at ordination. Half of it was a sense of purpose represented in this group, but it included then someone now excluded. I have a question for you."

"Go on."

"Why are you involved in this?"

"I have never understood why we cannot have more intimate relationships more easily."

"So which have been yours?"

"As you have no choice but to become initiated, I will give you first names. Yojana, Connie, Janet, Jenny, Fatima, Liz of course, Helen, Kay and our escapee. Some of these were in meetings, some in parties, a few one to one. Hopefully, I'll add you. Also there were women in Christine's properties, who provided delightful distractions. One became my maid."

"OK. So I know of Yojana Asthana, Connie Wilson, Jenny World, Helen McPhail, Christine Vine and..." (now I took a gamble) "...Janet Hayes, because my separated husband is in SMS. The only Kay I know is the headteacher, Kay Sally Parker."

The fact that he didn't contradict my guesses assured me that Janet Hayes and the headteacher were in the group.

He said, "Anyway, let's see if I can help on the specific belief matter you raise."

"Yes please," as we continued to walk in the park.

"So I take you back to your classical theology, your Thomas Aquinas..."

"Not sure he is mine."

"You'd be surprised. Aquinas drew on Aristotle from a previous civilisation more than three hundred years before the common era. Scholasticism produced an application of reason into Christianity. It is seen as a major foundation for Western Christendom - ancient Greek culture absorbed. So observable reasoning was the support for revelation, and not always received well. The Islamic builder upon Aristotle - rivalling Aquinas and Anselm of Canterbury, was Avicenna or Ibn Sina, who was around before both of them."

"I don't know when these people were around."

"I do. In the Common Era, 1225-1274 for Aquinas, 1033-1109 for Anselm, and 980-1037 for Ibn Sina - before them. And Moses Maimonides is our man, and he's 1135 to 1204."

"You remember the dates; I find dates hard to grasp. I remember even fewer people's names."

"The clock, with some exceptions. 1274 is a nearly a quarter past one 'previous'."

"Ah, this reminds me of colleagues who met you during our retreat visits. 1492 as half past three."

"Ah. I use 'previous' for those, it's not 1530 after all. You remember 1492! A crucial date. So, the Arabs copied and built on classical culture, but Europe rediscovered it after your Dark Ages and aggression into Muslim occupied areas - areas where we Jews had been safest. Your principal theologian had been Augustine of Hippo and his dates were 354-430 - and he rejected classical reasoning. No need for the twenty four hour clock with him."

"Gusty the Rhinoceros. I'm joking now. This is an attractive park in July."

"You see, Christianity was seen as self-sufficient under Hippo, but did Aquinas save your religion or undermine it long term?"

"I see the point," I said. "It's muddy there."

"Thank you. And you see there was the Renaissance and the confidence of the human perspective, or reasoning."

"So who was Aristotle then?"

"But I haven't talked about the Jewish equivalent yet, Maimonides."

"Sorry."

"I'll answer you. Ask."

"Aristotle then: he was an observer, wasn't he, like me looking at these trees?"

"And consider Plato, 429-347 before the Common Era pointing to perfection beyond matter in the heavens; instead, Aristotle was both empirical and practical: he wanted to understand the world. The essence of things was to be found *here*, not in a spiritual essence beyond, like with Plato. However, Aristotle did not understand the function of experiment. Ethics came from reasoning too. Intelligence is activated rather than following tradition and authority. Regulate your desires, and reach better decisions! Law was rational (beyond the passions) and therefore reasoned and ethical."

"And the Thomist absorbed that."

"Funny you don't say 'Aquinist'. Well: Christianity had loved Hellenism, the victorious cultural school, because it elevated this world into the world beyond, so pure forms and and reason is within God for revelation, and humans are fallible and indeed 'Ay-of-Aich' invented original sin for you Western Christians. All that stuff about the soul went into mediaeval times. But Aquinas said if reasoning is pure and correct, it will agree with revelation. How could these be different? It was just another route to God."

"The Calvinists reacted against that then."

"Much later. If reason disagreed with revelation, it had not employed a necessary argument. Avicenna also set out to reconcile rational philosophy with Islamic theology. His writings were released into Western Europe with his physics, aromatherapy, logic, engineering, geology, medicine and theology. Avicennism is his Persian Islamic school of philosophy in the Islamic golden age (until the 1400s). Ibn Sina, properly speaking, a short name of a longer one, did his proofs of God not unlike Anselm and Aquinas."

"We did those in college: never satisfactorily."

"Well, the Scholastics were careful in their reasoning but reason just had to conform with Scripture as interpreted by the Church. The light of reason needed a divine light."

"We still have this difficulty now and it costs us."

"When reason broke from theology you get what you have now: argument backed up by experiment, backed up by falsification, and different truths have emerged. Plus, we discovered that the social order was not divinely ordered. Thomism that was once progressive became defensive, particularly in 1893 when Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical letter *Aeterni Patris* that made Thomism normative for the Church. I'll accept that there was thus something of a rapid deflation of Thomism after Vatican II."

"You're a rabbi - why are you telling me this?"

"Because Aristotle is all so wrong! We know, against Aristotle, that it is a fallacy that a part must have the qualities and substance of the whole. Active atoms and buzzing brain waves are quite capable of producing stable rational thought; one actuality does not have to retain the composition of the other. Plus we know about the self-organising principle and self-generating. There is the weird quantum world; time has a beginning wholly within itself; and the universe has a beginning wholly within itself. Evolution is a systemic feedback loop for chaotically mutating life. More than this, the uniformity of application of some mathematical and scientific laws is warped at the very small and the very large."

"But I am trying to relate..."

"I'm getting into my stride, Linda! Maimonides, born 1135 or so, died 1204, also known as Rambam..."

"Thank you mam."

"...wrote, even then, *Guide for the Perplexed*, and it was for those already into maths, logic, observations, and metaphysics. *Don't* read the Bible literally, God is *not* corporeal: he is only what can be said *negatively*. So you could do that. "

"Not is not enough. There's always an is," I said. "I think."

"There is no plurality in negation. You want transcendence? Perhaps you don't. So Maimonides was Aristotelian, and Aristotle was translated into Hebrew. He adopted Aristotelian thought to Biblical faith. He was used to undermine traditionalist belief and observance among Jews. Crescas attacked the Aristotelian world-view, the religious and pseudo-science and maths."

"He wasn't crackers."

"Linda, your humour undermines yourself."

"Levity among the Levites?"

"The words are unconnected."

"Gretta calls this wordplay postmodern."

"Aquinas drew on Maimonides and stated so. Maimonides stressed God's unity, lack of a body, eternity, God knowing us, punishing and rewarding. Moses had his role; the messiah will come and be of the resurrection of the dead. Now our Maimonides was very influential and set up commentaries and debates to and fro. Jewish opposition was in some ways like your Catholics to Aquinas at the time. Why 'divine incorporeality' as a principle? Where was resurrection? Why a stress on intellectual ability? What of rabbinic learning and all their debates? But the opposition that grew, including to his legalistic code, Midrash Torah, actually ceased because

Dominicans were making life so tough, you see - and the French expelled many Jews in 1306."

"Just after five past one," I said.

"It wasn't funny. Gersonides was another Aristotelian writer. He was from Provence."

"Wasn't Maimonides from France?"

"No, Cordova, moved to Cairo. Gersonides said God gave the clever people magical dreams and prophecy. God didn't know everything, only what was determined by heavenly bodies but he did not know individual choices. But you can give God positive attributes where we are in the image of God, see.

"This, however, doesn't help us today, or you. By the end of the 1400s the Greek philosophical effort was over in favour of the more mystical. Abarbanel lived 'til 1508 and said you cannot make an analogy between Torah religion and science: the Torah then gets treated equally. And that was that."

"So I'd find Maimonides more useful."

"Yes, and many still do. But now we skip to the present. Would you like an ice cream from that van? We'll get it and pause. My brain hurts. Sit over there."

Having taken my first lick I said, "All these names. How come you are called Neptune? It's not very Jewish."

"The family name was Ostrowski, and my male ancestors left Poland to come to Britain. Ostrowski means 'water meadow' or 'island', but from there we came across land and sea, and the god of the deep sea is Neptune and the discovery of the planet Neptune wasn't long before, plus Neptune was discovered by calculation before observation."

"There's some lateral thinking going on there," I said.

"My name helps when I am perhaps more multicultural, you might say. And your maiden name?"

"Bode. Bee oh dee ee."

"A warning of a particular outcome. Are you a prophet?"

"Could be." With more licks I stated, "You are unmarried."

"Still looking. But enjoying something different - that group. Hah! Even as a rabbi. Who'd have thought it. Can you ever see yourself not being a priest?"

"Well, I am now."

"You don't believe in ontological difference, do you? You didn't become sacred at the point of the ritual?"

"Not if you put it that way. Nah."

"So if you didn't get another job, after being a curate, you would just be a knowledgeable theologian. But the Vanguard bishops want you for your sacramental qualities."

"All I've ever done to earn a crust is farm work."

"Be a rabbi's wife. Be a rebbetzin - in Hebrew it's rabbanit. It's often said a rebbetzin's quality is a pointer to the rabbi himself, and you would be."

Sat next to him, I looked at him, and I thought about smiling, even laughing. He wasn't. "Oh come on! You flatter me."

"Let me tell you about another Jew in the German Enlightenment - who's one for the numbers - when biblical criticism was arising in those competitive universities of the Lander. People forget: Germany was so progressive and was ruined by its misapplied romanticist myths"

"Our romanticism was, what, Wordsworth and daffodils..."

"1832 and Geiger was editor of *The Scientific Study of Judaism*, and he was convinced that, with practices but without dogma, Judaism was far more open to modern interpretation than Christianity."

"Did Geiger counter dogma?"

"Linda!"

"Was Judaism more open?" I asked.

"Yes. We evolved the institutions to cope."

"Surely I should be a rabbi not a rabbi's wife," I suggested.

"Oh indeed. You can learn Judaism: I'm introducing it to you, you see."

"You are chucking me in the deep end, more like. If I recall ten per cent of this..."

"I am solving your belief dilemma! And then *you can convert!* Go through the mikveh and then call upon God and give your commitment. We have a handful of Reformist and a few Liberal Jews in Serninsea, then a number in Wytham, but many there are in Cambridge."

"Go on with your theology later, when we walk further," I told him. "I'm not getting indigestion from the ice cream."

"You are tempted?"

"Sit and lick, Rabbi Maurice, for now."

The ice cream consumption continued.

When we did walk further he said, "The Reformist Jew must be intensively trained and understand the tradition. We are not just wishy-washy but are like the Pharisees - debating from scripture and tradition. Like: what does the tradition say about something, how can I *realise* it, what does my conscience say, and what is my responsibility back to the community? So our Reformists are like the American Conservatives, and our Liberals are like the American Reformists Two minutes past seven, the Liberal started, two minutes past eight changed its name to Liberal Judaism simply. It is the ethical above ritual, and has a lot to do with equality."

"1902, 2002" I said, translating from his memory method.

"And yet we are all struggling, like you, with belief, when so much seems so different now, but also because six million Jews died and either God was useless to intervene, or was barbaric and chose not to intervene, or was slow to act, or God doesn't exist at all. How can he exist?"

"Yes. The supernatural has died with me too," I said, "if it was ever alive. It was born on life support and never flourished. The Church lets you go 'bleep bleep' and doesn't let the corpse rest. But, Rabbi Maurice, you are contradicting yourself. You can have a crisis of belief."

"You see, a mad supernatural theology says that Hitler was a divine agent and six million were the suffering servants to purify the future. But is the future purified: is it any less racist? What happened in Serbia? What happens in North Korea, Syria, Iraq, Iran, in Crimea, let alone Europe? Indeed, for so many, why is Israel misbehaving?"

"Quite. I wasn't sure what to say about that with you. If you want to build a high wall you build it just inside your own plot, not through next door's and next door again."

"I agree. So another theology is it's all part of the intended pattern, that the West is better, as a result, and Jews live well now. Maybaum, this is. They live better

in Eastern Europe, even in Russia where attitudes are sneering. And we have survived: we are witnesses to the fact that Hitler did not succeed. And Israel has come about, in difficulty. Fackenheim, this is. Or there is no answer: God was hidden, God was present, and it is mysterious; it's very dark, beyond understanding, but you have faith, says Berkovits. Or it is goodbye to the God of history, past and future, intervening and present. Joy is now, be more Pagan, and there is a divine Nothing at the heart of it all - just a cycle of death and life for which we had death by the Nazis and rebirth in Israel. So says Richard Rubinstein. So take the latter - a bit of magic, a bit of ritual, a cycle of life."

"I do that, yes I can do that."

"Try a theologian like Mordecai Kaplan."

"This is trying..."

"We look for improvement in this world; we get truth from science; and our values come from ourselves, and then biblical criticism shows the origins of Judaism are just a human construction. God has not revealed the path ahead to his chosen people; instead we have human authors reflecting an internal history. So God does not act in history, the Torah isn't immutable, and the foundation has gone from under rabbinical thought. But God as the will to live is important. Judaism is the community's self-consciousness, not unlike how Emile Durkheim had it."

"Yeah."

"Judaism is a culturally rich formation - social, ethical, aesthetic - a sancta. It's like a life. Kaplan's views, and with his son in law Ira Eisenstein, have led to Reconstructionism, but we include some of those views. In fact Reconstructionists move on as they are bound to do, with the consensual view that Jewish laws are the non-binding customs of a civilisation. Heschel was another same time modern theologian who said look at what forms faith, generates its need, within the real. Like the nature we see here."

I said, "This is so resourceful."

He said, "These crises of belief are within Judaism. I am indeed helping you. Why? I am being a rabbi, a teacher. You could be a rabbi, and a rebbetzin, see. I will say no more. Either we have lost the supernatural or the supernatural has brought you alongside me."

"So many things to do, this God," I said. "Very busy; receives lots of equivalent emails and plenty of spam."

We walked further and with the contrast of little being said. There was quite a while of silent walking, and we approached the tramline.

I said, "This is such a transformation from heritage into a tramline for the folk in the towns. See, transformation is possible," I exclaimed. "It would be different if it ran along the sea fronts, but it doesn't."

He said, "You know, we both enjoyed our gassing away together. We are both gas giants," he added.

It took a few seconds for me to get the joke regarding our names, and then I thought very negatively. "The joke is too insensitive."

"Ah, yes; humour is like theology: it can be very dangerous. It has unintended consequences and references. Gallows humour at best. Come into my car."

The Rabbi Overnight (Wednesday & Thursday 18th July)

Maurice drove me to Ingle Barrow.

Helen McPhail let us in. Stephen appeared and hoped that I understood the purpose of my encounter with Archie Holborn. I just passed it off with a gesture.

He said, "I knew you'd be fine over it, and that's the point. In the Vanguard, we have to be tough. We put ourselves at risk." He left the room.

Meanwhile, Helen, demonstrably wearing a skirt and no knickers - she lifted it up - told me that her period was nearly over. She asked me if I could tell her when mine was due, and I said I could not.

"You're not going through early menopause are you?"

"I should think not," I said.

"And thank you for your doorstep present, which we scooped, but you seem better now."

"It wasn't actually on the doorstep," I said. "And you told me to go in the garden."

Helen said, "Go *into* the garden, not 'go' in the garden."

Helen showed us our room, with a double bed and a nearby exclusive bathroom. She said, "No time like the present."

So I evacuated indoors this time, and did a brief wash, and got into bed first. Maurice went into the bathroom. He returned, naked, and I realised I hadn't encountered any circumcised penises before. The duvet cover was low.

He got into bed, and said to very directly that if I was to consider becoming his wife, he would claim many personal relationship confidentialities between us. "Furthermore, if you became a rabbi, then they could not use you as a priest."

I said, "They would regard my ontological status as fixed; I would still be eligible to carry out sacramental acts. There could be a conflict here."

He said, "If such a conflict arose, I would be on *our* side, and we would both leave."

"I can't leave," I said, although wondering about getting out.

"What they say, and what they are able to actually do, are very different. Witness Christine: as a deacon she should have obeyed, even without such an intensive connection as between bishop and priest. But she didn't, and as a resourceful woman they cannot touch her. I am resourceful too, and you would be, and we would decide."

With this there was a knock at the door, and in came Helen with nothing but a see-through nightie on. "I mentored Maurice," she told me, and got into bed, regardless that I was in it. So her hand strayed to me as she brazenly just climbed aboard him, and of course Maurice accepted her immediate offer. "Won't be long, Linda."

Maurice said, "And I thought Annie Fenwick might have joined me. I mentored her: she stayed with me in Wytham for over a week. She is often online, seen on Goosechat."

"She is here. She is with Stephen," said Helen, rising and falling. "But I'm not missing out."

"How old is Annie?" I asked, like a gooseberry.

"Nineteen," said Maurice, slightly breathless. "Do you mind if she comes in between us, Linda?"

"Oh, the more the merrier," I said, with an irony they did not hear.

"When she has finished with Stephen," said Helen, who was aiming to finish with Maurice in the time-honoured way that might deprive me.

"You'll like her," said Maurice. "She was head girl, and one of the few in the school who studied RE with any persistent dedication. She too rejected Augustinian theology, when she learnt all about it in her A level. She studied Spanish too, but I think she had time in Spain as a young child, so it was an easy A level for her."

It wasn't long before this lass entered the room to claim her mentor again, obliging Helen to get off before their orgasms. Thus Helen asked me to finish her off, and came round the bed. What was I to do? I stretched out my right arm and used my fingers and finished Helen with her God exclamation. Annie Fenwick was taking in the rabbi orally. I'd never seen anything like it. And, then to add to it, Stephen was at the open door leaning and looking in and soft, presumably because he did orgasm earlier. Helen bent over to kiss me, which I accepted with my arm around her back. She then joined her husband, and the bed contained three.

And three it would stay, because the young woman, once she had taken in what Maurice had to give her, lay in between us to sleep, giving me direct contact with her lovely curves and early development still.

"Stroke her," said Maurice.

Yet I felt quite uncomfortable about this. My time of discovery was at a similar age to this young woman. Annie muttered that she had slept with my husband several times. She was sure that people I knew saw her online, mainly to watch her masturbate and perhaps join in.

But she was a bright girl, because when I muttered about Aquinas again, in a wordplay, saying, "Annie, I acquired an enquiry about Aquinas earlier on," the teenager quittedly mentioned Saadia Gaon, who died, she said, two minutes after twenty to ten.

The rabbi said, "Oh yes, I didn't mention him to Linda. He was influenced by the Islamic Kalam school, who argued that Greek philosophy and therefore rational argument aided religious argument. Faith and reason are fully compatible. Descriptions of God were implications of God acting in the world rather than God's attributes."

"Are you still awake?" I joked with the rabbi.

"Or take the interesting suggestion that for time to flow means it must have a beginning. The soul doesn't start before the body nor enter from outside but functions within the body: within its faculties of reason, spirit and desire. This is so this-worldly, so Aristotelian, and is fresh to the moment."

"You're like that battery bunny going on and on."

"Annie," he said, "Linda is telling me to be quiet. You never told me to be quiet. Oh, she is very quiet, Linda."

I thought, all these folks under this Confraternity are somewhat odd. I liked Maurice, but he was very intense. The teenager's efforts with Stephen and Maurice had exhausted her, but her warm presence between us lost me a chance of sexual contact with Maurice. I did not want to climb over her, or go around her, or start making movements to disturb her.

I said to him, quietly, "Your knowledge is so much, so detailed; how did that work as a banker?"

"Ah, I knew the ins and outs and knowledge is not only power but the ability to

beat the competition."

In the morning, this young woman was feeling my breasts and moving her hands all over; she had become completely sexualised. It seemed wrong.

When I was a teenager I would often enjoy going around the farm, or the club, naked. But it meant nothing to me. I was aware of bodies and intimacies, but I was one of those who just viewed nudity as other people viewed clothes. Long penises or stubby penises didn't get a second glance from me, and it was why, in my case, sexual development was rather late. I know it worked both ways, like some of the teens at the club were at it early. My love revolution was with Jenny, because I discovered largely unreciprocated feelings towards her, whereas my sexual revolution was with Keith. He took me apart and put me back together again.

But now I had a teenager crawling all over me, with a man older than me alongside her, and I'd been with Martin, Stephen, Helen, Adam, Christine, Gretta and Keith in recent times, and Jonathan earlier on. I was myself becoming sexualised. Martin had performed a conundrum in my head of a consented rape. And I did hold on to Annie when I realised that Maurice was now humping his way into her from behind her. I was being acclimatised into multiple present sex partners, rather than a different one in serial fashion. I knew that the group also held meetings and parties.

We were in states of undress or semi-undress at breakfast: Stephen, Helen, Maurice, Annie and me.

I told Maurice, in a moment exclusively together, that it must be him and me only next time. The fact was I'd had an emotional response to him, rather as I had to Christine. I didn't to Helen and I didn't to Annie. I had not seen Jonathan in this mentoring period, and I just wondered if I would fall for him again or want to kick him in the testicles. Anyhow, breakfast was the end to proceedings, and no doubt Stephen would report to the bishops.

Stephen said, before we dressed and left, "The bishops want progress, so the night and morning were a small clue as to the Fifth Guidance. You should make sure you receive and give orgasms, which is the Sixth Guidance. The Eighth Guidance is complaints and concerns. At the moment these come through me, and you'd mentioned Laura Kingswood properly. After all your mentoring, you should approach the bishops if something isn't resolved directly, but you need to show sense as to when to raise a concern among everyone at a meeting. The answer is: the more general a concern, the more it is policy, the more you raise it at a meeting; personal and direct matters should be more confidential. And this leaves us next time to discuss the Seventh Guidance, about what to expect at initiation, because we need to move you forward."

"I thought Helen menstruating on top of my face before was about the Seventh Guidance."

"They cross over," said Stephen.

Instead of going back to town I went to a nearby dyke, stripped off and swam maybe five hundred yards one way and five hundred the other. Shielded by the walls of the dyke, I lay on the grass bank to wonder just what was happening to me.

I put my clothes back on and went to the car and then went north to visit the declining Mr. Youell, and I think Mrs. Youell preferred the fact that I was in mufti and not the cassock.

Following Barman (Thursday 18th July)

The ambiguity in my own position was heightened while being the one passenger in Adam's car at 6 pm travelling to Caffernmere. I told him that almost certainly Janet Hayes was in the group, and thus she could well have left the message. I also gave him information that should have been confined to the group, that she was mentored by Stephen McPhail, being before and after initiation. Adam knew that Stephen was a plumber and organiser of plumbers.

"Helen McPhail mentored the rabbi; the rabbi mentored a school leaver. Something else, too..."

"What?"

"In the course of my investigations, I've turned into a complete slut."

"And what other findings have come from your investigations?"

"The rabbi involved is so full of theological and historical thoughts he's like a machine gun of information and clogs me up."

"That way."

"At present."

"Fortunately, I like you, Linda, and Ann approves. Ann is my more important relationship; obviously I can't have a fulfilling relationship with her."

"I wouldn't want to break your bond with Ann. Look, I'm used to coming second best. I was second best to my sister, as far as my dad was concerned; I was and am second best to Keith, especially when it came to Cheryl; I was second best when it came to seeking ordination, and I am second best with you. So it is consistent."

We stopped near the bishop's house. Adam suggested that I wear some spectacles of his. They had flat lenses, like they used to use in some television dramas. I added a flat cap, also supplied by his truly.

"By the way," I said, "if Yootha Ann, your daughter in law, wants to see Mr. Yannis Youell, she'd better get up here fast. He is not well at all."

"I'll tell her and my wife. I'll do it on my phone now."

"By the way, does Peter know what he is doing?"

"Our lad brings complementary skills. His teenage and since interest in magic makes him good at the job. Because he can do all sorts of magic tricks, he notices what I don't notice."

"How does your lad, as you call him, stay unnoticed?" I asked.

"I'm teaching him all the tricks of the trade. It's good fun. So he learns how my illusions are done. He won't tell me his! If he gets the opportunity to set things up, he can leave people mystified. Where he's best is encountering people and getting information from them."

"Gretta Cox-Jenkins can do that."

"He did a magic display and told me my credit card details and I had the card on me."

"Look after it more carefully."

"One rule we share is put things back and leave as little trace as possible."

"I've spent too much of my working time distinguishing between the supernatural and the magical," I said, becoming a philosophical theologian again.

"Hardly relevant. He can hustle. He knows about prime numbers and semi-

primes, and coding, and strategies to get into online biographies. He does have a maths brain and gets percentages. He has won some online gambling but says you have to give it full concentration and take the rough with the smooth. Which is why he has stopped it now."

"Employ him properly, then, as I've said."

"I know, but he presently costs next to nothing."

"That's what's wrong," I said.

"I'm sure we will employ him," Adam said, "in that he's adding to our efficiency and capability."

"Who is we?"

"Me. Ann."

"Isn't it Ann and Labhaoise?"

"Yes but Ann is in the driving seat. Right, just a second, for Agota..."

Mr Youell is dying. If you want to visit, come now. I would like to see you and mother.

Sent!"

We sat and viewed the bishop's house. "What are we expecting?" I asked.

"Him to drive somewhere. Take us there."

We waited.

Adam said, "Hang on, a call. Hello Kathryn. Oh, you two are in separate cars. If you follow, turn off at some point and let Peter take over and he'll suggest where you can follow next. No one has come out yet here. Bye. Thing is, Linda, Kathryn dislikes your bishop for being involved in this matter of the Serninsea Cross brooch and he has not had it checked out."

"Have you ever thought that Kathryn Wickenby could be passing things to her uncle?"

"I rely on it. It's long been known as 'chickenfeed'."

"And you get the Crown Jewels back?"

"Nah. Sometimes you do have to tell someone you are doing something, to stimulate some kind of response. Of course in conditions of necessary secrecy, you hold back. Some chickenfeed is for deflection purposes, but you have to be careful."

"Presumably some chickenfeed turns out to be good."

"Especially at first."

"Isn't Peter trying to go out with Kathryn?"

"It gets better: they've an item. Hang on. Here we go. That's his car coming out. It's a 2006 Lexus LS430."

"Are we following him then?"

"Yep. We need to get an idea where he is going. We may have to guess at times."

I rang Kathryn: "The bishop is driving off. We are going to try and follow and also guess where he is going." Then I rang Peter. "Oh, she's just told you. That was quick. Oh, you both have hands-off."

Adam said, "You are my hands off."

Along the way, the bishop turned at a junction.

Adam said, "I reckon that's the Titansea route. So we'll go up here now and try and reconnect later."

I rang Peter. "Titansea, we think. Where would that be, precisely?"

Adam said out loud, "Hotel? Wilkinson's Casino? Some club? Misleading?"

Peter said by phone, "Could be," and he rang off.

A very quick call came from Kathryn to me. I said to Adam, "Jim and Connie Wilson have driven off. Peter and Kathryn are working in formation."

"That's right," said Adam. "If we miss the bishop, they should stick with the Wilsons and then the bishop comes to them. We'll go a different route. Do you find this exciting?" Adam asked.

"It has its compensations, if not enough for me as a self-declared slut."

Along the way via various roads we did indeed spot the bishop again. So back to Peter. "I'm to tell you we're back behind John Barman's silver Lexus. Oh, Adam has turned off."

"Let's see."

After some time we saw him in front. I said, "Hang on, he's stopping. Oh, you are turning off."

"That's the casino. We'll go up this avenue and face the wrong way."

Then a call came from Peter to confirm that the Wilsons had arrived behind us in a white Astra. Kathryn only had a direct view when driving past.

A car arrived in front as I found some bottled water in the passenger car door. Peter was the driver. He came to Adam's window.

"Yes?"

"Kathryn turned around; she says they've gone upstairs, the staircase going directly up from the first outside steel door in the dead-end passageway with wheelie bins at the end. She says two others have gone in, so there are five up there. The blinds were already down."

"Get in," Adam said.

"No, I'll go and look. I want to check out those steel doors. I think there is a way along below those upstairs windows."

Adam moved and reversed the car's direction so that some car lengths behind Peter's car we had some view ahead and grass to the side. The upper floor was about visible but the blinds down blocked looking in. We could see Peter and Kathryn (in a headscarf and long coat) meeting alongside the side of casino building and walking off to her car.

After some half an hour I joked, "Presumably not a church meeting up there."

"Exactly: why not in the Wilsons' vicarage? If the police ever went above the casino they'd have a hell of a job knocking the door down. Is that why?"

"There was a drug dealer's house on the little Titansea residential estate like that," I recalled. "I've seen the doors there."

"Exactly," Adam said again.

"Who owns the property?" I wondered. "A lot of the property is church owned. All sorts of rents come in from them. But bishops don't collect rent," I added.

Kathryn walked this way and got in the back. She said, "So there is the far steel door for the casino downstairs, which is shut tonight, and they've locked themselves in for upstairs. I wonder if they have the Serninsea Cross brooch up there. Uncle George says imagination must accompany observation to open the options and get explanations."

"What do you imagine?" asked Adam. "Nothing to your Uncle George about this."

"Kathleen is at home keeping her eye on him: he thinks I'm seeing my new boyfriend."

"And?" he asked again.

"It's where they keep the thing. Peter says all the cameras are for the casino."

"Once we're satisfied they've all finished, we'll meet at Linda's."

"How are you getting on with this group, Linda?" Kathryn asked.

Adam replied for me. "She says she's turning into a slut."

"So it is like that?"

I replied, "Yes it is."

"Byeeee," she said, getting out. She got into Peter's car in front and drove it past the casino to the left (east).

We carried on sitting as the five up there clocked up nearly an hour and a half.

I didn't know where Adam went for a pee, and I was beginning to need one. Little drinks of water were adding to the total.

Back in he said, "There's nowhere for you to pee, and it was a bit dodgy me doing it. But I've a bottle for those purposes, and a funnel. Look in there."

This was fun for him. I unclipped and pushed down my trousers, placed the funnel in the bottle, and then peed into the funnel. He had another empty water bottle in a back door for the amount I was pissing and handed it to me.

As I changed bottles, Adam suddenly said, "Here we go. They are coming out. The five of them."

I said, pissing, "I know who those other two are, even at this distance. Stephen and Helen McPhail. The point is, Janet Hayes has written against her own mentor."

"Well done, Dr. Watson. Any clues in their house why the McPhails would be involved? About the brooch?"

"Now I think about it: he has a forge half way down his garden and she does jewellery."

"Well done, again, Dr. Watson. Could have told me that earlier."

With that he'd had enough and Adam drove towards my house as I restored my trousers. Then I realised: Keith! Keith would give our game away, and given that I was being mentored that would be bad. So all three cars in communication did a turnaround and we went to Peter's father's house instead, in Inglemire.

The upshot at Inglemire was that Kathryn decided that she and her sister would talk in a concealed manner about the Serninsea Cross brooch to Janet Hayes, the next time they all met, but we considered that the five had met before approaching news media about the brooch.

I said to Adam, in my car, to return to my house: "How can I fit Mary Ann and Yootha Ann in the small bedroom? Keith is in the second bedroom, unless he moved to the third one temporarily."

"Mary Ann could stay at my place."

"With you? You with your wife? Surely not. It's not fair that Colin Cromer has five bedrooms."

Adam said. "Mary might tidy up the room for me, though I rather think Ann and Labhaoise will tidy it before she arrives."

"Why don't you wash your sodding duvet and sheets for once? I mean, I might like to shag you in your bed at times."

"Get Keith to move bedroom. It is your house."

"It's the Church's house and perhaps Keith has more influence about who goes in it than I do."

"The wonders of your group," said Adam.

"I'm now worried about this former Head Girl: I know she's nineteen but she strikes me as young."

"She is active on Goosechat and a certain Christine Vine owns Goosechat. Annie can look after herself."

"I see."

Back at home and, after visiting the khasi, I was in the kitchen when Adam joined Keith in the lounge. I overheard Adam say that we'd been to the woods. Adam soon came through to me and discovered that I had undressed. I asked him, "What did we achieve this evening?"

"Dogging!" Adam said out loud. More quietly, he said, "They meet above the casino - some of the time. So we need to find out what is there, who else uses it, why they used it, and what else they might be keeping in there given the ready security."

"Actually I could wash these clothes I've just removed. My trousers seem damp. I think I pissed on them when I changed bottles."

So I set the washing machine going, especially with tell-tale smears on them needing the scrubbing brush.

We went through to the lounge, so that I was among two clothed men.

Adam acquired my tablet, and in a few minutes he said, "Linda, come close."

I said to Adam, "Come on lover boy, get them off."

Keith glanced across, so far only watching television.

Adam had a female face on my tablet, starting to talk to him. Keith turned down the television sound.

"Come closer," Adam said to me. "Mirela, this is Linda. The Reverend Linda."

"Oh, hello," said this Mary, or Mary Ann. "Reverend Linda: I think I can see more than I should."

"Hold it up further, Adam. Hello Mary Ann," adding her middle name.

"Ah," she said, "You've been talking about me, Adam. Yes, well, Yootha Ann is travelling early tomorrow via Wytham and she'll be in touch about arriving. How bad is Mr. Youell?"

"I have visited him a number of times," I said. "It's not good."

Adam said, "So I might see you soon as well?"

"I cannot come up the same time as Agota. What's your address?"

"It's not mine. Staying with Linda," he said.

So I gave Mary Ann my address, to pass it directly to Yootha Ann, saying, "Looking forward to putting her up."

"I'll see you then, Mirela," said Adam.

Mary Ann said, "Linda, look after Adam for me."

I said, "Okay," but then wondered what she meant by 'for me'. So as the screen was blank I said, "For her?"

Keith grinned, restoring the television sound.

"Oh, she is just being pleasant," said Adam.

"I thought Ann ran your life."

"I *am* married."

"First of all, I'm not looking after you, and secondly I'm not her representative."

And as for coming second in things, it seems here I come third."

Adam smiled, and said, "Don't forget Labhaoise," which caused me to turn on him and smother his head with my breasts.

Keith called across, "Don't break your tablet!"

Narrator: Adam *Christine Starts Her Collaboration* (Friday 19th July)

What Linda did not know was the day after we received the note from the identified Janet Hayes, I received a posted letter from Urania House, Hammersmith, London. *Personal and Strictly Confidential*, it was marked, which meant that Peter had not opened it. It gave me a number by which to leave a message, a message of a preferred location and time.

How risk averse was she, because she might have to say risky things? I wanted to test her mettle. So I chose a meeting point two hundred yards to the side of the back of the bishop's Caffenmere garden, the garden where Linda and I had toileted previously. I did not tell her it was the back of his garden, but insisted on the direction of arrival (not to cross the garden). He had a camera there, but I'd since worked out where it was pointing.

So I spoke to Peter and asked if we could use his father's house, in Inglemire. We were aware that this could be a fake contact, a set-up to distract. Having seen Christine Vine walk past the office's street-facing CCTV, I was reminded what she looked like.

I arrived beyond the garden end and did a three point turn in the road. Her car arrived. So she was the genuine person. She herself insisted on a diversionary journey away as she did not want to drive past the end of his garden.

So, with her own three point turn, she followed my car get to Peter's father's Inglemire house.

"Where are we?" she asked.

"Inglemire."

"Yes, I know that. Whose house?"

"My assistant's father's."

Peter welcomed us in, and his father arranged drinks with a spare room downstairs. I had already briefed Peter on the questions I wanted to ask, and he suggested a few as well. She had come by helicopter, no less, from Ebbsfleet to Eslaforde, and driven many miles to the rendezvous and this destination.

With drinks ready, I was sat at one side of a card table and Christine at the other. Peter was sat on a settee recording the conversation, but I also had a pad of paper and a pen.

I said, "Christine. Thank you for asking to speak to me at a location of my choice. Tell me what you want to talk to me about."

"I want to tell you about a group called The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players. It is a cover name for, currently, one of three groups of people all of whom come under something called a Confraternity. The full name is the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the English National Church and in Latin it is *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Anglican Nationalabus*. I think you already know something about this group, because you

were investigating it to some extent while Linda Jupitas was being targetted for probable membership. And on this I want to give a condition of mine and I think an extension of that condition will flow from this."

"I am not investigating, but Linda Jupitas has been, and she obviously communicates with me. I know about the badges, some of those involved, and I know it is a secretive and ritualistic group, and learnt something about you and the pre-ordination retreat, and you not getting ordained, and that it involves beliefs about sex and practising sex. You want to tell me its secrets? You have conditions?"

"Yes. You must persuade Linda to get out. This demand is related to her historical friendship with Jenny World. Jenny is vulnerable, which is why she is still a curate, treated as a daughter or little sister by her priest in Hartlepool called Fatima Tammuz. Fatima would give Jenny up if someone else monitored her condition, but so far the relief that Elizabeth Huett provides is occasional. Liz is busy and also not based in the same town."

"Linda, for your information, is *already* conflicted. She looked strained yesterday evening. Did you send the note about the Serninsea Cross brooch?"

"I said she could put 'From C' to help disguise her as the source."

"Janet Hayes."

"Yes. I came past your place but she put it in the recycle bin. Janet is falling out with them, withdrawing. It's an ethical issue. I want Linda to do the same."

"Why don't you ask her?" I asked.

"Because I want you as her lover, her friend, someone she trusts, to give her this recommendation."

"You did meet her."

"I kept to a secular role script. Is Linda committed to joining this Confraternity group?"

"Linda wants to make her own discoveries. When she was ordained, she got a kind of excitement bug based around the opportunity the group offered, to actually make a difference, set against relative failure in her parish ministry. You had a lot to do with this. She has said all this to me. But she is worried about the treatment of some young and vulnerable people. Annie as 'Headgirl' online isn't vulnerable."

"Annie is a gifted person who has been wasted, despite teacher efforts; she had a bad home life. Jenny World has turned into an unstable nymphomaniac and Laura Kingswood is deeply troubled through a succession of bad experiences. She is my tenant so I still have some influence. My purchase over Annie Fenwick is limited to her webcam work and her obeying the rules. It's a very moderate site, much unlike me."

"Lovely lass."

"I know you feed the meter with Annie."

"Between her legs for me. Fabulous. She just is. But, to the point: you got out after encouraging Linda to go in."

"She's tough. They've got that right, at least."

"Maybe. Why did you leave?"

"Differences. I'll come to these. I thought I would always have Jonathan Eyre on my side, but he sided with his longer term pal, Barman. And Liz had her affair with Barman - though he and Liz are single. May I go through what I want to tell you? My comments categorise under emergence, organisation, purpose, personnel."

"Sure. Please."

She explained that the groups had their origin from a series of connections. Jonathan Eyre was in a shell of a marriage, when women became notches on a post. This included some dreamy-eyed and perhaps ambitious clergywomen, and so many women became pregnant it was amazing that he wasn't exposed. Christine was one of his lay captures, although she gave him her thoughts about sacramental ministry.

Peter said, "It's amazing what people don't take in when they look but do not see."

"Maybe," she said, "but he brought together all sorts of streams in my mind. When Jonathan Eyre fucked me, it was like everything had come together. Jonathan had me in the palm of his hand, but I realised this and tried to turn this around - my stances in exchange for sex."

Added to her ideas was the core insight from John Barman's conference affair with Liz Huett.

"Not only did I agree about the orgasm, but realised sex could pay me a living to carry out ministry. I also have a view about pain as commitment. Jonathan had connections into the escorting world via some business people. That's what got me clients and self-management."

"I was introduced to the property market at Serninsea. Directed towards ordained ministry, I located my church base at Wheaton north of Eslaforde and thus became its curate as a deacon. I read a lot of material and could see how to draw together authority and purpose. I read John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock..."

"*Wacky Races?*" I asked.

"She wrote much on liturgy. Graham Ward, James Smith, Stanley Hauerwas, Michael Hollerich, Georges Bataille, Randy Rashkover..."

"You're kidding."

"Matthew Fox, Sallie McFague... No? Linda will know who these are. Plus many Church Fathers, especially Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian."

She described to me Apostolic Catholicism inside the National Church, and how she wanted to overturn hundreds of years of existing views of sin. John Barman's view was simpler: if it feels good it must be good, not sinful, but she combined service and sacrifice. Whilst she had nothing against pleasure, it had to be combined with actual sacrificial service and the end that was truth.

The upshot, however, was a group of people formed a "generous Catholicism under the Church" that even included Reformist Judaism and Modernist Hinduism, where her own Body Eucharist liturgy attempts connected into an initiation service that involved the sexual transmission of fluids.

"Yojana is in management but does have an interesting grip on modernist Hinduism. Rabbi Neptune is vastly knowledgeable on Judaic thought as a tradition and as a reform. Linda could relate to him; it might suit her theology."

The group had to be secretive to be able to select and reject people before they were too aware of approaches. Christine said how priests under bishops had no choice but to join once selected; Christine had herself avoided this, but this wasn't planned.

She said, "The group won't survive expansion based on principles of pleasure; it could be unearthed with the Wytham diocese under scrutiny of its bureaucracy. You could investigate the group and add to the exposure of inefficiency."

"You inform me, and I inform the media?"

"Yes, and add what Linda and Janet has learnt."

I could see the tabloid potential here: the National Church, its people of authority - still associated with the establishment - and effective orgies, affairs, and questions of abuse. "I'll need names, but also want to try and protect the innocent, especially Jenny, Laura, even Annie. Because these things can be destructive."

"And therefore why Linda should get out."

She told me that the Serninsea Cross brooch had backfired. Barman wanted to produce a discovery of an Anglo-Saxon treasure, but the Wickenby twins had insisted on the micro-testing of it. It wasn't directly a group matter but it showed the nature of the man. It had been made by Stephen and Helen McPhail and testing would expose modern methods even when imitating old methods. The McPhails wanted to prove they could be experts, but Barman then got cold feet. "They met to resolve how to go forward, the best way to declare it a fake."

I said, "Linda is being forced to join, and yet you are telling her to get out. What's the risk - what can they do to make compulsion stick?"

"The one example is Ken Osis. He started backing out, but he faced some of the equipment made by Stephen, as used by Connie and Jim Wilson. The Wilsons are sadists, and Barman uses Connie's assertive nature even in administration. Nothing happened because he folded. It may be that Linda has to seek sanctuary somewhere, while exposure of the group takes place until it is destroyed."

"Did you set up this compulsion for priests?" I asked Christine.

"What I asserted was that the priest was the arms and legs of the bishop, and that is Catholic theory, and ecclesiastical in form. They've interpreted that as indivisibility, and therefore compulsion. But the answer is that the priest can resign and become 'incardinated' to another bishop. Of course the problem is the Vanguard group asserts a coup of loyalty within the National Church, so the connection to the diocesan bishop is superseded by the bishops of the Confraternity. But an individual can still resign and seek a new bishop."

"Linda has a house and a paid job. You'd force her into poverty."

"No because exposure destroys the groups and the Confraternity, and if she is out of it, she keeps her job, her house and restores, properly, her direct fealty to her Bishop of Wytham. Anyway, I have the means to see that she's all right even if everything goes pear shaped."

"So, from being loyal and dependent yourself and giving *them* fealty, you are now into destroying them completely."

"They have become corrupt," she said. "Instead of providing service, it is nothing more than a means to pleasure. Experience is never enough; unless there is sacrifice there can be no gift of service. All three bishops are simply pleasure-seeking, and the two they're getting from Wales includes a clone of Jonathan and another where she has had a long incestuous relationship with her niece. I'll give you their names as well, but they haven't joined yet and, to be honest, no one gives a toss about the Welsh Anglican Church."

So I said to Christine, "I have some news for you. My business colleague Ann, part supplier of your properties with Labhaoise, thinks Linda is on the road to destruction. It's partly why I am staying with Linda. We are wondering if we can give her a religious role within the business - we've adjusted the planning permission to include religious use for my place and next door once they are combined. We don't

know how this may come about, but she'd have a bedroom and a base to work from. Something like that."

"Might be interested in that myself - not a bedroom. I could provide her with a house. You could give us an altar table and some seats. I noticed a big double garage. Many independents put a chapel into a large shed or a garage. Gretta Cox-Jenkins once operated like that."

"She also advised Linda not to join. So I will discuss matters with Peter here now, and with Ann in particular."

Christine asked if she could stay the night, and we agreed. She needed just a bed and a room, and she'd pay for these and her breakfast. Peter's father Donald rejected payment. She didn't fancy driving back to Eslaforde or to some prostitution house in Serninsea for a room. She was probably still dodging around people and she'd come to me assuming separation from George Wickenby.

My final point was that if this involved Magellan Investigations doing some actual investigating, then there would be a fee. "On the other hand, making a dossier for the media might pay for itself via the media."

The interview ended, and Peter and I discussed the fact that we needed to build evidence to have a dossier to go to the media. I went back to Serninsea, and contacted Ann for advice. I said nothing at all to Linda about meeting Christine, when she arrived with Yootha Ann at my office.

Much later at Linda's I received a message from Peter.

Christine was naked on the landing. Her body has scars from whips and lashing. She said, 'These are from sacrifice and clients.' I proposed installing secure communications between your office and decoding terminals in London, Eslaforde, Ebbsfleet and a terraced house in Serninsea.

He was being too clever by half. I agreed, of course and then wiped the message.

Narrator: Linda *Yootha Ann and Uncle Adam* (Friday to Saturday 20th July)

Yootha Ann had said she would get the bus from Wytham station to Serninsea late afternoon, so after my Friday visiting I went to receive her at the central bus stops, standing under a bus shelter from the reducing rain. I would recognise her from being Mr Youell's worker from Rumania in the next door farm.

At the bus stops a man said, "Hello Reverend Jupitas," standing with a woman alongside. "Christopher Richardson; yes, Mrs. Jupitas. This is Karen Halsey, my girlfriend, who is a nurse already in Eslaforde. She's just arrived."

"Hello Karen. He won't tell you, I'm sure, but I was a patient when the practice nurse was examining me."

She said, "You're out shopping? We're back from Eslaforde looking for a sofa. The shops didn't quite have what we wanted. We'll try Wytham tomorrow."

"Ah," I said. "If you want one online, look up Dyfed Cadalwadr in Llanidloes. He has a website of furniture. Mention my name in the information box and he might knock off some money. He will arrange delivery - his location in Llanidloes is

irrelevant. He sources what you want, and delivers."

Karen said, "We like to see, feel..."

Christopher said, "Cad... al... wad... r."

"Dyfed is spelt 'dee wi eff ee dee'. The 'y' is like a u and the 'f' is like a v."

"Oh," he said.

"Welsh. Obviously. He is the husband of my similarly intersex sister, Lucinda, Christopher."

"Ah."

"Go to three double-ewes dot dyfedfurniture dot co dot wal and you'll get it. And I didn't have sex with him, Christopher."

"Hey?" asked Karen.

"Sorry. I gave the nurse he was with a long list of sexual partners at present," I said. "The nurse was enquiring into my sexual health, you see."

"Giving sensible advice, no doubt, and in confidence," said Karen.

"I'm sorry. Of course confidentiality goes both ways. Apologies to you too, Christopher. I should realise that the professional activity of examining my sexual organs is in a cordoned off space."

Well, that was handled well, I thought - not, as they gave pleasantries to part. Perhaps I was becoming too loose sexually.

No sooner had the pair gone that I said, "Hello Agota," choosing her original name, as our guest came out of the bus from Wytham. She dropped her bags by me under the shelter.

"I prefer Yootha Ann now," she said, after giving me kisses past each cheek. "I tell people I am British rather than coming from Erdély."

"Of course. If you remember, Adam used your native names and I still tried your British ones. Accidental, really."

Tall, but not as thin as she was before, I noticed in my more sexualised condition that she had pointy breasts pushing into her t-shirt. Her shortened brown hair was newer to my eyes.

Walking to the car, I took her on the short journey to Adam's, and she said in the car that, "I am proud of being a Magyar but I want to blend."

Peter let us in; I introduced us, and Adam and Yootha Ann gave each other one big pressing hug. *He* never did that with me. Adam told Peter he could go home. We three went upstairs, where either he had cleaned up or Ann and Labhaise had done it for him.

"Nothing has changed much here, Uncle Adam," said Yootha Ann.

'Uncle Adam?'

"But it will," said Adam. "I think I'll be coming in to quite some money soon, buying next door and doing the whole place up. How is mum?"

"When I see her she is very well. Do you still care for her?"

"I have great affection for her."

"And do you love me?"

"Yootha, I have always loved you."

(More than me, then.)

"I can sleep here in your bed."

As Peter below left the building, I started to feel queasy. I said, "At my house, Keith, my separated husband, has agreed to move into the third bedroom. You can share a double bed with your mother, when she arrives."

"Oh, thank you Linda," said Yootha Ann.

The three of us went in my car to Sutton. Once arrived, Adam took up Yootha Ann's luggage. Soon she was upstairs unpacking and he was down again. I put the kettle on for coffees.

It gave me the chance to ask Adam, "Why 'Uncle' - how old is she?"

"Thirty-five. I can hardly be called 'dad', can I?"

"No. I'll take her up to see Mr Youell," I said.

"We'll all go," he said.

I rang Eliana Youell to say we'd be coming. We'd had our coffees first, to not have any there. I noticed how hands on - literally - Adam was with Yootha Ann, sat together, touching her head and shoulders, hand down her back, mugs in hands.

Soon, we all said hello to Mrs. Youell and then Adam and I removed ourselves to the car.

"So her surname is now?"

"Aysher. A rapidly failed marriage."

Back at my house mealtime took place, and she told us plenty about Reading and Slough. However, she was still shocked at Mr Youell's physical appearance. "He was once so strong," she said. "The funeral is planned; the cancer is spreading big."

I said, "I can take it. I knew him."

"No, they are doing a Civil Celebrant," Yootha Ann told us.

"A humanist. Ah, they are getting popular."

"No, these are not humanists. They do qualification."

Adam said, "A bit like an NVQ. Sort of thing my new lad is doing outside the agency inside the scheme."

"An NVQ in private investigations?" I asked.

"No. An inappropriate Administration with ICT. It doesn't test him," Adam said.

I said to them, "Clergy are sometimes put out by the rise of civil and independent funerals. We thought funerals would hold up, unlike baptisms and marriages. Funerals were yet another God-of-the-gaps ritual: people are so secular."

So, at the meal, I said of our newcomer, "Let me ask you a question. Why Yootha Ann?" I wanted to hear it from her.

"It was choice, a television star I saw. She was funny to someone learns English. Agota wasn't an England-friendly name; you know this. I changed my names, as mum did. I call her mum now just like the English. Annabella is long-winded. György is more George, but my gone husband's name is Aysher. You live with someone and then realise."

"So do you know your dad then?" I asked.

Adam quickly said, "Linda!"

"What?" I responded.

"No, I don't know. His marriage to my mum was not long either. None of them! I was pre-school when he left. I think mum marry Adam to make an honest woman of her in UK, as you say. Though it didn't last, did it. You know why, Adam."

"I don't think we ought to go over this ancient history."

"Obviously I fear for my mother as well."

I asked, "She's got man trouble again?"

"No! It spreads fear, does not cancer? Poor Mr. Youell. Mum's only fifty-two."

"Mary Ann: I look forward to meeting her."

Keith came in from an extended work session.

I said, "Keith. This is Yootha Ann. The one for whom you've shifted bedrooms."

"I have some news," he said. "I've started showing my job to someone who is going to take my place. She's on a short contract to begin with, but she will do what I have done except for some functions."

I told him there was some food left; he joined us with greetings but then decided to go to the front room.

Sometime after tea Yootha Ann asked me, "Are you going to marry Uncle Adam?"

"Em, well, the divorce has to come through first. As you saw, my husband is still under this roof, but leaves to Felixstowe to be near his girlfriend very soon."

"How did you two meet?"

"School, but mainly university."

"No," Adam said, "she means us two."

"I was a client of his. And knew him at school."

Yootha Ann said, "That's how mum meet you, is it?"

Adam said, "Yeah, but what Linda really wanted to do was find out if her husband was having an affair. She got someone else to pay. Your mother's was a proper SMS enquiry. Obviously, I didn't get further work."

Yootha Ann said, "Do you go out with all your female clients, Uncle Adam?" And she started giggling.

He replied, "Actually, a few of them."

I said, "I look forward to hearing about some of the others."

"They depends if Ann approves," Yootha Ann added. "Uncle Adam says you go around undressed many times."

I looked at him. "Er, yes, but I'm not now."

"You are a vicar as well."

"I'm not a vicar. I'm a curate, that is under the wing of the one who is a vicar. Yes, there are times and places for everything, as the good book says."

"And you never had children."

"No."

"You two can have children. You are forty. Mum got herself pregnant when 16. She was far too young to marry but did in the village church."

"In Rumania," I said.

"Transylvania."

I tried not to giggle myself, having a vision of lots of long black coats, bats flying and the like. I couldn't resist: "Was it a gothic wedding?" Adam looked at me with a severe stare.

She said, "No it was simple chapel. Unitarian."

"What?"

"It is the simple village chapel."

"These folks seem to be following me around," I said. "Perhaps it's a message from God."

"What?" Yootha Ann asked.

"Oh I walked into one of their chapels by accident in Wytham, plus your Peter has online contact. We have creeds and things, bishops, and all sorts of clutter your Church doesn't have."

"Plus deep cultic elements," said Adam.

"We have a bishop and I was brought up learning the Catechism."

"What?" I asked. "Unitarian? That's not what they said at Wytham."

"We go back to the 1500s."

"I'm confused. Adam; you must introduce Yootha Ann to Peter properly," I said. "So 'we' means you as well as your mum."

"Of course. The population around the region is Orthodox mainly but Unitarian as well, like many in the village. My father was from outside village." Then Yootha Ann asked, "Can I ask you - if it is not too personal - do you and Uncle Adam go to bed together then?"

"Well that's a sort of, 'how personal do you want it to get?' question. So the answer is 'yes' - we do, yes."

"Because, aren't you supposed to be vicar and, you know..."

"Well, I am *not* a vicar. Yes there are all sorts of things I'm *supposed* to do to live an exemplary life."

"So you don't."

"No, I am supposed to give the appearance of an exemplary life. But we don't live exemplary lives, and it is all rather by social definition and one may as well just regard it as ridiculous."

"So you..."

"Plainly speaking, Yootha Ann: my husband fucked his girlfriend, and, after that discovery, I'm fucking Adam - Uncle Adam."

"Sorry."

"No apology needed. It's how it is."

Adam said, "Actually, that was *crudely* speaking; I am obviously Linda's revenge."

"No you are not," I said. "You are with me on your own merits, and hopefully me to you. What is more, Ann approves. Surely that matters to you."

"It does."

Yootha Ann said, "My mother. She was in your choir. She wanted a church. She decided against the Methodist church. She liked yours better. She likes to sing, doesn't she Uncle Adam?"

"Singing. Yes, my wife was involved in your church. They needed more bodies in the choir."

"This choir folded before my time," I said. "Numbers shrank. We sing from within the congregation now. You are all surprises, Adam."

Yootha Ann asked, "Just, I am wondering. Are all clergy like you then? Your boss, the vicar then, and then others..."

"Here we go," said Adam.

"No. My boss really *is* exemplary. He lives the dutiful single life. Ah, yes, so your mother was his interest. I suppose I am the really naughty one, but I keep it very quiet."

Yootha Ann said, "I've never been religious. My mum was, but not now."

"She wasn't when I knew her," said Adam.

"No, well... " said Yootha Ann, stopping herself. "Big disappointment, the choir. People."

Time ticked on further. Adam talked about showing Yootha Ann around Serninsea tomorrow. For us all, after drinks, it was time for bed. And, as established, Uncle Adam came with me. We were reading via tablets.

I chose to do some reading on Reformist Judaism. I said, "I suppose I ought to read about Yootha Ann's religious background. Do they have websites? Vampire bats, blood will tell, write some code, in HTML."

Adam looked at me. "You know, for an intelligent woman, you can say some spectacularly stupid things. Fancy asking, 'Was it a gothic wedding?' Rumanians don't come out at night and and bite," he said.

"*Christopher Leeeee.*"

Looking at a kindle, Adam said, "We did some basic preliminary research on the building."

"What building?"

"The sixties building that is the casino, with its upstairs," he answered.

"Knocking on the steel door shop."

"Is there something wrong with you tonight? It was built as a theatre, downstairs, a proscenium one - that has since gone with it being a casino. It once had a staircase behind the theatre. There used to be wings either side the proscenium and a crossover behind it all, and upstairs there was a large rehearsal space, and lots of rooms to facilitate everything. The theatre failed. The idea was to put on shows, but there weren't enough - a lack of interest - and the place didn't make enough money. The entrance was at the side like now, but just one and a staircase there. Now we see two outer doors, separated, so the upstairs is a large space and a few rooms behind still. The building is church owned."

"That explains the language of stagecraft and our bishop in the control booth and all that crap."

"Oh yes. The source of the metaphor."

"Yes," I said. "I need a pee."

After pissing. I came out of the bathroom when Yootha Ann emerged from her room in a thin nightie. The slight curve on her body was enough, and her small breasts perhaps expanded to darkening nipples, to tell me that she was pregnant. Maybe three months or a little more. She went into the bathroom.

When afterwards I lay down with Adam, and started playing with him, I said, "She's pregnant." I was on his left, both facing the door across the room.

"I know," he said.

"You know? So Mr. and Mrs. Aysher have a new one coming along. She'll have to arrange access, then, and all that."

"Not his."

"Oh. So who's the father?"

"She doesn't know."

"I think I'd know, Adam. I usually check who is penetrating me, even these days." There was a silence. I then asked, "It isn't you, is it?"

There was a knock on the door. It was Yootha Ann, of course, stood, in the same nightie, now lit from the landing light behind her, and thus more confirmation of her pregnant female nature.

"Night night Uncle Adam."

"Come on then," he said.

A naked man got out of bed, and she swung her arms around him for a hug. And I'd thought that only Lucinda and our father had 'cuddle time'.

"Night night, Yootha Ann. Go back to bed now." He kissed her on the lips.

And off she went with a spring in her step. I decided against any sex with

Adam.

"How old is she?"

"I told you."

"And your daughter by marriage."

"I wasn't with her three or four months ago. I did *my* bit with Ann and Labhaoise."

"Okay, 'Uncle Adam'."

"She works among salespeople and, like her mum, is in administration. So her boyfriends are not even local. That's how she's kept a number of them. You're a naturist and presumably such families are on display to each other all the time. Like your dad."

"Can you not tell the difference?" I asked back.

My anxieties were confirmed when next morning there was a knock at the door, and Yootha Ann came in. She wanted to join us.

Adam said, "Come in here."

"Er..." I said.

So she popped into bed climbing over Adam and lay in between us as we half sat up.

"I can't help noticing you are having a baby," I said to her.

"Yes. I want it. I go naked like you two." And so she tossed the nightgown to float down to the floor beyond Adam.

I said, deliberately, "It is not your husband's?"

She pulled the duvet down to reveal her stomach. "No, like you, we separate. Why you have no children?"

"I can't."

"Why can't you have them?"

"I'm not made your way."

"How are you made?"

"I wasn't made with the necessary plumbing to have babies. So I have told you."

"That is sad. I am happy."

"Good," I replied.

She asked, "Are your mum and dad separated too?"

"No. They are happily together with my eldest sister and her husband, and my youngest sister, on a farm in Wales.

I could tell that Yootha Ann had placed her right leg over Adam's left leg.

"I am getting up," she said.

I was a bit concerned as how she got up and shuffled over Adam, giving him a kiss on the way. He then gave her bare bottom a light pat. Next came a complete view of her rear, because she bent right over.

Standing, turning and smiling, she said, "Good morning Uncle Adam, good morning Mrs. Curate."

When she had gone, Adam said, "Families!"

I felt like punching him in the face.

Colin's Query (Sunday Morning 21st July)

Sunday came. Mr. Yannis Youell had died Saturday afternoon. Yootha Ann was now staying until the funeral. Mary Ann was travelling up. I knew Yootha Ann wanted to attend the morning service, to see me 'perform' and to reflect her own way on Mr. Youell.

I was actually presiding in the morning and giving a sermon in the evening. But Colin Cromer wanted a word with me in the vestry before the main morning service.

"Yesterday night I received a call from a parishioner that Mr Yannis Youell had died."

"Yes, I know about him," I replied.

"Yootha Ann George has visited him several times. I understand this morning that the funeral is not to be one of ours."

"The funeral, as such, is a short ceremony in a pub taken by a Civil Celebrant when the body itself is cremated somewhat later according to the convenience of the crematorium. Her name now is Yootha Ann Aysher."

"How is this so?"

"She had a short marriage."

"Mr. and Mrs. Youell were married for decades."

"Sorry, Yootha Ann's surname."

"If you are arranging the funeral, or she is, why aren't we doing the funeral?"

"He wasn't a churchgoer. I haven't arranged anything. The younger family are very secular. They've done it."

"You did visit the family recently."

"Yes. A number of times, like Yootha Ann did once she'd arrived."

"What is going on? "

"Yootha Ann appreciated his employment."

"You seem to be well informed; I am the vicar here and it seems I am not. Why do I know nothing about this? Where is Yootha Ann staying?"

"At my house."

"For a while, then."

"Yes, a number of days."

"What is she to you?"

"I sort of befriended her. I knew she was coming here."

"What I am trying to get at, Linda, is her connection with you, let's say, *before* she was coming here."

"Can I, Colin, ask why you are so concerned?"

"Putting up people we barely know. There is plenty of accommodation in our seaside towns, as you have lectured."

"Yes, she is staying with me."

"Why?"

"There is one connection."

"Which is?" Colin asked.

"Her mother was Mary Ann George when mother came into the church choir."

"Then it is a great pity that we are not doing the funeral."

"She is not the Youells."

"No she isn't, and so I am back to my original question. The connection, Linda. Why would you put up Yootha Ann?"

"Colin, don't get like the bishop. I mean, like when he was spying on me."
"Bishop John does not spy! You are his and my curate, and I am entitled to an answer as to why this lady is being put up in our curate's house."
"Am I not entitled to privacy?"
"You are not entitled to being evasive."
"How do you know what you know now?"
"I know because a parishioner rang me about his death and Mrs. Youell mentioned Yootha Ann staying with you when I then rang Mrs. Youell this morning offering my condolences."
"Why are you asking me when you already know?"
"Because I want you to say *why*."
"Colin, there are many dying every week in this seaside town, and you take little interest in them, whether we do their funerals or not."
"I always take a great interest in the people at a funeral. Like ringing Mrs. Youell. Like when an ex-employee of theirs is staying in your house."
"Well, there you are then."
"So now I have asked you several times. Will you not answer my question?"
"It's a fluke happening, Colin. I visited the Youells' and Yootha Ann wanted to come up, and I was perhaps over-generous."
"Well I note that there is some distrust here. You are not only being evasive: you are lying."
"No, it really is a fluke. She was working at the next farm to ours."
"You are lying because this is not the complete answer. Why are you interested in this woman, Yootha Ann? Your words, please."
"Colin, why are *you* so interested in this woman, Yootha Ann?"
"I give up."
"But Colin, you are being evasive. You are not telling me why."
"Linda!"
"Colin, now I really have no idea what you are on about. I know it is a tied house but surely I have the right to decide who stays, even if I take in waifs and strays off the street. And she is hardly that."
"Is her mother, Mary Ann, coming to the funeral?"
"Yes."
"Is she also staying at your house?"
"Yes. In fact she arrives later today, but obviously she had missed out on seeing Mr Youell alive."
"Perhaps you will tell me the accommodation arrangements."
"As I have told you, I am now separated from Keith, but he still lives in the same house. For your information, Keith has already moved from the second to the third bedroom so that mother and daughter can fit into the double bed that Keith has been occupying. Does this answer your query?"
"It answers one query."
"Progress, then, Colin," I said.
"For God's sake answer why you are housing her!"
"Because she is her - Yootha Ann's - mother."
"Not *her*. You simply will not answer my simple question: 'Why is Yootha Ann staying at your house?' Answer me."
"I have told you. Either that or you think you have another answer that I

should give."

"Well, let me try this answer. Mary Ann was in our choir. Adam Magellan married her. He then lost his wife's company when she so incredibly soon gave up her SMS job and moved away. Yootha Ann is staying with you because you are living with Adam Magellan, in that house, despite my repeated warnings and despite your separated husband being in the same house. The reason *she* is staying at your curate's house is because Magellan has his feet under your table and he has already invited his adult stepdaughter to stay."

"It's a fluke."

"Not really, and it is a good job Bishop John *will* know what is going on because I will tell him."

"Colin. I'm saddened."

"And so am I. Good job that the validity of our Eucharist is not affected by the moral standing of the priest."

"Are we done?" I asked.

"For the moment, because a service needs our presence."

"Very real," I said, as I left the vestry first.

"What?" he asked, behind me, not getting the joke about 'real' and 'presence'.

Adam and Yootha Ann then came in. I waved. Colin now gave me the severest look I have ever received from him.

It put an edge on to that morning service. Who was being unworthy? Plus, Yootha Ann came forward for communion. Unitarian isn't exactly valid enough to partake. But I wasn't going to refuse her. Colin gave me one glance but he had the chalice and didn't refuse her.

Colin said no more.

Sermon & Christine's Escape (Sunday Evening 21st July)

After a Sunday afternoon of accompanying Adam and Yootha Ann at 'The Playground' amusement park and lying on a town beach, where I was hideously over-dressed, Yootha Ann decided that she wanted to come to the Evensong and hear me preach. Her mother would arrive by car into Serninsea later in the evening. (She had learnt to drive in Slough.)

Yootha Ann and her five years older stepfather arrived with some five minutes to go, as I came out of the vestry holding my sermon papers, and I noticed a certain well-dressed Christine Vine sat at the back. There were only nine others already attending.

I went to her. "Hello. What are you doing here? Come to pray?"

"I've come to warn you. I'll listen to you first."

"So pleased to meet you again; it was awkward at Andrew Walter's."

"Your training vicar is looking."

Indeed, Colin was looking from the altar table end, and when I returned he said, "I recognise her. She was the curate in the bank robbery and the news, and she was the one who failed to get ordained. What is she doing here?"

"Come to pray, I think."

Colin said, "I'm beginning to think that you think I am an idiot. I see that Adam

and his daughter in law are here again. They got away before I could speak to them this morning. I have an answer for *that*."

So he went to the back of the church, where he said hello to them both, and also to Christine, in a combined act of pastoral duplicity. It was clear that Adam had recognised Christine, which, given his lack of ability to remember faces and names briefly encountered, was rather interesting.

About ten minutes into the service, a certain John Barman came in and sat on a pew nearest the door.

I said to Colin during the second hymn "The bishop is here."

"As entitled," he said. "Make sure you give a good sermon. I've told him about Adam Magellan staying in your house, and he said he is very concerned."

I suppose, with all that was going on, and having been ordained priest, I didn't care what Colin thought or did any more. Because, of course, Barman now had me 'on board' and he knew all about Adam in my house. Barman himself might have disliked Adam, but he didn't care, so long as I was discreet.

Funnily enough my evening sermon was on pastoral care itself. Perhaps I was offering pastoral care to Yootha Ann. Although I was looking at the bishop, at Yootha Ann and Adam, and at Christine, Adam and Christine looked decidedly uncomfortable, shifting about on the pews and looking side to side and at each other.

What I said was that the word 'pastoral' can be too narrowly associated with the clerical paradigm. We are all members of one living body, and arguably one priestly office between us all. As for caring of souls, I stated that we mustn't make a mistake of spiritualising souls. "It's kidneys that rejoice in Proverbs 23:16, I told the gathered small number that chuckled. The soul thirsts and hungers for the Lord, it says in the Psalms 42:2 and 84:2a, meaning physical attributes. Indeed the central Christian rite is of eating and drinking and not something disembodied."

I thought, myself, but didn't say, that I bet the Unitarians could not match this! "Liturgy and worship should embody pastoral care," I told them, "but not be limited by it, providing its own regulative pattern.

"But if liturgy produces a set of gateways to the future, produces the new from the old, in exchange and gift, then it is clearly pastoral because the new is healthy and the old is but memory. This is more than time as a healer, or waiting as pastoral: it is a ritual act and in a sense forcing the issue through renewal in encounter.

"And it is not individual. Although individuals receive pastoral care, the care is done collectively, publically, and interactively. We become captured as one in the sacred story. And it is both ordinary and extraordinary - either the Eucharistic meal, so basic, or indeed the full Christian narrative itself of loss and death and utter renewal."

I looked at Christine, who'd said so much herself about loss via sacrifice.

"In the end, to know is not cognitive and propositional, but to know when one encounters it. And that's biblical and pastoral. Amen."

As I returned to the choir pews, Colin Cromer, clearly over-compensating, told me that this was the best sermon I'd given so far. "Positive and no self-doubt."

As the dismissal came, for me to do it, I positioned myself at a church pillar to avoid being seen by the bishop as I looked at Adam and pointed to Christine. Adam himself was pointing towards the bishop at his stomach level and shaking his head. I nodded. I saw Adam speak to Yootha Ann and I paused as *she* went over to Christine. I then did the dismissal and the organ music started.

Adam walked ahead from his seated position and stood to anticipate, even block, the bishop. Christine stood up, and she and Yootha Ann came directly down the aisle towards me. Adam then pointed to the altar end of the church, near the vestry door, turned around and left through the main door (before anyone else).

Colin said, "Yootha Ann, and Ms Vine together. How interesting. Are you coming to talk to us?"

Thinking on my feet I said, "Speak to Yootha Ann, Colin. This is Christine, who was a reverend deacon in our very own Church as you know; I'll show her the vestry if I may. Come on."

"The vestry isn't for... Sorry, Yootha Ann; I hear you are staying with my curate. Come with me to the main door where I will shake hands with departing folk."

In the vestry I unlocked and opened the external door, our own sometimes clerical way in and out. And off Christine went as Adam approached from the back gate beyond the graveyard. (The vicarage garden was to the side of the graveyard.)

"Star number palindromic base 2 and 8 St. Sernin's French road!" he shouted to me. "Star number palindromic base 2 and 8 St. Sernin's French road!"

"Yes, I've got it. Star number palindromic base 2 and 8 St. Sernin's French road."

"I'm a bishop from yesterday!" Christine called back. She and he walked directly down the grass pathway alongside the graveyard to the end gate.

As I returned to the vestry's outside door, the other bishop approached from within the vestry. I did actually stand in his way. "Bishop! So good to meet you."

He asked me, "2 and 8 St. Sernin's French Road? What does he mean? There isn't a St. Sernin's French Road!"

"Don't know Bishop John; excuse me." I went around him very slowly in the vestry.

He went down the path, but Adam and Christine had bolted.

He turned to call out at me, pausing. "I am going to do your initiation; you follow my authority!"

"Oh no you bloody won't," I said to myself. I went back among the pews and up to the front.

"What is going on?" asked Colin alongside Yootha Ann in the main church, still at the main door. Yootha Ann smiled somewhat at the spectacle.

"I think Christine decided to leave before the bishop could get to her."

"You helped her."

"Yes, he has no claim over her."

"But he has over... Anyway, Yootha Ann here says she remembers happy times with the Youells. They really looked after her. And she says I can meet her mother, with pleasure."

"She'll be arriving tonight."

"We'd better go," I said to Yootha Ann. "Ah bishop, you're back. This is Yootha Ann. Yootha Ann, this is Bishop John Barman and Bishop we two are off for something very nice to eat. Come on, can't stop. I'll disrobe at home!" I pulled her by her arm.

Colin said, "Er, goodbye, and see your mother soon! Bishop, please, what..."

"That Reverend Christine Vine," I heard the bishop say as I paused to the side of the doorway outside. "She has not given up her religious activities, and I'd hoped to ask. Being helped by Magellan and your curate, obviously."

"Come on," I then said to my lover's daughter in law.

Yootha Ann got in my car with me. "On your phone look up Star number palindromic base 2 and 8."

She said, working the Internet, "Star number 1, 37, 73, 121, 181, 253..."

"253 is too many, actually 181 will be about the last one - if it is Toulouse Road. Locals should know that the Abbey of St. Sernin or Saturnin is in Toulouse, Yootha Ann. It's why we have Toulouse Road. The bishop should work that out when he thinks a bit."

"I am looking now palindromic base 2 and 8. Er, 1001001 and 111 it says and both are 73."

So I dropped her off in Sutton and inside I disrobed and changed to mufti, quickly, before I drove to the researched destination and copied the stake-out of the other day to park a short walking distance away - in fact between number 2 and 8.

However, I could see the bishop walking about, clearly considering whether to knock on some door. So he had got the correct road. I decided to drive past him, without spectacles and flat cap this time; I didn't think he noticed me. I could not approach number 73, so I turned and drove past him again to observe and go home. He must have seen me, because it wasn't long before he called in person at the curate's house.

"Where have they gone?" he asked me as soon as I opened the door, fortunately still clothed.

"I really don't know. I was as lost as you, Bishop John, driving in the same area."

"Why did he pick her up? Your Mr. Magellan. You helped."

"No, it's very unusual for him even to come to a service bishop. Ask Colin..."

"He was there this morning. He obviously knew in advance about this evening."

"If you say so."

"You must have known Christine was coming," he said.

"No I didn't." (This much was true.) "Adam does not tell me what he does at work. I thought I would get to chat to Christine."

"You're lying. And under the Confraternity you do not lie to me."

"I'm seriously not. I did not know. But, bishop, you turned up during the service, so you must have known she was with us."

"I cut to very short an appointment at another church, when I was told. I thought I heard the word bus. So it could be bus 2 and 8, but we don't have a bus 2, 8 or 28. Toulouse Road?"

"A bush bishop, perhaps?"

"I'm telling you: don't come out. I'm going back. I'll find them. And I think Stephen McPhail needs to emphasise our requirement for your obedience."

"Oh. See you later Bishop John."

Adam's phone was off, and so was Peter's. I had some tinned salmon with salad with Yootha Ann.

She said, "Are things normally this?"

"It is a bit weird tonight."

"I think Reverend Cromer is trying to find out more about mum."

"Yes, something there that isn't quite right either."

Mary Ann arrived! Yootha Ann and I, and then Keith, welcomed her mother.

We had to explain that Adam was busy. (Keith also kept his counsel despite his group membership.) Thus I decided to go out and down to Toulouse Road, parking in a cul de sac some blocks away, regardless of the episcopal instruction.

I went to number 73 and rang the doorbell.

"It's open, come in," said a slightly metallic voice.

"Oh, hello Peter," I said when indoors.

"They came here and left immediately out the back. Ann Dromeghda acquired this house ages back. Adam then asked me how we could codify the house and I said about the special number characteristics of 73."

"So where are they?"

"They are at my dad's house in Inglemire. You see, we are almost certainly being watched. Kathryn's uncle is doing it, Sunday. George will guess you have come in and think they are here. There's a tenfoot at the back way and you can get out to Mabel Street. So specs and a hat, I think, for both of us, a bit like you had at the stakeout."

"Yes. You've got them. Good."

"We'll leave the lights on."

So I went first, and waited in an access tenfoot to Mabel Street, and then vanishing man Peter drove up and told me to get in.

"I'm parked down Thorpe Close," I said.

"He'll find that, will George. Your bishop will already know you've come into number 73. It's all about our ability to get out less noticed."

"Isn't your dad's address known?" I asked.

"Eventually." He parked in his father's drive, and I'd recognised Adam's car on the road.

In we went. Adam, Peter, Christine and myself were using Peter's dad's sitting room. I said, "Hello Christine! What a going on!"

"I didn't think he would come to the church. After all, he was supposed to be at Wilson's church in the marshes."

"Useful number 73, isn't it?" Adam said to me.

Peter said, "This is my dad, Don Marshall."

His father said, "Ms Helicopter here is good company for a middle aged geezer like me. Used that field yesterday, flew over in both directions today. What a machine!"

"Leon is the pilot, not me," said Ms Helicopter. "Having the helicopter fly over Caffenmere and Serninsea today fits in with my appearance in your church."

"You're all investigating, and out of hours," Donald said.

"Yes," I said. "Adam, how do you manage Peter's involvement like today, Sunday, on a government scheme?"

"Well, that is for me to know and anyone else to guess," said Adam.

I said, "Yootha Ann is this moment welcoming her mother, your wife."

"Oh fuck," said Adam. "We'll go soon as we can."

"Christine," I said, "what shall we talk about?"

Donald said he'd return to his programme on television and left us.

"Your service," she said.

"Really?"

"Yes."

"No, let's ask about you. That clothing is sharp," I suggested.

"It's because of aspects of my job."

"You said you are a bishop now. How does that work out?"

"Listen. I will talk about your sermon."

"I don't think you *are* a bishop."

"I am but I will talk to Adam first." Adam looked at her, and then looked at Peter looking at us.

I said, "I can wait. My training vicar: he liked my sermon tonight."

"Yes, I thought it might impress."

"I didn't do it to impress," I replied. "I tried to give it 'substance'."

"I bet you did," said Christine, "But if you examine it, was there anything actually said?"

"Yes, the soul is not disembodied."

"How is the soul either embodied or disembodied?"

"Em, well, not airy-fairy spiritualised."

"What is one and not the other?" she asked. "Nepes means soul, mostly a noun, rarely a verb. Mediated by throat, appetite and breath. Basar is flesh, as something held in common, whereas nepes is individual. But they are connected. You cannot eat the nepes - counted as blood. Body and blood, Linda."

"I don't get your complaint," I said.

"You were not talking about anything," she asserted.

"You're very sceptical," I responded. "All we've got are words."

"Think about it," she said, "where is the sacrifice in our general core ritual?"

"I was talking about inner renewal."

"You cannot have renewal without sacrifice. In your view, liturgy is only like a battery getting a top-up."

"No, it's more eternal than that."

"So why keep doing it then?"

"Because our real lives have a pattern: drinking, eating, urinating, defecating, talking, sex even. A ritual exchange is a token, representing real world life changes. Andrew Walter talked about Gestalt."

"You constantly come at this from the wrong angle."

"Well, *you* haven't lost your interest at all."

Adam had lost interest: he was looking at the ceiling; Peter was listening.

"I told you, I am now a bishop. Respond to my point! You come at this from the wrong angle."

"Circularity and renewal in ordinariness: but set against a linear faith, a line made more eternal," I answered.

"That's dualism. You always end up dualistic," Christine said. "You are trying to leap-frog across a chasm. When we have a core ritual, we ought to give a sacrificial offering."

"Isn't the point that Christ did this for us, so we do not any more?"

"Then why do it - the ritual? What is the real presence? Assuming it *is* real presence. Where is the giving? Where is the effort?"

"Turning up. Coming forward. The collection."

"Trivial," was her dismissal.

Adam then said, still looking up, "Why are we talking about this?"

"What are you suggesting?" I asked Christine.

"His body and his blood, our body and our life force. Of course it is ritualistic,

but it must involve something."

"Ritual involves useless token exchanges: Trobriand Islanders and all the Kula ring shit. Poor quality wine and a wafer are just as useful. Anyway, real presence is ridiculous," I stated.

"But here is the thing. I am deadly serious; Barman thinks it is all entertainment, all pleasure. There is no harm in pleasure, but we should do something that involves actual effort, real risk, in offering to God, recognising at some cost God's, yes, *unconditional* gift to us."

"Barman is after you," I said.

"Ah!" said Adam, "relevance!"

Christine said, "He has no jurisdiction over me. I'm taking away his pleasure trade."

Adam then said, "I don't want to be funny, Linda, but, at present, the less you know the better. Christine has already been giving me some useful information."

"That, I gathered," I said.

"I want you to play dumb and puzzled regarding Christine. Obviously don't say a word about the earlier stakeout."

Christine said, "Janet Hayes doesn't like Barman doing what he has on the Serninsea Cross brooch. They met to strategise wriggling out."

I said, "He is pressing me because I am under the Confraternity."

Christine said, "I have an alternative. I will tell Adam."

I asked, "What is it?"

"I'd rather not say, yet. But my travels and conversations and actions..."

"The helicopter yesterday?"

"Yeah. But you, Linda, do *not* get initiated into the National Church Confraternity supposed Vanguard. Get out. I am warning you. It is your real sacrifice."

Adam said, "She's right. It's now too risky for you to find information from inside the group"

I said, "Rest assured. I'm not having Barman fucking me in an initiation."

Christine said, "It was never going to be anyone else. But even if someone like Liz was going to do it: get *out*."

Adam stated: "We may need some duff notes for Kathryn or Kathleen, I suppose, in case their uncle starts getting funny. But, Peter, anyone, tell Kathryn that Christine here went to number 73 only and she's locked in. I don't want George down here."

"Chickenfeed," I said.

"Linda," Adam said, "can I have a couple of minutes with Christine alone? Go and say hello to Peter's dad."

I knew when I wasn't wanted. But I wasn't a fool. She used the helicopter yesterday, and she'd told me she was a bishop from yesterday.

Adam drove me to the north end coastal road of Sutton-on-Serninsea and then drove further northwards, leaving me to walk home a fair way under the soon reached street lights. He'd decided he could not come to my house after all. I did pass a car a street from home with some man sat in it looking at a mobile phone, but I decided to keep walking. I knew I'd have to collect my car next day. I went in to welcome Mary Ann, unable to say when Adam would be back to welcome his wife.

Adam did return late and greeted Mary Ann just as she was going to bed in a nightie. And for two well-separated, the hug was rather heavy and long. Again, he

didn't hug me like that! So why the hell were they *not* together? Surely Adam could have operated in the Thames Valley, where there was likely to have been more work as well.

Colin Criticises (Wednesday 24th July)

On Wednesday afternoon attention was paid to the funeral. It was strange because there was a direct cremation to take place in the future and the ashes ready to collect later still. No one attends at the actual cremation and it is much cheaper. This 'service' was in a local pub that Mr. and Mrs. Youell frequented. A Civil Celebrant was hired and was available very quickly. Wednesday was their traditional night in that pub but this was early.

Adam was not sure about going, but did, taking the two women, whilst I was sure about not going, and didn't. Instead, I did a short spurt of visiting, and then came back to have a walk about town (to meet and greet randomly) and end up at the inner town cafe. In came Diana and Patricia, burdened with some town shopping.

Almost straight away, Diana said, "Your fucking sad man, Ken Osis."

I asked, "What's been going on?"

Diana said, "I was at reception in the casino last night when he came in and he recognised me. My dress was low-cut and he even referred to it. I've heard earlier today in the college that he has been into the staff room with his collar on."

Patricia said, "Linda, can you help her get shot of him?"

I said, "Well, yes. I hope he is not talent scouting."

"What?" Diana asked.

"Oh, never mind. Talented women, he likes. Look, Mary Ann is with us. This Unitarian thing! So this wife of Adam was one of these in some Transylvanian village. Presumably she still is."

"Sorry?" said Patricia. "Say again!"

"I know! *Transylvania*," I said.

"No: 'Adam's wife,' you just said." Diana was smiling. Patricia continued: "You are a married clergywoman sleeping with a married man, who welcomes his marriage partner?"

"He's well and truly separated."

"They should have divorced by now," said Diana. "So they are - what? - both staying at your house?"

"Yes."

"How much trouble do you want for yourself?"

Patricia asked, "Who is Adam sleeping with?"

"Me! Mind you, Adam doesn't hug me like he hugs them. He hugs Mary Ann, who's 52, and Yootha Ann, who's 35."

Colin Cromer himself was at the window, and came in to the cafe and paused at the till to make an order.

"Shush a bit, my training vicar has just come in."

Diana asked. "Yootha? Where did she get that name from? A vampire?"

"Television. They both changed names when here. Yootha Ann George, Mary Ann George and then Magellan. Yootha married a chap surname Aysher and rapidly separated and she is now pregnant, father unknown."

"This gets better," said Patricia.

Diana said, "Actually I've done a bit of reading, some of what Adam looks at."

"Peter," I said, correcting her. "I did say."

"Suit *you*, really, this Unitarian mob."

"I got a boost by being ordained: that feeling I got. My driving force is Catholic and liberal-minded."

"Feeling? Believing?" Diana asked.

So as Colin came close I said to Diana, "Well, I still feel different, so that could be what we call pneumatology. That's in the New Testament where the Spirit makes God's life active and accessible outside God's own being. That's related to salvation. Given there is only, really, the salvation economy in the Son, in which the Father and the Spirit are actively present, then everything gets incorporated into Christ. The Father or Spirit can't be separate. You can't say what is personal isn't real. There you are."

"Very good, said Colin, sitting at the spare table alongside over the aisle.

"I don't know what the hell any of that means," said Diana.

I said, "What is personal is made super-personal through Christ the personality when the Spirit moves... Definitely not Unitarian."

"She's right," said Colin. "You need to tell Peter Marshall."

Diana said, "So the Spirit is what moves you, what you feel."

"Yep. Well..."

"*Feelings*," Diana sang to me.

"Not so. 'All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.' It's in the book - John. 'Through whom all things.' says Paul. Father and Spirit through... Yes."

Diana looked bemused. She knew that all this was for me to impress Colin.

So I added, "In the divine economy, they all share the job done, and there is no bill because it is a gift."

"Well I am in some admiration," my training vicar responded. "You are discussing theology with your friends. But in this divine economy, there is a profit account and a loss account. And, on the latter, I was at a funeral of sorts in a pub given by this so-called Civil Celebrant. It was semi-religious. I have to tell you one who is not pleased with you, and he was there too. It is Bishop John. I don't know why he was there. Keeping their distance were Adam Magellan with two of his family. His *family*, still. Wife, still, and step-daughter. The bishop did not like the way you assisted Christine Vine to run off on Sunday. She has left our Church completely. Excuse me for mentioning this, your friends, but Bishop John is not happy with your personal relationship with Adam Magellan - as I am not, I say yet again."

"Oops," said Diana.

"I may as well say it, even in present company. These recent relationships - you with Magellan, Keith your husband with an SMS employee in Harwich - all started during your marriage, Linda, and before you were priested. Bishop John says

you need to start doing what he requires, he told me."

"Oh dear," said Patricia.

I said, "Let me tell you that Keith is leaving for good, hopefully very soon. Please don't try to embarrass me in front of my friends."

"They know all this! You embarrass yourself, with your conduct unbecoming. Bishop John informs me that Connie Wilson wants to meet you again for more shopping and socialising. Why this should be important I have not a clue, but what I do know is he expects you to do it. Now, do you all know how Yootha Ann got her name?"

"From a 1970s comedy star," I said.

"Correct. She saw the comedy actress on *my* television set. I still have it on video. *Man About the House*. Why do I have it? Seeing as we are being honest on this sad day, hear me. Her mother was in our choir. I might have made a respectable woman of a Mary Ann Cromer, but she suddenly upped sticks and became Mary Ann Magellan."

"Grrr," I sort of said.

"Coming into the choir as she did, she was a relative outsider, and as such had fewer implications for a man in a position like myself. And given that Mary Ann Magellan and Yootha Ann Aysher - yes I do know - are about to arrive in this cafe, I will drink up this tea and bid you all farewell for now."

"The choir were racist towards her," I said. "She got out."

"*Rubbish*," he replied.

Off he went. So the bishop went there. About five minutes later Mary Ann, Yootha Ann and Adam did arrive at the cafe and sat at the same table over the aisle, the two women facing and Adam facing them on the same side as me. I introduced Patricia and Diana opposite me, but after offering condolences (particularly to Yootha Ann) my friends said they were going very shortly.

Mary Ann asked, "Why was your boss, your vicar, at the funeral?"

I replied, "I don't know. I didn't even know he was going."

At this point, however, my mobile phone went. It was Bishop John, the all-knowing interfering git.

"My Reverend Linda, Where are you?"

"I'm in the cafe I go in, in town, with my friends, and now joined by Mary Ann and Yootha Ann, and I know you were at the funeral because Colin Cromer has just been in here."

"So many to see together at the funeral but I decided not to follow on. I note how unco-operative you have been, Linda. Connie Wilson wants to impress upon you your obligations. But I would say, I hear you, and I don't *need* to be your initiator. We can compromise."

"Colin mentioned Connie wanting me to go shopping again."

"Indeed. Have you seen Christine Vine since she was spirited away at the church?"

Adam could obviously hear this: he shook his head.

Diana asked in a whisper, "What's he going on about?"

"No," I lied, in my answer to the bishop.

"I don't think there is any more I can say productively. God bless I suppose."

Quickly I said, "I'm not going shopping with Connie Wilson. I don't wish to see her at all."

"Oh dear," he said. "Goodbye."

He'd gone.

"Adam," I started asking, "Should I make this the point of getting out?"

"Up to you. We're building up quite a picture."

Diana said, "Curiouser." She and Patricia got up to leave.

Mary Ann said, "We will both stay only one night more, if that is all right. And then we should go homeward."

Yootha Ann said, "But I've enjoyed meeting Uncle Adam and indeed you."

"We'll all head off back to my house then," I said to them. "See you two again soon," I said, looking at Diana and Patricia.

I showed Adam a text message immediately arrived from Connie Wilson:

Shopping very soon. Do ring me to arrange the date and time tomorrow.

"You'll ring her?"

"Presumably in order to show willing?" I answered him, as Diana and Patricia left the cafe.

He said, "If you don't 'show willing', that's the break off."

Mary Ann Explains

When Mary Ann went upstairs, I had the opportunity to speak to her alone. "You can tell me to mind my own business, but there's one issue I must ask you about."

"Yes?"

I told Mary Ann to come into my bedroom and sit on my bed with me.

"Look, even as a naturist I have been a bit restrained with Yootha Ann here," I said to her. "She is Adam's step-daughter and is wandering around at night with her small bump visible under her nightie and with her nightie off. I've no problem with that. I want to ask her about her affectionate nature - this 'Uncle Adam' stuff, when he isn't."

"She is - what you say - *affectionate*."

"Aren't you worried?"

"No. She is thirty-five but immature. Too many men take advantage. Adam? No."

"So next question is, er...."

"The father?"

"Doesn't she know?"

"She does know. I work for a Slough transport company and SMS legitimates their vehicles, they call it, at the two Felixstowe branches - SMS and my employer."

"So?"

"And for Agota we found a similar job in Reading, mixing with the same transport people."

"So the father is known then."

"He lives in Felixstowe, who himself comes out to Reading and Slough on his travels."

"Hmm. So the father is known. On Adam: I think that Adam almost grieves for

you; I'm sure he really does love you."

"I am not dead. Adam: he does not know how to love. And the reason for marriage was mine; it was bad move in the church and I had to get out. And Yootha Ann became, you know, too close to Mr. Youell, so it best she got out as well. They did have affairs, Yannis and Eliana. Linda, if you want to marry, I will give you a divorce."

"I'm not married to you."

"I give him a divorce, sorry. You pick me up on language."

"You say he does not know how to love?"

"Not when I knew him. But why would he?"

"I was starting to think that he is not in love with me because he is in love with you."

"We did go to bed. Proper marriage. Consumed."

"And you left him."

"He has affection. He doesn't actually love. He joked that he was looking for woman when I had SMS business for him. I made him that woman. But he had a situation at school: a teacher he cannot escape."

"He doesn't have to see Ann."

"He likes to see them. They like to see him. Before, it was difficult and perhaps they feel guilt since. And then two girls made fun of him, horribly I think. These made him more sexual, but they took away him having a relationship. He try to have a relationship with one of them, but she went strange and dumped him he say and went to university. She went to theological college after. So she is one of your people, but not in this area."

"You know about these two, but not who they are?"

"I don't want to know. The other one went off to university and married someone afterwards. I'm sad for Adam; Adam is sad man."

"I think I do know who they are," I said.

"Maybe you do. Ann, a bad influence, is his wife, really. And he gave her and her woman children. So if you have difficulty with him, blame the teacher, the sixth formers girls."

"Oh dear. Well, em, why is Colin Cromer so concerned about you and Yootha Ann being here? It's made him a little out of character."

"I know that. I liked church life back in my village. I thought this is like a village, by the sea. You don't have Unitarian church here; you have a different catechism, but this National Church of yours looks... The word once used was 'accommodating'. So I like singing - singing a lot, you know, good Protestant traditions - and I joined in the choir. Good for English too."

"I don't get how you with a modern religion would come into our church."

"You are wrong partly. What is your parish church building - Victorian? The church where we worshipped is fortified at Dârjiu, or we say Székelyderzs; it was Roman Catholic and became Unitarian with Reformation. It is Romanesque style and Gothic, and, I know, received rib-vaulted arches, and there are carved images of a pelican with chicks, the sun, the moon, masks and a ploughshare. There are buttresses. There are five metre high defence walls in a square, the gate tower has openings for firing guns, also closed with wooden shutters."

"Useful idea! We could do with those. Shoot the congregation on the way in, kill the suffragan bishop."

"You make bad fun. There are these St. Ladislaus murals - a significant man in forming Europe. These frescoes from early in the 1400s after the church was first built were damaged when the arches were added in the earlier 1500s and in the 1600s when pulpit came."

"Sounds like *lad is louts!* No? I jest, Mary Ann."

"Ladislaus was King of Hungary from 1077 and King of Croatia from 1091: Ladislaus built up the Hungarian Kingdom, so later Hungarian Kings venerated him for their own purposes. It is said Ladislaus was canonised on 27 June 1192 by Pope Celestine III. The main shrines are at the Cathedral-Basilica of Oradea, Romania and Cathedral-Basilica of Győr, Hungary. I tell you the most popular story in Ladislaus's legends is his fight with a "Cuman" warrior who abducted a Christian maiden, and this is what is depicted in our church. Colin Cromer liked that story. He didn't like so much that as King, Ladislaus got tough on thieves. People could be hung for theft; if they fled to church to escape hanging, they were blinded, and offspring of bondsmen and freemen reduced to slaves. Steal a goose or a hen and lose one eye and then make sure there's a hen or goose to go back. Yootha Ann told Mr. Youell that story because he had geese."

"He had geese until he died. I mean, he always liked to keep geese."

"Of course. He liked geese, and he liked women. Among all the various important relatives, Ladislaus had a daughter, Piroška, and she was Empress Irene in the Byzantine Empire, venerated as Saint Irene by the Eastern Orthodox Church."

"I'm even more baffled now. I thought your Church was modern. So what happened between you and Colin?"

"Colin was single, too long single I think, and I warmed to him quickly. But I met Adam when business had business for him. Colin showed me love, but I did not like the choir people, because I was outsider. They did not like me. My life with Colin would have been with these people. Colin realised I was seeing damaged Adam, with sex, and gave way. To make it *right*, I married Adam. This left Colin very upset, and yet the choirmaster still wanted me to return to choir. I came to the church but sang in pews. Then Mr. Youell had relations with Agota, but she was able to convince his wife that it was not her. She realised that next time she would be caught. Mrs. Youell had social connections with the women at the church, and the gossip found its way to Colin. Then I was isolated by women at the church and I just looked for a job elsewhere. Mrs. Youell never went back in the church at all. At the time she met a man or two. SMS had Harwich vacancies and there were partner and client firms, in other places, and Slough was one of them, and I just decided to move. I took Yootha Ann, taking her from Mr. Youell. Soon she moved to Reading."

"Oh dear," I said. "So Colin had given you his heart."

"Adam and I did physical attachment; Colin was more, yes, romantic. I would have stayed with Adam. Ann with Labhaoise's children: I didn't know that at first and learnt this truth. They were his. I was annoyed when I found out. I was surprised Adam went to the church with Yootha Ann this time, now, like rubbing dirt in Colin's nose."

"Why do you stay married then?"

"It is no consequence. I'm different in Slough. My attachments are more like his. Perhaps you will improve him. Colin Cromer will be unhappy to know that you and Adam in relationship. Of all the people!"

"Be assured. I'm affectionate for Adam. I don't think we will ever have a

standard relationship. Ann Dromeghda does approve."

"Yootha Ann and I have train to catch tomorrow. I suppose we have no reason ever to come back to Serninsea, but if we do we shall call on you, and Adam, and so both of you stay together."

"Yeah, I'd love to see you again. I'll drive you both to Wytham railway station tomorrow."

"No, bus is fine."

However, when we went downstairs and into the lounge, Mary Ann entering first, she asked, "Adam, who were those two girls you told me about in your sixth form?"

He said, "You two talking about that?"

"Gemma and Leena? You gave me once their first names."

Behind her I shook my head at Adam. I said, "I know who they are. Gina and Le-Lori."

Moving his eyes from side to side, Adam said, "Some sort of women's natter you've been having?"

"A Romanesque church," I said. "And a Hungarian *Lad*."

"Ger-Granville?" Adam asked, making a reference to another old television comedy.

"Ladislaus," said Mary Ann. "You know all this."

"Him on some wall," said Adam, "back in the land beyond the trees."

Later on in bed, in came Yootha Ann again, and this time her mother was behind her. Now a naked Adam got out and up and hugged each in turn.

Mary Ann asked me, "Is this all right with you?"

"Yes," I replied.

"I remember with pleasure his cock."

"Well there you go," I said.

"Nicest man," said Yootha Ann. His embrace was of her body too.

He said to me, after they'd gone back to their room, "She's thirty-five, not really a daughter, not a niece."

"Adam. I have spent ages trying to get you to get your clothes off among my friends. You then, without a thought, get up out of bed, stark bollock naked, and hug mother and daughter."

"Well, there *you* go," he said. "Proper intimacy, not like that cult lot you're seeing."

I said to Adam, "No matter what has gone before, now I want that bishop and those groups exposed. Take them apart."

"So do I," said Adam. "I will. You and I should stick together. I need to get back to work. Peter has been running the shop but I like your methods. Okay, we wobbled a bit with your genetics but not now; I have an urge to do some really hard sex and you are the one for it. I like looking at Annie but Mary Ann has reminded me - and you - about real contact."

"And the daughter in law you hug screwed or was screwed by Yannis Youell and goodness knows who Eliana bedded."

Still, I found what he said reassuring, and made myself available. I wanted fucking hard on the spot. He obliged. After all, he wasn't fucking his wife. On the other hand, the damage he carried was my fault.

Point Blank Refusals (Thursday 25th July)

Having refused to go with Connie Wilson shopping a second time, by telling her directly by telephone, I went, perhaps against my better judgement, to the McPhails' on Stephen's following summons by text. On arrival, there was a definite change of mood.

I sat in their kitchen, and both of them were there. He said, "Bishop Terry is very disappointed in you. You helped Christine Vine get away from him. He wants to know what she is doing. What is she doing?"

"I haven't got a clue. I unlocked the vestry door because she wanted to leave. He came along behind me; I didn't realise he was chasing her."

"Not according to him. He is concerned you haven't absorbed the First Guidance on obedience. We are here to further the work of the Vanguard Confraternity. Yes? We do it by obeying the wisdom of the bishops."

"He turned up ten minutes into the service. Christine obviously wanted to leave. She was there to hear my sermon and participate in the service."

"She is no longer part of the National Church. She has given up all involvement. She has nothing to do with Wheaton; Terry says she even has a different house in Eslaforde. But she is busy doing something and went elsewhere in the British Isles on Saturday. Her helicopter was around on Sunday."

"I don't know. I saw her earlier in something of a stitch up for me when she was dealing with tenant issues."

"Stitch up? Who made the stitch up?"

"He did."

Helen shook her head, but Stephen said, "I think you'd better get your clothes off and come to the sexual play room. You need to receive some discipline."

I didn't move. "Really? Is this instead of shopping?"

"Terry decided that we should deal with you by Connie taking you to Nottingham. You refused."

"Why Nottingham again?"

"Because you can do a stint in the sex shop we frequent there, and Chloe Brown can assist you offering yourself to willing customers. Also we can put you on the late train, and see if anyone will have you in the toilet."

"Ah, the sex shop I went in with Connie Wilson."

"Yes. Annie Fenwick has worked in there to loosen her up. She's a star now of Goosechat. You need further breaking in. You're still going, to Nottingham, because you obey the bishop. First Guidance. This, coming up now, is extra."

"Annie is part of Christine Vine's Goosechat."

"We don't change a commercial business arrangement. Annie is definitely one of ours, at our meetings. And she was eighteen then. You're asking too many questions. You need to realise just where you are coming from, instead of being on your high horse - like Vine has been. She's always telling people to 'listen' but seems not to hear anyone else. You're getting to be the same."

"Right, that's it," I said.

"What?" Helen asked.

"That's it. I'm not going any further with this. I would have done an initiation,

possibly with Elizabeth Huett, but not now with this, and not with these accusations."

"There is no bargaining in this," he said. "I'm your mentor, and you need to understand discipline."

"I'm not *bargaining*. I'm quitting. I nearly didn't come here. I'll just do parish ministry, thank you very much."

"Linda, sit down."

"I'm going, thank you."

"You have no choice. You are a priest and the Vanguard bishops have claimed you. This comes before any diocese."

"No it does not. You are operating a cultic fantasy..."

"Oh really. Get in the sex play room!" He moved in front of me.

"Are you going to stand in my way? Am I to be your hostage?"

"No."

"Then I will leave. Thank you and good bye. Nice knowing you."

I went out into the front garden and to the road.

Stephen called out, "You will be forced back!"

I went to Adam's where he was busy in his office. I said to Adam, "I've quit the group. I may need some protection."

"Ah," said Adam. "Good. Okay. Christine was worried that you'd drag things out. So I will need a debrief all about this group, and also on what you know about the other two groups."

"Hardly anything about *them*. The groups don't spread out information until after initiation. The purpose of the Nottingham shopping trip was to prostitute me in a sex shop."

"Like a Mary Millington?"

"Who?"

"Never mind."

"Is she another clergywoman? I don't know all the names. Does she need protection?"

"Calm down, Linda. None of those: a tragic public figure, especially after she acquired a sex shop in London. Look, I don't suppose they will resort to physical violence because they want the group to be secret. Barman will start making your parish life uncomfortable, and then you'll have to make a career decision of some sort. Ann says it is like punishment in a school: it always relies upon the pupil's and parents' consent, even at the end of a process. If you don't consent, they can't punish."

"Why are you discussing this with Ann? Why don't you start making your own decisions?"

"Calm down! She is financing my investigation. *You're* not paying; Christine isn't paying, although she could afford it."

"I have *left*. There is nothing more to investigate."

"You told me to take them down. I'm still interviewing Christine. I want a full picture. Have you seen Sea TV today - with all that about Janet Hayes??"

"No."

"Well, watch it some time. Put it on upstairs. You'll see."

So I went upstairs, and put on the television, and when the news broadcast cycle re-ran, it included Bishop Barman saying that he'd "discovered" that the Serninsea Cross brooch was very unlikely to be genuine, and although originating

with an unnamed detectorist it was likely to have been planted in the Marshes deliberately. "It is, unfortunately, modern. Nevertheless, it remains valuable and can still be a symbol of the past for Serninsea."

"Liar," I said to myself. "Forged by Stephen McPhail and Helen's jewellery skills. Complete fake and deception."

"Who are you talking to?" asked Peter, entering with two coffees.

Later on Kathryn came upstairs. She said that the bishop was: "...a complete liar. It is not a symbol of anything, other than the pastiche nature of the present day. It's fake news."

"Yes," I said, "although they are very skillful people - the McPhails."

Chapter 15 What Christine Does

Narrator: Linda *Trip to See Geoff Virgo* (Saturday 27th July)

It was time to disappear. Christine had advised that I get out of the area. I left an email for Colin Cromer, that I had been obliged to attend a dying aunt living in Bristol. There was no aunt in Bristol. The furthest relative, other than the family in Wales, and someone in Norfolk, was in Leicestershire, and that was a cousin of some remove, someone I never really knew. I had to say Bristol because my mobile phone would identify my location.

I drove to Eslaforde and a given rendezvous, where I then followed Christine to her new house just outside Eslaforde, near the railway, and one with a large field. The decorators were in. My car went into her double garage, alongside hers. Her pilot, Leon Agnew, had made all the clearances for a journey that would take us across the country, some two hundred or so miles, with no need to stop and to arrive in a busy airfield. The helicopter could do some three hundred miles in one go, she told me as we flew. She was taking flying lessons; this journey was one she had now made a number of times. A pilot and a helicopter were very expensive to run, but the convenience was significant.

Our luggage wasn't a lot. We were going to see the independent bishops who had ordained Christine: a deacon *sub-conditione*, a priest and then as bishop.

Christine said, "I got reading a bit about *episcopi vagantes*. Accounts were not always as awful and condemnatory as we were led to think. And then there was Jenny World's uncle, an influence on why she was ordained at all, although they were different traditions given Jenny's conversion and relationship experiences. Jenny had corresponded with Geoffrey Virgo to try and make him straight sexually, to see the error of his ways."

"Geoff ended up in..."

"Independent Sacramental Ministry. And he is married now to his fellow bishop. They don't have children, but they do have some clergy."

Much of the chat was about Christine making the connections with them and having produced a Ministry Plan for work amongst prostitutes: seeing them housed, become better protected, getting medical care, and gaining better pay and safer work among some of the business class or online. This ministry was already active. She was establishing a new and advisory Confraternity Vanguard. All the three bishops in this independent group would be involved in its governance.

We arrived at the airfield and, after securing the helicopter, made a transfer to a taxi. The taxi took us three (including Leon) to the bishops' out of city home, with a very good garden, and a large shed converted into a chapel. Leon took the taxi further into Bristol, but would be back.

The two of us greeted Mar Arcturus-Virginis Bishop Geoffrey Virgo and Mar Flacillus Bishop Luis Mariano Callas. I was especially pleased to be reunited with Geoff but chat about school could wait. The first matter was the holy blessing to the meeting in their chapel. They went away to robe up.

Christine reminded me that as an ordained priest in the National Church I had to attend approved denominations' services only. "Stuff that," I said. She put on

robes contained in a long bag.

I joined in as their congregation at the large garage chapel. What I found surprising was that Geoff and Luis presented a Liturgy of the Mass that featured elements of earth, air, fire and water, as symbolised 'elements', and that the wine and bread had various references and was not simply Christian. Geoff had a tablet from which he could read their Eucharist text. This liturgy made references to science and evolution and transcendental love.

The briefest of homilies stated that once a month clergy within travelling distance get together for a communal Eucharist, whereas most of their services could be alone or Geoff and Luis together. (This was against Anglican rules: Eucharists must include a congregation of at least one.) The homily made reference to the Didache's love feast as an example of a Communion service variation.

The three concelebrated. I did receive the bread and wine.

"So what happened all those years ago?" Geoff asked, back in their lounge, all robes removed, over coffee. "I know that you, Jenny and Adam did a little - let's say - experimenting, and I scarpered; that Jenny and Adam got together after you went to university; and it wasn't that long before Adam was back on his own. I started teacher training and ended up in Bristol."

"Did you teach English as a foreign language?"

"Never. English in schools and FE. Jenny became very intense when she wrote to me. Adam went into the police. Jenny went from a year's accounting training in Serninsea and university in Middlesbrough to training for the clergy. You?"

"With Adam now, loosely. I went theological via Social Science and Theology. I met Keith, and subsequently got married."

"Couldn't make head or tail of him."

"He tried for ministry, and after his failure I tried successfully. And then the marriage started drifting, really. He now has a wife-to-be in Harwich and a mistress in Serninsea - to use old-fashioned language. He was never loyal, it turns out, in the medium to longer term."

"And Adam?"

"He got married; he still is, technically."

Geoff continued, "Ann Drummer?"

"Not her, Dromeghda, but she's a big influence still. She stayed with Labhaoise throughout."

"That's right. Did Jenny reappear at all?"

"A brief hello at my ordination. And what about the future of your small Church?"

"Well," said Geoff, "we're expecting developments from Christine, which we are about to discuss."

Christine said that she would now try to persuade Jenny's uncle, and perhaps a woman he worked with, Pauline Junor, to be incardinated into this Church, and he at least would be called Mar Simili Anseres. This would expand the Confraternity she was introducing to four or five. She was only cagey about Pauline because she did not know her. Bill had shown willing to join a larger group, when Christine met him recently.

Luis decided to speak. "We are really enthused by Christine's ministry to sex workers. Her concepts of us being theosexual, Christosexual, Spiritsexual are an exceptional insight."

Christine responded: "Listen: I looked around but I approached you two for a number of reasons. One is you were apostolic and you consider it really important - some actually don't. Also, I discovered that the 'Liberal' meaning was historical and specific, that you have a sound Catholic basis, and inclusive, and you were immediately positive about a society I proposed as adapted from the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Anglorum Nationalibus*. Just because this Church has an independent existence doesn't mean it cannot be vanguard orientated. You also want to expand - some don't. Geoff has a Serninsea connection and Bill Masters can join in. He is a bit quiet about Pauline."

Luis said, "Let's discuss all of this."

Leaving me in a library, Christine went elsewhere with them alone to discuss the setting up of the Confraternity: she would lay out its principles in detail. I looked at books on Liberal Catholicism and Theosophy, including about how Arnold Harris Mathew interacted with Anglicans.

After their meeting they came into the library and we went to their lounge.

Geoff and Luis explained that so far they had ordained about twenty clergy, some *sub-conditione* in other ecclesiastical gatherings. Would I be interested? It could be done now, back in the chapel.

"Maybe not, for the time being."

They had ordained four of their own and incardinated two more from other jurisdictions - but Christine was the biggest catch. Coming from the National Church with a unique Ministry Plan and her own resources, they elevated her directly to bishop, her own Catholicity and ecclesiology secure beyond question.

"This means you must have a bishop name, like Geoff and Luis," I said to Christine.

"Yes. Mar Weburga."

"Mother..."

"No. Listen: 'Mar' is for bishop," she said. "Saint Werburgh was a Benedictine and patroness of Chester, and Abbess in a Minster in Sheppey, and in Ely. Died around 700. Mercian with royal relatives. Her father, King of Mercia, eventually said she could enter Ely, and she was consecrated abbess by Bishop Sexwulfus of Lichfield, of 675 to 691. Her uncle became king and asked her to add discipline to three monasteries in the kingdom. She founded more, including Weedon, in Northamptonshire, where some of my more distant relatives live. St. Werburgh encountered a flock of geese causing havoc in the cornfields of Weedon and commanded them to leave. One version has it that one goose was her favourite: she named him Grayking. He had a black ring around his neck and was the fattest and happiest looking of the flock. Grayking was eaten by the convent steward, Hugh, because Grayking looked very tempting and fat, and also because for him banishment wasn't sufficient punishment. When Saint Werburgh found out she was furious with the steward. She found the bones of the goose Grayking and ordered him to arise. The bones reformed and Grayking the goose stood before her."

"Resurrection," I said, trying not to laugh. "*Sing a Song o' Sixpence* is where twenty four baked blackbirds sing to the king when the pie is opened. Resurrection."

Christine continued, "Ah. In 708 the body of Saint Werburgh was exhumed because of the many miracles associated with her. They found her body to be uncorrupted and as it was when it had been laid to rest. In 875 the body was moved to Chester, the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, which is the site of the present

cathedral of Chester. It was rededicated to St. Werburgh and St. Oswald, most probably in the reign of Athelstan. Our Lady and St. Werburgh's Church has a statue of the Saint, which also has a goose beside it. The statue itself was specially commissioned by Father Malcom Glaze when the church was converted from the original state to the present day church."

"Fascinating," I said, "and thank you Mar Werburga Bishop Christine."

Then Geoff said, "And do you know the story of the Winchester Geese?"

Christine answered, "South of the Thames - it's history. Women were licensed to work under the Bishop of Winchester's jurisdiction in the Liberty of the Clink with its brothels and pubs, and close by is the Cross Bones graveyard that was unconsecrated for the sex workers. So the association of religious authorities and prostitution is not innovated by me or John Barman, and is not some fantastical association as some might think, although my connection has become more direct, and there's a ceremony on the 23rd of each month to these glorious dead at the garden there. I have attended it on a number of occasions."

Luis said, "Mar Weburga brings real substance to our communion. We don't have dioceses but if we do one will be Mercia and Christine will be for that."

Geoff said, "We do have a woman priest under consideration for another bishop, who lives in Middlesbrough."

"Not Eizabeth Huett?" I asked.

"No no," said Christine. "One of ours. See, I said 'ours'."

Geoff said, "Margaret. She would be number five."

A point came to mind. "Until Christine came along, you two were in control. Did you fear losing control?"

"No," said Geoff, "because we are introducing a unanimous-consensual decision making system, meaning vetoes and then continued resolving, and bishops can always do what so many Independents do and break away!"

Christine smiled. "This is the new Confraternity variation: unanimity voting and consensual processes."

So I discovered that, although the Church had rules, such as clergy being police-checked, it was an incredibly loose body that simply allowed their clergy to get on with whatever they were doing. Geoff was a Methodist originally, and when teaching studied Wesley the sacramentalist. Geoff went up the candle, did some studying, and learnt about Old Catholicism and Liberal Catholicism, and joined the Liberal Catholic Theosophical Church. This was when he met up with Luis, and they decided to form their own Church, first called the Liberal Apostolic Univeral Ecclesia, later shortened by removing the word Universal, the two ordained as bishops by existing bishops.

After this informative chat, the three bishops and I had a look around Bristol itself, and ended up in a public house. Back at their house, Leon Agnew rejoined us.

I asked Christine, later at a private moment, "Am I sleeping in your bed then?"

"No, I'm not organising the Confraternity like that. We will facilitate services, on our self-sacrificial basis, taking up where people are in the Church, and in religions, business and other settings. There will be a time and a place to demonstrate sacrificial openness to each other sexually, but it's mainly about openness to serving others in all ways sacrificial."

"So this Vanguard won't promote sexual ecstasy as a way to the Kingdom of God?"

"It definitely will, but the emphasis is different. Having an orgasm isn't necessary for a divine decision. Prayer is enough. Listen to me. I'm going to take away Barman's entertainment network. I will bring it down and I will replace it. Will you come on board with me?"

"Yes, but I want closeness to you."

"Linda. If you want to pay me, you can do with me whatever you like. But you can't afford me. So come and take part in the event I am organising. You'll be away from hostile forces. Properly speaking, you should come under our new Confraternity, but you can't without being incardinated. I would initiate you if you were secular, but I can't because you are in another ministry."

So it was that Christine and I were in separate bedrooms. She was entertaining her pilot, Leon, and yet she denied all personal relationships.

On Liberal Catholicism (Sunday to Wednesday 31st July)

Dressed and ready for breakfast, I headed for the gay men's staircase, although they were in another wing of this house. As I turned to go down the stairs, Christine called out, "Linda!"

She had robes on; I was in mufti. I paused. She caught up with me. "Leon will join us for breakfast later."

We went downstairs, and we joined the robed bishops to move from the kitchen to the chapel in the garage. We would have a Eucharist or Mass before breakfast.

I said to the bishops, going to the garage, "You know, I hadn't considered you as real bishops."

"Demonstrated in the courts. And we also represent the real, actual, Liberal Catholic tradition. It doesn't mean the same as your Anglican liberal Catholicism, that had its origins in Charles Gore, a sort of Oxford Movement amalgam with modernity."

So can you summarise *this* Liberal Catholicism?" I asked. "I got a glimpse of it in your library yesterday"

"Ah", said Geoff. "Let me do it as a homily or sermon."

He preached without notes. "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and all the Powers and Principalities, and the Four Elements to the Four Corners of the World. Early in the twentieth century, Arnold Harris Mathew, a sort of ex-Roman Catholic, ex-Anglican, and for a moment, Unitarian, was made a bishop in Europe, and thought he was going to gain some Old Catholic congregations in the UK, only to be disappointed that they didn't ever exist. He did, though, have a following of clergy. One of Mathew's bishops, F. S. Willoughby, consecrated the priests Wedgwood and Leadbeater after they broke with Mathew over the issue of Theosophy; Leadbeater himself had previously left the Anglican priesthood over his attachment to Theosophy. The two supported Krishnamurti as the coming World Teacher, something that Krishnamurti himself later dropped. Leadbeater had all sorts of views regarding the astral plane and the purpose of copper in its transmission near the altar table, indeed adding Buddhism and Hinduism into the pot. The use of Theosophy (Annie Besant and all that with Krishnamurti) helped the Church grow in Australia, India, Europe and North America.

"Nowadays Liberal Catholicism does not need an attachment to Theosophy, and, anyway, it was always optional. Sadly, perhaps inevitably, Liberal Catholicism has split and often into many sub-varieties. More than this, some descendents of various bishops of that line were not Liberal and not particularly Catholic either. Some groups pursued Orthodoxy, some were Protestant, and many were Gnostic in terms of esoteric knowledge.

"One influence of Liberal Catholicism and Leadbeater in particular was an emphasis on magical interpretations rather than supernatural. Leadbeater claimed in the 'science' of the sacraments that the priest had a power many call magical."

Yes, I thought a Catholic Anglican would define power through a properly ordained priest as supernatural. Magic is where the person and the set-up have power, whereas the supernatural comes through them through correct theology and ecclesiology. So, one wondered here about Christine making a compromise.

"One of the most interesting individuals after Mathew, Wedgewood and Leadbeater was Ulric Vernon Herford. Now, he started life as a Unitarian minister, although he spent time at St. Stephen's Theological College in Oxford, a place of High Churchship. He left that denomination to embark on his own ecumenical project. He only ever consecrated one man, but one was enough for all the rest since. Rather like we did with Christine, Herford was deaconed, priested and bishoped in a day: this happened in India in a Nestorian origin Assyrian Church under his assumption that this was compatible with his Unitarian views. But his consecrator Mar Basilius made Herford into Mar Jacobus *without* inquiring of his views, whilst knowing of Herford's desire to have one ecumenical evangelical and Catholic Communion. My husband changed his name from Luke in recognition of the consecrator of Herford, Luis Mariano Soares. I might have added Ulric Vernon to my name, but I haven't yet: as in 'Geoffrey Ulric Vernon Virgo'.

"Herford was a very well-meaning chap: so he became bishop, started a monastic-type church and it had some congregations, variably, and he was strong on Animal Rights, all in and around Oxford.

"Herford mixed with Free Catholics and others. Take Constance Coltman. In 1917 she became the first trinitarian ordained female minister. A Congregationalist, she yet believed in the Virgin Mary as intercessor. That was because she came from the Congregationalist Kings Weigh House in Mayfair, London, which had W. E. Orchard as Minister, who was increasingly sacramentalist, and he was associated with J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, the Unitarian. They were ostensibly Free Catholics - sacraments with freedom to believe - until Orchard went off to Rome. Well, Herford ordained Orchard into the priesthood - although not Lloyd-Thomas. And he was, basically, bishop to that Congregationalist chapel rather higher in its practices than the local Anglo-Catholic and Roman Catholic churches. Lloyd-Thomas ended up going back into education after the Free Catholic movement broke up.

"I can hear you muttering under your breath, Linda," said the preacher.

"Sorry," I said.

"Please speak!"

There was this chapel that Christine and I stumbled upon in Wytham. He was fairly humanist, wouldn't you say?"

"Yes," said Christine. "And an interesting female to male transsexual minister."

I said, "This was of a Presbyterian line but now almost liberal-humanist. And..."

Oh, sorry."

"No, please continue, Linda," said Geoff.

"Only that I learnt how my partner Adam married Mary Ann, who was in an old traditional Protestant chapel culture within Transylvania. There was a Unitarian bishop over there, more a superintendent."

Christine said, "According to your Peter, it gets better: there's a universalist charismatic bishop in America in the equivalent to the Unitarians there; there's even a retired minister who's a practising Zen Buddhist."

"I cannot keep up with this," I said. "Carry on. Sorry. I'm the one in lay clothing here."

"Definitely a priest," said Christine.

He did continue. "As for ourselves, we bishops carry lines of apostolic authority from Liberal Catholics, Roman Catholics, Eastern and Thomasine traditions, and now, so does Mar Werbura Bishop Christine here. We do often ordain each other so as to attach more and more lines of legitimacy."

"On the matter of gender, Liberal Catholics have generally been pro-women and also gender orientation inclusive. They've offered a socially inclusive Catholicism, different from Rome and the Eastern Orthodox. As it happens, a minority of Liberal Catholics still have issues with it, but there are lots of female bishops. One British Church under a male Archbishop had only female bishops within Britain before it sadly disintegrated. One has had a female archbishop - a queer theologian. On the question of sex, some reject original sin, and we do, and some advance all kinds of relationships as enriching, and I think we do. Christine points out that the act of lovemaking itself is a vision of heaven; she also says sex can lead to love, and sex includes, properly, sacrificial acts from one lover to another. Sex is the material effort, and love is its gift. Her mission - Ministry Plan - turns prostitution into a sacrificial service often by those with little to give, but who should offer this from more safety. Sacrifice is not to be put at threat: it is risky in the offering itself. There is something esoteric in this."

"And thus we frame our pastoral ministries as clergy in various localities carrying out their own ministry plans, and then Churches with many societies, online colleges, and now we have this eschatological ecclesiology of a Vanguard Confraternity, where we bishops plan to lead the Church towards the Kingdom of God. Amen."

I was again the receiving congregation in the Mass concelebrated by the three bishops. It was a pity no one else came to the garage. Leon was not with us, here, but was waiting for breakfast.

We had breakfast, and said our goodbyes.

So, for the next few days I would live at Ebbsfleet. This is where the helicopter took us, with the journey through busy airspace noted by the air travel authorities.

Christine left me on Sunday afternoon for London, and she wasn't back until later Monday. I thought I would have to prepare my own meals, but these maids appeared and did everything for me. When Christine came back, she looked drawn, and was tired, so I left her alone and she did some daytime sleeping on Tuesday.

I spent some time looking at the trains flying by nearby. When I asked Christine if I could join her at her work, she said no, but she had an appointment for us at her own private gynaecologist and this was on Wednesday.

Messages on my mobile phone were asking as to my whereabouts. Was I still

in Bristol? Colin asked. I decided not to answer any of them.

The Clinic (Wednesday 31st July)

Wednesday morning in Ebbsfleet there was an early visit from Christine Vine's fussy mother Carla, docile father John, and James, a fat clergyman: she talked at a fast rate, and full of opinion, father put her down with the odd quip, and the cleric said nothing. Christine was told by her mother that she might be clever but not too old to go over her knee. The bachelor priest, James, turned out to be Christine's brother. As soon as they'd gone, Christine acted as if she'd forgotten that they were ever there.

"Your brother? He's..."

"Roman Catholic. He's a convert. Oh, and he is gay."

Having spent a lot of time in Christine's well appointed bathroom, I went with Christine by rail from Ebbsfleet to London, having read this message on my mobile from Adam:

Barman rang up asking where you were and I said didn't know beyond a Bristol funeral. Colin Cromer called. I said the same. Seems you are now AWOL.

On my agreement to join her at her private clinic, and before we set off to London by train, Christine kissed me.

She said, "I give you Hildegard of Bingen's reflection on Genesis chapter two verse seven, from memory:

"With my mouth I kiss my own chosen creation. I uniquely, lovingly, embrace every image I have made out of the earth's clay. With a fiery spirit I transform it into a body to serve all the world."

I really wanted to keep to my own gynaecology service, but curiosity got the better of me, I wanted to know more about Christine, and London was far from Serninsea and this was a discreet address.

At the clinic near Urania House in Hammersmith (which I did not visit), I went into a room alone with a female clinician and signed on an electronic pad many times to give all consents. That done, I was swabbed in my mouth, then given a blood pressure test, and even gave a blood sample. I was weighed and measured.

Then I was asked by Jennifer Langley (name badges are so helpful!) to undress my lower half and place my lower legs on to the leg supports.

Dr. Robert Bruce came in, to join the clinician. Jennifer, pushing a speculum in, applying a lot of pressure, not knowing my case.

With light emitting diodes on a metal arm illuminating my inner 'purse', the clinician complained: "I can't get this in far... Where is it?"

"If you are referring to the cervix, I haven't got one," I replied.

Therefore Dr. Bruce took a look and said, "Hold back on the swabs. Do you mind if I ask my colleagues to come in?"

I thought, 'Here we go!' but said, "No, I don't mind but don't discuss it until in here."

Speculum in and LEDs shining inside, Ms Langley stood back and Dr. Bruce

left the room. He returned with three others, Doctors Peter Earle, William Middlemas and Dorothy Marshall.

Dr. Bruce said, "My colleagues are gynaecologists to royalty, so you are in very good hands."

"Not Dr. William Wallace, then," I said out of turn.

So we now had three men and one woman peering into my vagina. Two swabs went into plastic containers with writing added to the labels, one that had touched my vagina wall where the cervix would have been, and one at the urethra.

Dr. Middlemas said, "We should look at her breasts. Can we examine your breasts?"

"My practice nurse at home has only just examined them. But go on."

So I took off my tops, and became naked and had four hands over both of them provided by two doctors Bruce and Marshall.

Then they felt in the area of my undescended gonads. "No surgery?" asked Dr. Marshall. "Do you want surgery? Do you take HRT?" she asked further.

"I have had oestrogen occasionally, but my mother and I refused surgery. My older sister had surgery and is on HRT."

Then Dr. Bruce asked, "Can we have you on our books?"

"What?"

"As one of our clients?"

I said, "No. I already have a gynaecologist. In Serninsea, actually."

"Where's that?"

"East coast of Foss. I'm National Church and National Health. I couldn't afford you."

"We could make an exception," Dr. Marshall said, looking around at her male colleagues.

"No," I asserted.

"Do you dilate then?" she asked. "Objects inserted?"

"I know the practice of dilating. I have a set of dilators."

"Fascinating," she said.

Dr. Bruce asked, "Do you have regular sexual intercourse?"

"Yes."

"Is this as an escort worker or in your relationship?"

I thought, crumbs, *as an 'escort worker'*? How did I go from being a priest (just about!) to an escort worker? "I'm a priest! I'm in a regular relationship and a few others. I am here with Christine Vine."

Dr. Earle said, "Obviously you take different sizes of penises. Do some cause pain?"

I said, "I have recently had a change of partner. My new partner is larger in dimension, and he does push all the way in."

He went on: "You've had no surgery to extend your vagina?"

"No."

"Nothing either for cancer risk? Do you want it?"

"Of course I don't want cancer."

"No, do you want surgery?"

"No, I don't."

Dr. Middlemas asked, "Do you orgasm well? Everything functions properly?"

"I orgasm as badly as the next woman," I said. "It is a clitoris after all."

"Its visible end is well visible," he said.

"Would you like me to masturbate in front of you? It'll come up even bigger and brighter."

"Would you?" asked this doctor. "If you are comfortable doing this."

He obviously didn't get irony with cynicism. "If I must."

The original woman, Jennifer, said, "This isn't necessary."

The female doctor said, "I can bring a vibrator that is new out of its packet. You can show us your dilating technique with it."

I said, "You'll have to take that out. And for no reason, I said, "*Speculum sine macula*." This actually refers to mirrors, not insertion devices.

Dr. Marshall thus replied, "*Carnes immacolata virginitas* you are not."

"I was once," I responded. I knew that phrase.

Dr. Marshall left the room as the speculum device was unscrewed and removed and placed in the sink. After a minute this woman returned and went to the sink to wash a standard vibrator. I bet it was hers as well. It didn't weigh much as there was no battery in it. So I inserted it.

I said, "Normally for ten minutes I circulate with it inside but also pushing it like this."

Then I was asked if I would consent to be photographed close-in, and so I agreed. I had an electronic device to sign.

They stood close while I continued pushing and circulating, and Ms. Langley took photographs and placed them to the computer screen.

When I stopped Dr. Bruce said they'd like to take more detailed pictures. So another speculum went in, and a camera with a light on a thick cord to a box was hand-held closely. They were muttering dissatisfaction.

"Take it out and I'll pull myself open," I said.

The speculum was slowly removed and placed in the sink.

So the photography continued as my fingers stretched myself as far as I could do it. Anyway, my clitoris had now revealed itself more and my lips had become slightly swollen. Another swab was taken of the mucus I had produced.

Dr. Bruce then said, "If we publish the photos in a book on gynaecology, we'll send you some royalties. Leave your contact details."

Jennifer Langley then said, "We haven't done an anal test."

A man said, "We'll need to clean up some of the moisture there to not get it on the swab."

I asked, "Should I get on my knees on this seat?"

One man answered, "Better on the bench."

So I came off the chair and got on to the bench, to lower my back and stick my arse out. I pulled my arse open and someone rubbed a tissue around my anus. Without using further opening devices a swab was inserted into my anus - not too far in. Out it came to be dropped in another of those plastic tubes and the lid sealed. I'd had this done before.

"This isn't right," said Dr. Dorothy Marshall. So a third speculum appeared and went into my arsehole. "Are you working today?"

"Today?" I asked, still looking towards a wall. "I told you I am not a sex worker. My husband did this nearly two decades ago. It's clean enough because I anticipated you might want to look. I'm doing pelvic floor exercises. From time to time that's the tube they use."

"Who uses what tube?" Dr. Marshall asked.

"Men with penises going down my arsehole tube," I replied.

"During escorting?" asked Dr. Earle.

"Are any of you listening to me? I am not - oh, I give up."

"Dr. Marshall said, "Gentlemen, I think we have finished. Jennifer, please see that *Reverend* Jupitas is comfortable and clean. Could you join us Doctor Robert?"

And with this, four left the room." I heard a man outside say, "I've not seen that before in my whole career."

"We are very pleased to have met you," said my original clinician, as I turned and sat on the bench. She said. "There is a bathroom through that door. I have this glass bottle for a urine sample, and afterwards you may have a shower if you wish."

"Nah. Give it here. I've had enough. Same thing, same questions, every time."

I pissed there and then into the beaker, and gave it to Jennifer.

I got hold of my trousers and put them on, and then placed my tops on, and finally my shoes. "No discussion about me to Christine Vine," I said.

"We don't discuss clients outside professional consultations. We will check for all the diseases and conditions, er... reverend."

I would learn by text message in the evening whether I had passed this personal MOT. I went into the waiting area. Christine was speaking to two women still down the corridor and then they left going past me.

"Did it go all right?" Christine asked me. "My clinician walked out on me and I had to sit there with my legs up waiting. Did yours leave?"

"No."

"Well there was quite a commotion," Christine continued, "and I heard someone in the corridor say, 'I've not seen one of those before in my career.'"

"I heard that too," I said.

"And those two lost their gynaecologists for a while. The thing is," said Christine, "if you are different, it may affect things."

"What things?"

"Listen: I want to introduce you to Sir Sanjay Bunker; this is how you will give me your service and sacrifice."

"I'm not stupid, coming here, but I've been denying I'm an escort."

"He is my client, normally here in London, sometimes in Ebbsfleet, and when in the Vanguard group I had special times with him. The thing is, I have you as his reward for coming to my side of the fence. You see, he wants to penetrate the Serninsea parish priest and wife of one of his lower managers. I want him split away from Barman. You are the means to this: so what you do will be vital. Accept every gift from him: shopping, presents, whatever. You're no good to him if he *doesn't* pay."

"If I refuse?"

"The Titansea Hotel is where I will operate in competition against the other party. My newly made Confraternity has its own badges, and we will operate only in the hotel. My prostitutes will be forbidden to go to above the casino. It is where they would initiate you. They might choose the Blue Diamond Club but it is regulated with a council licence. If we separate Bunker from Barman, we can expose the bishop's involvement and not put my client at risk."

"These parties," I asked, "Are they for networking various business people?"

"They do that, yes," said Christine. "This is what mine will allow. I will have a Body Eucharist and an initiation..."

"Not doing me!"

"Not you."

"Give something to me for a change."

"I am doing already. I guessed your measurements compared with mine at the retreat. I have bought a dress for you already. I want you inside the Titansea Hotel without anyone knowing you are there. You'll come in with me, hand in your mobile phone, and sleep overnight beforehand in the hotel."

"I'm AWOL already," I said."

"I know. Your parish priest will have to do without you. Let's go back to my house in Ebbsfleet on the train. I will give you my body. It's a fair exchange rather than a simple gift."

"Yes," I said, "especially after today. I am a sex worker."

Learning About What's Coming

On the train alongside Christine I looked at my phone and among the messages was one added from Stephen McPhail, consisting of a Bible reading and a following message:

"See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee; Exodus 31:2-6.

I have been relieved of your mentoring. I have gone back to my day job, if you like. Your friends ruined the potential of the Serninsea Cross brooch. You will be picked up by Connie and Jim Wilson by the new command of the bishops. You shall be initiated and you shall initiate others. We know you have been in Bristol and Ebbsfleet."

"Huh," I said to Christine, showing her the message. "Exodus goes on to assert the Sabbath as holy and for no work. Defile it and you face death; you are cut off from your people. Like these days we go shopping on Sundays, and we are not creative."

"Listen. Adam and Peter are doing some surveillance regarding above the casino. Now, properly, I should incardinate you and then initiate you into my group under the Confraternity. But I can't because you are still in the National Church. You will have a badge but be a guest only. You'll be directed to a registration area. There the assistant will attach you to Sir Sanjay. He'll come along when he's ready. He's a bit freer than some of the conference attenders. He wants to listen in to the actual conference as a likely financier: 'What are the future ideas to back?' It's about electronics and communications.

Each attender who wants one has an escort partner to accompany them.

You'll sit next to Sir Sanjay at the conference, you'll eat with him and others he meets (unless he asks otherwise). You'll attend to his personal body washing and so on. You'll accompany him daytime and in private arrange to sleep with him."

"Electronics?"

"It is a conference on the future of electronics in wholesaling and retailing and goes on over three days and two nights. There are some new devices to discuss, and measuring devices too. Thus there will be a few SMS people there, as relevant. So you'll still need to sign a confidentiality agreement. It is in my contract with the conference organisers."

"I might well be recognised."

"It's on two hired floors and I doubt anyone at all will recognise you."

"Huh. That's marginalisation and secularisation for you."

"Sir Sanjay was impressed with you assisting SMS's self-examination, the robustness of their procedures at SMS."

Then I had a cold shiver. "What if SMS people are there: a certain Keith?"

"Sir Sanjay has already made sure he's not coming. You'll get paid the same as me. There is a very basic £30 an hour for the accompaniment during the conference, which you must do."

"And many hours?"

"It's a long session. It's tiring in itself. You will get breaks when you don't sit alongside your man. It's the law; I insist upon them, and Sir Sanjay understands. Everything is a contract to him, just like with Donald Trump."

"It doesn't cost him much at all."

"No no. The wage is like basic. That covers the accompaniment, as such. But there are direct payments as well, and I'll tell you about them. Anyway, your job is to persuade Sir Sanjay not to go to the party on the second night. Many of the attenders will. That's the practical side: to get him to resign from the Worshipful Company and move his allegiance to my new set-up. And, another thing, Sir Sanjay is what you call him too, until if or when he tells you his real name. Sir Sanjay Bunker is an Anglicised name of an Indian, Hindu name."

"Which is?"

"I'd rather not tell you. But if he does, you are winning."

"What do I get paid for all this - the direct payment?"

"Okay, I'll tell you. Private arrangement but you're daft if you have less than four thousand, and may be six thousand for two nights."

"What? *What?* That's rather different from thirty quid an hour. Shit. I'll buy a new car."

"Not just that," Christine added. "Remember, accept all presents. You *may* have to risk going out with him. If you do, wear a wig and specs. You can take the helicopter elsewhere to go shopping: dresses, bags, make up. It might even be a big ticket item. He pays well and so he should."

I also said that I knew of a number of long term older residents who lived in the Titansea Grand Hotel and received a discount for continuous living: that they pay the same each week as residents in old age homes.

"Different floors. We're on three and four. Something else," she said, "There are rumours coming out of Harwich."

"I can guess. SMS might pull out of Serninsea altogether?"

"The conference facilities I am providing might just keep them there," she

said. "I have more. Listen. I told you about the resurrected goose, Saint Werburgh's favourite. He was called Grayking. Your name in the hotel will be Cynthia Grayking. Sanjay Bunker knows this."

So I said, "I've heard plenty of what you want of me. And I'm contractual too: your body, same bed as me, and if you don't there's no deal."

Back at Ebbsfleet a text message said I was of clean sexual health.

Leon was elsewhere, I was told. Thus I was invited into her bed. But when she went between my thighs, she started pulling me open and tried to catch the light. As a result I walked out of her room.

"You are not my gynaecologist."

"What are you hiding?"

"Nothing that matters to you or Sanjay Bunker."

Thus I returned to my own bedroom in her house, annoyed.

I had a late text from Diana.

Where are you?

I've been in Bristol; I've moved on to London where I shall be for a number of days.

Can I tell this to your vicar?

I replied with a simple affirmative.

Caroline knocked on my bedroom door. The phone to one side, I welcomed her in.

"I won't look," she said.

It was so good to trace the curve of her back and the smoothness of her backside. Our tongues engaged together in some long and deep kissing.

Christine did push a finger into me. I could tell she was thinking of more fingers, so I shook my head. She said I could open her up if I wanted. However, I brought her to orgasm with tongue and fingers and she made a prayer.

Her tongue on to my protrusion had the same result with me, and she demanded I say a prayer.

"Thank you God. And what happens after the hotel, when I am back into Serninsea society? Won't I be in danger then?"

"At least *pause* after a prayer! I hate that because it lacks sincerity."

"I agree. Sorry."

"Listen, they can't *kidnap* you. They are not *gangsters*. Perhaps you could say you've had some days in bed and Colin Cromer can visit you. I look after my women."

She was now turning me into a tart.

The Hotel Conference Preparations (Friday 2nd August)

Thursday I'd been alone as Christine had travelled to London's Urania House in Hammersmith. I'd become a naturist within her Ebbsfleet house. She was exhausted

once back and not communicative.

Friday and we had to be up early. Christine's house had a room next to a shower room with two sinks and two hair dryers. We had our hair done in there before 8 am with a couple of brought-in hairdressers.

Above the noise of the dryers, Christine said, "I'm asking how we recover Bernard of Clairvaux. Modern thought reflects a victory for Abelard. You know."

"You never stop."

"It starts, does it not, with monastic pedagogy around statutes and commentaries."

"Foundational," I said.

"So that's the 1100s, and by the 1400s there's been a change to where the world is seen as having order."

"Order!" I said, like the House of Commons Speaker," shouting over the dryers.

"You're not taking me seriously. The debate was in the twelfth century itself, between Bernard and Abelard. I want to go back to faith itself seeking wisdom, as with Bernard of Clairvaux. Abelard is a worldly Aristotelian. Quite a shift."

"It's the age-old division: revelation and supposed natural theology."

"Ergodicity', it is called," she said. "Monasteries did resist."

"To maintain the patristic."

"Theology leads to its social theory, Linda, and we need to recover this perspective as operative."

"Can you, for one minute, just give it a rest?"

"No. Listen. Take Marcella Althaus-Reid. She practised theology on the model of Paulo-Freire."

"Liberation theology and education," I said.

"Was academic, in Scotland at times: queer theologian. Died in 2009. Theology should become indecent. She wanted theology to match the experience of ordinary people, as part of their liberation. The Church continued to underline sexual oppression. She studied continuing Church identity among bisexuals in Canada."

"I recall a brief reference by Gretta Cox-Jenkins."

"Theology from below."

"You can't have it both ways, Christine. You are the most vertical authoritarian cleric I know, after the Pope."

"I am not authoritarian. God is not restricted. All voices, including yours, are to be heard without restriction. That must be right. Doesn't mean they are all equal. Marcella Althaus-Reid's ecclesiology - she was in the Metropolitan Community Church - is a vehicle for liberating sexual minorities. To me, the MCC is a sort of yes and no."

"Give it a rest!"

"Hardly in the spirit of Marcella Althaus-Reid! You will be in an unusual situation, sharing life with indecent co-workers."

"Not sure it is liberating."

"Learn on the job."

We joined reappeared Leon at breakfast. Christine showed me my plunging, slashed dress in a very light thin flesh-coloured material. It would show a lot of leg. I liked it.

Under pressure to get travelling, I apologised for the time I took in another

bathroom, and we walked with suitcases (containing the dress) into the warm air to arrive at the helicopter nearby. I wore a blouse and trousers and disguises of a long hair black wig on over my long blonde hairdo, and added a peak cap and flat lens spectacles (from Adam?).

Christine's helicopter landed at Carr Fenn on a cloudy day at about twenty-two degrees. The location of landing was itself a declaration of her presence, but not my presence. Christine got out and went into a waiting car whilst I remained.

"Thanks Leon," I said as he secured the helicopter inside and a taxi pulled close. The machine was locked up, the taxi driver put the cases in the boot and we sat on the back seat. Leon got out at a terraced house not far away, where he appeared to pay and lean in as if to kiss me, and the taxi went on to stop outside the Titantsea Grand Hotel. The driver said I didn't have to pay.

From the taxi, I went in with my suitcase, and said at the reception, "I am Cynthia Grayking." The male receptionist pointed to a notice on a stand:

The Serninsea Electronics and Communication Conference 3rd & 4th Floor.

In the lift I removed my cap and flat lens spectacles.

On the third floor I found a toilets and changing area. I took my dress from my suitcase and put it on. the cap and spectacles went into the case. Outside I queued behind numbers of women similarly dressed, while others were milling around. Some official woman with the name badge Joy Melville at a reception room was uninterested in my printed off sexual health certificate; its use was up to me. Some items I did not want stealing I removed from the suitcase into a smaller shoulder bag, despite assurances of safety inside that reception room. We did not have our own rooms! Rest and naps could happen in either of the made available workers' rooms.

Another official spoke from her own doorway into the corridor. "Is there a Cynthia Grayking?"

"Me. Hang on."

"Come in. I'm Rose Crook. You are employed for accompaniment and meals and nothing else, by Werburgh Limited, and anything else you negotiate is entirely your own doing. It is £30 an hour before expenses: an allocated partner should pay all bills. The hours are 12 pm to 8 pm today, regardless of when the partner arrives, 10 am to 8 pm tomorrow, and 10 am to 1 pm on the third day. In this time, less your entitled breaks, you accompany your allocated partner for meals and at the conference sessions as he or she demands."

There was a confidentiality agreement to sign, which meant that what was seen and heard from the participants was commercially confidential. I signed it in my Linda Jupitas name. "Best is you see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing," said Rose.

All of us had to avoid using slang words and swearing, which was easy for me. We had to advise Rose or another official of strange contacts and unusual observations (seeing something!). We had to be clean, fresh, and welcoming, and maintain these.

She had a red badge with a black goose and a W for me, the red to indicate I was only a 'Guest' and I had to wear the badge in company except private one to one moments.

"Any further accompaniment with your allocated partner is by private arrangement, or you could just go home. I have nothing further to say."

Bishop (!) Christine appeared in a purple dress as thin as mine with a circle in front of her exposed cleavage, the material rising to a circle of a clerical collar. I could see one stripe mark within the circle.

She called into the corridor, "Listen everyone! The conference begins at 1 pm, to allow some to travel who haven't stayed overnight already."

She told us that there were some thirty-five women and five men to accompany attenders. There were some extra sandwiches and drinks in the conference room for us: our partners would feed with us first at the evening meal.

Off we went to gather in the third floor conference room. All the woman had legs to kill for; I was probably the oldest. The five men were in sharp suits. The prawn mayonnaise sandwiches were tasty.

Christine repeated what Rose had said. Except, she said, "You are welcome to use all facilities of the hotel if you stay around outside paid hours. As for anything else, newbies might chat with those who've been to similar gatherings elsewhere. I suggest Clodagh, Alice, Karen for consulting.

"All of us here are required to attend in this room for the second session - the Eucharist." We could decline by not going forward. Bishops Bill and Pauline, wearing red badges like me would preside and initiate, but already twelve were done in different locations yesterday and twenty-two were due today. Each Eucharist would have an Open Table.

We were never to wear the B badges some might own.

Everyone was told to be on best behaviour, as Christine's employees. "You eat with the best of manners, and extend your tastes to accommodate your partner. Stay with your partner at all times, except for the three thirty minute rest periods on full days and the one break on the final day. Even if your partner sinks a lot of drink, you don't. Use the nearby plant pots to sink drink.

Being under the discipline of the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia and also under the confidentiality agreement meant not going to the party above the casino. "This includes after eight o'clock, if anyone has bothered to read it. Over there, they will welcome you - but your contract here says no."

We could put in for a thirty quid subsidy towards the one approved dress or suit with Rose - she'd approve it. (Obviously this did not include me.)

"All dresses seem to be right: plunging necklines, visible nipples, plenty of leg, and touching crotches," said Christine. "Anyone with bras on can take them off immediately. Knickers are optional but best without."

Partners knew that their accompaniments needed to be told the thirty minute rest times, to be logged on the first one with Rose. "If the partner takes you out, then that is still your work time. But your partner is not under any obligation to give you any gifts whatsoever via shopping or otherwise."

Cold feet wasn't a serious reason to reject a partner. But whatever further happened with them was not part of Christine's company's wage payment. "If you do just leave, then you break the contract with Werburgh Ltd regarding wage payment and I'm ready to pursue for damages. But do tell Rose Crook why before you run away. She'd have to ring for some replacements pretty rapidly. Use your breaks to report on matters of concern. Mobile phones stay in the office: you can check them during breaks.

The only time we could walk away, Christine told us, is with violence or

serious threat of violence. But we were to allow partners to put hands on backs and bottoms, whilst getting permission to do the same back.

"Any use of mobile phones outside rest times and beyond the office means you're docked an hour's pay plus temporary confiscation. Your attention is always on your partners; that's what you are paid for."

This included sitting with the partner in the conference sessions, although he or she may release the accompaniment: that's up to them. "You also separate to fetch and carry: water, liquid and snacks. Toilet breaks happen in your rest breaks.

"One more thing I have left until last. Some of us have no choice but to use our real names. Otherwise, use your business name. Models do this all the time, and so do escorts. Don't give out personal details. Clodagh."

Clodagh Grant spoke. "I'm just an old hand at this, coming from Barman and his mob. Any money payments on top of your pay should be electronic. Find one of us who can make a transfer. Don't ask Rose, who's dealing with employees, but ask me, or Bishop Christine, Alicia Rogers, Karen Curzon; we can go in an office and do some transfer payments. Get paid by your partner not to your details but to one of us, and one of us pays you. We do this there and then."

Christine said, "Any questions?"

One woman asked, "Is our having sex part of the religion?" (How her breasts stayed in her dress I did not know. Her badge was on - some still weren't yet.)

Christine answered, "Under my approach, all this does come under ecclesiastical management in a way it wasn't properly before. Sexual public displays are less here but your own sexual activity is expected to be a deliberate celebration and thanksgiving of the body under the Divine. Those of us attached to Holy Church are all theosexual, Christosexual, Spiritsexual. The centre of this must be the orgasm. If you're not having orgasms this weekend, you are not connecting with the Holy truly sufficiently. That's just a revelatory fact."

Another woman said, "I'm partnered with a woman and fortunately I am compatible, let's say. I mean, you are expecting personal overnight arrangements."

"I'm not expecting anything overnight. There are two declared Confraternity lesbians already here among us. Surprise surprise, you are paired with women attenders. I have initiated you and Jane, is it? Hello Jane - white badge on Jane please. And everyone else! No male gays, as it happens. Clodagh, please."

Here she was again. "Yeah. Don't presume any partners are actually interested in anything else beyond simple accompaniment. Sorry if you think you've missed out. Out of hours is your business, where you go and so on, except don't over to above the casino. To have our initiation is to reject theirs."

Christine resumed: "I organise the Werburga Geese, not John Barman. I'm completely independent of him. Barman is not here and he does not have access to the conference floors. He can of course come into the hotel."

We had to beware of people asking questions, and the contract included confidentiality - personal and commercial.

"We're expected to go," someone said. "always with the same partner." There were a number of 'yeahs' around the conference room - except Christine's.

So that was her public talk. She wanted me to go into the office space. As we did, Rose Crook left.

Christine asked, "You okay?"

"Yep."

"You won't be with Sir Sanjay Bunker all the time. I'll take over once or perhaps twice. He may want you to go with other men. Do it. Okay? Make sure you lubricate yourself throughout. It is very demanding after two days, and these are long days. There are bottles and sprays in the room where the money is transferred. They'll tell you how to transfer the money Sir Sanjay gives you for your personal services."

San Bandyopadhyay

Bishop Christine Vine asked me how I feel, "I bet it's something similar to being a non-Juror, being here."

I replied, "Really? In 1788 Charles Edward Stuart died and the four Scottish bishops capitulated to the House of Hanover. They had some forty priests left. So there is no road ahead in separation."

"Just thought there might have been a comparison," said Christine.

"I'm still Qualified. I think."

Rose came into the office, followed by a very tall slim woman in a long, backless silver-flesh shiny dress. "Badge!" said Rose, turning, and handed her a white and black one. Christine left.

This woman said, "Last minute, I was told, so that's when I came from a client. I would like to know who else is going to dig around my fanny."

"Mr. James Taylor, Executive Director of Sales of Fast East Electronics Ltd, FEEL. This man is married, with two children, and living near Peterborough, and he has interests in model railways and preservation railways - he's made a considerable investment in preservation railways. When he came up here, yesterday, Bishop Christine initiated him. If you are local, tell him all about the tramway."

"Puff puff into my tunnel."

"I'd be sure if he is steam driven or you need the electric," I said with a smile. She called herself Patsy Mound but then I told her I was Cynthia Grayking.

I hovered about in the corridor but didn't want to speak to anyone else beyond odd hellos. Men and the odd woman were coming out of the lift, and it was their own conference name badges that led to approaches from our accompaniment people. We did not have name badges, just Christine's W and a goose in white and black or red and black.

I found myself alone and waiting: sitting, standing and sitting again. The conference was starting, and I wondered what I would do. But then an Indian man came out of the lift.

"Ah," he said. "Are you the Reverend Linda Jupitas, parish priest here, wife of our manager Keith?" Ah, I was Linda to him.

"Yes." I stood.

"My accompaniment for today, tonight and tomorrow through to Sunday! I am going to keep you busy instead of going to the party."

"Payment, Sir Sanjay," said Christine, coming down the corridor. "Four thousand for Linda and one thousand for me."

I gulped. We didn't go into Rose's office, but another room. There was a computer terminal in there, and seated Clodagh with Alice stood behind her saw to it

that a payment for five thousand was made to Christine. Clodagh then took my card and I was suddenly so much richer, from Christine's account.

"But I am disappointed," Sir Sanjay said.

"Why?" asked Christine.

"Because she is not wearing her cassock and collar."

Christine said, "I'll get mine for her in five minutes."

Alice Krasniqi said, "I'll get it. Collar with it, Christine?"

"Yes. She can hardly wear a cassock out here, San. Breaks", she said.

He and she, not me, worked out suitable times.

Rose came in. "Sir Sanjay, both of your bags are now in the lounge of your suite at 406. Cynthia, your suitcase is there as well. It is one floor up."

Christine said to me, into my ear, "Listen. Don't let me down. It's your purpose to keep him. My cassock will fit you."

Alice returned with it and collar, so I took it.

Christine turned to Sir Sanjay. "Oy!" She snogged him there and then. "Remember, she's not me."

"Come," he said to me, not her.

Sir Sanjay and I went up the elevator one floor, and he stroked my back.

At his door he gave me the key to unlock it. "Come in and shut the door," he said. "Let's unpack, Excuse me if I don't look at you further, until you've put the cassock on."

My dress was off. He was to his word. The cassock was unbuttoned, which meant I had to put it on and button it up.

He did look at me as I fastened the final five upper buttons and put the collar around my neck.

Sir Sanjay approached me. "You are the parish priest." He undressed until he became naked and was physically responding to the fetish costume in front of him. He lowered himself and put his hand and then arm under the cassock to go upwards. He touched me between my legs out of sight. Now he gathered up the material. When I was exposed, he slapped my left inner thigh with the back of his right hand, and so I stood astride. His erect penis went into me, and he began to thrust.

He slobbered his mouth over mine, and his left hand went around to my back. When he stopped pumping and slobbering, semen ran down my right thigh.

"I have been travelling and I would like you to shower me. We have time."

I took him to the bathroom in the suite. First I had to hold him and direct the flow while he pissed into the toilet. Then at the shower, me also naked, I used shampoo and shower gel. A vigorous shower was followed by a good drying - my effort. We shared the supplied hair dryer and staying nude I set about blowing him, in the windy sense, on this king size or more bed.

He said, "As a Hindu I'd always wanted to make love to a female Anglican priest. Put the cassock back on."

"Christine isn't Anglican any more," I said, as I slipped it back on over my head and restored the collar.

"She was never a priest," he said. "And now, from nothing, she is a bishop, organising everything. But I am with you, during these days of this conference. Christine says I must treat you well. Call me San."

"Then tell me about yourself, San."

"Roll that up and sit with your legs apart."

I did as he wanted. "San?"

"I am, what they call, old money and new money in India. Here, I came into insurance. From insurance and shipping insurance, I set up some ventures in the south east and east, including a measuring firm. So here was Serninsea Measuring Services, and later Systematic Measuring Services as the firm added sites."

"Why here?"

"Yes, I thought I could develop on the coast, here, with the dock and with space. There is also a lot of cheap property, industrial and residential. I thought I could do things here at low cost. So with the dock always at risk from silting up, I paid for it being dredged. I might have been wrong about its potential. I know why Keith wants an M16 road around here. I once partnered with Christine in London and here she has bought lots of property and so I have developed my client relationship with her on a more long term basis. Remind me of your maiden name."

"Bode."

"I know that your husband Keith is transferring to live with Ms Mould in Harwich, although he will work in Felixstowe. They've just bought a dog together: that's a long-term commitment. I told both him and my niece Yojana that he is a fool to leave you. So will you call yourself Bode again?"

"No. Jupitas is my working name."

"I am not called Bunker of course, that is an Anglicised working name. My actual surname is Bandyopadhyay. Bandyopadhyay is a Brahmin caste name: Bengali. I am actually Sir San Bandyopadhyay."

"Band - oh - pad - y-eye. Why 'Bunker' then?"

"Golf. Prepare to see a golf course come about nearer Serninsea within five years. Some use Banerjee as my surname, but I don't like this so much. It is another name for Bandyopadhyay. Can I watch you masturbate?"

I said, "It's up to you but the opening session starts very soon."

"I suppose so. Well, I may as well read my notes for ten minutes."

"I can masturbate while you read your notes."

"No, you have looked after me very well already. I'll read some notes alone and see you later. Go away."

"I need to put the dress back on."

"Before you do, bend over and let me look at you from behind." I did this. "You are so inviting - but, yes, later."

So it was dress back on and I went and sat in the corridor. Why was I doing this? I didn't care about San Bandyopadhyay but I still wanted to be in Christine's slipstream over Barman's despite considerable differences of theology. I was more with Abelard than St. Bernard.

San came out and I stood to meet him. "It's not really my sort of conference," he said to me, "but I am interested in what others are doing. There are some measuring device issues to be discussed, but I have people for that anyway. Come on."

We both went into the conference's ongoing opening session, and most in there were paired up. The presentation by Mr. James Taylor, Executive Director of Sales of Fast East Electronics Ltd, FEEL, was on the 'necessity of innovation' - however small - as people wait for the next upgrade. It seemed to me that the marketing need to innovate preceded actual innovation.

When he finished, Patsy Mound in her back and sides revealing silver shiny

dress got up and bent over to kiss both of his cheeks. All I could see were the mounds of her backside, and the shape in between that needed no signpost.

When this session was over, Christine stood up at the front and called for attention. She told everyone. "We come back in here in twenty minutes. Can the hotel crew please bring in the heavy table, two side tables and two of the screens on wheels? Remember that we have an Open Table and anyone can participate in the Divine Economy. We have initiations, and we have the Body Eucharist."

The place was emptied, with Sir San going too, wanting some time alone, and I was the only supplied escort staying in there. A large and long possibly oak table was lifted in by four men, and then two screens of a latticed wood pattern were placed beyond the table ends. Behind them went a side table each. Some linen sheets arrived, placed on the table. Candles in large silver holders were placed on the covered table. Also brought in were bells and a gong with a stick. In came two goblets of wine and bread on a platter.

An older man came in wearing full vestments that had a join at the front, wearing a red and black W goose badge. "You are Cynthia Grayking?"

"I am. Do I know you?"

"I am Bishop William Masters. I do know who you are. You are Linda."

"I can see her in your face: you are Jenny's uncle. I understand that you were the one who persuaded Jenny to get ordained when she became religious. Your vestments are unusual."

"Not quite persuaded her. She would fulfill herself getting ordained. Her process going through with it was rather stressful. I'm surprised you are here."

"No one is more puzzled than I am about me being here," I said.

"Mar Werburga - Bishop Christine Vine - is very directional. Do you think I should join her Church?"

"I haven't got a clue. But your vestments..."

"My niece corresponded with Geoff Virgo, and now Christine says join him and his husband. Is this what you are going to do?"

"No. I'm still ostensibly a curate in the National Church. I'm hiding from some people. I'm feeling a bit uncomfortable, to be honest. I'm about to see something that might work against my sensibilities."

"Do you know why I am doing this - and Pauline will too? First of all, I've always thought the Church was wrong about sex. Prompted by Bishop Christine, I agree with Marcella Althaus-Reid that we need to sexualise theology, change authority, use metaphor and build back the sacred. But also my niece got involved in another grouping and she has become all secretive and yet I cannot join my niece's group because I have had nothing but dismissive remarks from Bishop John Barman about my status, and ministry - and, of course, Pauline's."

"There were two Hindus and a Reformist Jew in it."

"Maybe. Yet sects and cults often reject those closest to them but not in them, like me. But now we have Christine's ministry, and she has spilled the beans to me about Barman, Eyre and Huett. Pauline and I are assisting her."

"A Bishop Pauline?"

"Yes. Are you still a naturist?"

"I am."

"Then my vestments. You will not be shocked when I do this." He pulled at the meeting of the material, held by velcro. Now they were not together, and there in

front of me was his bare chest, penis, naked legs. "Bishops Pauline and Christine have the same. Bishop Christine supplied these."

"I'm not shocked," I said in front of the reveal.

He closed the material by way of the velcro. "Bishop Christine wants you to sit alongside us, next to the screen on the right. We are doing initiations. Christine wants you as a witness to one in particular. I'm told that if Barman and company did it, it would be a romp and for fun. Christine says it should not be entertainment for the unknowing."

"Quite right."

"Pauline and I could be initiated, but we would have to be incardinated into her Church first. We are thinking about it. It would be for another occasion. Are you thinking about it?"

"No. I have a Church career, apparently. I get paid and have a house provided. I assert that we must have a congregation, whereas you independents don't. So the answer is no."

"We have many pastoral encounters, via our funeral and wedding ministries, and through the websites we keep. Ah, here comes the photographer, Leon Agnew. Liberal Catholic Churches do have a habit of photographing everything, to prove they happen."

"I know him."

As a result of this, I asked Christine, entering in her velcro-held split front finery, that I be allowed to sit in the congregation unless wanted specifically. I did not want to wear a clerical collar. I'd sit with Sir San Bandyopadhyay. She agreed.

Hotel Initiation & Communion

Here were three bishops in full regalia stood in front of the large table: William was to our left, Christine in the centre, and Pauline to our right. Twenty-two initiates were gathered to our right in simple white gowns and bare feet, with red and black badges - and one of them was Janet Hayes.

The already initiated were obliged to attend. Also here were people from technical firms like electronics, communications, measuring, sat with their escorts, probably a few with spouses, in what was the congregation.

I found and sat with Sir San Bandyopadhyay. Leon now the photographer got busy and stayed busy. And on this, Bishop Christine said, "Just to note. The photographer is doing the archive. I have with me two guest bishops; I am the representative bishop of the *Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali* or Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia. Bishop Bill Masters is the entirety of the East Angles Liberal Catholic Church; Bishop Pauline Junor is the entirety of the Orthodox Catholic Ministries. We recognise each other as apostolically sound. Bishop Bill, you start. Listen everyone."

Bishop Bill Masters began by saying, "*In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In Christ's Body - the Church, this Mass incorporates a Sacrificial Service of Initiation into the Vanguard of the Church under the guidance of the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali or Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia.*"

Christine Vine stated off-script: "When we speak of a Vanguard of Service, we

do not mean a superior class of Christian. We mean someone who will give sacrifice from their personalities and bodies in the duty of service for the ecstatic salvation of others. This commitment is given by intimate submission, at this service and through subsequent actions. Only bishops of the *Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali* organise the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali*; and their priests may join them as initiators, although guest bishops may assist in the Eucharistic act. Those initiated become members under the authority of the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali* and receive a white Badge of the Werberga Goose in black.

"The initiation service is the equivalent in some other Apostolic Churches as Confirmation, but listen all: we are all theosexual, Christosexual, Spiritsexual beings, aware of our lifespan, bodies, and sexuality for the Vanguard to bring in the Kingdom. *God be praised: in his depth is the source of our corporeal selves; we love Christ and feel his intense love; and the Holy Spirit moves us all over. Through our Communion: gain awareness of our bodies.*"

Bill Masters continued from the script: "*The Master Jesus Christ, having himself published his religion to the Jewish people for the salvation of the world, commissioned his Apostles to complete the work he had begun, by preaching his Gospel to all nations.*"

"*All power,' said he, 'is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.'*"

I had a few problems with that, historically, and the Creed has eternity not the end of the world.

Christine again: "We have here..." (And she read the names of twenty-two people, including Janet Hayes.) "Present to initiate sacramentally is myself, Mar Werburga Bishop Christine Vine."

Bill Masters opened the solemn initiation: "*The candidates must hear this. Initiation into the membership of the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali demands that clergy can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; and that all continue to be instructed into the history and purposes of Liberal Catholicism and the Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali, whereas other initiates more simply assent that, by the grace of God, they will conduct themselves faithfully to observe its general principles, and give service and sacrifice - including that of their very corporeal being - to others .*"

Christine took over: "The candidates have given written consent for the ceremony that involves the transfer of bodily fluid, but we must ask you: *Do you here, in the presence of God, make the solemn promise, vow and consumption that will assent to and confirm your membership of the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali?*"

"We do," they all said together, from the script.

"*If you have acted with others without your neighbour's consent, you should seek forgiveness and make amends, and until you do, you should consider not attending this Mass. Nothing must happen without prior thought and sober consent.*"

Pauline continued: "*Our body is our flesh; our blood is the life flowing around the individual body, and for this we must embrace life with mutual consent and*

positivity. Therefore, initiates: do take the Vanguard Bishop Christine's fluid carefully and healthily. Firstly, go behind that screen, undress and wait."

Bill returned to the participatory liturgy: *"O God, unto whom all bodies be opened, all desires expressed, and where no secrets are hidden; Cleanse us and prepare us by your Holy Spirit, that we may sexually love you and our people, and magnify holiness, through the Christ Body and in his Church. Amen."*

Christine was next: *"Our Corporeal Guide with his feet that walked this soil: have mercy."*

We said *"Christ have mercy."* (So did I.)

Pauline now said, *"Our Corporeal Guide: have mercy."* She continued: *"Glory be to God on high."*

We said, *"And peace with service to all."*

Bill said, *"We praise, we bless, we worship, we glorify, we give thanks through our bodies to God."*

Now Christine asked that, *"Christ remove our wrongful intents; the one who sacrificed for us, show us how we sacrifice for others. Holiness come to us through the grace of God."*

Pauline said, *"Our Corporeal Guide be with you."*

We said, *"And with your Spirit."*

She said, *"Let us pray."*

Bill gave the prayer: *"O God on this day, bless our gathering and the knowledgable at this conference. We humbly beseech you so that in all our thoughts, words, and works, we may ever seek your honour and glory, and study to preserve we the people in wealth, peace, and godliness."*

Next from Christine came the Creed. I expected the Apostles' or the Nicene. *"We believe in Baptism, Initiation, the Holy Eucharist, Absolution, Holy Unction, Holy Matrimony, and Holy Orders. Our Corporeal Guide Christ and his immediate followers gave to His Church a body of teachings and principles we call theo-ethics. Perhaps some of the original teaching has been lost; and some has become obscured with false additions through time. What remains we express as we must, but we seek total divine wisdom and we are, as the Church, given the purpose of interpretation to that end. Developing wisdom is an ancient and modern task. From the Holy Lady Mary comes the World Mother as made real by so many women, and from Mary Magdalen comes a Tower, a watcher, a Leader, a comforter. Under the Universal Church can be absorbed all the beneficent religions and philosophies in a unity of purpose. We believe that God is Love and Service and Truth and Light, given into this Church; that perfect justice will come; and that all God's children shall one day meet with God, however far we stray. We hold to the Majesty of God, the Church-guiding Community of all, and we know that we do serve God best when best we serve our neighbours. So shall God's blessing rest upon us, with peace for evermore. Amen."*

I approved of most of that.

Christine was now doing, what I thought was the equivalent of 'The Peace' and 'Draw near with faith'. *"Everyone! Proceed to kiss one another. Draw to them with faith. What you do, later, in expressing your bodies, and in the exchange of life-fluids, within this building, is under this liturgical charge. Do not let the Devil enter into you. Do your engaging with one another as sacred acts. Offer one another a sign of peace, and ask for a nod for permission to embrace upon flesh and give a*

kiss."

Given that we were sat in rows, our embracing and kissing was necessarily limited. I've been in churches where they hug each other, and it has never convinced me. I kissed San to my right and a woman to my left. The naked initiates behind the screen kissed each other and the bishops went among them temporarily.

Then Bishop Christine, back in position in front of the altar table stated: "And so I, the ordained of this Ecclesia, will transfer part of my living, Spirit-given, life-fluid, to the candidates for initiation, in an Act of Apostolic Life, and then we will all come forward for Communion. Our Lord said, this is my Body or Flesh and this is my Blood or Vitality. Initiation candidates, come and one by one. Your nakedness is a moment of transition: you came into this world with nothing and you will leave with nothing. All your time on this earth you have your body."

The bishops in a line opened their vestments so that their apostolic bodies were somewhat visible but mainly in shadow. Right to left as I looked, Pauline turned and picked up and held the bread, to then turn and face us, Christine did nothing but face us - pushing her open vestments back to reveal breasts and a bald pubic area, and Bill turned and picked up one of the two large chalices of wine and faced us. From the right moving left, each candidate embraced Pauline within her opened vestments, so that bodies met, and consumed some bread. Each then moved to Christine, to embrace her flesh, and place a finger into her pubic area to then suck upon it. To each one she said, "*I initiate you ... into the authority of the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali or Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia. You are now a Werburga Goose, and you give your complete loyalty to the Confraternity.*" After Christine each initiate then moved on to embrace Bill as he held the wine up, to then receive a sip of wine. But one candidate, Janet Hayes herself, bent down and licked Christine's pubic area three times, and some urine went into her mouth. There were some gasps regarding this sight. The candidates each found new tunics with white and black badges on them behind the other lattice screen. The photographer of all this did not add to any sacred sense of the occasion or indeed make a good window.

"Listen and remember," said Christine: "we are theosexual, Christosexual, Spiritsexual, and this act has been inspired by the Holy Spirit."

Now we all went forward, to embrace and take the bread, embrace Christine and touch her pubic zone, and embrace and take the wine. I felt daft hugging with even thin textiles on. I surely had the right to lick Christine's pubic area as Janet had done, and I did so, to gasps in the congegation, but of course Christine did not state the initiation text to me.

The distribution of the elements and bodies ended. San Bandyopadhyay had received communion: the flexibility of being a Hindu! San said he had embraced Christine, but not Bill; a number of men were selective like this given Bill's semi-stiff exposed penis.

Bishop Christine said, "*God, hear our prayers.*"

We all said, "*God hear us.*"

Christine again: "*Those who were initiated are now Werburga Geese and Ganders, and will give their complete loyalty to the Confraternity and support with intimate bodily love other Werburga Geese and Ganders.*"

"Let us pray. *Almighty, eternal and living God, through your gifts of grace at this ceremony give those initiated a renewed sense of purpose in membership under*

the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali, and give them the confidence to use their bodies and life-force in the spreading of service within Your Gospel. Amen."

Bill again: "God be with you."

We all said, "And with your spirit."

He continued: "Almighty and eternal God, we thank you for feeding us, and animating our love, through the work of your Son and our Master Christ Jesus and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by whom we do what is good and acceptable to your divine Majesty. We make our humble supplications unto you to certify everyone of your favour and gracious goodness. Let your Holy Spirit ever guide us; and so lead us in obedience; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, ever one God. Amen."

Christine concluded the ceremony. "In response to the commands of our Master Jesus Christ, you have all participated, by a solemn act of worship before God and this assembly, your dedication to work with your minds and bodies to live the Gospel and go out and make disciples of faith; and may God bless you all. In the name of the God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit."

This was the end. What I noticed, from this most rigid of ecclesiastical persons, was a liberality under the Church as sole guide: the Creed was radically different, there were no scriptural readings, and the prayers were few. This was a most strange and unique sacramentalism. Perhaps nearly a hundred people had touched Christine's pubic area and some non-initiates had inserted a finger. I had participated in this most non-Anglican of liturgical acts. As people left the room, San Bandyopadhyay told me that very soon Janet Hayes, who'd crossed over to Christine, would leave for Hartlepool.

Rest of Hotel Day One

After the service, Christine, still in full vestments, but closed, came to San Bandyopadhyay and me, and suggested, "San, do the painting job after the break."

"I'd be delighted to do this with Linda," he said. "The room has been prepared?"

Christine said, "Of course. You might enjoy this, Linda. I'm just going to remind those initiated not to go to above the casino in the evenings."

San Bandyopadhyay said, "I will not go if I can take Linda to the car showroom at the same time tomorrow night."

"But then do the decent thing, San - I'm telling you - and put another two thousand in my account for Linda."

It seemed an odd payment for a car showroom visit. Was I expected to put six thousand pounds towards a car? So we went along this floor to the office, with Alice Krasniqi arriving there, and that was another two thousand for me.

We arrived at the dining room, where a late lunch was available self-service.

Whether it was against the rules or not, I asked San to excuse me, and went to Janet Hayes, and said to her, "Hello. I'm Linda. I think we are both escapees from the Worshipful Company."

"There'll be spies here."

"Really?"

"They will know you are here. Look, Linda, I'd had enough of the lies and the showman in charge. So much Christianity is trust in people, from trusting the Apostles as in the texts. But I don't trust him. I don't trust Jonathan either and Liz laps Terry up. He's a fraud on this Serninsea Cross brooch, involving his favourite people in the group."

"You left a note before for Adam Magellan."

"Yes."

"How much do you know?" I asked.

"They're not communicating with me like they did. You'll be in special trouble with them, being a priest here. I'm told Sir Sanjay is not going above the casino."

"He's my responsibility. About them, I walked out. Some people were being exploited and I received some rough treatment. Christine has toned things down a bit here."

"She hasn't and she won't. Don't you think it's unusual for a woman to pee into my mouth in front of a crowd?"

"I suppose so."

"Look, we either believe in this thing or we don't. Do you?"

"Well, I sort of..."

"You can't be into half measures. Christine won't take you in properly if you won't step up to the mark. We are extremists but this doesn't take away the decision, the choice. I mean, what is Ken Osis doing in that Worshipful Company? And this thing that priests *must* be involved once selected: Christine says that sacrifice has to be your own decision, and she is right. Everyone has the right to walk away."

"But it is easier if you are unpaid, like she is. I still have to obey these bishops, and it's not as if I can just resign. Look, San is over there and he is looking. Great meeting you. Are you escorting anyone?"

"Actually, no. Here was a group occasion to get initiated. Keep him," she said. "It will deprive Barman of his big financial supporter. But be aware that he and Christine do some weird shit. I admire how she steps up to the task, and will you?"

"He'll be painting me, apparently."

"That's the least of it. I'm going to leave the conference shortly. The twenty-one other initiates are staying. See, I've got a white badge now and yours is still red."

I returned to San, as he was pressing the flesh in the more usual sense, and so started introducing me as Cynthia, while I apologised for seeing Janet. We collected our food, with a touch of the Indian in the tikka fish salad, including raw red onion, cucumber, coriander, lemon, red and green chilli (deseeded and diced). I sat with him on a back table - surprisingly, I thought.

Once people had stopped approaching him, he had a revelation for me. "So I told you earlier that my actual name, my inherited name, is San Bandopadhyay. It is a very special surname because it is the family surname of Tagore. It is of the highest caste, the Brahmins. Although my family is Bengali, the Tagore clan goes back to the Punjab settling on the River Hooghly in the eighth century of the Common Era. Have you heard of Rabindranath Tagore?"

"I've seen it somewhere."

"Look him up. As well as him we are also directly connected with Ram Mohan Roy, a religious figure as well and an educator. Have you heard of him?"

"No, don't know" I said.

"Then I start with Ram Mohan Roy. He was a modern Hindu saying God is one and transcendent: he defined Hinduism as a term, translated the Vedas, co-founded the Calcutta Unitarian Society and founded the Brahmo Samaj, a modernist Hindu group."

"Hey? Them again?"

"Who again?"

"Unitarians. They seem to follow me around. Tiny group, yet keep popping up from nowhere."

"Not as tiny as the handful in Christine's Church. I know only that these two groups I mentioned focus on ethics and social reform. Roy's father followed Shiva and mother Vishnu, so perhaps this is why he transcended both and tried to make Hinduism Western. He is associated with Bristol..."

"Bristol," I said. "Funny."

"...whereas Tagore is associated with some time growing up in Brighton and visiting Staffordshire."

"Not Worthing?"

"No, not Worthing. What is the relevance of that?"

"Sorry, a distraction."

"Hmm. Tagore mixed with Anglicans, Quakers, and gave the Hibbert Lectures in 1930 - they are Unitarian related - and he was an educator on the lines of Fröbel, Dewey and Montessori - stimulation, play, harmony, community. I am told you are interested in this sort of thing, my priest, my Goddess."

"Two of Christine's fellow bishops are in Bristol. Did you just call me 'my Goddess' or is that another?"

"I do want to paint you. I have done this with Christine."

"You paint portraits, figures?"

"No, I want to paint *you*. I have a room set aside. I want you to be the Goddess. I am not interested in the next part of the conference, and so come with me," he said.

Here was an art room, or made into one, because on tables were blue paints in bottles, trays to put the paints in, rollers, and brushes, with water already in large glass jars, and below a whole area of the floor with plastic sheeting on it. I knew what was coming.

So I had to strip off, and get the dress to a safe distance, and he too stripped off. The idea was he was going to cover me in blue paint, the colour of divinity, directly on my body, from face to feet. So we were on the plastic sheeting. He first tipped paint on to a tray and used a spongy roller on me. Then tipping more paint into a tray, he used a rag with a rougher approach with a variant blue. All I had to do was stand there. But clearly what he wanted to do was use his hands, so the paint dribbled down his arms as he rubbed his hands all over my body.

Then he paid attention to my face, so I now was bright blue all over. Oh, he tipped a whole tray of blue over my hair. My precious hairdo was ruined.

Then I had to lay on the sheeting as he used his own body to rub over mine, so he was becoming as blue as me.

I nodded to him, because he had become stiff where it matters. So this was when he entered me. He wanted a divine connection with his Goddess, but I wondered about the blue paint going into me.

While he was busy the door opened and in slipped Janet Hayes. She came

close as San was out of me, incomplete in every way.

"Do you want to come on to me?" I asked Janet.

She smiled. "No. I wanted to look."

"I've gone soft," said Sir San. "I'll photograph."

I wasn't sure about him taking photographs using a camera previously hidden behind an unused jar. At least the colour gave me some kind of disguise as I sat there and then stood up and stretched out my legs. Blue paint was dripping from my forehead close to my eyes.

It did not stop him taking that empty jar and filling it with some runny paint, and told me to sit up. He again tipped it over my hair, and it was all runny. I moved the paint over my eyelids. Janet was still there, with a grin when I opened my eyes.

He then took some darker paint as it was, in a thicker state, and tipped this over my head, and he rubbed it into my hair and all around my face as if he was washing my face.

When I could next look, Janet had gone. Now he took photographs of me, first sat and then stood up facing him.

"You are the colour of the Goddess," he said. "You are the colour of divinity and you are my divine experience."

He was stiff again, and so I lay in the paint on the plastic sheet and he shallow fucked me, probably thinking of avoiding paint going in too deep.

The facilities included a shower, so when he was done we squeezed in there and he rather enjoyed removing the paint from me and indeed me attending to him. The hair showering was extensive; and outside there was a clean space near our clothes to dry ourselves. Outside Janet was back and looking at us.

We carried our clothes in a dash to his suite followed by Janet; inside I made use of a hair dryer and she applied it to us. His hands were all over me but, all of a sudden, he paused.

He told Janet and me to have a half hour away from him. What a blessed relief. I left, dress on, holding my hairbrush from my bag.

"Well, that's me," said Janet. "No scraps for me. What's he paying you?"

I made up an answer: "I'm not allowed to discuss it."

Once she had obtained her baggage we went down to the ground floor and as she left I found a woman behind the desk at the main reception with a chap alongside her. "I'm Cynthia Grayking at the conference," I said. "Is there a garden to sit in or somewhere in the warm air?"

"Yes. The downstairs dining room down there: go past that and there is a back door."

I must have brushed my hair continuously, standing outside the building. Would anyone recognise me? Perhaps I should have stayed blue.

When I arrived back at the third floor there was a message held by Rose Crook. San wanted to be alone longer and had work to do beyond the hotel. Busy man, apparently. Nevertheless I went up a floor to San's (and my) empty suite, only to discover three dresses had been delivered, and three pairs of shiny heeled shoes. The shoes were black, red and blue pairs. One dress was thin flowing red, one was stretchy white and then there was a thin, semi-transparent blue one. Ah, a note stated that the first one was for Christine, and only the two others were for me!

I went from the suite to sit in a social room and look at my phone. Half an hour later I went back.

I put the white dress on, and looked at myself, but busy San came in and indicated that he preferred the blueish translucent dress, for dinner. The blue shoes were next. He understood from Christine that I never wore knickers. Bras were out among the escorts anyway.

So I went away again, in blue, and had nothing to do. How much these clothes had cost him I could only imagine; my measurements having been given to Werburgh Limited.

I wandered around on floor one, where I met a male resident, Alfred Burger. He recognised me. So I went into his suite and did a pastoral visit! Of course he was blinking a lot at my appearance. He was paying out of his savings and property release to live in the hotel and only wished he could have done this earlier. His wife was dead and he just had all meals and laundry provided. If he ran out of money, the local authority would have to pick up his welfare.

"You look *very* attractive, curate: are you staying here?"

"I'm having a day out; I'm here with a friend. Very posh if a little dated, Mr. Burger."

"You're not dated, but you are perhaps posh today."

"The hotel I mean."

"Oh it's not posh, love. I think you've made one resident very happy."

"I'm pleased about that; I should come here more often," I said, lying. What he meant was I made his day showing him impressions of my nipples and bare legs as the dress fell away.

Great. Good move on my part, I did *not* think. Anyway, I made an excuse and left, and went up three floors to the suite. Christine was there and kissing San for her dress and shoes, and we three went down to floor three and to dinner. I said nothing about Alfred. I think about four Anglicans lived there as residents. They probably all knew each other.

At dinner we three had nut cutlets and spicy vegetables (there was a cheese based dish for those with some allergies). San told us that nowadays, by just standing still and doing nothing, he just grew wealth. He had charity outlets but they took only for a small proportion of his income. So, "Do not worry if I spend money on you two."

I told him that the dresses were fabulous and more than I could expect.

He said, "Ah, it is so sad Christine about your split with Terence Barman. Why did that happen? Why do you recommend I don't go there?"

"Because he is not serious," said Christine. "And dishonest. Listen to me on this: you just listen."

"Theological grounds," I said. "Christine is premodern within postmodernism. I'm a modernist, you see, rather like your Tagore Hinduism. I must find out more, San."

"Hmm," said Christine. "Too philosophical by half. The Church gives rise to some seeing its position as pseudo-Platonist."

I said, "So, whereas I think there is the basis for research, for finding history, for something behind texts, despite all the problems, Christine here thinks there are no such foundations; however, out of her perceived breakdown into transient truths, there is this apparent liberty for those like Christine to go back to the Church as its own knowledge and ethic."

"I don't suppose I understand half of it but you're very impressive," said San.

"Linda presumes too much, said Christine. Why do you suppose I have no foundations?"

"Definitely not in this world," I said. "Not the one we have discovered most clearly over the last three hundred years."

"It's not relevant," said Christine.

"Linda," asked San, "is she right about Terence Barman?"

"Yes. He is in it for himself, and appears to be doing one thing while actually doing another. It's what Janet Hayes says too."

"I must paint her," he said.

I continued. "She was available!"

"You're my previous priest and Goddess."

I said, "The other thing is, he builds a reputation for being progressive when he is not, when he is the opposite. I think he and many there exploit. I choose Christine instead."

"You've got one thing right then," said Christine.

San said, "Christine is good with the authorities here. The police go after the pimps and want the prostitutes off the streets. I support you Christine because you will get in control and run the erotic services in the town. I want to be in on this too, if I can help. You give it extra edge."

I said, "My lover, partner, Andrew Magellan, is investigating Bishop Barman. He wants to keep Christine and yourself clear of the consequences."

He said, "Ah. I see."

I went on, "There is Barman's background in the Midlands, and how he came here and who followed him, and the context of a diocese that is going wrong. By the way, I walked out of his Confraternity, or Theatre Players..."

San said, "I am its secular Director, so I am involved."

I said back to him, "Far be it for me to recommend anything, but you could resign. Plus, the diocesan Bishop Imperial is a very nice chap, intellectual too, and supports me, but he's a useless bureaucrat. I find Screddington distasteful, the other suffragan, but that just may be his personality. He may not be so far from your theology, Christine."

"He fails by falling in with Barman. Otherwise..."

"So the whole lot could come crashing down. And I am part of the institution. Stick with Christine, San: she is clearly a good organiser."

While we were eating a certain 'Bobby Sernin' came around the tables looking for people to come to his show at the Blue Diamond Club - Friday and Saturday evening.

Bobby Sernin described his show as: "Near the knuckle: that's all you can see when you get deep into it."

This created an instant problem for Christine, as she was sunsequently approached by numerous white badged Geese saying that their partners would go there and likely want to go to the orgy above the casino.

Christine had to give way, much to her annoyance, but she asked San and me if we would not go. She went away and returned, and we would instead have a trip to see Annie Fenwick, and Christine asked Sir Sanjay if he would speak to her and consider investing in Goosechat as a whole. Then she asked me if she could persuade her Goosechat performer to give up her Bolingbroke Geese membership and transfer to her Weburga Geese instead.

Before leaving the hotel, and in some moments of separation from San, one of the older male business folk approached me. He was Andrew Hindley, from FEEL, a long time expert in semiconductors and lately flat screen technologies. I said I was Cynthia Grayking, who taught English and RE, but not Welsh. He said teaching was difficult and badly paid now, and I agreed and it was why I became part time and doing this escorting as well. I said that I was under pressure to produce results where the statistics did not in the end represent learning. He said he'd thought at first that I'd have been a model in some photographic studio.

"Appreciated," I said, "but I am older than most models."

"May be some time ago," he suggested.

This later comment worried me somewhat.

Narrator: Linda *Visiting Annie at her Workplace* (Friday 2nd August)

One person not seeing Bobby Sernin was Annie Fenwick, earning her 'tips' online. In the blue dress and with San, a taxi took us to the terraced house to see her at work.

One of the other performers there took us to Annie's room, where we two stayed off camera. 'Headgirl' was naked and open legged, masturbating to the sounds that were tips coming in. With a double bulbed vibrator part inserted, each tip produced a vibration of an intensity determined by the amount tipped. Noises were bleeps to cash cascading.

A point came when she put a BRB ('Be Right Back') notice up and cut the sound. Drinking a lot of bottled water she told a fascinated San Bandyopadhyay and me about something they call 'squirting' as a performance.

"Because the police and law know where we are, we're not allowed to urinate straight down. A lot of punters want that. So we get around it by squirting. It's like having an orgasm but what you do is vigorously thrust your fingers in and out and pee through that. It sprays all over the place. But you can only do it so often, otherwise it looks like the cheat that it is."

I thought, here is a really intelligent lass doing this nonsense to earn a crust.

He told her he was thinking of investing some money in Christine's operation, although I knew she didn't need his money.

Annie resumed her online performance and then did one of her sprays high up. Despite spraying away from us we still got wet and she had to apply some kitchen towel to her computer. For the public view she had a towel to dry herself.

In a second BRB I made my pitch for her to join Christine's operation throughout.

"But Barman does orgies, above the casino, and I like moving about different people. Christine is doing pairs, escorts, accompaniment. I'm moe a free agent."

After some time we left, and San said he'd think about investing. But what he wanted was me to impersonate Annie, so (to 'step up to the task') I did and more directly at him. I wasn't just a tart: I was becoming filth.

Christine came in and found the mess in the bathroom, so called upon a night cleaner. She looked at me.

"How am I supposed to say 'no' to him, Christine?"

"I appreciate he is risky."

She told me she didn't want his investment but I'd kept San from the Bolingbroke crowd. She also assumed that Annie wanted to keep her Bolingbroke Geese badge. Quite.

Christine said, "You're not used to it. You have Saturday and through to Sunday morning to endure. After all this, I and Adam's Ann will see that you're all right."

Narrator: Adam *Linda's Whereabouts* (Friday 2nd August)

At the end of the working week, I was in the curate's house checking the landline for messages and going through Linda's computers for various communications. I thought I might sleep over because her bed is a lot more comfortable than mine. However, I had my own message from Peter Marshall via my own secured media on my tablet device.

I've not been spotted by Linda, in my disguises, and dodging behind Kathleen's new friend Winnie Lott who's nicely acting as my escort. Definitely lesbian when in bed with me, when everyone else is humping. Christine welcomed me Thursday. I'll do a presentation for FEEL (electronics), by arrangement from Christine, so long as I declare it as a trick. Linda's been with Sanjay Bunker and he painted her body fifty shades of blue, Christine told Winnie. Janet Hayes got herself sexually initiated by Christine. Winnie and I took communion and hugged Bill Masters and Pauline Junor, respectively (!) as well as touching Christine. Very nice. Sanjay Bunker and Linda have gone to see your screen mate Headgirl to keep Bunker away from Barman's lot. He is taking Linda to the car showroom. It's his pound of flesh to accept Christine's turf only. Linda will find that difficult, even if very well paid. She's on £4000 and presents plus £2000 for the showroom plus thirty quid an hour. I'll go there using my Canadian disguise. I'm monitoring people going between here and above the casino. Some are staying at the hotel just to go to above the casino. There may be a spy in from the other side embedded in the conference.

I put Annie on screen via Goosechat. 'Headgirl' sprayed in the air. I know it's fake but Goosechat won't show them peeing. I sent a few tips.

Keith was milling around as per usual. Quite what he knew and did not know I did not know - and I didn't want to ask him. He was going out later in the evening, and Saturday evening, and I assumed it was to the parties held by the Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players above the casino.

The doorbell rang, this early evening. Stood there, all threat of rain gone, as I opened the door, were Diana de Groot and the Reverend Colin Cromer.

Diana said, "Colin Cromer asked me if I know what has happened to Linda. I've had only one reply - Bristol and London - and the reverend has had none. Do you know any more? Where is she now?"

"Come in anyway."

Keith was in the larger lounge.

"Why are you here?" Colin asked me, sitting down there along with Diana.

"I have a set of keys and so does Keith."

Colin Cromer started mumbling.

"Where is she?" Diana asked.

"I don't know. She went to Bristol."

"A funeral?" asked Colin.

"There has been a death," I said, giving the sort of answer that is non-specific.

Keith then butted in. "I understand she has also gone to Ebbsfleet."

"Ebbsfleet? Why on earth Ebbsfleet?" Colin asked.

"I don't know," Keith answered, "but it seems I am better informed than he is."

I looked at Keith rather severely for playing games; he knew the home base of Christine Vine, but I suspected that he did not want to name her because this would open a route to a group trying to conceal itself.

Diana said, "She rarely goes anywhere without leaving a note about where she has gone. Has she told you, Keith? *Where* in this Ebbsfleet?"

Keith shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, how do you know?" she asked him.

"I don't *know*," Keith said. "But wasn't there someone at Margate who knew someone at Ebbsfleet? She hinted at wanting to meet up. She likes to call in on this person and that."

So Diana asked me, "And do you know anything on these lines? All I know is that there was some woman at this Margate conference that impressed her; I think she was from the south west, an academic student. Perhaps she was the one that died?"

I said, "There was someone like that; she was a postgraduate student, I heard later on. Quite a picture of health, I'd gathered."

"A few people impressed Linda at Margate," said Keith. "And she impressed them."

Colin Cromer said, "Ebbsfleet is more specific. Have you got a name, Keith?"

"She mentioned many female names. There was the Bishop of Margate there and his boss, the Archbishop of All England."

"That's not Ebbsfleet," said Colin. "And the last time I checked, they were both male - though, these days, male and female get a bit indistinct."

I said, "I expected her back sooner than this. She might be back tonight or tomorrow night."

Diana said, "Well, it's not good enough."

Colin Cromer then said, "When we are short of information, it is worth thinking about the person and how they are likely to stand up to adversity or indeed opportunity. The face that she presents to everyone is the confident and intellectual priest with a pastoral sensitivity, and her strength is that she can be forthright and determined if she wants to be. She has personal resistance and loyalty. But her flaws keep surfacing, that she does these sudden badly-advised actions and is aloof even - cannot communicate to others what is concentrated in her head. She fears that she is in the wrong job, and her core beliefs seem to be out of sync with the Church. So is *this* why she has gone absent without leave? She can be so self-centred, even obsessive about her nudity and she seems to dump authority as it suits; this can weaken the institutions around her. She has weakened our institution by how she has lived here, involving you two. What she *needs* is institutional stability

and a period of calm. So what I am asking is whether we think she has hit a crisis point and so she has withdrawn from everyone?"

Diana said, "Ah... Thanks for that."

I said, "I think you may be getting ahead of matters, Reverend Cromer. She didn't strike me as hitting a personal crisis. She turned positive at her ordination."

"But," he asked, "did she just deflate again?"

Keith said, "She had a new sense of a project ahead."

And Colin Cromer added, "That was then. I'm getting no further forward here. I'm going. I just want to say I am not at all happy about what is going on in this house. It's a funny sort of separation, and who is sharing Linda's bed? Not her husband, but you."

Diana said, "Linda was loyal. Keith had the affair: two affairs, probably."

"You think so?" Keith asked.

"I'll stay a bit longer, Reverend Cromer," Diana said, "because, as I said to you, they may be able to say more to me than to you. But just to be sure: she's not gone off to the Bever Wood Naturist Club and everyone's keeping silent?"

"No," said Adam. "Pretty sure. Saxiclite is very unlikely too. She's a member of Bever Wood but it's not a place that would give her informal favours."

Diana said, "Jeremy Symes and Lindy Peacock might. They manage it now."

"My God," said Colin Cromer. "This town is a den of iniquity."

"Bever Wood is in deepest, darkest Nottinghamshire," said Keith.

Colin said to Diana, "If there is anything you *can* report to me afterwards, let me know. This situation is simply not acceptable."

So off he went, and we waited for Diana to say more.

And she did, too. "Right," she began, "there was a group she was looking into, a sex cult, and I think this has something to do with it."

Keith said, "Be careful what you think you know about."

So I said, "Oh I think I know quite a bit."

Diana asked, "Has this group kidnapped her, because she won't go along with them? Is this what's happened?"

"Oh no," said Keith. "She has run away from everything."

"What I know," I said, "is that she became increasingly concerned about it, and wishes to have no more to do with it, whereas they say she must."

"You think you know much when you don't," said Keith.

"Oh, I have very good sources," I said.

Diana asked, "So what is this group exactly?"

I said, "Let's just say it thinks it is the leading force of the Church to open up the future. And it is illiberal and autocratic."

Keith said, "If what you say was correct, it would be a theocracy. And why not? And what I think, Mr. Magellan, is that you are a deliberate and disruptive influence."

"This group," Diana said, "involves Ken Osis, doesn't it, and I think it is like the Freemasons with added sex. She is at risk."

Keith said, "It holds meetings, makes plans, advances the cause, and is only like the Freemasons in that it doesn't like to tell of its particulars."

"Adam," Diana asked, "from what you know, am I right? Is Linda in danger?"

"I don't think so. I think we know that Ebbsfleet is one home of the clergywoman Christine Vine. If he knows she has been to Ebbsfleet then he knows

she has been with Christine. And if that is true, from Bristol to Ebbsfleet, then she is taking time out and will resurface soon."

"What do I know?" asked Keith, waving his left hand.

Diana said, "So you think she is safe, Adam?"

"Most probably, yes."

"Right, well I am going, and you'd better be sure about this. I think you are hiding something, Adam, being a complete shit, but you probably have a reason. But, woe betide if she comes to harm. As for you Keith, I don't trust you one bit. I will tell Mr. Cromer that she is most likely safe."

Diana went. To think Diana had enjoyed both of our sexual organs!

Keith said to me, "I think there is a need for you and me to communicate. Are you investigating us, and, if so, to what end?"

"More true is that Linda was investigating you, that her contact with Stephen and Helen McPhail was information gathering. I don't know all that has been going on, but I know she turned a corner, so to speak."

"Why would she and not you be investigating us?"

"Because that suffragan bishop kept undermining her ministry. Her question was, 'Why is he doing this?' and all investigations start with a question."

"So you are saying she is with Christine. In Ebbsfleet, then."

"Don't try it on with me, Keith Jupitas. You know perfectly well that the Titansea Grand has a parallel event run by Christine Vine for the electronics conference. Christine's is more daytime and yours is evening. Some but not all are going from the Titansea Grand conference to your parties, which is what they used to do - incomers stay at the hotel and go to these dos after the presentations. Yes? Is Barman going to gatecrash the electronics conference?"

"The idea is that people beyond the invited *don't* know what is happening above the casino. It's a very private private. So he won't be declaring his presence in the hotel."

"Christine will be operating a complete offering. No?"

"You're implying that Linda is in Serninsea. Sir Sanjay Bunker is missing too. Perhaps she is his attraction, in that he's wanted to have her especially since she started wearing a clerical collar. And once Jonathan Eyre had her, she was his must-have."

"Anyway, Mr. Jupitas, I am going to occupy the main bedroom tonight, as I may, so we had better get along in a limited manner at least."

"Oh no," he said, "I think I will go on to a nice little coastal establishment north of here. Sharing this place with you only is well beyond the pale."

"I am sure you are very welcome there," I said to Keith, and he was soon out of the house. He will have realised too that his bishop's ship of sex was getting leaky.

Narrator: Linda *Lectures and Presentations* (Saturday 3rd August)

Christine and I woke and I sat up while San between us was chopping wood.

She said, quietly, looking at the ceiling, "I could not have done this without your presence. This is the first one I have organised."

"On this day when Nestorius was exiled I am in exile. I've been turned from a

priest into a whore," I responded.

"Well I am a whore turned into a bishop. I'm still a whore, you still a priest. What has Nestorius got to do with it?"

"Saints days. We follow them. I've a lot of time for non-Roman Empire Christianity."

"He was a heresiarch."

"Later we get the Church of the East. Luminous Religion."

"You need to come down to earth. Here, in this hotel, with him here. Don't wake him."

"The Titansea Grand rather than the Great Oasis of Hibis? What about Bill Masters, Jenny's uncle? He had his todger out. How did he end up doing that?"

"Like you, it's given him a sense of purpose. He has bad theology, of course."

"Everyone but you has bad theology. Pauline was exposed too."

"You kept covered up, after a fashion."

"Situations. When I was a model, at the photographic studio, women would think nothing about talking to men completely naked in the office while the men looked at catalogues and booked them for a photographic session. They shared in cups of tea with the kettle on. It was a communion."

Christine then got up. "Humanism. When he shows you those cars tonight, just say about the best one, 'I like that one.' Make sure you use your disguises."

When the water was flowing, San woke up. He said, "Who's having a shower?"

"Christine. She's so very busy. I'm still here."

"Let's have you then."

He carried on having me while she dressed. Christine looked on. She then left us.

While grinding on he said, "You know that my niece Yojana Asthana is still a Bolingbroke Goose? Christine has not persuaded her over. Do you think I should try?"

"My husband has a special relationship with your niece. Are you all right about that?"

He paused, still inside me. "She should be more sharing but yes I am."

'*She should be more sharing...*' was the new reality. And from her uncle! He went on: "It's splitting SMS, this. Some of us think we should stay with Terry Barman but others have already come over to Christine. Janet Hayes, for example. I don't want this division. There is enough difficulty up here in Serninsea, from a business perspective. I must make a guiding move."

Once he'd come inside me and it ran out, there was a period of lying down and saying little.

Suddenly he said, "It is not exactly a car showroom."

"I gather that much," I said.

"Keith is a fool to lose you, and now he is having to lie to Cheryl Mould. She wants an ordinary husband. I'm not going to promote *her*. She couldn't come into Terry's or Jonathan's group even if she wanted it. She's not management."

I shared the time of brushing teeth and then attended to San in the bath. His need to make calls was my opportunity to use the toilet.

I put on the white dress with red badge and went with him to join all the glamour at breakfast. At last San was attending a presentation, and therefore so did

I.

It seemed to me that the first presentation of the day was no more than a former SMS man, Francis Underhill, justifying his presence. He told of his career and then via banking in the Far East - when he was lucky to get out before the most recent financial crash. Now he marketed electronic products and had been rapidly promoted at FEEL. He could see how companies could be run to maximise innovation into sales, and thus became an executive to do just that. He said there would be ever greater employment in Artificial Intelligence and its rolling out, and thus this is what he was doing. Today factories have few people in them, and in the future there might be one person simply overseeing decisions made by communicating machines. The danger was continuing to promote cheap employment laws, because expensive labour was a route to investment and installing AI, but once installed even cheap labour could not compete.

Then it was the Body Eucharist, which followed the same later pattern as before. Last time I groped via my dress, but thin as it was this was silly. So my dress came off as I walked up, raising some applause, and some others did the same. Good, I thought. About time. This meant being naked hugging Pauline - taking the bread from her, fingering Christine - and she fingered me back, and then hugging Bill - tugging his todger and taking the wine. I put my dress back on before sitting down.

San communed after me, staying dressed. Afterwards, he decided he wanted his own working time again. Seeing him go, Bill Masters came over to me and said Jenny would be present in Serninsea but he hadn't seen her. He talked about his and Pauline's funeral ministry. She came along and told me I have a lovely body and could have started a small trend.

"How old are you both, if I may ask? You don't live locally."

Bill said, "You may. I am fifty five."

"I am sixty," said Pauline.

"You are both very good for your ages."

"Bishop Pauline lives five miles from me," said Bishop Bill.

"And why did Bishop Christine persuade you both to help her?"

Pauline said, "She is going places; she is making a difference. Look at this gathering here. She combines orthodoxy with freshness."

Bill said, "We are looking into the Communion of Jenny's friend, also being in Independent Sacramental Ministry. I don't like Fatima Tamuuz dominating Jenny, as if Fatima has two children and not one, and she and even Elizabeth Huett can't have Jenny's best interests at heart. I wish she and Adam could get back together. Adam would give her stability."

After getting a drink, and hanging about, and not doing any pastoral visiting (!), I thought I'd try to return to San. I went back to the suite, and found a naked Christine on her back on the bathroom floor with a naked San bending his bottom above her face. "Out!" she shouted at me. "Go somewhere else. Listen! Do not come back in anything less than one hour."

Outside the door I heard her tell San that he could have me at the car showroom and not now. What was there to do? Taking the stairs down, I met a chap coming up them. "Hello," he said. "I am Donald Sixsmith, Innovation executive at SMS from Harwich. I know you. Christine said Cynthia Grayking but you are the estranged wife of Keith."

"Yes, I am. Hello."

"Sad about the marriage, but we all knew it down at Harwich. Up here he's still got Yojana Asthana. I don't know how he does it."

"Lying and cheating is sufficient."

"I mean Cheryl has achieved what she wanted; surely he can't keep seeing Yojana like he will again tonight."

"He makes his own bed."

"It's where I'm going: a full-on sacred orgy. Presumably you are not."

"No. A car showroom."

"*The* car showroom? You are joking."

"Why would I joke? I'm going with San..."

"Best of luck with *that*."

Off I went, choosing this time to go downstairs and into a lounge off the main reception, where I found some newspapers for the day. If I met a resident, then sod it. As my mind drifted, I realised that Donald Sixsmith asked me questions he could well pass on above the casino.

"Hello Mrs. Morgan," I said, fifty minutes on.

"Sally, please. Alfred said you had met him, and you are dressed like he said too."

"I thought I'd come back again. I should see you on Sunday. Are you all right for transport?"

"Oh yes. But the circulating minibus is a good idea."

"I thought that. Well, we have to raise money to keep that service going. I'm sorry to be rude but I have an appointment with a member of staff."

"Lovely to see you. I'll tell Alfred and the others."

When I went back to the suite, I got hit with a whiff of air freshener by the door and there was a hotel maid opening windows. Then I got a smell of curry or something. I'd no idea why they'd share a takeaway. That smell got stronger into the adjacent bedroom (with its own door to the corridor outside). The windows were already wide open. I opened the bathroom door and there was water swilling everywhere; Christine was naked and wet including her hair slicked back. She looked at me with eyes wide open. She had a stare at me that was almost vacant. San emerged behind her from the bathroom, with a towel, and she said at him, "You say nothing - *nothing*."

I stood in the water and still got the smell, so I just ran a flannel over my face and rinse my hands. I got the hair dryer for them and became their servant. The maid said she was going, and shook her head.

The three of us arrived at the next talk already begun. The woman said decisions were having to be made about research expenditure and intellectual property rights quickly on very small items. After her there was this Canadian in mirror spectacles, beard and long hair called Graham Bell. He was from an associate company of FEEL, by pre-arrangement. He had a beautiful West Indian assistant - presumably an escort, 'Wonder', sorting some papers. He told us to imagine a piece of paper on which you wrote a letter that was transmitting its content direct to a computer that translated the handwriting. We didn't have to: the West Indian shook a piece of thick paper and she wrote on it. He told us that everything was captured. The paper was a disposable sensitive scanner: its content went straight on screen as the handwriting, and in a flash became editable text. He screwed the source up. Another sheet showed another feature too, where a guest came forward and wrote in

shorthand something of her choice, and the connected computer gave it in longhand instantly as editable text: *I'm looking forward to Bill but not my tax bill.*

However, the Canadian finished by saying, "Don't believe everything you see. These were magic tricks and no more."

Christine said, "Clever chap, that Canadian."

He received a round of applause. We all had a break. I was wondering if I should declare my payments for self-employed tax.

Then I said, "Christine. I may have said too much to a chap called Donald Sixsmith."

"He is one of my undecided executives," said San.

Christine waved over to the Canadian. "Peter. Come over here. Chap called Donald Sixsmith?"

"You bastard!" I said to Peter Marshall.

"Hi Linda. Just watching things, looking at the traffic going to and from above the casino, including him. Adam knows you are here; he is keeping it quiet."

"Well, I am going to this car showroom tonight. I'm going with San here."

"Okay," said Peter.

Then there was a session by Lesley Francis of Fast East Electronics Ltd., explaining the quantum computer. It was a yes yes, no no, yes no, no yes, switching and only resolved by the user into a final yes or no each time. It was a so much faster computer. The more biological or light-based it could be, the better.

Actually, I was starting to lose sense of time and space myself. Next came the evening meal, and a vegetable curry chosen for me by San.

When finished he said, "Follow me."

Narrator: Linda *The Car Showroom and After* (Saturday and Sunday 4th August)

At the suite I put on the blue dress and blue shoes. Then he produced a matching blue headscarf from his bag. "You will also wear a headscarf so you will not be easily recognised."

Well, I thought, in for a pound, in for two thousand. He agreed to me wearing the black wig, spectacles and cap, so the blue headscarf stayed around my neck. A taxi took us to this showroom. San and I walked in.

He said about the best vehicle present in his opinion being the Škoda Kodiak SUV (from 'Sports Utility Vehicle' for rougher terrain) seven seater.

"I like that," I said.

The Audi Q7 was twice as expensive. The British one there was the Land Rover Discovery Sport, which wasn't so expensive.

San said, "We are also displaying the hybrid Mercedes GLE. We move cars to and from a real showroom in Skeathorpe."

Then he said that my scarf would become a blindfold. From now on, I would have to follow instructions. I was genuinely worried. But it went around my eyes, and I felt two hands grasp my bare arms, one for each. I was being led along by a man and a woman into a lift, and out, and into somewhere else. The door was shut.

A remote female voice through a speaker said, "Take the scarf off. Take the cap off. You are inside a small black painted glory booth. You can have on a third or

all of the LED lights on above. There are two cameras above and at shoulder height with their lights. You see you have two bottles of water, a bucket for peeing, and two cushions for your knees. The mirror, with a hook alongside, is on the door wall, and there are two open slots on each of the other three walls. You can see that the dimensions are such that you can put your bottom to one hole while putting your mouth to another. A third man can grope you, but they all can through the second slot on each wall. A further camera may look through a slot.

"In five minutes you will start to service the people who come in for the next three hours, but you can have a short break in one and a half. Swallow with smiles: these men have paid plenty and they are not going to the bishop's party."

This was hard work. I needed the water because the penises made my mouth dry, plus the fact they came in my mouth as well as in or on my rear orifices. There was no ability to lie on my back. Sometimes I gave them the range of my bottom, occasionally I raised my leg up like a nimble dancer to press my orifices to a slot. They looked in when I needed to relieve myself.

I think one of the punters was San himself. I wondered if one of them was - no, surely not - Keith? He'd be at the other party, held at this time. It's just that I recognised his fucking style.

After one and a half hours I sat on the messy floor and paused. A hand came in with a further bottle of water and a gooey caramel filled chocolate bar. It didn't mix well with the sperm that I hadn't quite swallowed.

With penises poked through again, I resumed. I kept up my smiling. My body was messed up with what didn't deposit in my mouth. Fingers went in my orifices.

How many men did I service? Forty? Most made sure they got a longish time with me, but I could hear some muttering to someone saying 'time's up' occasionally. Thus, some withdrew before coming to any conclusion. At one point I was dizzy while a man had his fingers in my shallow vagina and another one stretched to pinch and pull at each breast nipple.

This went on and on and on. My back was aching, my mouth was drying, the cushions were no longer protecting my knees, and my arms and wrists could hardly agitate another man, and I felt like I'd had a meal of sperm. I couldn't see because the flat lenses were spattered but the cameras meant the spectacles and black wig stayed on.

By the time the last man finished, coming in my mouth yet again, five minutes beyond the given time, I was exhausted. My mouth ached, both my orifices had been stretched, and were dripping, and my arms were like tree trunks with pains in both wrists through wanking so many unknown men. I'd been kneeling or standing all that time as well - the only seat was the bucket partially filled with my piss.

A woman came in the booth and took me out to a space that had coloured spot lights above, and two men each held a camera. I was effectively dumped on to a plastic covered raised block with some foam cushioning under the covering, my cap placed to the side. As I lay on my back exhausted, a man in a mask started fucking me, and two also wearing face-coverings came on to my specs gooey face, and then a woman with breasts either side of my face stretched over from behind the platform to cup my face in her plastic gloves-wearing hands. Many unidentifiable wankers unloaded on me, and what was spilt the woman dragged up to my open mouth.

I heard a man tell another that this part was a 'special treat' after the glory

holes. So they'd stayed back and each man was therefore having another ejaculation, and one or two achieved their first. Some came inside my mouth, some over my pubic area. I detected the odd condom, but many didn't bother.

All this went on and on, and I kind of transcended myself into thinking about lying down in the woods at Bever Wood Naturist Centre. I had no option but to keep swallowing, but for effect the woman in gloves spilt part of a bottle of water over my mouth - as if this would help. It was probably more for appearances. My eyes were stinging despite the spectacles.

Finally the fucking ended and the last man dumped his load. The woman assisted me up and held me from one side, and another masked man with a Canadian accent assisted me from the other. I was rested upon on a seat, and I threw off the messy spectacles on to the floor. The man disappeared but the woman stood beside me.

She joined me in a shower that had a seat in it, and I needed that seat as she cleaned me with repeated shampoo, gel and sprayed water. The wig received treatment in there. The recovered spectacles were at last made clear.

She also went on to dry me and I wore my clothing again. San came to collect me. I still had difficulty focussing despite the washed flat spectacles. The wig was wet through and heavy on my head.

We went through the cars display indoors and straight outside into a waiting taxi. Some men loitered outside. My legs ached and my eyes stung. The wig was off once the vehicle moved off. He said, "I have been catching up on my business work!"

Back at the hotel with wig on again I made it to the lift and our suite assisted by San. Pains in my legs had travelled to my somewhat filled stomach, the result of which was I threw up into the suite's toilet. White in my face, I was so exhausted that I crawled out of the dress and into the bed. Lying on my front, San nevertheless entered me from behind - but then almost immediately gave up. I think I fell asleep as soon as he moved off me.

When I woke and needed to go to the toilet again, Christine was asleep in between us. Getting out, I staggered to the toilet, and I did not care that he got out, followed me, and started to stare. As I tried to empty my bowels (nothing there), Christine grabbed him by his arm and yanked him away. I couldn't be bothered even to try to brush my hair afterwards, despite the desire. Christine back in the middle of the bed effectively prevented San from engaging with me.

So day three's morning arrived, and with Christine gone I spread out in the bed while he had me yet again. When he came up to my face, I just opened my mouth and let him do whatever he wanted. After forcing myself up and into the shower, with solidifying aches and pains, he joined me. I dressed silently and the communal breakfast lacked conversation.

The plenary session went past without me taking much in. I gathered that the future was bold, optimistic, cutting edge.

Then came the final Body Eucharist, on Sunday, with some women going forward with their dresses removed - the 'trend' I had begun. When I got to Christine with my dress held in my hand, I dropped to my knees, and stared upwards to her, as if to say, 'How did I get to be like this?'

She turned to face the altar table, squatted and circled her divided buttocks over my head. I stuck my tongue up, a gesture more than anything. When I went

back, dropping the dress back over me, there was applause. (I had also groped Bishops Bill and Pauline.)

At the end, back in the suite, with Christine elsewhere, San had a final feel of me, including me bending over in front of him. He kept groping me as I packed. Then he kissed me before I got away, with my suitcase, wearing the red dress and matching badge, with the cap and specs on, adding the still wet wig, to collect my mobile phone.

Christine caught me and said, "Listen, you did really well. Badge!"

I took the red badge off my red dress, closed the pin and slapped it into her hand.

"I'll see you soon," she said. "That was good, on your knees, in the worship."

"I am knackered again," I said slowly.

At the main reception, a woman said, "Cynthia, a white car outside is for you."

Leon drove me home. I left my disguises with him. Indoors, I ignored Keith, going directly upstairs. I shut the bathroom door, pulled my dress off and kicked away these new shoes. I found some ibuprofen in the cupboard, swallowing three of the rounded tablets, and sat on the bog for a long time. Into my bedroom I finally flopped on to the bed on my front.

At first, in growing stiffness, it felt like I could not sleep. However, when I looked to my left, there was a cold mug of honey coffee with melted down spray cream on top; I started to drink it and, before it was finished, started shaking. I put the mug down, slid under the duvet and fell asleep properly.

Chapter 16 Magic and Liberalism

After the Hotel (Sunday to Monday 5th August)

Adam spoke to Diana in my bedroom while my eyes were shut. "Don't mention to anyone yet the sex cult. I want to reveal it with maximum impact, maximum revelation. For example, if her vicar knew about it now, he wouldn't understand it and they would cover up."

Diana agreed. "But I want to know everything that happened and so far she wants to say nothing."

I said, "I can hear you. I wasn't at that sex cult. I was in the Titansea Grand."

"Why?"

"The less you know before Colin Cromer's here, the better. After he's been, you can visit alone and I'll tell you."

Sunday evening my training vicar called in after Evensong, the duvet covering my boobs. Adam sat in the room. Keith came in and out with drinks, but I told him I didn't want any food.

Colin asked, "What happened? Where have you been?"

Adam then said, "I told him you'd been to Bristol and Ebbsfleet."

"I went to Bristol and then saw a friend at Ebbsfleet. I'm sorry Colin but I am not very well. My body is aching."

"Have you got some virus? You look drained. Are you seeing a doctor?"

Adam said, "I'll get one to come tomorrow."

"Now, I have to say, I spoke with Alfred Burger and Sally Morgan today and they each met you doing some pastoral visiting in the Titansea Grand. This surprised me. She even expected to see you today. You wore a light blue dress that gave Mr. Burger the kinds of thoughts he might have dropped at his age. I don't know why you think this is funny. You spoke about raising money for the minibus with Mrs. Morgan, on Saturday. You were then wearing a white dress displaying your long bare legs. I was talking to Adam here on Friday, with Diana de Groot..."

"Adam has told me," I said.

"...and clearly no one here knew you were in town. Mr. Burger and Mrs. Morgan said you were well."

"I was optimistic."

"About what? Did you do other visiting? Why wasn't I told? There was a conference going on at the two top floors; I don't suppose you had anything to do with that because it was about electronics."

"I met people visiting Serninsea. In the hotel."

"Dressed like a tart?"

Adam said, "Reverend Cromer, please, she's obviously not well."

I said, "The minimal clothing is a kind of half way house among naturists gathering. It's like attending a public wedding where they wear as little as possible. I was tired when back from Ebbsfleet."

"Was there a wedding?"

"There will be one."

"Is this to be in the parish?"

"Do you want people wearing next to nothing in the parish church?"

"No, frankly."

"Colin, I never intended to visit Alfred Burger or Sally Morgan. I'm not going to say, 'Hello Alfred, now get lost,' or similar to Sally am I?"

"Sounds like you were staying there."

"I did, among people I wanted to see, but two parishioners recognised me."

There was a knock on the door but Diana then came straight in and said, "Hello again Reverend Cromer. Linda, cover yourself *please*."

Colin said, "Diana, Linda here was in the hotel at least on Friday and Saturday - in Titanseas. There were naturists there, apparently. You're one of these naturists, Diana. You didn't know about this?"

Diana said, "No, I didn't. I'm going to stay with her, reverend. She's white and looks wiped out."

"Yes," he said. "Linda: you'd better continue to have time off. A sick note can be backdated, if we must. The bishop has said you were absent without leave and he is not happy. Diana, it seems like you'd better ask her what happened and I'll find out at the end of the queue."

Once Colin had gone, Adam said, "You really are a skilled liar."

"I didn't lie."

Diana said, "The Titanseas Grand? Why didn't you contact anyone?"

"Because..."

Adam took over: "Because at an electronics conference, they perversely didn't allow communication outside. New products and ideas. Linda was in the thick of it, as organised by Christine Vine."

"I get it, I think."

"Peter was there, checking Linda was all right."

"Well, if you don't mind, Adam, I will sleep alongside Linda tonight. Aardse knows where I am. Linda can take her time to tell me *everything* that happened."

Adam said, "If you want. I'll go back to mine. I get the sense Linda is a bit pissed off with me."

"I'm not," I said. "I just ache and I feel awful."

So Diana slept alongside me, and waited on me for all my needs. Her one memorable statement was, "It's about time Keith fucked off."

I thought I was hanging from an X frame on a wall being tested out by Stephen McPhail with San Bandopadhyay applying a bullwhip and every time it cracked my skin I tasted sperm. Stephen McPhail approached to repeatedly push his finger into my right shoulder.

Diana was already up and pressing my shoulder. She said, "Monday morning, madam, and there is a person Keith let in the house who wants you to sign documents. Can I tell him to come up?"

"What about?"

"Delivery of a car."

"What?"

He came up. When signing, Diana pulled my duvet up. The documents were for insurance, tax and registration.

When he went, I got up to look out of the window, along with Diana. "A Škoda Kodiaq," she said. I saw Keith and Adam outside of the front door looking at it. Diana said, "You'll be able to drive your *congregation* around in that."

Despite still feeling somewhat soiled, I sat on the bed and physically attacked my hair with the brush. Diana said, "Leave it alone, Linda. You ought to eat something now."

Then I started crying, so Diana decided I indeed needed a doctor. I said, "I don't want a doctor. What am I going to tell him?"

"Linda! That car: what did you do to get that car?"

"A bit."

"A bit? I *bet* it was a bit. Your vicar says you were dressed like a tart, and Christine Vine was organising it. Was it an alternative to the sex cult? Were you providing services? Are you hurting? Is it physical or mental?"

"Mental is physical. But yes."

"Can I see? Show me your body; let me look properly. I've noticed some redness around your crotch."

She had a look around my vagina and anus. "Your doctor needs to advise on this."

Then Christine arrived. Diana said at her, "Get the fuck out of this house. She might not get it, about you, but I do. She needs a doctor. She could be torn," said Diana to Christine.

"Werburgh Ltd. will pay for a private gynaecologist," said Christine outside the room door. "He's up here to do such work."

Diana said, "No! Her GP can come as a matter of urgency."

"Listen. It was very demanding," said Christine. "He's a specialist medic."

"Fuck off Christine," I said. "How could you put me through that?"

"But you were successful. I'm going." Actually, she paused.

"Just go," said Diana. So Christine went.

Diana followed her out, saying things at her.

When Diana came back into the room she said, "Now she has gone, tell me precisely what happened?"

"Leave it."

"I've waited long enough. You jump into things and get damaged. What happened?"

"All right. Sanjay Bunker, you know him. I was his escort within the electronics conference so that he stopped supporting Bishop Barman's party gatherings. They were meeting above the casino. There might have been Eyre and Huett over there. I don't know. I ended up going to this car showroom."

"What car showroom? Start at the beginning."

"Yeah? First off he fucked me in clerical garb. Oh he bathed with me, showered with me, fucked me often, watched me piss and start to shit, painted me all over in blue colours..."

"Painted you all over in blue?"

"Yes. Tins of paint. Big jars. A roller and brushes. I slept each night with him but Christine got in our bed. She did something disgusting with him in the hotel suite and sent me away. And then on the final night at the car showroom I was confined in a box with slits to the outside, with cushions for my knees and only a bucket to sit on and piss in. Perhaps I serviced forty men sticking their penises in. Then most of them had a second go nearby with coloured spot lights above."

"And you did this for Christine Vine?"

"Christine made me the attraction for him to come over to her camp from

Barman's. He wanted to fuck the parish priest."

"So you are quite a volunteer. Are you obsessed with her?"

"It was an alternative to that sex cult. I think I've been paid six thousand pounds, a wage, two dresses, two pairs of shoes and now, it seems, a car I was shown in the fake car showroom. And, as for Christine, she is one religious weirdo."

"Fucking hell," Diana said. "No wonder you are traumatised. Sanjay Bunker. I suppose he thinks everything, everyone, is up for sale."

I said, "I didn't know Sanjay Bunker wasn't his original name. It's a Brahmin linked name, San Bandopadhyay, if I can say it now, and connected to progressive Hindus and yet another encounter with the Unitarian lot Peter is into, but again seemingly completely different."

"Well, that's your field. That and prostitution."

"Christine knew Peter Marshall was there."

"Yes - Adam knew where you were and didn't tell me everything. Go to the police!"

"I consented. I'm sorry but I want to rest and sleep on."

Diana rang in sick herself, and then rang Aardse to say I was continuing to be unwell.

Later she woke me to ask if I would see Peter. Yes, I would see Peter, and so sat up.

"Cover your tits!" Diana instructed. "I'm going to make some light food for you."

She went. Peter came in with Kathryn, Kathleen and this woman Winnie Lott, who'd been his assistant 'Wonder'. He said, "I looked out for you. I arrived on Thursday. The idea was to keep you safe, like you are now. I didn't like what I saw at the car showroom."

"You went there?"

"Yeah."

"Did you know I was in that box?"

"Yeah."

"Were you at that box?"

Kathryn said, "It's all right. He had to blend in."

"Did I suck you or did you fuck me?"

"Does it matter? And I stayed later - 'blended in', as Kathryn says. What they did afterwards was cruel: it was Bunker who wanted the extra session to happen."

"What accent did you use then? Not Canadian?"

"They thought I was Canadian both times."

"San Bandyopadhyay went to do some work."

"You put your bottom to him. Your arse. I saw him. He did actually do some other work, in an office at the fake showroom. If he was at the following session, then he had a mask on."

"And you?"

"I was the one with the anarchist design mask on."

"Not that it matters but did you find any Barman spies?"

"Donald Sixsmith, who was one of his men, was spying for the other side. I think you knew that."

Diana came in with a salad, one without an Indian touch. "I heard that; I'm appalled. Can't we prosecute?"

"I consented," I said again. "I want to move on, if I can."

Peter said, "Well, a long time back you indicated that you wanted you to do a little magic show some time so you could preach against magic."

"Oh yeah."

"Have you been staying supple?" he asked.

"Obviously not well enough."

Diana said, "She's been doing pelvic exercises to correct her arse, and now it's been undone."

"Not entirely," I suggested. "I can look forward."

Peter said, "Exercising might be the way to get you back to good health."

"Nice to meet you, Peter's escort," I said to Winnie a little late.

Kathleen said, "Fortunately, she isn't interested in men."

Winnie smiled.

Peter and the women went, while Diana stayed.

Colin Cromer came in, which I appreciated. He sat with me, and didn't say much. But he did say, "I've defended you against the bishop. I told him you are definitely ill. Do you not keep warm enough, is that it? I'm trying to understand you."

"I keep warm."

While he talked about what he preached the day before, Christine appeared.

"Listen, I've brought my gynaecologist."

"Gynaecologist?" asked Colin Cromer. "Why do you need a gynae... All right, it's personal. We meet again, Christine Vine."

"This gynaecologist is also a doctor," said Christine. "Come in, Dr. Bruce. He is seeing a number of people."

"Ah. You." I said, to Colin Cromer's puzzled look.

"Yes, I can go beyond the usual issues and can prescribe," said this doctor up from London.

Colin then said, "Bishop John asked me to report to him if or when I saw you again, Reverend Vine. And you are right here."

"Tell Bishop Barman what you like."

"Yes," said Colin, "But I think we should clear the room for the doctor."

I said, "You can stay if you want. You know about my sister and you know about me."

"Oh," said Colin. "Well, no, I am a man. And I am going. I'll let myself out. I won't stop and chat to Keith downstairs."

"*He* should leave completely," Diana told Colin.

Colin turned to her and said, "You know what, Mrs de Groot? For the first time in my life, I do not really know what is going on in this town. I used to think I did, but now, faced with a bizarrely behaving colleague, I really haven't a clue. She's clearly ill, she's been dolled up in a hotel over two days when she wasn't ill, and all I know is an electronics conference was happening, and now we have a private gynaecologist here. Does this madness make sense to you?"

"Yes it does, actually."

"Well, I'm glad someone knows, because clearly I am not meant to know. And I have a suspicion, just a faint suspicion, that even my own bishop is being evasive."

"I'd work on that insight," said Diana.

"I would too," said Christine.

"I think, Reverend Vine, the less you say the better."

I said, "Our own bishop is actually Derek Imperial."

"The one round here, the one who is effective, the one who pulls levers and makes things happen, who keeps in touch is Bishop John Barman. Is he concealing things? You two think he is. But you won't tell me, will you?"

"No," said Diana.

"Goodbye then."

"Oh fuck!" I said.

He came back in. "Did you tell me to 'something off?'"

Diana said, "She said, 'Oh fuck,' at the situation."

"The tongue, not of a priest but a harlot," said Colin, who went off more quickly still and down the stairs.

As I opened my legs to Robert Bruce, I said, "Well he's accurate there, at least."

"So we were right that you are an escort," he said, pulling at my vulva opening and shining a torch.

"Yes," I replied.

The upshot of the doctor's investigation was not to use any dilators for a week and he prescribed and gave a cream to be administered to my rear for a small tear. So I asked Christine about her wear and tear, to which she said something like resistance grows with use.

The General Practitioner, Doctor Gujjar, made a flying visit; the upshot was that I was exhausted and should stay in bed. He signed a fitness note, as they are called in contemporary Orwell-speak.

Diana alone was with me in bed when she asked, "Who the hell rings at eleven at night?"

I hoped it was not some needy parishioner. It was Jenny World.

"Thought I would call you, you know. I received information, probably third hand, that you're not very well. But, em, there might be an appointment for me down your end, a ministry in this area. I could do here what we've done in Hartlepool: our parish church becoming fully electronic and online, a fully communicative church."

Somehow the call seemed set-up, like I'd just been to an electronics conference. Nevertheless, I said, "If you are in the area, call around."

"I heard you are with Adam; you are separated from Keith."

"Yes."

"Are you in bed?"

"Yes."

"And is one of them beside you?" It seemed a strange question.

"No."

"Can I talk to Adam?"

"Adam is at his own accommodation tonight."

"Is Keith there then?"

"In his own room."

"Oh. I see. I'm a perpetual curate in Hartlepool."

I gave Jenny Adam's phone numbers, but before she rang off I said, "I met your uncle."

"Has he joined up with Christine Vine?" (This proved what was on her mind.)

"Not fully. He helped her. I did meet Geoff Virgo as well."

"There?" she asked.

"Where do you mean?" I asked back.
 "Oh."
 "Come on Jenny. I know you know. The Titantsea Grand Hotel. But no, I met Geoff in Bristol."
 "Why?"
 "Because I discovered he lived there."
 Diana said, "End this call. I can hear her. She is after information."
 "Who's that. Is she in bed with you?"
 "Yes she is."
 "Who is it?"
 "Just a friend."
 "Are you in a lesbian relationship?"
 Diana said, "Stop the call!"
 "Who is she?" asked Jenny.
 "I am going to go now, Jenny. Nice hearing from you."
 "Who's in bed with you?"
 "A friend, just helping."
 "Linda!" barked Diana.
 "Can I call in?"
 "Of course. Bye Jenny." When she had gone I said, "Calm down, Diana."
 "She's angling."
 "I know: the vacancy is where Jeremy Symes was. I didn't want to tell her about San Bandopadhyay."
 "Like you being a prostitute," Diana said.
 "About him being there, what I did with him."
 She said it more slowly. "Like you being a prostitute." Now she had more to say at a normal pace. "That car outside is four or five times your payment, plus speedy delivery. Are you staying as his client?"
 "I don't ever want to deal with him again," I said.
 "Let's sleep," Diana said. "Come on. We'll see if you can do any pelvic or other exercising tomorrow, and no dilating."
 "I'll arrange to see Jenny; I'd like to see Jenny."

Diana's Private 'House' (Wednesday 7th August)

Diana had nursed me, so to speak, for Monday and Tuesday. People had come in and out, but the effect of Diana with me day and night (in my changed state) was a growing desire for her and certainly less for Christine.

Given the heat, we had no bedding on us. "Good morning Diana. Wednesday today. We'd normally meet in the afternoon."

"I suspect you've actually been awake a while. Why has your hand been on my pubic area?" she asked me.

"Because I'd like to go inside and give you some pleasure."

"You may have become a prostitute, but I have not."

"I'm not charging you anything. Will you let me in?"

"Get your hand off, Linda: I am a happily married woman. Only Aardse goes in

via that door."

"You're a naturist; I see all of you."

"That means you can stand outside and look. It does not mean you can come in."

"Then I shall ring your doorbell. Repeatedly"

"Only children play with doorbells. Grow up."

"Not the little button I want to press."

"You've already pressed your hand on my door."

"Perhaps you should not leave your door open." I removed my speculative hand.

"Look: your indoors might be the equivalent of a transport hub, but my door leads to a private house."

"So what about your gorgeous tits and your raised nipples then?"

"You can admire the soft exteriors and pebbledash, of course you can - but keep your dirty hands off. Perhaps it's time you returned to a house with a door knocker on it."

"That will give you the time to sort your damp course out, Diana. It's obviously in need of replastering."

"It's time you got up. You're meeting Jenny World today. How was *her* damp course the last time you did a survey of *her*?"

"As a new build - twenty-two plus years back - her damp course was rubbish. I don't recall it having the hint of fruit. On my finger."

"You'd bought so many apples and oranges, someone has had to eat them before they went off."

Both of us ended laughing as we alternated the use of the bathroom. She slapped my evacuated arse while I brushed my teeth.

We had breakfast. Diana smiling at me told me that she would meet Patricia and me later. The fruitbowl was nearly empty.

Jenny Meets Up

I managed to park my new air conditioned Škoda Kodiaq SUV outside Café Albert, on the promenade. First, Diana returned to me via her own home, accompanied by Patricia. Jenny was coming - she must have been (still) staying locally.

The new waitress, taking our three so far cake and coffees order, said, "Did I see you at the Titansea Grand? You look familiar."

"No, I don't think so."

"You're not Cynthia?"

"No, I'm Linda."

Then in came Jenny and a woman with a child. Jenny gave each of us a hug, starting with me, but this woman introduced as Fatima Tamuuz shook our hands.

"My five year old is called Akemi," said Fatima to me, who also shook hands from below.

Those three sat at an adjacent table over the aisle. Jenny was in mufti, but her companion wore a clerical collar.

Another waitress attending then asked, "Were you two at the party?"

Jenny said, "Yeah and I want to move back here. The ordinations again made me think I should. Thing is, I realise I must learn to drive - especially when it's rural."

"Jeremy Symes' parish? They are still to interview," I said.

"But I hear from the Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke that Inglemire might get a priest back. If it does, I want to be there. Let's not talk business here."

Diana now interjected, "So, according to those waitresses, you two were above the casino while Linda was in the hotel."

Fatima said, "This is not the place to discuss these sorts of things and not in front of Akemi."

I said, "We could walk outside or something."

The coffees were cold enough to finish rapidly and pay. Leaving the cafe I gave a little hip-level wave to my closer friends, who decided to stay.

Then, outside, hit by the warmth, Fatima with Akemi said, "Linda. You were in the wrong place, at the hotel. You are a parish priest here and it carries a commitment to obey the authorities."

"The diocesan bishop," I said. "Him alone. I'm having no more to do with the Confraternity under Barman, Eyre and Huett. Simple as that."

Fatima asked Jenny, "Are you all right on your own with Linda? I'm going with Akemi off to Caffernere. There's someone there to look after her."

I said, "Yes she is, and you can tell *him* to leave me alone. I'm out of it."

Fatima and her daughter went off, and this left me with Jenny. My one time feisty friend wanted to go to the Titansea Grand, where she was staying. It was a short drive.

"Jenny."

"What?"

"I knew before that you have a role initiating in this Confraternity, under Bishop Barman and the others. I should tell you Adam is investigating. You've got to get out, Jenny, because the whole lot is going to come crashing down."

"And you are under an obligation to join us. They won't let you get away."

We went to the hotel reception and to a woman I'd seen before. Jenny said, "My bag is still in my room."

"Fine," said the woman, who then said, "Are you Cynthia?"

"Yes."

We walked off to the lift. Jenny said, "So that's what you called yourself, *Babooshka*."

"What?"

"As in 'A Pseudonym to fool them', me thinks."

"I still do this!" I said. "I find an appropriate song."

"Kate Bush's *Babooshka*."

"So where did you stay here, Jenny? First floor, eh?" (She pressed that button.)

"While that conference was going on. While you were upstairs. Fatima and I shared a room with Akemi. We've still got it."

A lift and a short walk later she said, "Come into our room." We went in and the door shut, and she lay on the bed, so I lay alongside her.

After a long silence Jenny said, "I hated you for a long time. I think I still do."

"Why?"

"Because then I thought you took me down the wrong road. When I

converted, I could not be a lesbian. I'm not. People said at university that I was strange and on the edge. I don't know how I didn't end up under medical care then. I went to Bede Theological College. I was evangelical and charismatic, and the college authorities became the enemy. It was all the doubting stuff that I know you spout. I continued, and I was mentally patched up and they decided to be compassionate. I had one curacy and then ended up with Fatima, who I've been with her ever since. And with Elizabeth Huett, I've been placed into this Confraternity group. Look at this. My badge is H for Hereteu and a stag. Yours will be a B with a goose, when you get it. Christine didn't give you one of her new Ws did she? Did she break her own rules?"

"No, she didn't, because I am Anglican. I had a red one."

"We missed Sanjay Bunker. How was he?"

"Horrible."

"I still want a parish."

"What is wrong with Hartlepool or Tees in general?"

"Nothing. Time to move on. Fatima cramps my style. She won't let me look after her daughter when she's busy. I know who the dad is - Philip Shrimpton, who fucks anything that moves."

"You want a parish around here? Let me think: it's because Christine has gone. It's to service the Confraternity."

"That's why I might get one."

"Why would you, an evangelical, consider a near-defunct Inglemire, who'd take *anyone*? I mean, it is the sort of parish where an incumbent goes to sleep. If the diocese functioned properly, it would be merged with anywhere to give it some life. Serninsea itself cannot go on like it is: they'll all merge sooner or later. Colin says Serninsea should become a Minster model church, with clergy centred there, but probably after he has retired."

"I don't want to be a curate at the Wilsons' church and vicarage; I don't even like them. Jonathan Eyre can call on several ordained women in Margate and area, but for all his efforts Terry has failed to get any woman to stay in this area to do the main job. Hartlepool still has Fatima and Elizabeth if I leave. This place will have you and me."

"No it won't because it won't get me, Jenny. Adam wants to exclude you when he exposes John Barman through his investigation. If Sanjay Bunker can be out of it, you should be out of it. Adam does not tell me everything, but he is building his dossier. You also lost Janet Hayes. He is probably interviewing her now."

"Then I want to talk to Adam."

"I'm sure he wants to talk to you. He hasn't been at my house for the last few nights, but I've seen him daytimes."

"You were fucking a woman."

"No I wasn't. Diana is a compassionate friend. You met her just now."

"Face is somehow familiar. Was my uncle at Christine's bash?"

"He was indeed. And his partner Pauline."

"She's his friend. Like your Diana, then."

"I think they will be joining Geoff Virgo's Church like Christine did."

"She went all *episcopi vagantes*. Huh."

"Like your uncle."

"Huh. Anyway, you have to join because Ken Osis is all dopey about you and

your friend, and even Maurice Neptune wants more with you. If you want to keep your parish ministry, you'd better knuckle under."

"Jenny, have you been sent to tell me all this? You won't make any difference."

"I said it wouldn't to Terry. Show me the Inglemire parish."

"Don't you know it?"

"It's a long time since I've seen it and I wasn't signed up to the Church then."

So we left the hotel and went to my new car. Inglemire had just three churches: Inglemire itself, Caffemere and Ingle Barrow.

In the SUV Jenny asked me, "Is Adam still married?"

"He is."

"And you live with Adam?"

"He stays over. We have a loose, friendly, sexual relationship."

"Keith will be gone soon."

"He should have gone sooner. Perhaps he's too attracted to Yojana."

"He'll come up to see her, when he's gone. He's a good fuck, your Keith."

"You get around everyone in these groups."

"Too true. I love it. Sarah Deimos, the suffragan in Hartlepool: I'd want her but she has never been interested. I just love sex. I kind of fancy Sarah Deimos, but Liz is gorgeous."

"And a *woman*."

"Look. You're married to Keith, shag Adam, shagged Jonathan Eyre, Ken Osis probably, clothes off with Jeremy Symes..."

"Not in a group: one by one."

"Stephen McPhail, Helen McPhail, Maurice Neptune, Martin Holborn."

"Not exactly relationships by choice."

"By the way, has Ann Dromeghda approved of your relationship with Adam?"

"Yes. And this is Inglemire village proper, as you do know."

The church was locked. We went to Caffemere, and that church was locked. So we went to Ingle Barrow, parking the car and going up the mound into the coastal church - hoping the sea might add a little bit of cool.

Inside it, Jenny said the church gave her the spooks. "One thing when you are going strange is the visions that become real. These imaginings are never pleasant."

I said, "Let's go to the car and let's go to Adam's back in town. Surely you can't operate as a parish priest in this place on your own."

"I don't think I could be here. Not at all," Jenny said. "But you could and we could."

I reflected that had I been on my own I'd have swum in a dyke, given the heat.

Narrator: Adam *Janet Hayes Adds Information* (Wednesday 7th August)

I opened another window and sat down with Janet Hayes in my downstairs office. "Thank you for coming to talk to me. You know that I am investigating John Barman, for a report that I wish to co-ordinate with a report coming out about the National Church's Wytham Diocese: it's a by-word for chaos and inefficiency."

"I don't know anything about that," she said.

"The first time I became aware of you was when you sent a note via my brown recycling bin: that we first thought could have come from Christine Vine. We worked out it was from you, but didn't approach you."

"I was bound by the confidentiality of the group I had joined."

"We were thrown by the use of Linda's ordination service."

"I wondered if it would help keep my anonymity. Barman had some left over and they had a blank page for notes. So he was using them. Waste not want not. He won't have noticed one going missing."

"You've now joined Christine's group. How did that go?"

"I don't know if it means anything because I'll be up in Hartlepool soon. If she takes over Barman's group and other groups, I might have a role up there. But I'm not ordained and can't do anything to start anything up. It was just a statement of intent: out of Barman's outfit and into hers."

"I can assure you that you won't feature in my report. Your evidence will be from a well-connected anonymous source; however, I can't guarantee that a journalist won't find you."

"Eyre and Huett should be exposed as well. Christine has captured Sir Sanjay Bunker."

"Tell me about your life."

"I was born near Southend-on-Sea, at Great Wakering. I'm thirty-five. So after a few jobs I got selling items of model railways at Margate five years back, mainly via the Internet. Another thing about me is I'd been brought up in the National Church, had a lot of boyfriends including in the fellowship group, done some modelling, and had a modelling friend in Southend who became a prostitute. I got paid once for her client going with me, while she was paid to fuck at these nearby stables and I don't mean the farm workers. Some others I met got me involved with some local digs and they were interesting."

"Archaeology?"

"Yes. My family did have an allotment in a historic space. Also, when I moved over the river and east, to Margate, I looked for social groups, including back to the Church. I had been a classic case of confirmation as a leaver's certificate - I was spotted by Bishop Jonathan Eyre. He was always interested in new people into the churches. When he found out about my dodgy past and discovered that I was still single, he fucked me. He didn't mess around, and I was besotted with him. I went to his accommodation over and over again. I took emergency contraception afterwards first time and then got myself properly protected. He won't use condoms, femidoms, anything like that. I'm not shocking you, am I?"

"No. I've heard a lot similar."

"You're a hardened private detective."

"Investigator."

"The bishop recommended that I get a job in Systematic Measuring Services, and so I went further north, to Harwich. Here was an extension of Jonathan's group, which I didn't join until I moved, and it was under this thing called a Confraternity. I assume you know all about this institution. Here he wanted me to fuck around lots of different people. And suddenly I did this marketing course online, and they just made me Marketing Director, from absolutely nothing. Bring it on! Sir Sanjay likes his temporary favourites. He ignored me at the Titansea Grand - I felt a bit put out."

"Divert to him for a minute. What do you know?"

"He wants to dominate a woman, test her to the limit and then some. He'll have some obsession about her. He put the end of a long model railway track into my vagina. Work the rest out yourself. I hardly dare mention other things. The Confraternity attracts extremists, and it makes extremists."

"So you were in SMS."

"The plan was to move me up to Serninsea, temporarily, and then Hartlepool, where I am about to go now. They are all National Church Confraternity locations. We say this, but of course the National Church is ignorant of it. These soon to be five bishops have taken it upon themselves to demand authority. The crazy thing is the model is not theirs: it's Christine's. As you know, she is the brains. Jonathan fucks, Barman is a schemer and fucks, and Elizabeth Huett is the one Anglican nymphomaniac diocesan bishop; she was promoted as capable but adds this to her list. She has heard from Connie Wilson that Linda can swallow the male organ, and both want lessons in technique."

"Huett had her affair with Barman."

"Yes. That started it with her before she was a bishop. There is no reason why they can't marry. Outside constraints they'd probably be a polyamorous couple."

"He's more casual than that," I suggested.

"She has favourites. Jenny World, Fatima Tamuuz, for sure, and has protected Fatima having a daughter unmarried, and there are a number of gay women she visits. She once sought out Sarah Deimos but covered her tracks. Jonathan is married, by the way, though he never mentions his wife in any detail. Sarah Deimos is a lesbian, but you'd never see her in this Vanguard. By the way, since Liz overstepped the line, Sarah realised something is wrong. She knows that her bishop travels here from Middlesbrough a lot, and Sarah is picking up some signals from within Hartlepool. Fatima Tamuuz is a one-time lesbian Muslim and broke away from her family in every way. She too is a woman of extremes, and as a convert she was someone for the National Church to brag about. Sarah of course knows that Fatima looks after Jenny, but Sarah does not know Akemi's father's identity and Fatima refused to disclose the man. Fatima is a controlling lesbian above all others I've ever known. Jenny can't breathe. One reason why Jenny fucks all and sundry like a bitch on heat is to try to create some space from Fatima's control. Fatima has these helpers for Akemi who may not know what Fatima gets up to and so Sarah can be less worried about Akemi. It is one reason why Jenny will be able to come back to her home town, because Fatima knows she is coming under Sarah's increased scrutiny. Fatima would get rid of Jenny to save her own skin."

"So you got out."

"Well, before my move I didn't pay much attention to it: the Serninsea Cross brooch. But coming up here the Wickenby twins and a few others said it must be a fake. It was not found in the right setting. Although it is not a Confraternity matter, it does involve some of its people and reflects Barman's character. The Wilsons do all his dirty work for his favours. Stephen and Helen McPhail made it. They went for maximum authenticity. But you can't beat the scientists."

"What about George Wickenby working for Barman?"

"And more. Barman wanted to recruit the Wickenby twins as models into this Confraternity, but they aren't managers that have had to deal with confidentiality, and, of course, now wouldn't join."

"And George himself?"

"He's outside of it. His nieces know he is a bit of a perv, and their modelling was encouraged by Uncle George. Uncle George did some photographing. He's no Eric Gill. Linda was in that studio years earlier."

"I know."

"You go back with Linda, don't you Adam."

"Are you interviewing me, now?"

"Linda does share some of our views. She was loyal to Keith, but he's pleased that since he 'released' her she's been rather active."

"I have a loose, supporting relationship with Linda. I like that with my women: Ann, Labhaoise, Mary-Ann, Yootha-Ann, Linda. I've a soft spot for Jenny. I don't like the reports I hear about her."

"Jenny does a really good licking around my anus, and I mention that because Martin Holborn found Linda easy to penetrate deep into her anus. Am I shocking you?"

"Nope."

"Barman is hung like a horse. Horses have never interested me, but there are rumours around here of a woman and a dog, if only I could find her to find out. Keith has asked about it; has it come from Linda at all?"

"I haven't got a clue."

"The group frowns on it; something about animals cannot sin but I think some animals are social and even devious. Then I thought the Worshipful Company wasn't into sin. Think instead of leaders, loyalty, ranking, the herd. Doesn't quite add up, does it?"

"The needle has now gone right off the scale."

"You're too timid, Adam. You know that they intend to get Linda back, and their plans for her do not include you?"

"Tell me about their plans for Linda."

"Will you tell her?"

"I tend to see how things play out first. She is very capable at looking after herself. I step in if necessary."

"Historically, I'm told, Inglemire with Ingle Barrow and Caffemere were two separate parishes, but they're not now. The plans are to merge with Serninsea, but Barman has other ideas. He can install Jenny there. There is another option: Jeremy Symes' ex-parish is up for grabs, but that's further north and north west of the Wilsons' - beyond the Marshes. The idea is Jenny looks for a parish, but Linda will be the priest-in-charge, and Jenny her curate. They'll end up in the same vicarage, and Linda will do what Fatima has been doing for quite a while now. Both women will initiate and guide, and without even common tenure Barman will have them where he wants them."

"As I understand it, common tenure isn't as good as the old freehold."

"It's better than being a priest-in-charge. This is why I am talking to you, Mr. Magellan, so that this sort of development is stopped. This movement is supposed to be for people who love God, and who see that sex is part of the vision of divine love. We arrive at divine love by open, consensual, sexual expression."

"Can you explain divine love? I mean, sex to me is self-satisfying."

"When he orgasmed into me, Jonathan Eyre would say, 'For the love of God,' and make direct believing statements. He encouraged me to think divine thoughts when I hit the heights. 'This is what heaven is like,' he said, with him ejaculating into

me. I really believed it. And I still do. And at the hotel: I didn't get naked and lick Christine in front of a crowd of businesspeople without believing what I was doing was special."

"What *about* Christine?"

"I'm not gay, Adam, but I wanted her juice in me. That is communion, Mr. Magellan, and the commitment to join. I'd been with her before - quite a privilege given her prices - and her tongue and fingers were in my vagina and anus working me. She's very strategic: she says she is too expensive but knows just when to offer herself for free. And now she's a bishop chosen by the wider Church. Some time after the initiation she came to my room and took me apart - I orgasmed like never before. You should try it. When you come, praise God. Would you like to fuck? I'd like that, Adam."

"Well what about Maurice Neptune and - oh, I don't know - Ken Osis?"

"Maurice will have his own agenda, so he could break away. Ken Osis is trapped, but they are short of ordained women in this locality. So Linda and Jenny together matter."

"Just some other details. You and Linda shared the same mentor."

"Stephen McPhail. He builds BDSM equipment."

"I suppose some people buy them."

"He makes money building and selling them; he makes money organising plumbers; he makes money plumbing; and she makes money with jewellery and craft. I've been suspended on his contraptions. He's clever."

"Thank you, Janet, and best wishes for your move."

"Get undressed, Adam Magellan."

"Not really."

"I've some spare time, Adam. I'd only like to experience what Linda experiences."

"Thank you, Janet. Enjoy your move."

Jenny Visits Adam

As Janet Hayes left by the front door, Linda and Jenny were arriving. Jenny said to her, "Oh, you. You decided to run before you were pushed."

"Goodbye Jenny," said Janet. "Hello Linda."

The two came in. Jenny wanted to meet Peter, so she and Linda went into the reception room. "I've heard about you. Peter Marshall, eh?"

"Hey?"

Peter said, "Linda: introduce me to this lady."

"The Reverend Jenny World," Linda said. "An old friend of mine. Well, she's forty, like me. By the way, I'm all ready for our magic show, and it could be a good way to get me back into the swing of parish life."

All four of us went to the downstairs kitchen, which Linda had not been in before, that had a small breakfast bar at the wall and two stools. But first, Linda left us for the toilet.

I said, "She does do this."

When Linda appeared again, Peter immediately asked her, "How much did

the SUV cost - immediate delivery?"

"I don't know."

"Normally, £29,000 new, plus rushed delivery, though I suspect it was from the showroom. It is two years old. £24,000."

"He spent £30,000 for those nights with me, plus other purchases? I am staggered."

"What did he do to you?" asked Jenny, but Linda didn't answer.

While I put the kettle on and got the cups to make the drinks, Peter produced a pack cards. Leaving the pack face down, Peter put the top six cards face up. Jenny had to choose one of them. Putting them back on the top of the pack face down, I thought he then (as stated) put the top card to the bottom of the pack and produced only the top five, laying them all face up on the bar. Had the card Jenny thought of been removed?

"Yes."

"What was it?" Peter asked.

"Six of hearts," Jenny said.

"Phew!" he exclaimed.

She said, "That was very clever."

"Well the handling was, but you didn't look."

"I did."

"You looked, Jenny, but you didn't see. That was me at the hotel. I remember you, Jenny, on floor two and you went to the party above the casino."

"I don't know you. I knew the card I chose."

"You were there for a reason," Peter said. "Donald Sixsmith?"

"I know him, of course."

"You two met."

Going to the bottom of the pack he showed her that the first six cards were eight of hearts, six of clubs, seven of diamonds, six of hearts, seven of clubs and eight of spades. The narrative, he said, was removing a card, but the five cards she subsequently saw were the six of diamonds, eight of clubs, seven of hearts, eight of diamonds and six of spades. They were therefore all different cards and only looked like the same ones. Deceived by one missing card, she (and all three of us) hadn't checked the rest. His 'phew' had been further deception along the same lines.

Our drinks were ready.

Peter said he'd do another trick, so we went upstairs to my accommodation. Peter unwrapped a brand new pack of cards. He did a "simple shuffle", as he put it. He turned the pack and displayed the bottom card as the six of hearts.

"Remarkable," Linda said.

"People are impressed when you open a new pack of cards," he said. "Magic is deception. You cannot conjure up magic that isn't prepared. There are no magical powers, just skill in the sense of dexterity and telling a story to put you off the scent."

"Like in the hotel," said Jenny, drinking her coffee. "I know that Linda tried to let Christine achieve everything she wanted. Thirty thousand quid! Sanjay Bunker was separated off from our John Barman - but he wasn't. Christine is deluded."

"Why?" asked Linda.

"They have other shared interests."

"I know," said Adam, "like the Blue Diamond Club. But that's not the point here."

Linda said, perhaps to change the specific subject, "Peter, did you know that this San Bandopadhyay or Sanjay Bunker shares a real surname grouping with a Unitarian founder in the Bengali area?"

"Khasi Hills," said Peter. "The impact locally went into the Khasi Hills, in extreme north east India. Matriarchal area. Unitarian villagers and otherwise Welsh Calvinist missionaries."

"So we have Dracula in Transylvania and, what, *Carry on?*" Linda asked.

Peter asked, "What?"

Jenny said, "She means *"Carry On Up The Khasi."*

I corrected her: "*Carry On Up the Khyber!* Khyber Pass implies arse."

Linda said, "The Khasi of Kalabar, Bungdit Din, Sir Sidney Ruff-Diamond, Private James Widdle, Captain Keene, Brother Belcher, Sergeant Major MacNutt. Soldiers made invincible because they don't need anything under the kilt."

I asked, "Are you busy Jenny?"

"That's why I am here. Talk to Linda and also talk to you. Find out what's going on."

"I've heard you are looking for a parish around here."

Jenny asked, "From Linda?"

"No, from other sources."

"Anyway, I'm staying here tonight."

"Oh, really?" I asked. "My bed isn't exactly suitable."

"Fatima is staying in Caffermere so I am staying here, tonight."

"Fine by me," Linda said. "Thanks for the coffee. Toodle pip!"

Peter said, "Linda, hang on. Practice, please, bending your legs from straight out to bent-under, and be able to swivel your body within a contained space. Can you send me some information on individuals who might come to the show, if ethically allowed: people where someone known had died some time ago? I'll email you a form for you to fill in: their first name, the deceased's name, and trivial things like names of pets and car makes. Then, on the day, let me know who is in the audience."

"Is that ethical?" I asked Peter.

"It will make a point Linda wants to make."

She asked, "What point will I want to make?"

"That hearing from the dead is bunk."

"One-off then," Linda said, always willing to compromise. "And these clothes are coming off in this heat! Bye!"

I said, "So, Jenny: you and me. Go home Peter. Work has ended." Peter went downstairs. We heard the front door go. A few minutes later the front door opened and closed again.

I stood up and started washing the mugs.

Jenny got up and put her arms around me, stretching up on her toes. I felt slightly uncomfortable. "You and me," she said, "were once an item."

"It wasn't easy, Bouncy."

"Well, Linda damaged you, and Ann did."

"I won't have people criticise Ann, Jenny. What are you up to, Bouncy? I mean now."

"Telling you I want you to stop the investigating, Adam."

"Sorry - no can do."

We washed up, to make those mugs available another time soon. Jenny said nothing until they were on the draining board.

Then she said, "I want a parish down here, so don't destroy my chances."

"With Linda, apparently."

"Whoever."

"And not with Fatima Tamuuz?"

"I hate her. Her daughter is lovely."

"You don't hate her. Do you want some grub - the old fish and chips, if it's not too hot?"

"Yeah. Okay."

"Come on then, Bouncy." So we went there, Café Albert, and in fact ate outside, given the heat. Eventually we drifted back to my place, and she went to inspect the bedroom.

She said, "Do you ever wash your duvet cover, pillows, and stuff? And there's all sorts of rubbish in your bedroom."

"Well, I do; had I known... The office sofa is brilliant for sleeping, if you want to go down there."

"Fuck off; I'll sleep in your mucky bed next to you."

When Jenny presented herself to me, removed of all clothing, she was just a bit of a plumper version of her former self that I knew so well. Of course I desired her - Bouncy - and it wasn't long before we did what we used to do. Her on the bed and me kneeling on the carpet, she had this funny action of clamping my head in between her thighs, and tapping her finger on the top of my head. When I could focus close, I recalled her labia when younger - a less bulbous version than now. A couple of fingers went in deep and wet; she was so much tighter as a teenager. The other thing I recalled and she revived was her leaving the bathroom door open and doing her noisy pisses.

I suddenly felt very caring for her; in bed she didn't just fuck and the rest, but clammed herself to me tightly. No covers were needed. This was more tightly than when she did it before she split from me. I uncoupled myself for the loo, but when back she wrapped herself around me again and hard until she loosened with sleep.

She said to me, when back herself from another noisy piss, and clamping on, "You know, like, when you go mad? You go places, and no anchor, freewheeling and crazy journeys, and numbers are shapes and full of colour in 3D, and it always ends up being painful."

I felt sad for her. I expected a long persuasive talk of sorts to drop my investigation. But she had nothing to say, really, in fact about anything. Neither did I. So, when she left, she went off to the hotel, cursing about meeting Fatima again and that she wanted rid of her.

Narrator: Linda Rest (Thursday 8th to Saturday 10th August)

On Thursday 8th August I thought I should attempt to get back into parish life. I felt the requirement to attend Morning Prayer as Colin had restored it. People had been told by Colin that I was ill. Meanwhile he thought the magic show was a good idea to get back into the thick of parish life. He understood it would have a distinctive

Christian message, and we would follow up the use of the church hall with a discussion back at the curate's house. It was *my* project.

Colin said, "I hope the suffragan bishop will be pleased about your initiative. He seems more hostile; I continue to plead your case. He was muttering about a clergy discipline measure but I said you'd been ill a while and you did look ill in bed. Perhaps we're not entitled to know everything about your personal life. And good too to involve that young chap, Peter Marshall. I quite like him, the sort of young man we should attract. But I don't need you yet, and I'm suggesting an extra break. Go to one of these places you stay at; I will come and visit."

I asked Diana if she wanted to come; I asked Adam if he wanted to come. Neither of them did, but I took the advice to go. I wondered if Colin needed me at all. Of course I went to Bever Wood on the 9th. Going there meant I was again out of the way again, and could not be pressured to return to the 'sex cult' that I'd investigated.

I met Jeremy Symes and Lindy Peacock on arrival. I'd no qualms a little later about telling Jeremy about recent events: Christine's hotel endeavour was less secretive than Barman's above the casino, but I spilled all the beans. Jeremy was still suspended, facing no future as a clergyman, and indeed working at Bever Wood.

I wanted to be outside more, and it was by trees or running water that I wanted my mind to be blank. But at a certain spot, I recalled the second part of the car showroom, where my mind took me to Bever Wood for the duration.

The weather was warm: no longer the heat wave. The temperature was around twenty degrees but the outlook was stormy. Still, I could relax.

Next day Jeremy sought me out and found me staring at trees in the woods by the stream outside as before.

"Ah, Jeremy. Do you also reflect here as well as in ministry?" I asked in a one-to-one chat.

"Better. I'm thinking that old certainties can leave us unable to deal with the challenges of today. So Barman may well have done me a favour in making me agree to my suspension. I'm free to reflect and question."

"I'm doing this."

"But you still have the institutional gravity."

"I suppose so; I suppose I saw the Vanguard group as a potential."

"My questions are getting basic. Can we still accept a definition of the divine that was formulated in the fourth century? What of the sin of the first mythical parents? Surely humanity could not be appeased by the sacrificial oblation of God's Son - and it is mythology. We can value both service in virginity - the Marion model - and service with diverse sexuality. No fig leaves."

"I've thought all this."

"Here we're surrounded by reproductive nature giving me an appetite for a new understanding. Thus doctrinal definitions beyond have become a serious obstacle to experiencing wonder. I'd find new metaphors and new language, but I wish to be respectful to what exists and people still use."

"I grant that traditional practice leaves a lot to be desired, but I still want to reinvigorate doctrines via original blessing and the supposed indecent. The Body Eucharist gives the body and real to our actual bodies; indecent theology brings out sexuality."

"They don't reinvigorate. It doesn't matter if John Barman does the Body Eucharist or Christine Vine. It's offensive to the core ritual. I say this even with being

forced out, even with my rethinking."

"I thought it could be a legitimate extension."

"The model is St. Paul's," he said. "I do accept, with the critics, that the Last Supper is not the institution of the Eucharist."

"Oh I agree. But surely rituals can adapt further, as this one has before."

"But that economic version of the love meal - think of the Didache - and a gathering that can be done quickly under repression is and remains the core ritual. Barman, as a bishop distorting the core ritual, should be thrown out for this alone. Christine Vine, of course, is now out, in some group among groups that do all sorts of innovations."

"You have a strong argument."

"Come on. It's more than that. If they knew that Bishop Liz Huett was giving her body fluids to others in an initiation ceremony tied in with the Eucharist - the Eucharist! - do you think they'd just let that be? This lot are secretive not because it is some vanguard but because this is an offensive combination, an offensive distortion. You've participated?"

"With Christine, yes."

"What did she do?"

"She urinated on Janet Hayes. I just licked her, put my finger in her."

"She *peed* on her?"

"It was very brief, so she took in a body fluid into her mouth. I couldn't have done it - I mean presided, if that's the right word. If I'd have started I'd have lost control until my bladder had emptied. Jeremy, you've got a semi."

"Yes and it's wrong."

"It's not wrong!" I said. "Sex is good, and it is divine." (Then I thought of the car showroom, and realised I needed to alter my argument.)

"So what is your view of the core ritual?"

"I think I regard the Eucharist as sufficient and complete. But we need a ritual to affirm the body and involve the body. The body goes through changes, and life does change: we need to recognise that. I affirm the body. So do you. I'd like a ritual to affirm the body going through life. It's why you and I are naked - we affirm the body."

"Well, do that then. But don't offend the core ritual. And as for the Barman group forcing you to join, it can only mean they fail or do violence, and surely violence isn't part of this new route to the Kingdom. As for sex, loyalty matters."

"It wasn't like that when you started - your wife?"

"I agree but I have sex with Lindy and no one else. It was a tragic state of affairs. It needed sorting out. It was sorted out. But we are a faithful couple. I'm far from perfect. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago* reminded us that we are all mixed up from sainthood to evil in the same person:

"From good to evil is one quaver, says the proverb, and correspondingly from evil to good."

"You're not faithful to Adam. These now two groupings in their idealism demand deceit to the monogamous."

"I'm faithful to Adam in the sense that monogamy is not required. We're good pals and fuck-buddies."

"Clergywomen cannot have fuck buddies, especially not to facilitate other sex partners."

"That's what's wrong with it."

"And how much does Colin Cromer know about this innovative suffragan bishop in his neck of the woods?"

"Absolutely nothing. He cannot see it. He wears blinkers."

"He will soon, because if your Adam pal won't expose Barman I will. Barman's mistake is that I've now got nothing to lose. But your Adam is likely to be more effective at sinking Barman - being an independent investigator. If Barman is sunk, and I stay out of it, I might get back into parish ministry, even after my coming divorce, even after working here."

"Are you being paid twice?"

"That's their fault. Suspended on full pay is a coward's deal."

"Jeremy, you have a good strategy. I need a continuing strategy of avoidance until Adam strikes. But Adam wants to time his revelation alongside the anti-bureaucracy report."

"Yes, I look forward with some pleasure to the double-barrel shotgun going off."

Colin Visits (Monday 12th August)

A text from Colin Cromer, my training vicar, said he would like to come and see me at Bever Wood. He would see how well I was doing. I had to admit I was intrigued and even excited about the visit. This was a naturist complex and the authorities expected everyone to remove clothes. I went into the woods by the stream for some more incoherent thoughts about what I was doing lately. Was I going to stay as a priest? I seemed to be hopeless at the job. What else could I do? Jeremy and Lindy had bagged the only available continuous paid work at the centre.

When I was ordained priest I had like a shot of purpose. However, this had gone in a group of extremists who turned what was positive into abuse.

The threat of rain was undelivered. My phone said Colin had arrived so I went and found him sat at reception. He was clothed. I started laughing at his startled face.

"I'm blutterbunded," said Colin, on viewing my body. "I mean, I saw the photographs and your duvet did slip down, but not nothing but flip-flops. Linda, I feel like saying, 'Cover yourself up!' But then here's Lindy, and Jeremy like I've never seen him, and all these people in and out."

"Colin. There are rules here. Go in the cloaks. You can always drape a towel. Take this lot off. You would say, 'In my church follow its rules and customs,' and it's the same here."

"You say more than you intended, I think, about this as your church. Surely they can make an exception for me."

"No. Become enlightened."

"I don't seek this form of enlightenment. You could dress; we could go out."

"I want to show you around. Were you not curious?"

"I do want to understand your world, but you must keep my visit private. I never expected to see my curate like this, in every detail. I don't want you seeing me!"

"It matters nothing to me."

"I'm near retirement. I'm not forty like you are."

"Most of the people here are already retired."

"Yes, I think I have noticed. Defeats my argument, I suppose."

"Well?" I asked.

"I'm sat down and you are a tall woman - your, well, you know, is in my eye-line. And I would never expect you to see me similarly."

Lindy said, "If you're embarrassed, hold the towel in front of you, but if you sit down you must sit on it."

Finally Colin went into the cloaks area, and then emerged, towel hiding his penis, and looking very uncertain.

What followed was a tour, first inside (swimming pool, games rooms, refectory, residential rooms), and then outside: through the area that was connected to a closed coal mine. I took him into the woods.

"Sit on the towel, Colin. You can always get another one if it gets muddy. I'm sitting on mine. It's not such a big deal is it?"

He said, "You're so forward. I held back with Mary Ann George, the Rumanian, and I lacked confidence. There's a sister of a clergyman in the Lake District I'd like to get to know more. I suppose you must get plenty of vitamin D."

"I've been doing exercises for Peter's magic show."

"You promise me there is a Christian message in this."

"Against magick. Believing in the supernatural is not the same as believing in magic."

"I'm surprised you prefer the supernatural. The temporary 1960s argued against it, for 'Being' in existentialism and the 'secular meaning of the gospel' and so on, I recall."

"Van Buren wrote a book of that title. But if you don't have the supernatural, you don't have any secure basis for this and not that. Like the 'kerygma', a drive of textual faith through preaching, is a cop-out."

"So why don't you bang the drum for the supernatural?"

"Because I'm not sure. People prayed for rain but weather systems cause rain."

"But how does doing magic argue against magic?"

"Magic with a k after the c. The magician shows it is deception; there are no magick powers. In the supernatural, the power is without, coming through; in magick, the power is within, coming out."

"Well, I suppose it will be entertaining. How are you feeling?"

"More puzzled than anything."

"Quite. I think you should be back for Sunday. We'll start with light duties and then be up to speed with the magic show. You know, I don't know whether to look at you or avoid looking at you. You are a woman in very good shape. I notice you haven't once looked at my private area."

"Look at me as you would in Serninsea. I look at your eyes."

"And that discussion we had: why you are hairless below... I'm sorry. That's why I looked. Do you not even close your legs?"

"Why?"

"I'm so sorry; this is really intrusive. I am responding: you know I am."

"It really doesn't matter. I'm sat on rough ground: my feet are apart for

stability. Anyway, women's genitalia varies."

"Linda, please."

"I never shave under my arms, but look - no hair."

"Linda, please. I can't deny being a man. I'm sat on the ruddy towel and cannot hide."

"Colin. Rest assured that I've seen so many erections I ignore them."

"Linda, you are incorrigible! Stop it now. I've come here at personal risk to myself. I was curious to see your 'second home', as you call it. This is a sort of Eden. I'm going back to my first home. Eden is a dangerous place: you are temptation."

"You don't want to stay overnight? The sunrise here is very pleasant. There may be a spare room or you can stay with me - we can get to know each other better. We could have a naturist retreat together."

"In the same room?"

"Yes. Why don't we get to know each other better?"

"I don't believe this. Temptress, you are."

"I'm not suggesting even the tiniest sexual contact, Colin. I'm suggesting *relaxing*."

"I give up. I don't even know what to tell the bishop."

"We could have discussed theology further, Colin. We never discuss theology. I'm not sure if that would make you less or more excited."

"Linda!"

"I'm not looking."

"We don't discuss theology when there is the pressing business of running a parish. Too many theories."

"We can discuss here. Which resurrection approach do you prefer: the event, psi or theological?"

"Are they different? What is 'psi'?"

"One is the ordinary believer's given view of the same chap walking around, one is psychological, of motivating visions, and one is theological that frames everything expressed."

"All of them," I hope.

"I don't think you can have all of them. Although there is a big stress on a body, not just a vision, it is a renewed body - goes through walls, disappears - that can only be understood theologically. The visions is the weakest; it's less about visions than explanations."

"Beaten men were faced with defeat," he said.

"It is precisely the beaten, the dispossessed, the lowest, who seek out a messiah, a victorious figure."

"You think too much. I fear I shall vision your body for too long. If I lay on my front you'd see all of my bottom. I'm not very good at discussing. Thanks for the offer, and showing me around, and yourself in this renewed setting."

"Stay!"

"No."

"Back to the cloaks area then, Colin. It's a shame."

As we returned he said, "You're overmused. I'm not against being informed by ideas, but it's about practical implementation. I hear your sermons and they simply do not relate to what people are doing."

"Yes," I agreed.

"Try to be more practical. The magic show - yes, I suppose you will demonstrate things. Keep the explanations simple."

"I'll be more practical, Colin. I'm just not into sequacity like you."

He dressed again, and gave a twenty towards funds. I waved him off, still naked of course. Perhaps things would improve, especially if I could stay out of Barman's clutches and perhaps reset my relationship with Christine.

Rehearsal & Osis (Friday 16th August - Tuesday 20th August)

I returned to Serninsea on 16th August. I chose to behave like a trainee. I sat in on an important wedding Colin conducted on Saturday 17th at 14:30. It was supposed to be my day off! Filippo Arnolfini was marrying Devonne Miniver, and all I did was speak briefly to the best man, Joris Vasari. The Italian community in Serninsea was small, and used to be bigger, but this family was well to do and sold a variety of clothes and a cousin ran a restaurant in town: Batonis'. Colin was pleased to be in a number photographs, sometimes in between bride and groom, but I stayed out. He was pleased they had chosen us, rather than the Roman Catholics, a different outcome from my effort regarding Mr. Youell's funeral. Colin went to the bun fight at Batonis', and I didn't.

He did a very short sermon on the following Sunday and I presided. We were becoming more aware of growing moves of resistance and even chaos regarding the 'inefficiency report' into the diocese. Rumour was that it would be damning, and some were trying to delay it a long time and even stop it.

It frustrated Adam as well, who was back in my bed from Friday night. The selfish thought came that if the Serninsea group under the Confraternity left me alone Adam might not need to publish his exposé.

Saturday, Sunday and Monday, Peter, Kathryn, Kathleen and I did rehearsals for the show that would be in the Church Hall on Tuesday with a follow-up discussion back at my curate's house. I'd been out to buy a red leotard and red tights, for the work as one of Peter's assistants.

The day for the show arrived. I was over previous physical aches and pains and was getting quite supple. My toileting had improved again after setbacks.

The hall was in use during the day, and thus final rehearsals were at my house. Peter had his father's van from Inglemire and with Kathleen had brought in some props for rehearsing at my home. One was a horizontal body-length box on wheels. The face up had a long edge hinged lid to get in (with a fully detachable centre break); there was a bit of a dark well-space at the foot end, with stored feet on sticks to push out. The long far side had one top-hinged centre-break dual door for escapes, with a black cloth that could drop down from inside behind that door. Little bottles to spray gouache red paint were concealed, rapidly removed in my house from use despite the non-stain claim. The feet's toes were radio controlled from a concealed button. So we did some practices with me in my red leotard, sawing me in half, but the tights were abandoned as we could not cover the fake feet and needed to see the toes wiggle. This meant I had to make sure the leotard itself covered my vital places.

Kathleen was around in this final rehearsal, and she had a blue leotard. Peter

said he thought red would be better for her in this trick. Kath's leotard seemed more secure than mine. Hers revealed her belly button within an exposed circle, so I was more concealed at least there. A red one on its way would be the same design - coming from the Arnolfinis!

In the rehearsal we made it like a dance: I was sawn in half, with concealed legs up, the box divided using those centre beaks, with toes wiggling, the box reunited, I rolled out the back and Kathleen got in there.

Peter said, "They make high-end sex dolls out of the same material as those feet."

Satisfied with that performance, they went to get another prop. Brought indoors was a vertical box, person-height, on a wider stand and wheels, and it had three independent front doors vertically and was slid into three connected parts - a zig-zag box.

Kathleen did some practising in that vertical box, going in by one door at the back, and she produced similar (sex doll?) detached feet, her blue leotard and belly button in the middle shifted to our left, and her head stayed to our right. Slid back together, she was able to come out of the back as she went in.

The door bell rang, and Peter went to the door and returned to say it was someone called Ken Osis. So I went to the door alone. Ken Osis was not wearing a clerical collar, very unusually. Despite the hours earlier than the start-time, I asked, "Have you come to watch the show or something? It is in the church hall this evening."

"What show?" Ken Osis asked, "I came to see you. Why are you in a leotard?"

"Why do you want to see me? I mean, in general."

"I want to advise you. Yer could be with me, in the parties, and then yer won't get punished."

"What do you mean, 'punished'?"

"If you don't show willing - I know that they punish clergy. They've decided. You'll be punished."

"I'm not joining up."

"I told you before: no selected clergy fail to join."

"Well, let me be clear: the answer is no, as it was 'no' before regarding you and Diana."

"What is this you are doing? Can anyone come?"

"It is for the parishioners. As I said, it is not here."

Then Peter returned. "Hey, we're busy. Is this man bothering you?"

"Peter, tell this man about your employer and his relationship with solicitors."

"Oh yeah," said Peter. "My boss Adam Magellan is in and out of court very often, and often collects and gives evidence."

I said, "Adam Magellan is investigating the groups under the Confraternity. He is also quick with the solicitors too. So that means they and you leave us alone. Go now - just go. I'm busy."

Ken Osis said, as he turned away, "I'm going. Don't say I didn't warn yer."

Peter added, "And you don't bother her or me again or it's a report on Mr. Magellan's desk for immediate action."

I slammed the front door. "He's pathetic. I think we should get back to the show," I said, "and I want to get this right."

But before we continued there was a call at the door. Had he come back? No,

it was Kathleen's sister Kathryn with a package containing a red leotard from the Arnolfinis. "Thanks," said Kathleen, having come to the door, and the door was shut again with Kathryn apparently going to the church hall.

I needed the loo, and then we decided to rehearse some more. One minute Kath was rehearsing in the blue leotard with belly button exposed and then suddenly she was in a red one with the same exposing circle.

Meanwhile, for anyone coming back to the house afterwards, I prepared glasses to contain supplied red or white grape juice and orange squash, and cups to have coffees at the end, with options of cream, cappuccino and honey in the coffee, and I arranged silver onions and cheese cubes on sticks, along with salmon paste triangular sandwiches, cashews and small salty savoury biscuits. All were covered over, some placed in the fridge. I chucked out the last few apples and oranges.

Kathleen, Peter and I loaded the van back. Off we went to the church hall.

Magic Show and Theology (Tuesday 20th August)

We lugged the props and gear and ourselves into the ready to access church hall. Peter put three bottles of already cooled distilled water into the hall's back room fridge's freezer and a dish into the fridge itself.

There was a simple vertical box that contained a side panel sized enough to hold clothing, but it meant anyone not too fat could hide behind the box with all apertures open. The back door just looked like a simple back when closed; the front door was as a door. I'd not rehearsed with this one.

This box (like the props I'd rehearsed with) was ready; it was put on stage with a white dress to be visible to all on a hanger. The stage curtains were nearly closed - a width of a person open - and the lights were so coloured that Kathleen's brunette hair and my blonde hair looked similar. My red leotard appeared as the same hue: mine was complete; her's showed her belly button, of course.

Kathryn had arrived separately; the twins had procedures by which they kept separate ahead of such performances. Coming together backstage Kathryn had on a light blue leotard with central circular gap. Both women displayed bare legs.

I looked at myself in the mirror in a room behind the stage. The leotard emphasised my slender hips, lengthening my legs. My long blue dress made the contrasting leotard look like underwear: this was the dress I'd used much earlier than Sanjay Bunker's gift, the one to entertain Adam at the restaurant.

At about the allotted time, people came in, paying their two pounds each towards church funds. It was hardly an amount to justify Peter's efforts. He didn't mind: he was learning. Maybe thirty-five had come in. Colin Cromer was present, on the back row of the seats.

We had a brief conference - Kathryn, Kathleen, Peter and me - to confirm limiting apparent costume switches and lessening dramatic entrances for better effect. Then Kathleen put on a red dress over the red leotard; Peter was waiting at the side of the stage curtain.

So the performance began.

I started by saying to the audience that we were going to see some magical

tricks. "It is somewhat like the *Magic Lantern Show* before - a variation - but this time your curate is having a go and I want to refer to miracles in the Gospels. I am definitely *not* implying that Jesus was a conjuror; rather I am saying that the Gospels' miracles are devices in the text for highlighting significance. So I might refer to *some* tricks with a bit of theology." I introduced Peter Marshall.

Peter came on stage and his use of "with Kath's help" sounded single but meant double. "So we are revisiting a few tricks, but if you've ever fancied cutting your curate in half..."

Someone somewhere said, "She'd morph into two of her - instead of making none of her."

I opened the vertical box (unrehearsed!), and inside this was the clear white dress shining in the stage lights. Peter picked the dress up by its hanger, showed it to the audience, put it back, and called Kath in her red dress and seeming red underwear to come on stage. She received some applause and whistles as she stood.

Peter said that not only would she disappear, but she would reappear wearing the dress, and do so instantly.

She went in, he shut the door, I raised up my bare arms, and he opened the door. There was just a red dress hanging instead, and no one inside at all. Then he said, "Ah, Kath's coming," and she came in from the stage side (again?) wearing a white shining dress. Her light blue leotard formed a visible impression of underwear, such that her flash of thigh was like a flash of knickers.

My doubt was about local people surely knowing the Wickenby twins. There was some applause.

I said, "Ladies and gentlemen, when Jesus was transfigured, he turned a glowing white. It was on a hillside and this represented connecting with the prophets and his own future transformation."

I'm not sure that many of these people knew what I was talking about, including the churchgoers.

Peter said he would now create instant ice. 'Kath' (as now in this white dress) carefully brought to him a bottle of water and a flat dish with a tiny amount of dust on it. All he did was pour water, and it formed a tower of ice. It was a simple trick of purity to impurity.

I thought I'd be clever and say, "Some say the Trinity is like water: Ice, water and steam. Ha ha. Actually, if anyone does say that, I will subject them to a long treatise as to why it is *not* so."

I could see a smile on distant Colin Cromer's face.

I overheard one in the audience call out, "Bet you couldn't, right now, turn that into frozen wine."

"No," Peter said, "because a trick is prepared. However, I can easily prepare that one if you want, it's just that I don't want to be sacrilegious."

'Kath' left the stage but I did not, standing to the side. She returned unwrapping a new pack of cards and gave them to Peter, and then she left the stage again.

Peter asked for anyone to come forward. "Marjorie Jack," she called herself. A screen came on to show close up what Madge could see.

He gave "the pack" a quick shuffle. I knew that actually only part of the pack was shuffled. Then he said he had the "whole deck" pretty mixed up and showed it

fanned out with the random order of cards. In fact this left an unfanned fat end. He then gathered them, turned them over, and fanned them out face down.

He asked Madge to select blind any card and show it. Peter looked away as on screen was the three of spades. Peter turned and gathered the cards so that she placed it on the top of the deck. She was then invited to cut the deck and place the bottom portion on to the top portion. He took the pack, turned it over face upwards for them all and it showed the king of spades. Summarising the moves so far, he asked Madge to cut the deck by "roughly half" and she restored a complete block of cards with a "seven" shown. It was a seven of hearts. Peter emphasised that finding a seven was all her own actions. Face down again, Peter asked her to count seven cards off the pack. She flipped over the seventh card, and it was the one she had selected, the three of spades.

I knew that crucially the fat end of the cards had been the hearts in descending order when face up, with a cover card at the end of something different - leading to the card.

Coming from behind the stage I said, "I'm allowed to say that this trick was in fact an exercise in arrangement and mathematics. I'd say that what often strikes us as mysterious and wondrous can still have a mathematical explanation. Fractals are like this: simple equations that translate into fascinating shapes combining the symmetrical and asymmetrical. They strike us as wondrous and satisfying, and I think it is because we know there are rules operating. Card tricks seem incredible and yet follow preparations and mathematical rules."

Peter then said he noticed that there was a dog in the audience. It was Dieter on a lead with Klärchen Sisse. "Let me ask the curate: we haven't rehearsed this have we?"

"What?"

"A card trick with a dog."

"We didn't know there'd be a dog here," I said.

Kath in white came in with a paper bag and Peter gestured for the selected to come towards the stage. Kath left, and I stayed a distance away.

The human and dog came forward and Peter asked Klärchen to give their names and select a card without showing Dieter. She was loving this, almost bouncing up and down on her feet. She selected the eight of hearts and gave it to Peter. He placed it back into the pack and the German Shepherd watched as the whole pack of cards was placed into that bag.

"We shake the magic bag," he said, with Dieter looking as he bought the bag close to the mutt.

Then he asked Klärchen to hold the dog's lead while he removed them and laid the cards out on the stage floor face down.

"Tell your dog to select the card again," said Peter.

"Dieter, find the card you selected."

On screen people saw the dog go among the cards and dip his nose to one in particular, wagging its tail. Klärchen picked it up to reveal the eight of hearts.

"Clever boy," said Klärchen. "How did you do it?"

"The dog did it," said Peter.

The audience clapped. The dog hadn't looked - it had smelt the bag and the card.

Peter then said. "That was a dog. I might, however, become in touch with

God: where people and animals go when they are dead. Would you like some evidence of this?"

Someone called out, "Wouldn't *that* be sacriligious?"

"Whether it is or not, I am getting a 'G'," he said. "Oh, it's an unusual name. Ger... Gertrude? Is there a Gertrude in here?"

Now I left the stage but at the side could see through a gap in the curtain edge. A woman put up her hand. It was Mrs. Carter - to whom I'd once said hello from Adam's high opened window, and she'd later tripped over down there at the pavement. She called out. "My friends call me Gert or Gertie."

"I'm also getting another name, Gertrude. Another unusual name. "L - not Linda, but Louisa. Not Louise. Is it Louise?"

"Louisa."

"Just to say, Gertrude, that we have never met, have we?"

"I might have passed you in the street. But I don't know you."

"Does that name Louisa mean anything to you, er Gertie?"

"She was my sister. Died two years ago."

"That makes sense. Louisa has some words for you, through me. She says she is in a good place now."

Out of sight I started feeling a little concerned about this breach of data protection.

"She says, 'Look after the little dog,' so I'm sure you do. Another dog!"

"I've only had the dog since she died. I didn't know we could bring dogs in here. I take it on the promenade. Louisa doesn't know anything about me having it."

"Oh yes she does. She knows its name," Peter said. "But it is another unusual name. It surely doesn't start with a... with a *zed*, does it?"

Mrs. Carter replied, "Yes it does. Ooh. So what is it then? I bet you can't guess."

I thought this is daft. If he can 'guess' 'z' he can guess the name.

"Louisa tells me it is... It's hard to believe but, em, not 'Za'... 'Zeh'... 'Zel'... *Zelda*?"

"Yes," said his target. People started clapping.

Then Peter relieved me somewhat by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen. I am not in touch with the dead. This is a trick. Believe me: this is a trick I am playing - with Gertrude and anyone else that I may name. And there's an M coming to mind. I don't quite believe it myself, because M seems to stand for Muh or Muhammad. Surely not Muhammad?"

"I like to be called 'Mo'," said a voice. "I might be the only Muhammad here."

"Why would I be thinking 'garden'," Peter asked, "and in Scotland?"

"I don't know," he replied.

"Macintosh? Do you wear a Mac?"

"You're confusing it with my name. It's McArden, thanks to my mother marrying a Scot."

"In Scotland?"

"No."

"But I get the sense that you've not been here long."

"No I haven't; that is correct."

"Your mother is deceased, isn't she? "

"Yes."

"She could be messaging me. Was your father Muslim?"

"She was. He is. He converted."

"My signal from you is that someone didn't. *You* didn't. It's you, isn't it. You are not a Muslim."

"You are wrong: I did convert. I am a Christian convert. Since being here."

I heard someone say, "Oh good." Peter had told me earlier that the best cold readers and previously informed make small mistakes, so it all sounds more authentic.

"And I am getting an E. Type of E. Not a pet, but thinking of a big cat. Why a big cat and wheels, Mo?"

"My father, who is alive, loves his E-Type Jag and says I can have it only when he stops driving."

"Thank you Mo. Once again, everyone, this is a trick, although I have never met you - yes? - and I did not say your mother is in Paradise and only 'could be' talking to me, but I am sure that she is in Paradise."

This received further clapping. I assumed that no one supposed that I had supplied the information.

'Kath' re-entered the stage with blue leotard on alone with bare middle and bare feet. This time a box was supposedly going to divide her up. She backed in wheeling it with the three doors open as one. Peter closed the doors on her and presented the blades so that people didn't see the blade was less wide than the box with the blade handles remaining beyond. And so she performed an out of sight contortion aided by false feet and lower legs with the bottom door opened temporarily before she came back together. Except that with the box back together, he threw the blades to the side and waved his arms about for further effect, and Kath had a red leotard on. What had happened was a back way door facilitated a final switch. Kath received a few more whistles from the small crowd.

Backstage I had removed all clothing down to my red leotard and waited. Feeling self-conscious about the coming trick, I had a sudden involuntary itch on my backside, where the spot had been, so I just ran my hand down my buttock.

With Kath removing her large prop to off-stage, Peter further said, "For your finale I am now going to cut your vicar in half."

"He's not here," said one chap, "but it's a good idea."

"I am," said Colin, on the back row, "and I am staying here in one piece." There was laughter.

"Curate," one woman then said.

I thus appeared in red leotard to some gasps and I confirmed, "Yes, I'm the curate."

One chap was deliberately coughing (I looked at him) and a few ladies chuckled a little. Colin Cromer had his hand at his forehead, as if shielding his eyes. Why was he doing that when he had seen me naked so recently?

'Kath', with her red leotard on, came on - without gasps - pushing the wheeled horizontal box with a saw on top, which indeed people were looking at from slightly below. She looked at me, and smirked a little.

The magician directed me to get into the box. As I approached the box, with my back to the audience, I could hear even more gasps and mutterings.

I managed all the contortions properly, as in rehearsal, and this time as his saw moved, with sawing noises coming through the speakers, I pressed buttons so

little bottles of wet gouache red paint sprayed out. I knew that he was dropping sawdust on to the stage from his hand. I refrained from pressing the twiddle-toes button once the saw was going through. He divided the box and angled it so that the opening side was concealed at the rear.

I heard clapping because I was now apparently divided into two.

"Time to go home!" someone shouted. This was the point, outside, that red leotard 'Kath' will have walked off stage.

"I am going to resurrect her," Peter proclaimed. "I'll put her back together."

Someone else shouted, "Don't, and then we won't aff to 'ave any more of 'er puzzling sermons."

Nevertheless, he put the box together, but I did not twiddle the toes. "This is not three days, and probably not much more than three minutes, to bring your curate back to life."

I'd pushed the reunited back open, and the cloth came down to the ground in the shadow of the box, and that was enough for still red leotard Kath to crawl directly behind to arrive, so I slivered out, and she went over me, and she was very quickly in and the toes started to move. My job was to keep behind the black cloth, as red leotard wearing Kath got out into public sight and, after applause, she pushed the box off the stage with me crawling behind the cloth. The adjustment had been not to repeat the costume switch here.

The box off stage, she asked the audience, "Have I just been divided into two?"

This was my cue to come on to the stage from the side and say, "No, I was."

Some chap called out, "You might have concealed yourself a bit better."

I thought this meant I was seen crawling behind the black cloth. It is not what he meant. Peter and I glanced at each other, and Kath got the other meaning as well.

Regardless, I said, "To conclude. These were prepared magic tricks. Jesus was not a magician. The miracles are pointers making statements of wider belief and expectation. Our brief little show is followed by a discussion directly back at my house in Sutton, for those who want it. If you are early, someone will answer the door."

The audience departed, three of us cleared away and loaded the van; Kathryn would wait at the hall for half an hour, and vanish that way, but we three went to my house to receive interested parishioners.

Car Crash of a Discussion

People came to my curate's house in ones, twos and threes. Soon Peter arrived with Kathleen (he said) in casual clothing. My blue dress was back on, which meant back at the house I presented a leg every so often and what may have looked like brief flashes of red knickers.

Interestingly, in the kitchen, Kathleen said to me, "Uncle George says there's no work future in being a magician's assistant, even if Peter does this rather than working for his competitor. He said we'd be better off modelling as twins, like in advertising or even glamour."

"You do as you see fit," was my response.

"Kathryn only appeared in *The Red Giant* so that we are known outside this town as one person."

"You're both archaeologists."

"All that archaeology teaches is that organic bodies decompose. And that's also the jobs market today. I don't believe the jobless figures for one minute."

"Neither do I."

Peter showed the gathered crowd of about sixteen (not including Colin the vicar) how a coin in his hand rubbed on to a bottle then appeared inside a bottle. He'd shown it to me before - the coin inside resides at the back in the bevelled bottom, and no one sees it there until an emptied hand that still contains (but doesn't) a coin is rubbed against the bottle and the coin is brought around the bevel to the front inside. Thus a coin had "passed through" the glass.

An idea had been for me to do the trick, but I didn't have the dexterity or confidence.

When he'd done that, I introduced Peter as: "a trainee magician with his friend as assistant, Kath."

One of the gathering in the lounge, church attender Tom Bowler, said, "Reverend. We know Kathryn and Kathleen are twins, so that's how they did it. Those of us who knew kept it quiet."

Kathleen dropped her head without comment.

"There's a biblical lesson there," I said. "Even Jesus was not able to 'perform' in his own back yard. Remember that? The locals knew him too well to have the power and charisma he had elsewhere."

Another, Catherine Mould - the very mother of Cheryl Mould - asked, "Is it right that a girl who appeared topless in *The Red Giant* should be working in the church hall?"

"Er, yes, everyone has the right to work, and note that only one of the twins appeared in the paper. So which one shall we ban?"

"That was my sister," said Kathleen, looking across at Catherine Mould.

As I'd intended, I declared that: "Jesus will have rejected what we might call sorcery, or doing tricks to prove the act of God. He left such only to God - as he saw it." The gathered parishioners did not look happy. "This here is a discussion session, so please comment."

Tom Bowler said, "Jesus as God knew everything, and Jesus as God could make anything happen."

"He walked on water," said Mrs. Gert Carter. "This young man might be able to read my mind but you can't walk on water. That's physical, that is."

Catherine Mould said, "It's camera angles and perspex when a magician walks on water, but Jesus didn't need any of that."

Mo McArden, the featured Muslim convert to Christianity, then said, "All these tricks were revealed on television, but none of Jesus's tricks have ever been explained."

Mrs Carter added, "He pulled up lots of fish where there were none."

"That was a post-resurrection story," I said, "which has a category of its own, a meaning, as within a diocesan report: *The Power, the Mission, to Gather in the People*."

"You mean you don't believe it, Reverend Linda," said the man who'd

coughed earlier in the hall. "It says it very simply."

I said to him: "I don't remember your name."

"Ralph. My pals call me Phil, second name."

"Your surname?"

"Thicket. I bet you don't believe in the Virgin Birth either. Or the Feeding of the Five Thousand. *Poetic* is it?"

"I don't think it says what it simply says: it is saying something about purpose and intention. So the feeding of the four and five thousand males plus others are stories about bounty and plenty in the Kingdom of God and what to expect - no famine, even with little food - and the early Church will have seen it as a love meal foundation. You end up with the twelve baskets: the twelve tribes of Israel."

"Well I think he did what it says he did," said Tom Bowler. "You're the magician, Peter: you could do these tricks. But I bet you can't produce that food from nowhere like Jesus did."

"Oh, and it's 'virginal conception'," I said.

"I could do all of these miracles," said Peter, "with props and preparation. I don't think that's what Jesus was doing, or could have been doing. No, he didn't arrange perspex and pay actors to walk on water. The trouble with a lot of TV magic is that the audience are in on it. I'm impressed with Derren Brown, and he is very secular."

"No, Jesus could just make it happen," said Tom.

"How?" asked Peter.

Ralph added: "Peter, in your magic box the assistant's not going to get pregnant without you doing something."

"That might be offensive," I said.

Another face I'd seen said, "It's miracles not magic." (I could not recall his name either.)

I looked at him directly. "I'd also make that distinction, er..."

"I'm Jim. Jim Bill Sayle, seeing as we are declaring middle names."

"Hello Jim," I said.

"You're a bit sexy aren't you, vicar."

"Curate," said Mrs. Carter, "I may say so, Reverend Jupitas, you usually dress properly, like even a cassock on when I saw you that time leaning out of the Mr Magellan's window."

Peter started to grin and looked at Kathleen. I was relieved that Klärchen Sisse hadn't come along, with or without her dog.

"You can visit me any time," said Ralph.

Mo then said, "Peter, I don't know how you read my mind. But we don't need to know how Jesus did his *miracles*, as Jim said. Cosmic energy, probably."

Peter continued: "Well, let's consider that. For matter to form you need energy, huge quantities of it, and tricks that reproduce miracles don't do that but deceive. Take *Star Trek* as in the sheer amount of energy you'd need to re-clone people at the other end of energising, never mind for the data information saved of those individuals. Anyway, I don't think Linda is talking about deception and Jesus does not convert energy into matter. Linda, we never completed our discussion on resurrection, information retention and black holes."

"We must resume it," I said.

"God made the world, everything, so making miracles is just a bit more

energy," was the reply from Ralph.

"It would be utterly explosive," said Peter.

Mo McArden said, "I thought I read Christ as Wisdom making the universe. And it was explosive."

"Anyway," Peter said, "I'm not a believer."

"You are not?" asked Tom.

Mrs. Carter said, "You have to believe something."

"Pagan and a bit Buddhist."

Mrs Carter asked, "Pagan? Didn't we try to abolish them?"

Ralph said, "Drowning them by ducking stools."

"No," I replied.

Peter affirmed, "Buddhist as well, about training the mind into both concentration and spiritual peace."

I said, "You go online don't you, Peter? So much religion can be online these days."

"*OURS*," he replied.

"People *are* on it for hours," said Mrs. Carter.

"No, as in 'our' - mine and yours," said Peter.

Our what?" asked Gert Carter.

"Online Unitarian Renewal Scene," Peter declared. "*OURS* also means us, each of us are different but us - as one."

I said, remembering the chapel visit, and yet unsure because of the Rumanians and possibly Indians, "Unitarians allow their beliefs to change, don't they?"

"Yes; each express their own beliefs that are '*OURS*'."

Mrs Carter followed up: "So you don't believe in miracles, curate; you are trying to tell us that miracles don't exist."

Tom Bowler then asked, "Uni what? Do they read minds like you do then?"

Peter replied, "I don't think the miracles did exist, but they weren't tricks either. People then told stories full of signs and wonders, expecting a lot."

"You see, I think," I suggested, "that although we believers say the same doctrines, what we actually mean by them changes over time. It must do, otherwise we'd never live in today's world."

"Jesus was eternal," said one middle-aged woman, "and not in the past. And don't we say it's one unchanged faith delivered by the saints? Sheila Gillespie, if you've forgotten."

Peter said, "It did change. What about Martin Luther? You know, he pinned his ninety-five theses? The Protestant Reformation?"

I said, "There was also the whole formative period of the early Church."

It was Madge Jack who said, "On that documentary it said the Protestants wanted to get the early faith back."

So I said, "What they wanted to do, and what they actually did, might be rather different."

People were muttering. "Jesus came from heaven," said Gert Carter, "so he could do anything. And Louisa my sister is in heaven. That I know."

Peter said, "Online, we in *OURS* mentioned the *Infancy Gospels of Thomas*. Jesus is thought there to be full of magical powers, but he's a very naughty boy with them and needs training by his parents after all sorts of complaints."

"Well that's rubbish," said the coughing man Ralph Thickett, "because Jesus was without sin. Unlike curates."

"So he never grew up?" asked Peter.

"Not in our sense, no," said the man. "That must be so."

I said, "Oh dear. I'm sure he had to learn. He was fully human as well. And what about when he dismisses the Syrophenician woman and her daughter in Mark and Matthew and the woman says even dogs would be treated better? Doesn't then the adult Jesus change his mind, heals her distant daughter and thus he learns something?"

"He was testing her," said the other man.

"That's not what it says or implies," I said.

"Well why do you follow him then?" said Tom Bowler, "assuming you do follow him, like."

"It sounds to me like you don't," said Mrs. Carter. "And I say that as someone who likes you."

Ms Jack was muttering: "She doesn't."

Peter then said, "I would even call it a racist slur, Jesus's immediate reaction to that woman."

'Oh shit,' I thought. We can't accuse Jesus of *racism*. "I do not," I had to insist, "because from him comes an ethical tradition that's within but then out of Judaism. It became a religion for all and is a tradition and resource for one's outlook, one's stance, one's future in learning our relationship with everyone else. And if the Jews were first, chosen, responsible, then we, beyond dogs or puppies, were also included by that illustrated healing and Paul made our entry into the Kingdom direct and specific."

Some were muttering about my laboured explanation. Not for the first time, either.

"Ethics trumps theology," said Peter, making a further controversial point.

"It might," I replied. "Well, there's no point having an unethical theology. I forget his name now, but some Greek created problems for God asking if something is ethical because it comes from God or does God choose only the already ethical."

"Is theology belief?" asked a large woman. I struggled for her name.

"Yes, sort of," I said. "Carrie...?"

"Then why can't you just believe? Evie Waite, not Carrie."

(She did, sort of, suggest Big Mummy if not quite the wrestler Big Daddy.)

"Ah. I do believe," I said. "But theology is also necessary argument."

"Well, *he* doesn't believe," referring to Peter.

"He is not me, Evie," I replied.

"But it's clear you agree with him and not really with us."

Peter said, "I *doubt*. I'm not magical Pagan but more about the earth and blessing it as a whole; Buddhism is a strategy; the rest is ordinary science and ideas."

Ralph said, "They're just false religions."

I said, "No, I don't think so. You don't have to dismiss other religions just because you are in yours. One religion he follows is sensitivity in what you do in the world and the other is a path about losing one's self as a way of opening out reality."

Tom Bowler said, "Ours is history."

"History-like. The gospels proclaim Easter faith, with fragments of the

historical Jesus. Another way of going back is like the Buddhists do: the Eightfold Path seems to work, they say, so someone passed it on, and someone before, and before, and eventually you back very far and they say it goes back to the Buddha. Christian tradition is a bit like that. Jesus Christ is established by going back and back regarding salvation."

Ralph responded, "Jesus said no one gets to the Father except by me. We are not in 'your religion' but his."

Peter said, "Well no one gets to do the self-losing dharma properly except via the Buddha. You can do that within the terms of any religion."

Gert Carter intercepted: "But the Buddha just died - Jesus came back to life to show us it was true."

I said, to Mrs.Carter, "Do you think that's why he came back to the apostles, including Paul's earliest account? To show it was true? Peter?"

"Coming back to life to prove it is true is like a cold-reader telling you your dog's name to prove there is 'the other side'. They never say anything actually useful."

"You did," said Mrs. Carter.

"But I was telling you what you already know. And no, I won't tell you how I did it."

Phew. I then said the same: "The resurrection stories are not like Peter or some other performer telling you the name of your dog to prove something - precisely not."

Mrs Carter added: "Yes it is, along with, 'Now go, preach and reach out!' - like you're not doing, Reverend. I know 'Zelda' proves nothing. You, Mister Peter, said it was a trick - but Jesus didn't. I know a bishop once said it was a 'conjuring trick' once - but it wasn't."

"No, the bishop you are thinking about said it was *not* a conjuring trick with bones. What I am doing is trying to put this on a more sure footing than the type of magic that becomes the religious stuff - that our friend here rejects, and he is a magician and a neo-Pagan!"

"Well he's wrong,"Mrs.Carter said. "And you should be making him into a Christian."

I said, "I can't *make* him into a Christian!"

"Why do we employ you then?" asked Tom Bowler.

"Perhaps to communicate it."

He said, "You're like someone who says, 'I want to sell you something but it doesn't work very well. Read the worship book but the services are dodgy.' What do you make of the liturgy then?"

"It is the story of Christianity condensed into worship and so it is in worship that we see where we are in its story and when we renew ourselves in its ritual."

"What?" Tom asked.

A woman said, "She's saying it's like fiction - a novel like out of the library. A story."

I responded, "Yes but no but..."

"We'll rename the curate 'Vicky Pollard,' said another woman.

This was getting worse for me. "I'm sorry but perhaps when I think about ideas I forget names!"

"Ideas?" said Ralph. "Is that it?"

"My name is Beatrice Kerr. The curate gets inside a good novel," Bea said.

"Yep! That's where Reverend Pollard is, Bea," said Ralph. "She's stuck inside a novel."

"But this story is to transform you, Beatrice. The technical term is 'kerygma'."

Mo McArden said, "So you mean, like, it's when you sympathise with the characters? But who wrote the novel? See, God wrote the novel and it's what Jesus did so it's not a novel."

Peter said, "But it's not history."

"Of course it's history," Mohammad said. "What else is it? I didn't convert because he didn't do it, I converted in part because he *did* do it."

Peter said, "And I haven't joined. No, it's not what Jesus did, necessarily, because people in the early Church wrote the Gospels and New Testament, from different places and different times, along different traditions already."

"Yes," I said, "Mark is saying, 'You may have to suffer too,' in a straightforward sense; and Matthew adds more for a future Church; and Luke is saying: 'Gentiles, this is what it's about' - and of that strand of the early Church too; and then you have John where it's all predestined and worked out."

Peter said, "Scholars increasingly include the Gospel of Thomas - the main one and not the later infancy one."

"Why?" asked the man. "Why would they do that? It's not in the Bible."

"Because," he said, "it is a book of Jesus's sayings, and some are likely reliable, although some are clearly Gnostic and inserted."

I said, to grab the reins, "I don't suppose we will ever read from Thomas, because of tradition. Well: you might, Peter, but not when the main Churches have closed the canon. Look there *is* history in them: the four are the most historical, but it needs teasing out. Sometimes the early Church puts words into Jesus's mouth, and probably makes the miracles miraculous. Now who's for tea and who's for coffee and we should also thank Peter. Oh, not forgetting Kath, who's been very quiet."

"It's ridiculous," Kath said quietly. "Go to the archaeology and you find *it ain't necessarily so*."

There was moderate applause. I said, "Carry on discussing, please. It is a very good discussion."

I went to the kitchen. I realised that actually this had been an utter disaster. They'd be telling the others and Colin would be quizzed too. I fully expected to get it in the neck - again.

Worse than this, after some had coffees and teas, when they were leaving, Tom Bowler said to me closely, "And by the way, Reverend Curate Vicky, I'd get the leotard sorted out another time because you were impersonating a camel. And your bottom is rather impressive."

Oh shit, by 'camel' I knew what he meant. As I could see Peter moving, I went to him and said, "Do you want to stay back?"

Peter said no, with work to do; but Kath said she would stay longer. I thanked Peter and, to be fair, a number did personally.

Kathleen said to me, as we retreated into the kitchen, "They were somewhere else."

"You're not kidding. And do you think I can tell anyone that I supplied Peter with the biographical information?"

"Go and say 'bye' to the rest of them. I'll make us two coffees."

"Add one for my 'ex' Keith, who's in the front room. I'm fucking angry."

Kathleen Continues Tricks

Keith brought his drunk coffee mug to the kitchen to then go to the downstairs loo for a pee. We two women were washing glasses and pots.

As he returned, zipping up his flies, he said, "Doesn't sound like it went too well."

"No it didn't," I said.

"Another planet," Kathleen said again.

"I have news. The job is finally moving and so am I. I want an early night; there's a long journey for me tomorrow. Look, there's no point me taking any furniture, frankly."

"Oh," I said. "Is that it?"

"Yes, it was confirmed while you were going to that little show. From tomorrow on, the room is yours."

"Let's kiss goodbye then," I said, and it was on the lips like we had done before in better days. "Goodnight - goodbye."

"Yeah, I might be gone early."

With him gone upstairs, we went into the lounge to drink more and eat leftovers. "I am so angry about tonight. This was a long time in the making. I hoped the show would be like the 'Lentern' one you did. But I wanted the presentation and the discussion. And *whoo*, some men discover that I am a woman."

"Peter will have plenty to tell Kathryn about tonight. Something to tell you. Uncle George went in the Titansea Hotel, and found out you used the name 'Cynthia Grayking'. Barman knows: it proves you were loyal to Christine."

"Kathryn and you are so similar. I can't tell you apart."

"This is the odd thing. We have concentrated on being identical twins all our lives. It is such fun fooling people. But in one thing we are different. She talks about blokes and I don't. What is the attraction?"

"You tell me. I wonder sometimes."

"I *can't* tell you," Kathleen stated.

"Find a bloke and find out. You've not..."

"I'm asking you, because you're religious..."

"That's debatable."

"I've got feelings for Winnie. Is that wrong?"

"Absolutely not."

"I don't know what to do about her."

"About her or with her?"

"I see what you mean. Both."

"Well, I am bisexual. I know that because I do have crushes on women as well as men. I'm just cursed, cursed with everything."

"You sound angry."

"You bet I am. I am taking my clothes off. Sorry, but this is who I am." So I did this, including the red leotard, and she looked at me from so close. "Kathleen, tell me about you and your sister."

"You're forty, I think, and very pretty. I suppose another woman would look at you and think nothing, whereas I am responding."

"Take your clothes off, act ordinarily and friendly, and you can consider me like hetero women consider men other than their own partners."

Thus Kathleen took off everything - including her leotard - and laid back on the settee next to me.

"Kathryn and I caused endless confusion at school. The science teacher even made a lesson out of it. He got a microscope ready and got us to fingerprint! Identical we may be, but not at the level of fingerprints."

Kathleen further told me that her aunt and uncle had brought them up since being two years old, her aunt dying two years ago.

"Do you remember the news about a house fire, caused by a cigarette smoking alcoholic woman who fell asleep and died in the fire?"

"There was something tragic at the time," I replied, with a vague recollection. "I was at East Midlands University so heard about it at a distance."

"A neighbour got us out, while a burning timber fell on our father, round the back of the house, not realising we were in the neighbour's car. Mum died in hospital after excess smoke inhalation."

"So you were those infants. Brands from the burning."

"Hey? So Aunt Julie and Uncle George took us on and we never called them mummy and daddy. But we were adopted and took on their surname; we could have been called Jones. Anyway, enough of history, as Kathryn and I have a request. Historical."

"Oh?"

"Especially as you are local. We may as well do something while unemployed, so we're part of the Scanning Local Populations Project. Wytham and all around should have a mixture of Celts, Saxons and Vikings."

"What do I have to do?"

"The swab." Kathleen went into her nearby handbag and produced a small plastic tube container and then a pack of cotton buds, from which she removed one and handed it across to me. "Put it in your cheek, turn it around and not get spittle on to it as such but actual cheek cells. So be quite robust."

"Like this?"

She nodded. When done, she put it in a tube with a number that she shared with me, and said they will also do Adam and Peter.

"Glad to oblige. Not quite gynaecology, but that's a relief."

"Hey? The thing is, the population is supposed to be majority Anglo-Saxon, with the old view being the Celts were pushed out. But if burials were happening at the same time as cremations, then the Celts were burying and the Saxons were cremating and this suggests side by side communities. There was in fact very little conflict, and the Celts did adopt Anglo-Saxon culture. So, if relatively few Anglo-Saxons came over then they must have been the wealthier and more successful - their culture copied and also bred more. The Celtic culture was all the more resistant in Cornwall, Wales, parts of Scotland."

"So the question is: is my body Saxon or Celt?"

"You'll be Saxon, Linda: long and lean. You have a beautiful body, Linda. We're Saxons, it turns out, Kathryn and me, down our mother's side."

"I might be long and lean for other reasons."

"What? Viking?"

"Personal. Why are you so interested in archaeology - both of you?"

"It's about origins, isn't it: Bronze Age, Iron Age, Romans coming in, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, and then the imposition of the Norman French elite which changed our aristocracy and royalty."

"What don't you do? What do you avoid?" I asked.

Kathleen said, "Auntie Julie was alcoholic, and trying hard to stop, so Uncle George stopped. Father was down the pub more often than not as well. We don't do drink or drugs."

I said, "This area is awash with drugs and alcoholism. Your body is so good - helped by treating it properly, no doubt. You've got the right amount of fat - really. You've removed your pubic hair. My breasts are out of proportion but yours aren't."

"Thanks. Kathryn and I have looked after ourselves and we stick to the same diet. We try to look exactly the same, if we can. Adam doesn't drink because he's an alcoholic."

"Really? I had no idea. When was he boozing? He really doesn't seem to tell me anything."

"Up to when he left the police. When Ann bankrolled him, she insisted he went teetotal."

"I'll mention it."

"Don't say I said this."

"I won't mention it then, unless it comes up. I don't drink, mainly because I don't like it."

"Linda," said Kathleen. "You look pretty. You showed a 'camel toe' because there was nothing under your stretchy leotard. How do you get yourself looking so hairless?"

"Because there isn't any. Feel, if you like."

"Really? Should I?"

"Feel the skin with your fingers. Any hair?"

"Ooh, none," she said, as she ran her hand up by one labia, and then around the top to go down again. "Feel mine."

"Yes, I can detect hair. I really can. It is not as soft as it might be."

"Tonight, I wore light mauve ultra thin knickers underneath. Kathryn wore the same. And the cut was better."

"You know, Kathleen, I can sit sunbathing by a pool with my legs open at a naturist club, or with my friend Diana, and no one cares a jot. It wasn't true, recently."

"Recently?"

"My training vicar came to see me there. Rules are rules and not only did he have to undress but he saw me like you do now."

"He strikes me as a bit traditional."

"He coped. Here they are making such a fuss of an outline? It so annoys me. Can you do me a favour? Can you brush the hair I do have?"

"And long, and groomed." She took my hairbrush in my small bag below and applied it to my head of hair. Kathleen said, "We've both done camel toe pictures. You pull the knickers or bikini bottoms up, and you emphasise the lines. The lighting is angled to make a shadow where the material is trapped. There is a camera club opening soon in Titansea and we will be occasional models but as one person because of Peter."

"I also did photographic modelling and then the lesser-paid art modelling. Some months ago now Colin Cromer received naked photographs of me from that time. We thought someone might have been trying to compromise me before my ordination as priest. But they didn't follow up and I didn't care anyway."

Kathleen said, "Especially with the Internet now, if you go naked as a model your pictures could hang around for decades."

"In the past," I said, "it was lots of photographs in private collections, and negatives. If they circulated at all, they did so at a private level. Not now."

"So - this hair is done now."

"Please carry on. I like it."

Kathleen asked, "Are you being sexual, or are you being naturist?"

"I am being both, Kathleen. I refuse to make the distinction."

"With me?"

"With anyone."

"No one has been sexual with me. You are a lot older than me."

"No one?"

"Can I kiss you?" she asked.

"If you want. But, if what you say is true, you need to ask Winnie. Go on then. Do it properly: good contact."

"OK, I will."

And she did. Then she stopped.

"Kathryn says Peter is teaching her. So would you teach me?"

"Well, Peter and Kathryn are starting a relationship, which is its proper place."

"Sorry. I wanted to know. Winnie could say no."

"We could be playing games. Sensation and entertainment. Nothing wrong with entertainment, but it is not intimacy. The group under investigation do sensation and entertainment, but not intimacy I reckon."

"Can you be with me now like you were in that group?"

"Kathleen! If you knew the half of it. Perhaps you do."

"Can I touch you?"

"What do you want? Oh, go on then. Just put your hand on my stomach. Yeah. Just rub it a little. That's real flesh."

"You do have very smooth skin. Silky."

"That was my name as a photographic model. Silky."

"Can I touch you more intimately. The wetness place," she said. "Camel toe for real."

"There is a common myth, Kathleen, that models must be really sexually experienced. It's not true. Some of them are forward, but others have no experience and it is safer doing modelling because they are not touched."

"Can I taste you?"

"Yes. I'll sit more forward."

She got off the settee to the floor. It was quite a pleasant sensation, of course.

"Can you do something to me?" she asked.

I said, "Sit on my lap facing me. I'll stroke around your breasts, one at a time." She sat on my lap and I stroked her, with her untouched nipples growing. As she returned the treatment it was obvious that she had no technique. "Kathleen, I am not a jug to be polished. You should wait to get to the nipple area. Other women have more responsive nipples than me."

"I feel sensation from mine without you having touched them at all."

"Always try and hold off something. Always be a little unsatisfactory in your satisfying. That's better. Circulate around. Use the back of your fingers. So now my other breast is getting envious, and this one jealous, so move on. No, slower. I am going to lick your breasts and your nipples."

She clearly was enjoying this attention.

"Now what?" she asked.

"Because your legs are wide over mine, I'll put my finger in a little." Having done this I said, "Move that low table and we can lie on the floor. Yes; so you get down on your back, legs open and I will lick you." In fact I descended to lick down her obviously shaven legs, and moved with more focus around her thighs. I acted with intent above and on to her vulva area. I slightly parted her lips, and looked at some pink, shiny flesh.

She then said, "I need a wee."

"It sometimes happens."

"I'll wash afterwards."

"Good girl."

So she got up and went into the downstairs toilet. I raised myself up on to my knees, facing away but looking around. The toilet flushed and she asked me to resume.

So she lay back, and, noting the water, I resumed, parting her a little, and applying my tongue. And then I stopped.

"Identical twins you may be, but it isn't just your fingerprints that are different. You smell different, you are less aroused." I shouted: "Kathleen! Come back in here."

Kathryn closed her legs and looked away from me. Into the room came a naked Kathleen.

Kathleen said, "We were going to switch back."

"I don't care." I showed my anger. "You two: this is an abuse of trust. For one thing, you, Kathryn, have a boyfriend. Kathleen, sit on the floor alongside your sister."

"Sorry," said Kathleen, now furthest from the sofa.

"Sorry," said Kathryn.

"You two: I have had a fucking awful day, and the last thing I need is you two trying tricks out on *me*. I didn't want to do any of this, and you two have tried it on."

Kathryn said. "I think we'd better be going."

"You damned well won't - I haven't finished yet. Look, you two, I've had my fill of being done over by others, so now I'm turning the tables. Get your bloody legs open, both of you." I rammed my finger into Kathleen and descended with my tongue on to Kathryn, telling them both to lie back.

"Oh wow," said Kathleen, as I curled my left hand finger upwards varying between movement and pressing. With that done, I pulled my finger out rapidly and sat up with a dripping tongue from Kathryn. Now I pressed my tongue to Kathleen and pushed a finger into Kathryn.

I kept this going for a while until I laid back myself and said, "Come on, pull me open, both of you."

"Peehole," Kathleen said, as each pulled at their side.

"Yes. And below it, no chance of speleology, no descending eggs. You go in, Kathleen, as there's a small space to go in. Swirling - that's good - but it's not like a

washing machine! Slow down! Finger up. Your turn, Kathryn, seeing as you're so keen to join in. Yeah, and, Kathleen, your sister can watch you lick my perineum and my anus."

"Can you do that to me?" asked Kathleen.

"I'll do it to you both. Get on your knees both of you and put your bums up. Stick your bum up more, Kathryn."

I got to work, licking and probing, until two men were stood above me and them.

"Very nice," said Keith.

"Well, it's different, said Adam. "He let me in."

"I thought you'd gone to bed."

Keith said, "I finally sat in your bedroom, wondering about a last time with you, seeing as he wasn't here then. The CCTV monitor came on and Adam was approaching. I sort of looked downstairs and realised you were busy."

By now the twins had sat up and were making an effort to cover their bits. I didn't bother.

"So what's going on, Kathryn?" asked Adam. "Peter didn't expect you to go out."

Kathleen said, "It's my fault. I wanted to know things. I've always asked my sister to join in. We did a switch but Linda knew immediately. Please don't tell Peter."

I could see him wondering if Kathryn had ever switched with her sister when with Peter.

Adam asked, "Shall I go home, Linda? Are you entertaining overnight?"

"No. Stay. I'll get up. You two had better get dressed. And, no, there is no final time with me, Keith."

"A second goodbye from me, then," said Keith.

I stood up, saying, "Look, er, Kath: it was a good show tonight. I'm only sorry Kathleen that the discussion was such rubbish. Anyway, I've some information for you two. It's not just your fingerprints or your vaginal smells. Your bum holes inside are not identical."

They left, and Adam went upstairs with me. The sex with him started to be pretty good. However, the phone was buzzing. Unusually, late, Colin Cromer had left me a text message.

You are obliged to attend Morning Prayer and indeed carry out all the Daily Offices. I wanted to talk to you about a South African Anglican congregation that might be coming here. Events by you mean we are becoming vulnerable.

A message from the suffragan bishop!

I need to be blunt, direct, and specific: wearing nothing but a leotard gave some of your parishioners a display of your reproductive region. Also, there was an awful lot of your bottom on display. This is a serious breach. Decorum is expected. I also hear that you had a discussion afterwards in which you and your magician friends were spreading doubt. You and they promoted atheism, Unitarianism and witchcraft. Your show even invoked reading the minds of the dead. You must apologise to Colin Cromer and you must issue a PUBLIC apology for the show and discussion having gone wrong. But I want this resolving fully. It is time you submitted

to the episcopal authorities for all your misdeeds and show willing on all fronts. God bless as ever.

"Adam," I said, "we might have to stop this investigating. I might just have to give way."

"Nope."

I said, "Fuck me, you bastard."

Avoiding Sanctions for Now (Wednesday 21st August)

"I want to avoid Colin Cromer," I told Diana. So Diana called the doctor and Doctor Gujjar came at very short notice. The note that Kathleen took to the church from him described me as 'fatigued' and 'in need of rest' with 'mental exhaustion and physical complications'.

This time I was avoiding with a medical certificate. Diana stayed, undressed completely and got into my bed again. Life has its compensations.

"What went wrong this time?"

"I had a leotard on, to be an assistant. Let's just say that, as well as showing a lot of hip, it pulled tight on my undercarriage."

"So?"

"Well, it hardly matters to you or me, but it frightened the horses. And then we had a discussion in which, let's say, my approach to thinking things through didn't exactly get on with the same horses."

"I thought they were supposed to be sheep," said Diana.

"So the other shepherds or jockeys aren't exactly backing me up."

"I'm just so sorry," said Kathleen, when she called back in.

"No," I said, "it's not you and your sister; it was the whole thing."

Diana picked up the drift. "I'm not going to ask," she said. "I'm worried about you being run down so easily."

Aardse came in, and Diana told him I had fallen ill again. He hoped I would be better and said he could cope. I'm not sure what he thought about his fleshy wife with me, other than I was lying on my side as if to sleep and she was sat up. While he was here Kathleen brought up drinks, so it forced me to sit up.

Adam decided to spend the night at his accommodation - Diana was occupying his space again. One person who did not contact me or even visit was Colin Cromer, and that was actually a relief.

A Suicide (Thursday 22nd August)

Kathleen brought me breakfast on Thursday morning.

Diana in bed alongside stated, "You do need rest, and I was here all night."

"I could stay," said Kathleen, "with or without Winnie."

Then I said, "Hang on, it's Adam. What?"

"Someone is Resting In Peace. I've just heard."

"What?"

"Kenneth Osis. He's topped himself."

"Oh shit. Is he in hospital?"

"Maybe it's a morgue."

"You... are... kidding."

Diana, able to overhear, put her hands to her face and dropped her head. "Oh God no."

Diana asked, "What have we done?"

Kathleen put her arm around Diana's shoulder - not mine!

I said, "I - we - haven't done anything!"

Kathleen then said, "You told him to get lost on Tuesday."

"Did you?" asked Diana. "What did you do this time?"

"Threatened him with legal action from Adam."

"What for?"

"For being a pest. He told me they'd decided I must return."

Diana seemed to make a silly comment: "I did wonder if we couldn't ever have met him half way."

"Well, which half do you suggest, Diana? Your lower half? I've had enough of this. Adam can stop his investigating and I am going to do what they want. Christine was in it for herself. I don't care any more. They can have me for whatever they want."

"No," said Diana, with Kathleen perched on the bed. "No they can't. He died because of what *they* did to him. They overwhelmed him."

"Look," I said, with Kathleen still comforting Diana. "He was an immature pest. I treated him for what he was, and then you wanked him off in the bathroom."

"I didn't just 'wank him off' - he needed to finish off his excitement about you and about me, and you did traumatise him."

"I did not."

"You screwed a plastic bottle in his arse! The man was in agony."

Kathleen then asked, "Were you going to do that to Kathryn and me on Tuesday, Linda?"

"Oh goodness me," said Diana. "Have you gone completely mad woman? That hotel and car showroom must have made you crazy."

"Osis wanked off was long before the hotel and car showroom. And as for Tuesday, Diana, they tricked me - didn't you Kathleen?. I was licking her out, Diana, on her request and not mine, and she went to the loo, and said she'd wash afterwards, and made out she'd come back, when I knew from the change in vaginal steam that it was Kathryn."

Diana started giggling. "Vaginal *steam*?"

"So I told Kathleen to come back in, and made them lie down alongside each other, and when they'd had their bottoms in the air a little while, Keith and Adam came into the room."

"I said I'm sorry," said Kathleen.

"And I've accepted that, but this is not all *my* fault."

Diana said, "Adam is right to take them on. You are safe here, with friends, and wait for Adam to strike."

"Colin Cromer saw me naked."

"What?" she asked.

"I didn't tell you. He visited me while I rested at Bever Wood."

"You didn't set about *him*?"

"For God's sake, Diana. Oh I can't be done with this." I said. I pulled the duvet up and turned to sleep.

I was doing my turn in a naked opera facing an audience and found myself unable to sing. Kathleen woke me.

"Your friend Jenny, apparently, is on the landline telephone." She handed it to me.

"Where's Diana?"

"Downstairs."

"I'm coming down for the funeral," Jenny told me, "and I'd like to stay at yours. I think it's wrong: Ken should have been allowed to withdraw. Can I stay at yours?"

"What? Yes."

"I want to come soon as possible, please. Saturday?"

"Yes, Jenny. Yes, okay."

"Thanks, bye." She rang off.

Diana upstairs wondered if this was wise, and Kathleen wondered if Jenny was friend or foe.

"Let her come; she was my friend. But, can you stay here Kathleen, in a room? Bring Winnie"

I did turn on local radio on the hour and it was all about Kenneth Osis, a clergy suicide. The report said:

A rural clergyman in the County of Foss has been found dead in his vicarage. Parishioners first raised his absence from a church meeting and contacted a neighbouring clergyman Reverend James Wilson. Reverend Wilson made entry into the vicarage and then called the police, who isolated the scene. Police say they are currently not looking for anyone else connected with the incident, but will interview those who knew him and there will be a coroner's hearing in due course.

I was shaking. Why would he do such an extreme act? Why was he even doing a confessor role for others - indeed, why was he even a priest? That, though, was like accusing him.

Diana went out shopping, leaving Kathleen to run up and downstairs. I spent half an hour on the toilet, also reading a book: *Church Leavers: A Sociological Study* by Bernice Wilson.

Diana had heard the radio report earlier. Back from the shops said to me, "We led him along. Actually, Linda, *you* did. You sexually overpower people. He was weak; you could tell he was weak."

"I told you..."

"It doesn't have to be all your fault. He contributed."

"You're right."

"I think if I was you I'd say as little as possible to the police about your many liaisons."

"The police? I didn't kill him."

The landline phone rang again. I said, covering the microphone end, "Oh crumbs, Connie Wilson."

"Very quick. You won't likely hear from Bishop Terry so I am going to have my say. Your training vicar thinks you are swinging the lead by going sick after embarrassing everybody. You know Ken kept a diary don't you? He kept his confessionals out of it, but he wrote in all his private life, and you'll come into that all right. It isn't the Bishop that will come crashing down: it is you. Just mark my words." The telephone went dead.

I suddenly developed a headache, and my mouth was dry. My stomach was becoming queasy, to such an extent that I couldn't fart out the gas securely. Off to the bog I went, again, rushing past Diana.

Kathleen told me that Winnie was excited to move in to a room, even to stay only a short time.

Narrator: Adam *Discussion with Diana* (Friday 23rd August)

I went to Diana's house, just in case people were watching my premises and Linda's house. Diana had left Kathleen with Linda. She hated me, but was always practical.

I warned Diana that what she was about to see on my laptop would disturb her: two videos I had paid for online and downloaded using a good chunk of the monthly gigabytes allowed in my account. The first was a 'glory hole' video, I explained, of a naked woman servicing various unidentified gentlemen with her various orifices in a booth using wide slits. The second was known as a 'gang bang bukkake' video - the latter term, I said, adapted from a Japanese ejaculation fetish.

"Oh crumbs. At least it's not obvious," said Diana. "Clearly we know who it is, why you are here."

"It's a black wig," I said. "And those covered spectacles are flat lenses."

"This second video is worse, far worse," Diana commented.

"The first video is over an hour, and came from three hours plus, Peter has said. The second one is almost live."

"Oh my God. Was she agreeable to this? How can she do this?"

"Peter says that during the second video she'd lost the ability to decide anything. Both sessions took place at what's called the car showroom. She was obliged to go to the car showroom for Christine Vine. Christine's scale of values and ours are somewhat out of sync; this group I am definitely investigating has sexualised Linda as well. She's always been pro-naturist, like you, but she might be losing it on the decorum of social values."

"I think it's worse," Diana said. "I think she is having a kind of mental breakdown. I think I'm going to have to continue looking after her. She tries to act tough and normal but, I mean, she's done this *faux pas* with this magic show and discussion, because she won't wear knickers, and then gave Peter full range to express his views, but she reacts by going back to her bed again. She's not swinging the lead. She also had sex with Kathleen and then Kathryn."

"I was there and I'm afraid Keith has been spreading rumours of her with the twins. You'd think she was less affected, but you're right. She needs overseeing."

"Kathleen is trying to work out her own sexuality using Linda - and Linda is not in a fit state to help, evidently."

"Jenny World wants to come down and stay at Linda's. She is penetrating her

safe space. Tomorrow."

"Another reason why I need to be there," Diana told me. "Kathleen is moving in with her friend Winnie - discovering their lesbian leanings I think."

"I heard. I'm busy making approaches to tabloids that I have this evidence of National Church bishops involved in sex cultic activities and parties. I want a contract, but it must co-ordinate with the coming report on the diocese's inefficiencies and waste. This ought to have been out by now, but the publication date is delayed, because I'm told the diocese is performing a rearguard action, complaining of misrepresentation. Meanwhile, Peter and I have cracked a few websites. It's how we got to the 'glory holes' video featuring Linda. And there is something regarding Jenny. She is on the Secular Clergy Foundation website."

"What's that?"

"Well, it concerns clergy who have completely lost their belief in Christianity."

"So-called liberals like Linda?"

"No. Linda retains an attempt to maintain a Christian presentation. These people may have been liberal, but they equally may have been evangelical. Or Catholic. What they want is out, but for one reason or another they can't get out. In most cases, it is because they have a family and the ministry has a salary. The deception - that they believe when they don't - may even be set against their own believing partner."

"Is Jenny lying to the bishop and people in Hartlepool?"

"If she is, it is deceiving the Hereteu or Hasland group, in Hartlepool, deceiving at her home with Fatima and Akemi..."

"Akemi's none the wiser either way!"

"Of course, Diana. And then there's her role as in coming down to Serninsea and initiating people here."

"Ugh."

"No female clergy are resident here. But, getting past the passwords, it is definitely Jenny on the Secular Clergy Website, but she does not say if she is deceiving at Hartlepool."

"And John Barman?"

"Quite. So I have a suggestion, Diana."

"Go on."

"Jenny comes down here to get Linda back in the group. And Linda is under pressure now after the failed magic show and discussion. I don't like to do it, but we can threaten Jenny with exposure of her place in the Secular Clergy Foundation. This will undermine her, including her initiating in these groups under this Confraternity Vanguard."

"Let her arrive; bring her to my house here and confront her. Changing the premises from Linda's or yours might put her on the back foot - give her a puzzle as to what is going on. Do it as soon as she arrives tomorrow."

So we decided to arrange all this to happen. Diana would tell Linda very soon at an appropriate moment.

Then I had some news. "By the way. Peter is now my employee. Ann has provided financial back-up, if needed. The scheme was ending anyway. No doubt the dole will put it down to the success of their scheme, but statistics never tell the whole story."

"They'll want you to take on someone else."

"But I won't. So what was free to me now costs: over a longer period of time it amounts to subsidised employment taken as a whole."

Diana said, "Ken Osis: That's so sad. There may be developments over that: not necessarily how Linda and I treated him but how this group uses it."

I nodded.

Thus we had plans for my ongoing lover and her friend regarding a former lover and friend.

Finally, I showed Diana a copy of a letter hand-delivered by Kathryn in a scarf and spectacles to Colin Cromer's vicarage letter box.

Dear Reverend Cromer.

I am a resident of Serninsea. I need to tell you that the Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke is hiding secrets of a sexual nature in the locality. Don't be surprised if stories of abuse - with adults, not children - arise at the same time as the report comes out on your diocese's inefficiencies. One chaos exposes another. Perhaps this is why there is delay to bringing out the diocesan report.

Tell the diocesan bishop that, by taking Bolingbroke's advice on delaying, he is implicated in concealing what his suffragan has been doing.

*Yours,
Concerned.*

Diana said, "What do you intend?"

"Cromer has blinkers on when it comes to this bishop. He hasn't realised that his bishop has been the driver of Linda's difficulties from the beginning. This will help redirect his thoughts."

"Are you telling Linda about this note?"

"Nope. It is a change of plan: originally I wanted nothing suggestive to anyone before the big reveal. But this is to prepare the ground, and there are two outcomes: either Cromer keeps it to himself or he passes it on and things get choppy before the reveal. It might too force the sex cult into hiding and mean less pressure on Linda."

"And what if I tell her?"

"Better not but I am calculating all the possibilities."

"You really are a bastard, aren't you Adam? I thought you were a bastard when I disappeared from round here. You are using Linda to further your own ends - money, no doubt."

"Ann says we will look after Linda, compensate her."

"That's what worries me about Linda: what's happening now will never leave her."

"We can be civil - you and me."

"As now. But don't think that the passage of time has made me think any better of you. And look at you now: you ask Ann for permission to wipe your own arse."

"Because Ann doesn't want me making the same mistakes. I've made mistakes."

"Like you fucking off to Nottingham. I'll never forgive you - never."

"And when I came back, Ann and Labhaoise took me on, knowing my moral debt. I do know all this. I'll let myself out. So you'll be ready, when the reports hit the fan?"

"I'll be ready. Yes, we can be civil. Fuck off."

"When you're done with these two DVDs, break each one in half."

"Has Linda added to your porn obsession then?"

"No. It's very limited. Honestly. There's one lass who I'd never meet."

"Fancy me having to wank you when I wanted a fuck."

"It was the fuck that got you pregnant."

"If you don't leave my house now I'm going to do you serious damage. Get lost. You fucking arsehole waste of space!"

Narrator: Linda *The Police Call* (Friday 23rd August)

When I next woke, Kathleen was tugging at me. Diana had been making love with me, and now I realised it was a dream. "Cover your tits and I'll let this man in your bedroom."

A mufti policeman came in and he and Kathleen sat down on the two available seats. I pulled the duvet up further as this man showed me his credentials.

"I am Detective Constable George Newlands from Wytham station. Okay? I assume you've heard about the death of your colleague, the Reverend Osis. We are establishing whether there are any suspicious circumstances. We have a few inquiries to make. The coroner is seeking some initial information. Is there anything of significance you know that might have led him to take his own life?"

"It's a complete surprise, and I only knew him professionally recently."

"In what precise sense?"

Diana walked into the room, coming from her house. "She's my friend; I'm looking after her. Thank you Kathleen. Yes, stay."

I thought Diana was in a commanding mood.

Kathleen said, "I think it is Winnie arriving." She looked out of the window. "It is, with a taxi full of baggage." Off she went with the doorbell ringing, and there was much going on downstairs and upstairs.

"You are?"

"Diana de Groot, her best mate, staying here."

"Detective Constable George Newlands."

So I answered some more. "He was my confessor, briefly: the person I met in confidential meetings to help me manage people confessing to me. He wasn't my first one."

"Well the law protects the confessional, as you will know. So, just going around that, was there any hint of why he would take his own life?"

"No."

"Did he ever discuss outside the confessional about his own brother committing suicide last year, and of his father dying of a heart attack also last year?"

"Really? He never mentioned it."

"You sound like you are relieved in some way."

"Hardly."

Diana said, "Definitely not. It's all added to her ill-health."

"Forget it then," said the policeman. "Did he ever mention his own health and outlook?"

"He might have been *lonely*. He brown-nosed some people. Do you know what I mean?"

"It's an unfortunate phrase."

"Bishops and so on. He was confessor to many, he told me, so perhaps he was depressed. But he didn't *seem* depressed."

"Well, the coroner may ask you for your impressions in due course."

Of course I hadn't mentioned our intimacies with him or scheming.

Once the detective constable had gone, there was a phone call from Suffragan Bishop John.

"I'm not happy, Linda," he said in his opening words. "I told Connie Wilson I would not ring you."

Diana came in close by me to listen.

"You see," said the bishop, "you are out of control, Reverend Linda. Anyone else would be giving you your marching orders. I have told you before, whatever we do we must be seen to be above reproach. Jim Wilson discovered Ken Osis's diary near his body, and the content of many of the pages of his time with you and a friend called Dee and later Diana give clues to this dreadful suicide."

Diana could have blown a gasket. I put my hand up to her. I said, "Connie Wilson made love to him, except it wasn't love was it? Is that in there? What about the punishment *he* might have received resisting initiation?"

"Connie has said she does not want you at the funeral, but I have said that we need you at the funeral to remove suspicion. All clergy should honour someone who was a faithful man and carried with him many secrets of our colleagues, including your secrets, some of which - outside the confessional - he has written down in stark detail."

He had not addressed my points but I said, instead, "Well he was never the right person for the job."

"Now you are questioning *my* judgement. He was exactly the right person for the job. He could have told me things about you, but he never did. How about that? You and your friend Diana lured him with your nakedness." My hand went up again. "You two played with him, the poor man. That friend of yours masturbated him. He loved ejaculating on to her body." I waved my hand over Diana's mouth. "And you, well... You terrified him - *terrified* him - by screwing a plastic bottle into his arsehole. The man was traumatised."

"Is his warning about my intended punishment in there? I have taken his warning seriously."

"And so you should, from such a sensitive, loving man. Indeed, I have said to Mrs. Wilson that I am now considering next steps regarding you, and she, being a sensible, organising sort of woman, is waiting for what I will instruct."

"I am off sick."

"Not too sick to receive Jenny World. She will give you good advice, I am sure. Two-thirty tomorrow she's arriving at yours."

"Don't forget, Adam Magellan is her friend."

"Oh rubbish. He is a friend of no one. I've told her that. He only comes to you for sex. *She* is coming to consider a parish - and is being considered, I might add. Remember, I have seen the diaries. Connie Wilson will be in touch, and this time you do as she says. Goodbye."

With him gone, Diana said, "We must expose him. Adam will take him down."

You must follow Adam's instructions, not hers."

"Quite," I said. "And then, I think, what the hell if I just fall in. I can take it. It solves everything. If I fall in, we can all live on."

"No," she said.

We heard quite a bit of noise, after which Kathleen showed her face. "It is the *second* bedroom?"

"Yes," I said, "with the double bed."

"Is this wise?" Diana asked me after Kathleen rejoined Winnie. "Anyway, I am going to stay over with you again. If I am in your bed, Jenny can't be: she can either stay here in the third bedroom or go to Adam's.

"I like Jenny."

"Linda, for God's sake. She's doing what Barman and the rest want. By the way, I may as well tell you: Adam has found a 'glory hole' and a gang bang something video and it is you in a black wig. They're horrible, Linda. Why did you do it?"

"Oh Crap."

"You piss in a bucket. At least you didn't shit or did they edit that out?"

"I didn't."

"So this Sanjay Bunker, who bought you a car and paid you six thousand was not being generous. He'll make his money. And these recordings also have very long shelf lives. They'll be watching this when you're an old woman."

"And he bought me three dresses. Funnily enough, I didn't wear any of them at the magic show in case they were too revealing. Instead, I wore a leotard and showed everyone apparently everything."

"Adam told me he'd found the videos after deep investigation."

"You spoke with him?"

"Yes."

"Can I see them?"

"Better not, Linda. Linda, you are not well."

"I'm better than I look."

"I think the opposite. Cut the bravado."

"Have you seen them then?"

"Briefly. I fast forwarded each one. Linda, they are disgusting."

"Adam - and Peter - is clever finding them. Peter will be in both videos - his knob and then masked."

"Linda, stop it. Yes, Adam is clever. I'll give him that. For your sake I have confidence in him. It's all in hand - I'm sure it is. You're crying."

"All this madness is swirling all around us; I don't think I can cope, Diana."

Diana got undressed, went for a pee, came back, and got in. Kathleen came in with drinks and some egg mayonnaise sandwiches. "Winnie made them up downstairs. We can go shopping tomorrow, Linda, Diana."

I said, "I want you two to feel at home. It will be good to get away from your uncle and become a little separate from your sister. You can have your own lives."

When Kathleen had gone, Diana said, "Sleep. We'll see what Jenny wants."

I went to the loo first, and came back. "You're a dead good mate," I told Diana, and went to sleep again, turning away from her and pushing my arse into her hips.

Colin Demands an Apology (Friday 23rd August)

Next day, Colin Cromer did call, after Diana went out to see Aardse. Would he tell me that I was swinging the lead? Kathleen brought him upstairs.

"Hello Colin. Again I'm afraid..."

"Quite. And how are you feeling?"

"I'm not suicidal."

"That's not appropriate."

"It's horrible what's happened," I said.

"I have to tell you that I think the show and the discussion by all reports to me were disasters. Not now, but you need to face me over your display of yourself and spreading your doubts."

"You saw me in the woods. I thought that was a landmark. You know what I mean."

"You don't display yourself to the congregation!"

Kathleen said, "It's not fair, Reverend Cromer. It was a good discussion on Tuesday and people should have learnt something. Leotards are traditional for magic assistants."

"Be all that as it may, a curate has certain duties and expectations. She is very early in ministry. Anyway, I'm not discussing it now but I will with you alone, Linda, when you recover. And your apology will be in the appropriate service order and newsletter, and you can write a piece on your doctrinal certainties into the parish magazine."

"What parish magazine?"

"I'm reviving it. We'll get parts from the diocese and you may contribute to each one, as I determine, as I will. Now, Bishop John tells me an old friend of yours is coming here - tomorrow. Apparently she is affected by the suicide. He says she could do a sermon on Sunday. Naturally, I agreed, especially as you are ill."

"She is called Jenny and I knew her at school. Evangelical, apparently."

"That will make a welcome change. She won't be as evangelical as this new Vineyard church we are threatened with. As for the South African visitors, they'd better go to Eslaforde. I don't think we can have a visiting group given the turmoil happening. What I will say now Linda is this: your attitude is such that frankly you should not have been ordained. You spout doubts and display your body inappropriately. There is a rumour going around that you got up to alley cat activity afterwards with some people."

"Gossip and rumour and assumption..." (And Keith.)

"Well, we are stuck with gossip circulating and probably have to try and recover the situation. But it won't recover without your thorough and complete, and, I'm sorry to say, personally humiliating apology. You've only yourself to blame. I'll let myself out, ladies."

I said, "I am very sorry."

"Look," he said, pausing and turning to look at me in bed. "I'm not stupid. There are growing rumours of some very nasty goings on in these parts. Now we have this supposed Bishop - apparently - Christine Vine acting along with some mad unconnected DIY bishops and rumours are flying all around. I mean, what's that all

about? I hear that some odd goings on happened in the hotel - and you were there as well. You were there and you *know*. Stay away from that woman. But, I suppose, you ignored me about Adam Magellan and I'm sure you'll ignore me about her. What do I count in all of this? I'm just your training vicar. Training? And cover your *breasts!*"

"Sorry. Thought it didn't matter any more."

"It does matter. That's the point: it matters a lot."

So off he went, my duvet hoisted up again.

Kathleen then said to me, "I love your breasts. When Adam shows what Barman is really doing, and this vicar of yours finds out, he'll have to change his mind pretty quickly."

"I want to thank you for staying in the room when Diana can't be here. I'm going to have to face the music, really."

"I like staying here."

"Get yourself a girlfriend. Winnie's slept here too."

"Alongside. Like Diana and you. How can I ask Winnie given her mother and my Uncle George? I'll have to get a flat."

"Make the second bedroom here your base. Then it need never bother your uncle's or Winnie's mum's. Stay as long as you like."

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

"I love you, Linda."

"The idea is you *find* love. Find out if Winnie is heterosexual or not. If she isn't, woo her."

"She's interested in me; I think she is."

Chapter 17 Suicide

Jenny World Returns (Saturday 24th August)

This time I was disinvented even from observing the Saturday wedding of George Oakley and Anna Barbara Aldrich at the parish church. It was scheduled for 16:10. I liked to have Saturday off, but my responsibilities were supposed to have increased around this time regarding weddings. I was in the doghouse good and proper.

Adam came in to Diana and me in bed. It was regarding Jenny. I'd cope, I assured them. Diana displayed all to Adam getting up, and both went to Diana's. I got up. Thus I was ready when Jenny World arrived at my house at the given time of 2:30 pm. I received her with a kiss and said, "Leave your luggage here; we have no time before meeting my friends at Diana's house. We're getting refreshments there." Kathleen came out of the house with me, introducing herself to Jenny. I smelt alcohol on Jenny's breath.

In transit Jenny said that she had come by train to Wytham and caught a bus across the Wolds and Ings. She was free of Fatima. Nevertheless she phoned to tell Fatima that she had arrived. She said it was a nuisance not being able to drive and noted my big car.

Diana had a large dining room table opened out in her house near South Drain. Peter was already sat down at it. The room was lit by a large window with bright indirect light coming in. Diana was sat down on a chair away from the table and so was Kathleen, next to Kathryn.

Jenny, who plonked herself half way along the table, asked, "Is Adam coming?"

"He will be back here very soon," Peter answered.

I said to him, "Congratulations on becoming properly employed."

"Aw, thank you Linda," he said. I was looking into the garden across the room and saw Aardse busy gardening.

"This is odd," said Jenny, taking a drink. "No booze? Wine? No? Okay." She also looked to the garden.

Adam arrived with his laptop, and sat at the end of the table. He said, "I thought we'd gather like this straight away, Jenny, because I have a thesis to put to you, if I may. There's this notion," Adam continued, "that you weren't straight with Linda and me when you visited before, and I want to check this out."

"Oh?" she asked, gazing towards Aardse and not Adam.

The doorbell sounded again. "We shall pause," said Adam. I went and let in Christine Vine, carrying buffet food on a plastic film-covered tray in front of her figure-hugging braless red dress. I said, "Hello," and added, "I think Adam has become Alec Guinness as George Smiley."

"Mother Felicity, let's see how Tatiana is getting on."

"I'm not sure who's more in a world of her own," I quipped: "you or me?"

I went back in to this dining room first, and Jenny obviously recognised Christine turning in from the hallway. Thus we had Christine's own staff-made sandwiches plus pork pies on the table. Christine sat by the door: if Jenny ran, she could stop her!

Jenny said, "I suppose I should say hello. Is it Bishop Christine these days, or is that only among your new mates?"

Diana noticeably looked in the other direction from Christine, who didn't answer.

Kathleen and Kathryn got up and started cutting the pork pies. Consulting the consumers, they put selections on plates and distributed them.

"Partake everyone," said Adam.

"Yummy," I said. "These pork pies are... Begin."

Adam said, "Linda and I... Well, we both have a special affection for you Jenny. But the reason we have gathered like this is that there is a *Diocesan Commission of Enquiry* taking place..."

"I know about that. So what? That doesn't stop me or anyone else wanting to work in Wytham Diocese." Jenny's selection had been pork pie slices and sandwiches of prawns in mayonnaise.

"And it could be published any time," Adam continued. "They have delayed it, but when it comes out we are going to expose Bishop John Barman for all his activities including around *The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatre Players*."

"I know what you are doing," she said. "So does Terry. Nothing to do with that report."

"Ah, but put the two together. Mmm. Lunch here in this buffet: first-class. Presently," said Adam, "there is no resident woman here to initiate."

"Well, you are wrong on that. Reverend Rhiannon Margaret Fleetwood, trained in Taunton, has moved up from Rochester."

Christine said, "She recently had a baby with Jonathan Eyre, Bishop of Margate."

"So?"

I said, "The one I saw pregnant was..."

"Julie Manns," Christine responded. "In fact, Rhiannon's had two with him. I've been talking to Rhiannon, Jenny. She has moved to Eslaforde, not here, and even into my old house, with the blessing of the Bishop of Scredington, and she should replace me at Wheaton."

"You and the Bishop of Scredington? Julian bloody Worsley," said Jenny. "We know about you and him."

Christine said. "Sorry, Adam."

Adam said, "Jenny, do not continue with these mad and dangerous people further."

Jenny picked up one of the unused serviettes and held it to her face, looking directly at Adam.

He went on. "Jenny, you know so much is about hacking websites these days, and we got into a list on the Secular Clergy Foundation website. For everyone, this is a website for members who are in the clergy but have lost all belief. Peter, please."

Peter said, "They are not theological liberals, though some may have been. Many were evangelical. They lose their belief. They become like Richard Dawkins in outlook. But they have a clergy job; there are often family or other commitments. They look for a way to get out, but until they do they carry on a deception. They don't do what Linda tries to do..."

"Thanks," I said.

"...which is to reconcile different realities and beliefs. They may have done

that, for a while. No: it is gone. The performance in the pulpit is likely evangelical, or liberal, sometimes Anglo-Catholic. In this, they do their job as required, and then, one day, the moment comes to resign. Jenny, you are one of those website members. You don't discuss your sexual activities, but you are sarcastic at Christian hang-ups about sex."

"You are confusing me with somebody else."

Peter said, "No we are not."

I was astonished. Gosh. *Zero*.

Adam said, "If we expose this, Jenny, you are finished regarding your role in those religious orgies, with any initiating appointment, in fact anything at all."

"Bastard."

"But we don't want to," he continued. "You are here to perhaps get Inglemire with Caffenmere parish, or similar, but also for *Linda* to be the Vicar of Inglemire with Caffenmere."

"So? Jenny asked again. "I might prefer Linda to Fatima."

Adam said, more slowly, "You've come to do the Confraternity's bidding, but in fact you will do ours."

She said quietly, "You've changed."

"This is to *help* you, and let's get Linda free of them as well."

I said, "We want you away from that group and we'll protect you from exposure."

Then Jenny said, "It's a job. It's why I don't care if it's Inglemire. The more moribund, the better. Sex is what I believe in and I'm good at it."

I asked Jenny, "Whom do you love? Fatima, Liz?"

"Ugh, not Fatima. Liz won't reciprocate. Anyway, have you thought about Suffragan Bishop Sarah Deimos living with Harriet Leda, the one from Seaton Carew? Harriet would be a naturist too but can't with Sarah. What else is Sarah hiding, eh?"

"Jenny," I said, "It is not about sexuality or intended naturism. Sarah may or may not be a nicodemite like you but she is not involved in the Barman activities and you know it."

"Help us," Adam said.

Christine added, "Jenny. Terry Barman loves his progressive reputation, when in fact he exploits. He has been trying to 'get' Linda recruited from before she started her curacy."

Jenny said, "I know that. I'm having that pork pie slice, please. Someone pass it to me."

Kathryn did and then said, "His ego was why he wanted to promote the Serninsea Cross brooch."

"It's beautiful," Jenny said. "The brooch, not the pork pie."

Kathleen then said, "But it is a fake and already exposed as such. And then he tried to make the pathetic best of it that he could."

Adam said, "I want you to be put outside of the report, like Sanjay Bunker. Will you help us?"

Jenny said, "He's selling two videos all over the world: porn actor Linda Jupitas, in a black wig and spectacles. How about that? He'll go on and make money for years and years. He's as guilty as sin. Expose him, if you dare."

Adam said, "Linda won't be recognised. Peter, Diana and I have seen it."

Jenny, Barman is using you here to stop this investigation, and to get Linda installed in the same vicarage as you. You then become like servants to his mates' pleasures."

"I'm here for the funeral, the one that you caused, Linda."

"I did not."

"You fucked Osis. You and her."

"Wrong," said Diana.

I said, "Your lot punished him, something you are planning for me."

"He was only roped up on a double A frame contraption. Nothing happened."

"What?" I asked. "Only roped up on an A frames thing? That was punishment, enough for him to capitulate. He was likely terrified."

"He saw a layout of instruments and agreed to sign. We've never punished anyone. But don't test us, Linda. Just join the Confraternity."

"You don't need me if you have this Rhiannon for initiations."

"You heard. So we need female initiators in the Serninsea area. We know what Screddington does too."

Christine said, "Not any more. He's not my bishop any more."

Jenny said, "Linda, the group is the key and you and me are to be part of the group."

"No," said Adam. "Linda is not joining, and you are in no place for you to continue in this Confraternity so-called Vanguard."

"Anyway, we are expanding! I thought Rhiannon intended to go to Wales, soon. You will do as you are told, Linda. Terry will engineer getting Rhiannon into the Welsh Anglican Church, and to Casnewydd more than likely. She'd like a paddock with two horses."

"Eslaforde wants an evangelical and she fits the bill," said Christine. "Eslaforde has money."

Adam said, "You're not listening, Jenny. It's not happening any more. You're in no fit state to be an initiator here: you surely don't want them to know that you are on that website. And, meanwhile, we will break the Confraternity Vanguard: bring it all down, and you are better off helping us do that."

"Adam, you're an arsehole and a shit. That's what a lot of people think, but no names. I tried to love you once. Later I heard that you were a cheat. And your blackmailing won't work: it only works if you've got nothing to hide and I know where your skeletons are buried."

"You can't function if you are on that website," said Adam to push his point again.

"Nope. Two things. The validity of the sacrament - the initiation - does not depend on the condition of the person performing the rite."

"She's right about that, Adam," I said.

"And secondly, Barman *knows*. Do you want to expose Sarah Deimos? It isn't just Harriet Leda she tucks away, but her true self. When you searched, did you not *notice*?"

"I've got it here," said Peter. "She's right. Sarah Deimos. She's looking for a way out."

"Sarah?" I asked, to no replies. "Odyssey, then." (I started humming their tune.)

Adam then asked Jenny, "Does Barman... know about Sarah Deimos like he

knows about you?"

Jenny replied, "We keep our secrets, and the Vanguard operates by secrets. So the only person who can be blackmailed is Sarah. Blackmail me and I'll see to it that Terry blackmails her. Liz is her boss, as well. And be careful Adam about your own cupboard. That's right, isn't it Diana?"

"Fuck off," she said, about something I knew not.

"Is Barman in that Foundation?" wondered Christine.

"No he is not," said Jenny. "Because, if he was, he'd know Sarah is in it. I won't tell you who is in it, but I can tell you who is not in it. He's always been a bit liberal."

"Hmm," Christine responded. "A sleazeball liberal."

Adam said, "Jenny, we can keep all this quiet for now. You can help us identify people involved. We take it that the Vanguard never actually went online. It was going to but it stopped."

"Not with people like you around," she said. "Hey, Bishop Cunt, don't be so purist. You were enjoying it above the casino before: we went to that bank together buzzing and took on the robbers."

Christine responded, "That was a supreme moment for service and sacrifice. You did it and I did it. Barman would have shat himself. Barman simply wants Linda - he really does. He wants her *frequently*, starting with his initiation of her. For him, that's what it is all about. He's angry that Sanjay Bunker got there first, in a race, and in style."

"In style? He beat Barman to my fanny?" I asked. "I'm the one person Barman is *not* going to get. And I am not going back, however they threaten me."

Jenny said, "But you opened your legs to Sanjay Bunker and then about forty others."

"How he relates himself to the Tagores I just do not know."

"Who?" Jenny asked me.

"Brahmin family line. I'll tell you later."

Adam then said, "Linda, drive Jenny back to your house. You can then rest, Jenny, after your travelling. Kathleen go as well. Christine?"

"I'm going to Eslaforde, my new house; I'm busy."

Diana said, "I'll return to Linda's later, Adam; I'm still staying over there. I'll tell Aardse."

Jenny said, "I'm grabbing some of this grub first." She did, and put it into a paper bag. "Your plan didn't work, did it Adam? I haven't been trapped. I'm not co-operating; I've come to get a parish and I have come to persuade - force - Linda."

When we arrived at my house I was suspicious of a car with someone sat in it. I was not sure. Kathleen, Jenny and I went in, and Jenny took her suitcases to her room, where she stayed alone for a while.

Narrator: Adam *Afterthoughts* (Saturday 24th August)

Diana made it clear that she did not want to discuss anything with me with Christine still present.

"I'm going," Christine said. "I know when I'm not wanted."

Indeed this meant everyone went, including Peter with Kathryn. So it was just her and me.

Diana said to me, "Well, Adam, that went well - not. Blackmail is said to be better than a bribe, but you'd better make sure the blackmail sticks."

"Quite. So Barman apparently knows that Jenny is in this Secular Clergy Foundation website. And she can retaliate too, expose Sarah Deimos for complete unbelief. Jenny is preaching here on Sunday."

"Are you going to that?"

"No. Perhaps Peter will go, though since he's gone on the payroll it starts to become overtime rather than some undeclared backhand."

"He'll not go out of interest?"

"Since that discussion Colin Cromer probably thinks less of Peter."

"So what now then?" Diana asked.

"We'll expect Jenny to start persuading Linda."

"Hmm. This would mean exposing Linda to danger if Jenny is successful."

"Linda will be fine once the diocesan report comes out, once mine is in the press, and Linda hasn't had to sign up. But my contact in Wytham at the diocesan HQ says they are doing everything to delay the report. Potential legal issues of named and shamed people mean them having a say back into the report. This is a convenient delay."

"Having to apologise on Colin Cromer's command is a real knock to Linda. She'll do it, and that's the best strategy. But she can't do the same with this Confraternity Vanguard."

"I'll ask Ann to reassure Jenny of no blackmail, because she knows that Ann has authority in my world, and then we'll just watch the lie of the land, see how things adjust."

"It's hardly a strategy, Adam."

"No, it's not. But we will publish."

"Because it is going to make you money."

"I promise we will look after Linda. She's a mate. You are really."

"I am not your mate, Adam, and if Linda had any sense she wouldn't be yours either. She's been on the rebound from Keith and he was a shit - it's bound to have affected her to know that her very own husband was constantly undermining her and having affairs at the same time."

"Well, we all need to keep a watch on Linda," I said. "That's about as much as we can do now as events unfurl. There is a lot of watching ahead: the diocesan report, the moves of Christine in her group, Linda's reactions in the parish and what her bishop and company try to enforce, and we need to be able to react. I'm talking about you, me, Peter, the twins, and Winnie."

Diana said, "If she needs comfort - in a holistic sense by the way - I'll be providing it and not you. You're incapable of comforting anyone."

Narrator: Linda *Don't Go Out in the Sun* (Saturday 24th August)

This was an odd Saturday. Kathleen, Jenny and I went out shopping. Once back, I didn't notice anyone sat in a car, this time, possibly viewing us. However, a

neighbour, Glenn Jenkinson, was cursing a car that would not start. The MOT was soon, and he had a crisis of low income. I already knew that he needed the car for work, to get across Wytham, and could not rely on buses, that would take so much longer and didn't reach the western area of businesses without changes of buses.

The shopping stored, I went over and said he should come indoors. As a result, I gave my old car away by supplying and signing, with him, the necessary documentation. This gave my suffering obvious benefit.

It was a warm day and getting warmer: some sixteen degrees it had been at 9 am and up to twenty eight degrees in the afternoon. We'd seen a lot of wet weather, but now it was dry too even if the sun was hazy.

Inside, I decided to strip off. Kathleen, seeing this, did the same. She went upstairs to check on Jenny.

Back downstairs, Kathleen said, "Jenny is working on something she no longer believes in."

"Her sermon for tomorrow."

When Jenny came downstairs, she had already done what she had seen of Kathleen. So she had nothing on either. She started consuming one of six bottles of beer in a pack.

I asked her, "Did you not have a sense of crisis when you lost belief? Did you not try to recover it? Anything?"

"Nope. I was ill when I went religious, I'm not going to be ill when I lost the religious. It just went. I read something, it was convincing, the whole set of dominoes went over. I said to Fatima, it was gone, and she said I wasn't the first and some people get it back by carrying on. So I carried on, and soon found out those who were experiencing the same and were contented. We have a secular suffragan bishop!"

"Who was first?"

"She was."

"Does her sister know?"

"Louise is sad about it. She left the Anglicans for more honesty but it hasn't convinced Sarah. I go round to Sarah's and we have quite a laugh. She still does all her bishop things. They promoted her while it was going wrong, so she felt trapped. She said no at first, but as a woman she couldn't let the side down. As for Harriet, she's tolerated by those in the know so long as there is no ceremony of any kind. Sarah couldn't care less about ceremonies now."

"Harriet Leda. How does Sarah hide her from the wider public?"

"Lives in the same house, but it is never acknowledged; Harri never accompanies her to an official event; they have no recognised partnership. Harri knows about you and she wants to be a naturist like you. But Sarah keeps her in a box and Harri seems to accept that for the time being."

I drifted towards the window and the sun, putting an arm across my breasts. "And you?"

"I'm just looking for a quiet life. I've finished the sermon."

"What is she doing *out there*?"

"She's taking in the sun."

"Fuck, we're overlooked!"

Seconds later with my cassock slipped on I was calling out of the back door: "Kathleen, you can't do that here. Come in! Come in now! The sun is harmful

anyway. We have to do this at Patricia's, or I'll get you a sun lamp."

"Are you two lovers?" Jenny asked, naked herself of course, speaking from behind me.

"No, Kathleen is my lodger," I replied. Kathleen came in.

"Sorry," Kathleen said.

Diana arrived, looked at the three of us and then she was the fourth naked woman in the house. I said, "You'd better know, Diana. Kathleen went out to sunbathe like that."

"Sorry again," Kathleen added.

"I don't suppose any of them will report you," Diana said.

"They know who I am and now an unknown woman goes out naked and sunbathes!"

Diana said, "As that rival author Diana Gabaldon would write, 'Dinna Fash!'"

"What dinner?" I asked.

"Fish dinner?" asked Jenny. "How is she a rival?"

"I prefer the other one." Diana then said, "Your sister's husband would say, 'Peid â phoeni' but it's not actually equivalent. A colleague at college said so."

"Ah."

Jenny's Sermon (Sunday 25th August)

Jenny was welcomed more warmly in the morning than me. Indeed Colin told me in no uncertain terms that this week I had to prepare and show him a statement of apology for my appearance in the magic show and for the direction of the discussion. I would have to give a clear affirmation of credal belief and assent to the Articles of Religion. If I didn't show full repentance he'd be unable to work with me further.

Jenny assisted with me at the Eucharist at which Colin presided. Colin did the intercessions, including remembering Ken Osis. Jenny was preaching in the evening.

I tried to cool down in more ways than one by spending an hour in the afternoon with Jenny at Carr Fen. I tried to get ahead of the curve by a long session in the bathroom before Evensong.

Before Evensong Colin asked me, "Have you written your statement or statements?"

"Not yet."

"On my approval of your texts you will apologise and state your credal affirmation in the three services next Sunday. Your longer apology goes in the new parish magazine."

Nevertheless the training vicar was happy that Peter Marshall was in the pews in the evening.

I brushed my hair with no idea what Jenny was going to preach - she had free rein. I was given the intercessions. Now it was for me to refer to the Reverend Ken Osis, as one of the departed. I said, "May he rest in peace," and Colin looked at me with fierce eyes.

Jenny walked up the pulpit steps. Off she went, reading.

"Jehovah's Witnesses, those biblical literalists not unknown for changing some biblical words to suit, refer to a coming New System of Things, when there will

be no more war, crime, violence, death, racism, terrorism, old age, sickness, diseases, homelessness, or greed, or need for money. However, the Kingdom as paradise we preach will be far from any system. I prefer 'World to come' and leave it open.

"What do we think then of resurrection, the final and best hope we Christians have of the future life? Remember, these Jews are at least right that it is about the raising of the bodies of the dead to eternal life in a new reality, and the very first - according to the New Testament witness - was Jesus Christ. Our understanding of resurrection, this guide to our future, is Jesus Christ himself. And it is about our bodies, and if we think about it: they are what hold us, imprison us, constrain us, and allow us to be free. Jesus showed that the resurrected body is a free body, and does not have the constraints of our bodies today.

"Of course modern-day sceptics say it is so much hooey, because dead bodies rot and don't reconstitute, and what about all the folks who are released into spirit-energy at the crematorium?

"We talk in terms of atoms and molecules, but the problem of divisible bits wasn't unknown to the ancients. They might ask: suppose a believing sailor falls overboard and is eaten by a shark? That shark comes near a boat, and the fishermen capture it, and their community have a good meal from it. What about the bits of the human digested by the shark that goes on to grow the shark and later remake the humans who've eaten it? In our terms we ask, 'Whose atoms are they in the final big resurrection day'?

"Augustine, the Church Father, wrote in his *The City of God* that the flesh of those consumed by others' hunger evaporated into the air, and that it was like a loan, so that on the day of resurrection God would redistribute it to the first human to possess the flesh; in other words, every eating from then on was like borrowing. The shark borrowed the human that was eaten, and the humans borrowed what was the human in the shark. The puzzle would end when all would be restored.

"Now God surely can solve what would be for us an enormous puzzle, but the puzzle of proprietary rights might leave some humans with very little that was actually theirs. Plus every seven years or so aren't we intended to be completely refreshed and released? What if animals too are resurrected? Now some Animal Rights type theologians might be happy but gosh it really is then complicated. When you think about it we are dispersed through so many creatures and indeed plants that the spreadsheet of origins is simply enormous. Not that God cannot reconstitute, but we have to ask what is old and what is new.

"Imagine that we are all sand castles in a windy desert. We are just going to blow away, into smooth large sand hills in the wind. But eating, reproducing: that's like making new sand castles. We build against the grain, so to speak, and Jesus was both with the grain and against the grain, even the maker of the sand before the Holy Spirit moves the sand. Many scientists say that: all we are doing by eating and building up is delaying the end. Entropy is, in the end, unavoidable. Everything goes to waste: into a passive disorder from a one time created order; but indeed they also say that when we eat or indeed reproduce, or rearrange, we are holding off entropy. However, resurrection utterly defeats entropy - and yet not as we'd expect.

"Of course the biggest sand castle maker is Christ in wisdom who made the world himself. And the Christian Gospel does not promise us a wasteland of desert all blown across, as science does: indeed, science offers us the end of the wind as

well. But, and here is the solution to the problem, nor does the evidence of the Christian Gospel offer us rearranged sand into sandcastles. The JW's New System sounds like more sandcastles to me.

"You see, it is clear from the gospels that we are dealing not simply in rearrangement or an existing transformation, but in what the scientist and theologian Arthur Peacocke called re-creation. The new reality ahead of us, at the point of resurrection and judgment, is re-creation, the recreative power of God. You cannot disperse humanity so thoroughly through death and have what is the important bit, personality, restored just from the dispersed atomic elements. It needs what God had done at the beginning, before the Fall, and so what God will do at the end, which is to use the full power of re-creation. The Word had made the World: the Word was Jesus Christ. Arthur Peacocke says a new mode of existence must mean an element of re-creation.

"The resurrected body of Jesus, and our own resurrected bodies, are not simply transformations, but are re-creations. Think about it like this, that death does demand re-creation.

"You may have heard about 'energising' in Star Trek: people beam down to a planet. It's molecule mapping and restoring after teleporting. But think about it. The person who walks on to the energising equipment is destroyed. Everything is gone, as he or she turns into an mighty energy beam. And they get reconstructed at the remote end. But the reconstructs can only be carbon copies, and even if they have the memories of those who stepped into the energiser, those that stepped in died - really died.

"And what went in was easy to reconstitute because no one ate them in between. But, on the other hand, with sufficient energy, we could generate several versions of one person, all with the same memories.

"Scientific transformations might include, for example, a bit of genetic jiggling so that, say, the energised person has a gene rearranged to remove what causes an illness. That's not re-creation: not in the full sense of rising to new heights, new fulfilment.

"However, what really would connect the dead person - and remember Jesus did die - would be the re-creative activity of God. An artist doesn't copy and paste a painting, say, even one lost in a house fire or something: it is painted again, yes like the one that was before, but it's a new creative effort, even one with the memories of the original. You put new life into that re-created painting.

"Perhaps my example is not a good one; to be a good one, the paints would have to be made from the ashes of the burnt-down house including the painting itself. Putting the ash in and mixing them all into colours to apply.

"But why re-create? For a purpose, for readiness, for the end-time. The end time? Yes, its condition of new perfection. It's what we call eschatology. So the miracle of Jesus returning, like any miracle God did, like the miracle of our more-than-restoration, is in the eschatology, the perfecting, and therefore the finalising re-creative power of God. And this is our hope for the future, in the creative power of God, bringing us all to a new mode of existence and the very basis of hope.

"And I would add this. All miracles are re-creations. They are all about the future-state and end-state that is our hope. They reflect purpose and bounty. Miracles, by God through Jesus, are all consistent, as is the very created world, and the resurrection was the greatest miracle, and will be on the road to glory. Amen."

Colin said to me immediately, "That was very good, wasn't it?"

"Yes." I was gobsmacked. I'd never heard anything like it. It wasn't just your gassy evangelical throwaway stuff but quite considered, and with a scientific edge to it and a crack at the Jehovah's Witnesses that often biblical evangelicals need to demonstrate.

We three lined up after the service to shake hands. Peter Marshall was holding back.

Ralph Thickett (who'd coughed at me at the magic show), said, "Now that sermon's what *you* should have said, Reverend. Substantial!"

"Not sure about the artistic analogy," I suggested. "Needs new paper, does need new paint. Stretched it a bit."

Colin, alongside, said to me, "You're envious of someone who preaches better than you and intelligently."

Jenny told Colin Cromer that our church in Serninsea was getting a reputation for theological sermons, so she decided to do one of those. She said, "I have this book from 1993 by Arthur Peacocke, called *Theology for a Scientific Age*. Would you believe it was published by SCM?" she asked - as if SCM are on 'the other side'.

I went to Peter alone to get a response. He said, "That was a hell of a shop window for someone who doesn't believe in the goods."

"Well, I couldn't do it."

"I'll let Adam know how it works, this level of deception."

Peter said hello to Jenny and Colin shook his hand.

Colin said to Peter, "You're always welcome here. Some are muttering about you as a sceptic, but my point is you've come and you've listened and she was giving good, thoughtful, guidance to our faith."

"She was doing that," said Peter.

Jenny said to me in the car going home, "It's complete nonsense of course. My sermon, like so much, confuses science and theology, and tries to write one in the terms of the other. And the theology adds nothing. However, it is not our job to tell them it is nonsense."

"It sounds like you are thinking," I said to her. "Wouldn't you have been all 'Jesus this' and 'Jesus that' as an evangelical?"

"I can do that. But you'd had a session on miracles and a magic show. It had all gone wrong. I put it right."

I asked, "Is Jesus not a rabbi with reverse ethics and an interesting love ethic that Paul expanded?" I was trying to find a floor she might rest upon.

"But these ethics are available anyway."

"Presumably nothing based on resurrection and life after death."

"Stop being silly," said Jenny.

"Well, what of the post-Easter Church and all that?"

"What of it? So what? Millions can be wrong with organising information. 'I want information! Who is Number 1? I am Number 2! You are Number 6'."

"Correct. I am trapped in the village. *But* - as a secularist, say: don't you have a commitment to truth?"

"My job is like doing Public Relations. Or like working on Russian Television News. I am an instrument of policy. Sure, it is better to do something else."

"So," I asked, "do you still have an ultimate purpose in life? Supposedly not."

"The thing is, I'm forty years old, and at that point in my life where I am

mentally stable and I just enjoy fucking as many men and women as I can. When I had madness issues, religion held me together. I remain schizophrenic like people stay alcoholic. It is controlled now. I take a lot of drugs quietly: you didn't see me do this yesterday and today. I regret some of my letters to Geoff Virgo, but perhaps he has found something for himself 'up the candle', as they call it, and my uncle too. Let him join Christine. It's all tosh. If you want to get inside my knickers, Linda, you can do that. I fucked Adam and waited a long time for that. You can revive memories. You don't come back to life."

"No."

"Remember my breasts? They're bigger now," she said.

At this point she wanted me to stop at a Sutton all day store. She came back with a six pack of bottles of beer.

"Drive on."

"I suppose you and Sarah Deimos laugh it all off."

"She thinks it is as ridiculous as I do. I'd love to go to bed with her, but she really is in love with her partner. I lied to Adam. They *don't* know I am secular. I'm good at lying now. Maybe Liz and Terry suspect. Liz is a big believer. So is Terry, beyond his surface of public engagement and wanting public approval. Christine is right that his main focus is his own pleasure. He is a sociopath narcissist. I'm not, and you're not."

"Journey's quite short."

"By the way, I told you all that in confidence."

"No, I won't tell Adam. He shouldn't be trying to blackmail you and you shouldn't try to blackmail him."

Then she said, "If you don't mind, I like a lie down on my own after a big event like a sermon. I do need rests. I'll drink these in my room and then sleep. It's for mental stability, not tiredness."

This seemed to suggest to me that all was not completely well. I was still wondering how she could remain mentally stable when losing such a commitment. Perhaps she was becoming a militant atheist; perhaps she was reliant on drink.

Narrator: Adam *Christine's Idea to Release Linda* (Monday 26th August)

Christine came to see me and Ann Dromeghda. She declared, "The blackmail didn't work, so what we need is a plan that gets Linda safe. Don't be under any illusions: they'll treat her as their ecclesiastical property, a slave indeed, and she will feel obliged to give her consent to punishment."

Ann said, "There is the law of the land."

"They'll get her to treat it like consenting to BDSM - shared bondage, her submission and her masochism. If Jim Wilson is given free rein, it will in fact be his domination and his sadism."

"She says 'no' now. Surely 'no' means no?" Ann queried.

"Consent happens at different levels. At some point there is consent to take a punishment. Ask a teacher."

"I was a teacher."

"If Linda were to go to, say, above the casino, then she gives a level of

consent they can use to get more consent. It's like how others do Conversion Therapy. They manipulate consent at one level to extend it to where consent did not exist previously. It's about obligations and reciprocity."

I said, "I can keep working on Jenny, but the attempt to blackmail her didn't work. She's here to persuade Linda to fall in."

"What will save Linda," Christine said, "is not being in communion with her bishops. Then they have no claim over her. They can't with me. So you and I have to help set her up with somewhere to go, somehow to operate, as a priest, where Barman and the rest have no claim on her. I did this."

"How does that happen?" I ask.

"Get her chucked out. I have a plan. My Church, the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia, does all sorts of ordinations on an ongoing basis. Your schoolfriend Geoff would stop at nothing to get some ordinations done inside a legitimate actual church - with publicity. So we have to neutralise Jenny and get her back to Hartlepool, even if only for the time being. Then get my group hosted by Linda to have a Mass and ordain themselves new successions inside Serninsea parish church. That should get Linda chucked out."

"And what do we do?" asked Ann.

"Put this Anglican opposition into these terraced houses as a Church base. If it includes me, I'll pay towards it. I continue my relationship with property with you and Labhaoise."

"We're already on to this," said Ann. "The plans allow a complete property merger, meeting area and rooms, and accommodation too. If she was to stay in the Anglicans, it could be an office and meeting place, as well as a place for Adam and some others to stay."

"With God's guidance, Linda could come into my Church, and I would play second fiddle - really would regarding the property. But I'd like access rights."

"But," I said, "Linda receives a salary and has a whole house at present. This would be subsistence living."

"If it was secure and comfortable, I think she'd jump at the chance. And we'd likely make her a bishop to give her equality in the place in hierarchical terms, so that she doesn't see me as *her* bishop."

However, I had a further issue. "How does this affect the media exposure of the sex cult and the diocese's inefficiency?"

"Why should it affect it?" asked Christine.

"You might create a louder bang," thought Ann aloud.

I said, "It's a question of timing. There's this funeral, where Linda is in trouble already."

"She's in trouble over the magic show and discussion," said Christine.

I continued: "The sex cult revelations must couple with the bureaucratically inept diocese revelations. I'll ask Peter about recording in the church."

Christine said, "Don't. Involve as few people as possible: Ann, you, me. Anything else needs anonymity."

Narrator: Linda *After Over 20 Years* (Monday to Tuesday 27th August)

I had been reading of the death of Wade Clark Roof, 80, a sociologist of religion, particularly his interest in the spiritual lives of the baby boomer generation using ethnographic methods. Reading is important for a clergyperson; Colin Cromer seemed to think reading was irrelevant for ministry in a locality.

Friends and I went to Patricia's, a change on this Bank Holiday. This way we could all be outside and in the sun: Jenny, Kathleen, Diana and me. We were all applying sun blocker as it was hot.

And I had received the reason why we had to go there. It was a message from Colin Cromer.

The bishop has received complaints of nude sunbathing in your back garden. I am fed up with this. Can't you keep this activity confined to Bever Wood? Instead of lying about and doing nothing, you could have been writing your apologies.

Wonderful. Why did any resident call the bishop and not Colin directly? I realised that Jenny must have spoken to Barman, and he was using it. Surely no resident had complained. And it was only Kathleen who had been sunbathing in the garden.

We were back at my house. We three were eating as Diana had decided that she would return to Aardse - I was obviously well enough now. I expected Adam to arrive fairly soon or when available. Jenny had bought wine, and was rather knocking some back. I received a text message from Adam:

Everything is fine by me and I will stay at my place overnight. Love Adam.

Bedtime came and Jenny was naked, newly shaven and at my bed.

"You have your own room" I said. "You're making things happen behind my back."

"Move over."

I was expecting some sort of predatory action, but instead she started retelling her autobiography. And it contained a few new details. So, both of us recalled what we did with Adam in the upper sixth, and after I went to university she did attach herself to him. She learnt then he was dealing with two women at once again, but separately this time. She was fairly certain about the identity of the other person, but did not want to tell me even now.

"Anyhow, it came to nothing," Jenny said, "with the other woman."

"Or with you. *He* went to Nottingham," I said.

She explained that it wasn't for a number of months into 1998 before she went with Adam at that time. Keith had sex with her on his (second) Easter vacation when visiting home.

Jenny said, "I knew you were with him, so I thought I was within my rights to share. I think I was the last person he had sex with before he left for EMU. He went with Diana during his first year vacation back, before you went to EMU. She was a regular of his, like me - he'd taken her virginity in the sixth form. And I learnt the list from him, and can update it. Want to know it?"

"He told me. Or I think he did."

"Helen Venus took his virginity when a dinner lady - later Helen Eris."

"Yeah, he was proud of her approach."

"Justine Geldzahler, Carrie Warren..."

"Oh?"

"Carrie later transitioned to male. Diana, as stated; me; and someone back at university called Lorraine."

"Before me."

"You were next, and you were his project. I don't think you're right: he was sort of loyal, if you discount Diana and me. But then back here we had farm workers Hannah and Tilly McClelland on the same night. Patricia Berger was next, after her divorce."

"So after university, he was anybody's and he was with me then. When is Cheryl?"

"Six years back, but after Diana again. Cheryl Mould was just divorced from Frank Little. He took advantage like that. After Cheryl was your sister. Took him two years and it was Lucinda's come-on. Give him that."

"I know what I'd give him."

"Just before your family went to Wales. So we're at my initiation in 2015 and your husband had me several times after, and of course there was noticably Yojana Asthana among others whom he mentored. There you go. My information is from within the Confraternity. You will tell it your own list."

"No I won't. We were talking about you."

"So before I went to Tees and before Adam was gone there was an evangelical group of believers in Serninsea..."

"It died away - the come and go of some of these spontaneous groups..."

"I moved from them to a Tees Spirit-filled crowd. It was very intense, at a time of developing illness. I showed real signs of disturbance, with religious fervour all wrapped in. I showed a new spirit of intolerance too, and with Geoff being gay, I wrote to him to 'reach for the Lord' and turn his 'sinful ways' around. It was all very intense in a Vineyard setting. Their model was John Wimber."

"In Fuller Seminary in America, his sociology of church planting was the idea of everyone attending being of the same social strata for more effective evangelism."

"I was about to tell you that, Linda."

"You ended up in the same firm as me," I said.

"Because this Christian Union person said the sociologically selective approach is wrong, because we should minister to everyone. The Vineyard world was also too indisciplined, too free-wheeling. The Christian Union approved a nearby Anglican Church: fundamentalist and anti-women regarding presbyters in charge. But there was a minority debate within, and some thought I had an ability to attach to people quickly and that this would suit gospel ministry. To do that I moved to one of the more moderate Evangelical churches, although my views were at the far end of the scale. And anyway, the hard-line church went independent under their minister Mervyn Tinkle, spawning several plants."

"They didn't pursue you?"

"Not once you swap fellowships, and they had plenty on their plate. So I stabilised with a doctor's help giving drugs and strategies against stress. The Maths plus Business Education and training for accountancy wasn't fulfilling, so I went forward for ministry. I was accepted to begin after my degree. I had my own uncle's example, if rather odd."

"He was independent. What about the mental illness?"

"I kept it quiet and they concentrated on me transferring from the free-wheeling. Then in theological college I had to do academic and Contextual Theology, and I was shocked. I mean, these arguments seemed to be those of 'the enemy'. I had nothing sufficient by which to counter these academics. You should 'unlearn' to learn, they said."

"Not to me."

"So many students write these critical, well-referenced, investigative essays, and then just put what they used to think back together again within their ministries. They recommended I carry on to do the same."

"Some of my tutors were into Karl Barth, Hans Frei, George Lindbeck - died last year. About Bultmann they said it's all about the ahistorical text. My essays got good marks as I set about their motives."

"The academic continuation into parishes doesn't work except what Lindbeck tried to achieve."

"Yes, in the parish they do expect 'role performance'. I was too critical, too actually liberal, never postliberal."

"So I had two years, not one, before I was priested, eleven years ago, under Judith Short at Marske-by-the-Sea. She was tolerant but managerial and demanded regularity in all things, and I did as I expected."

"Sounds similar to Colin. Did you get a boost being ordained priest, like I did?" I asked.

"No. Broken biscuits was my sensation. Bishop of Tees Hardwick Cockburn did the honours. Judith wasn't sure I was stable, but I was moved to Fatima Tamuz's ministry after only a year as a priest, and I went as a curate again. Fatima is a *bad* woman; her friend was Liz Huett. I knew I was having internal problems again. I developed unexpected and confused feelings for Fatima after she seduced me. She insisted that sex was divine, like her pal did, and she didn't leave me alone. She became more controlling, and then something enormous happened."

"Enormous?"

"I was visited by Elizabeth, then a priest, and was paraded naked in front of her. Liz was ravenous. I wet the bed with my orgasms like I'd never done before, and she was saying it was all holy and divine and God right in me. The authorities knew nothing of this side of Liz, and Jon Eyre and Terry Barman put words in for her elevation. Fatima felt overlooked and took it out on me. I swear I thought I was going nuts again because I really believed them about orgasmic divinity."

"Did this outlook on 'orgasmic divinity' put things back together again, for a while at least, Jenny?"

"No, because of the double awareness: I believed it, but it was also like madness. I was scared of Liz, really scared, especially after Penuel Fairthing retired and she became Suffragan Bishop of Segedunum in 2015. Liz said God loved me and I should be available to her all the time. And then one day soon she arrived with both Terry Barman and Jonathan Eyre. They all had me, all ends and everywhere."

"Oh my God," I said. "Together, or one after the other?"

"Fatima didn't take part, because this became my initiation; they said Fatima had acted as my mentor. I had their sperm and her juices. Next day Fatima took me for an afterwards contraception drug."

"Shit."

"I was visited regularly. Terry Barman told me to enjoy it. And I did sort of

grow into it, fucking them and Fatima. There were more people getting involved, too. It was a tightly closed circle, and I had to say nothing, but I was told I was invaluable and doing everything right. Terry Barman had connected with Sanjay Bunker via SMS, and SMS were in Harlepool too. Terry had obtained the space above the casino here and it was the dead man's idea to use its history to concoct the front of *The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players*. Christine, the thinker behind the Confraternity Vanguard, became a bit of a buddy. One odd thing was *not* having sex with her. I didn't tell Fatima I'd lost my beliefs; you do realise, in reality, that Christine is an atheist?"

"No I don't."

"She knows all you know and I know. We are all non-believers now. What she does is push it all into the institution. Mark me, if the institution goes she loses the lot. That's why she piled everything into the Confraternity Vanguard and now elsewhere. Think of this Marcella Althaus-Reid theology - have you heard of her?"

"Yes. Indecent theology, it's called."

"Good. I don't get Christine's attachment. Marcella Althaus-Reid's theology wants the Church turned upside down and inside out, not formed into Christine's Egyptian pyramids. Christine doesn't just leave the Church intact but arms it to the teeth: patriarchal as it is."

"Now it's another Confraternity."

"Terry saw strategic Christine as a threat long back. The Confraternity Vanguard is like a Church within a Church. Her Body Eucharist is this combination of initiation and Eucharist. She has developed a theological economics of sex."

"Hey?"

"Her own body is her centre of production, distribution and exchange. She is the most bonkers of us all, Linda. Anyway, she is gone from us now. You seem to get on with her."

"Not sure. Attachment is not approval."

"She is premodern within postmodernity. It is not like the religious belief of old, no matter how much they dress it up."

"That's what I think," I said. "It is impossible to even begin to think like the ancients. The Chassidic Jews know this, that the best times were the old times, and even they are forced into a kind of re-creation - to use your word. You know, I never expected this sort of discussion with you."

"Have you heard of Jonathan Edwards?"

"Yes, he was an American Calvinist at a time when some of them were going Arminian, and he fought a rearguard action against change."

"No, there's an athlete, a runner. He was evangelical and then someone pointed out a biblical contradiction or two, and his beliefs vanished. I didn't go like that, but I never really recovered. I never became liberal: couldn't see the point. My language remained Evangelical, and now it is a public relations job. Four years now I've been with the Secular Clergy Foundation. Some are in it for much longer. Look, I can still go to a Vineyard church and join in, but I know there is nothing in it any more. So I've become an actor. There's a new one starting in Serninsea. I'd take you there."

"No thanks."

"You still have some residual belief, but you will never satisfy the system unless you can find a way to conform. I do satisfy the system, even when it has all

gone. Christine is the most deluded of us all. And when it comes to sex no one gets the better of her. The bishops have been envious."

"And you don't just leave?"

"I have thought really seriously about returning to accountancy. But I like sex and they supply people."

"Who's Anna - at the ordination?"

"I got her knickers off twice but she's not into what we are doing. She's a mate still. She thinks I'm a predatory lesbian. Most of the time nothing happens between us. I'd like her to be to me like Diana is to you."

"Jenny, did the Bishop of Bolingbroke, John Terence Barman, ask you to come here?"

"Yes he did."

"Why?"

"To get you on side. It's your only stable option. What's Adam's report going to do? Oh, the Confraternity might retreat, but it will re-emerge. And, by the way, Colin Cromer is getting suspicious. He received an anonymous note about goings on. It must be Adam's doing. But the converse is, Linda, that Cromer won't be able to protect you from the storm. He will realise all this has been going and they'll sweep him aside. He's close to retirement. He's being played like a kipper."

"Kathleen - is that you?" I asked, hearing a presence beyond the closed bedroom door.

The door opened and here were two women in nighties: Kathleen and Winnie.

"Just checking," Kathleen said. "Is everything fine?"

"Fine," I said. "Enjoy!"

"Are you two going to enjoy?" asked Kathleen.

"Everything is under control, Kathleen. Night night - and you, Winnie."

They went.

Jenny said, "The gossip shop says you seduced the Wickenby twins and you were quite assertive."

"I did not seduce them. Kathleen wanted experience, and she did a switch with her sister as if I wouldn't notice. I noticed the moment I smelt her vagina."

Jenny started touching me. "Are you the same smallness down there, then?"

"Decades of dilating have made a bit of a difference."

She removed the duvet and instructed: "Open legs wide!" Jenny started an examination, facing me with her knees pushing down into the mattress. Then Jenny said, "Remember the pact?"

"Of course."

"It said we should meet in ten years and we didn't. It's twenty plus now."

"I know. Well, we are adults now."

"We should obey it. Adam can still come over." She opened me more and probed. "You are bigger."

I took hold of my mobile phone. Jenny applied her tongue. I rang Adam. "She wants you to come, now, and I do."

"OK. I haven't gone to bed yet. I'll drive over."

"You're lucky," Jenny said. "A life without periods and all that's associated with them."

"Yep. Continue, Jenny."

At one initial orgasm later, for which Jenny gave me no religious exclamation,

Adam let himself in. And we considered getting him to undress and lean against the wall but instead got him in between us. Soon, as instructed, he was doing us alternately, ten thrusts each and switching. He was slower compared with when he was a youth. It was Jenny who received his seed and she kept it better.

Next morning we both bathed Adam before we got in the tub ourselves, with the difference that Kathleen was knocking on the bathroom door. She and Winnie were forced to use the loo downstairs.

We decided not to cut ourselves and share blood, a dangerous practice. We'd met and come together at last and observed the bond we had made.

Adam told us at breakfast that he had most of the evidence to strike at Barman. He would *not* tell the world that Jenny was secular. She would not retaliate, she told him. I said I'd thought about it, but I was still not going to join the Serninsea group under the Confraternity Vanguard. I would not join Christine's either, which I could not anyway.

I told them that I was now hating the constraints of the parish.

Jenny compared this with being under Fatima.

I said, "I know something has to break: it can't go on like this for much longer. The next time I go ill, like I have twice so recently, I will probably collapse and die, even if I don't actually die."

But Jenny assured me that the Confraternity Vanguard would free me.

"You're not listening. I'm not joining it."

Apologies (Wednesday 28th August)

I was in bed with Adam and Jenny, deciding not to go in to Morning Prayer. I knew my priorities: we were having fun.

Colin rang me and told me that he would now be visiting me, expecting to help construct and pick up both statements of apology. He would come to me so that I could make any changes he wanted to the text on my computer.

Very soon the doorbell rang and Kathleen answered. It was Ann and Labhaoise. Phew. I was in the bathroom, with Adam and Jenny still in my bed, so I came out and listened from behind the visitors upstairs.

Ann said, "This has all rather got off to a bad start, Jenny. No one ever wanted to actually blackmail you about your membership of the Secular Clergy Foundation and no one will. But we are going to publish, and you can't cook an omelette without cracking some eggs."

I asked, "Why do you need to publish? There is another scenario. I submit to Barman, she gets a new job down here, and we just carry on."

"Because," said Ann, "that allows Barman to get away with it. No, we are going to publish. Linda, you have done nothing wrong. Publishing will clear the decks. As for Jenny, you will lose your initiator role, but it will see you out of the Church. So Adam is going to employ you."

"Am I?" Adam asked, looking over to me.

"Jenny as an accountant and administrator."

"Where is the money coming from?"

"Us. So, Jenny, you can also work for us: Labhaoise and me."

Jenny said, "I don't want to work for you. Why don't you get your snouts out of my business?"

"Because, like it or not, I am in business and this is my business. I've made my offer. You don't believe your religion any more, you surely want to get out, and you have no partner (so that makes you flexible), and we're giving you a way out into employment."

Labhaoise said, "Don't wait for it all to come crashing down. Peter can be freed of the admin and the figures."

"That's true," said Adam. "I could do with someone... Oy, Jenny, pack that in for a moment."

"I like the sex my associations give me."

Labhaoise said, "Obviously we've interrupted your present fun and games, so we'd better go."

Ann said, "Come on then, let's leave them to their fun."

With Colin still due, we got up, without doing the bath antics of the day before, and went to have breakfast. Adam went off to work late and Jenny decided to go out and hang around in town.

So I got on with typing, and was fairly swift at it too. Afterwards, I was hanging about in mufti. The doorbell went and it was him: Winnie and Kathleen disappeared into the front room.

"I have done the statements," I said, leading Colin Cromer to the long lounge. "You can read my laptop screen. I can print them afterwards."

"All right. When I've approved, send them electronically. I will forward them both to Bishop John."

We went into the larger lounge, the scene of the discussion disaster. He read the first statement I would give orally.

I wish to apologise for any distress caused by inappropriate clothing worn during the recent Magic Show in the Church Hall, and further apologise for the tone and direction of the discussion group that followed on in my house. I wish to make it clear, if a contrary impression was given, that I do of course affirm all creeds and formularies as expected by an Anglican priest.

Colin Cromer was unimpressed. This was, he said, "a mealy-mouthed typical politician's sort of apology."

Thus I had to change it, under his supervision, and it became, to read out:

I apologise for my inappropriate clothing worn during the recent Magic Show in the Church Hall, and further apologise for the tone and direction of the discussion that followed in my house. I wish to make it clear, despite the contrary impression from myself, that I do affirm all creeds and formularies as required of an Anglican priest.

"Next one," he instructed. "We can allow a little more scope for explaining the intention and the unfortunate result, but the emphasis must be on clear apology."

I said, "I'll just take away ambiguities now."

After an introductory paragraph it read:

The purpose of the Magic Show and my commentary was to show that Christianity has no place for magic, even though it certainly does have place for revelation and the supernatural. The difference is that whilst magic is the work of human hands interfering with apparent spiritual powers, the supernatural is the reassuring work from God understood from revelation. My magician friend pointed out within the show that his readings from 'the other side' were not this at all, and that they were a trick. When he said this, he meant it, and there really was no contact from an other side. He is learning to cold read as part of his stage magician's portfolio.

To prepare for the show I selected a leotard and did a lot of flexibility training. I now realise that the leotard was too thin and too tight, and had a cut that emphasised much of my body that no one should have seen. It was entirely inappropriate for me, a clergywoman, to wear this on stage. I apologise.

The discussion that followed spoke about the Gospel miracles. I was keen to relay knowledge that is debated in the theological colleges. I was not trying to undermine belief in the supernatural or Jesus as carrier and giver of revelation. The miracles emphasise many things, not least the bounty that will be ever-present in the Kingdom of God. To state that the miracles have theological readings is not to infer disbelief. Appearing to agree with my magician friend of a different religious affirmation against magick does not mean I do not believe in the miracles. I do affirm all creeds and formularies as required of an Anglican priest. Again I need to apologise for giving a contrary impression.

I said to Colin, "You do realise this is somewhat difficult for me to do and undermines my credibility, if no one actually believes the veracity of these statements."

"It is supposed to be difficult for you. This is entirely of your own making. However, once you have read the short statement out three times on Sunday and once after Morning Prayer on Wednesday, and this article has been published, I will say no more on the matter. But you must stop causing embarrassment, and I'm including here what happened recently in the curate's house garden."

Kathleen went by towards the kitchen, got something from there, and went back again.

Colin said, "Is that Kathryn Wickenby?"

"Kathleen."

"Is she staying here?"

"She has a room, yes."

"Have you cleared this with the diocese? You can't just rent out rooms. What is going on with you? Your husband has moved out, you have Adam Magellan here, and now one of the Wickenby twins. Well, I assume one."

"I'm not charging her rent. I'm giving her a taste of independent living. She needs a break from her sister, who is starting a relationship with a man."

"Hang on," he said. "She is not in a relationship with you - Kathleen? She's not a replacement for Keith, or even Adam Magellan."

"No. I don't jump into bed with anyone who comes along, Colin. She has her own room, she is just starting out being different from Kathryn for a change. I think very soon she will find herself a girlfriend and will move out."

"She's a... lesbian?"

"I think so, yes."

"She is an identical twin of her sister who has a boyfriend!"

"She also has different fingerprints. Colin, *please*."

"This is a curate's house. You have spare bedrooms, just like I do, for guests. They are for visitors who are doing parish business - and the occasional family guest."

"She is a family guest. This is my house! Until I go, I can treat this as my house."

"Absolutely not," he said. "You are a servant of the Lord and a servant of his Church. This house is part of your sacrificial serving life. Putting up Gretta Cox-Jenkins for the night was a legitimate use of this house. Handing a room out to one of your mates is not a legitimate use."

"She is not one of my mates. She is an archaeologist, magician's assistant and a model, and I gave her a break having heard her story."

"A model? Like you were once?"

"Yes."

"Did you go out in the back garden, or did she?"

"I told her to come in."

"If I get any more complaints about her - I get it now - cavorting around naked outside, this set of apologies here will seem like nothing. By the way, as you well know, Morning Prayer is not an option: it is an obligation for you. You will be present at each and every Morning Prayer."

Off he went. And after he did, Kathleen told me she had been in the hall and heard all that. "I'm sorry," she said for the umpteenth time. "I won't do it again."

I said, "Oh fuck it, fuck it, fuck it." I stood up and faced her, and then started vigorously undressing her to zero. I then did the same for me. She was wide-eyed. I said, "You and I are going to be like this here the rest of the day - but *don't* go in the garden."

Jenny, when back, had some advice for me. "The institution you're in won't have it. Most people go to work, do and say things they wouldn't otherwise, and go home to switch off. That's what I do. Yes, we have evening Parochial Church Councils and Deanery Meetings and all that, but in the daytime beyond the admin we can read, play, go out, even stay in bed. Look, you and me will have three churches between us, and one is basically a monument on a mound. Take your salary and enjoy life: and you will have pleasurable intimacy with a group of people. What's not to like?"

"I'm trying to make a contribution."

"But it's not working! When Michael Goulder lost his religion he could still teach it. He at that time, and you and I now, still have the tools to carry on. We can do the sermons and the prayer groups and the rest, and turn up as required, because we know the landscape. But all we are doing is turning the wheels. So what? That's what they want: they want to see the wheels turn."

"Colin Cromer is doing work with an outcome."

"He is like the old shire horse. What is it now? Thirty-six years he's been here, Terry said, after three at Cartmel? He is contented. He has the rule-book through his veins. You are not like him. You are a creative. Terry is a creative, really."

"And what about Christine?"

"Christine has another solution. She intensifies the institution and the self: but,

mark me Linda, she could not do it in our institution. She's had to do what my Uncle Bill does, to go independent, where they have a crazy level of freedom and an authoritarianism at the same time. She wraps herself into this nonsense of apostolic succession, and then starts to let her theology go anywhere - and self-deludes that it follows all the Councils, in essence. But that's not so. I've heard her say this before - you can universalise your theology so long as it is structurally of the Church. But that kind of Liberal Catholicism is notoriously flaky: Krishnamurti, Theosophy, Buddhism of a kind, magical powers with priests, free thought, this Unitarianism thing even. But there's nothing like blinkers to avoid all the contradictions."

"So what do I do?"

"Fall in."

"But Adam will publish."

"So what? The Church is resilient. You'll be all right. If it collapses I will work for Ann, Labhaoise and Adam, but I'd rather do this. I like fucking and you do. I've seen that video. You're licking your lips."

"The sperm was overwhelming and horrible."

"Adam is wasting his time: all he will destroy will rise up again. The three bishops - even the five - won't give this up. They believe it. The Vanguard will re-emerge. We were having fun this morning until we heard from your vicar. I want fun, Linda, when the hours are ours."

Adam soon came for his tea, accompanied by four naked women, two of whom later stripped him off. We two women had fun (was he tired?) before we three dozed together.

There was yelping from the other room.

Peter (Friday 30th August)

Having attended Morning Prayer, visited, and learnt that Colin (not me) would go on local radio for its Morning Reflection slot, I came back to the curate's house and picked up my own post.

In my post was a slim package of two DVDs, professionally labelled and covered. The first was *Silky Black Glory Holes* and the second was *Silky Black Gang Bang Bukakke*. The titles annoyed me because Bunker had reused my modelling name. The sender wasn't given but the postmark was Canterbury, Kent. So who sent this? The Bishop of Margate? It could have been Christine.

Nevertheless, this was what people were able to purchase. So I went into the sitting room and used the television and its integrated DVD player.

Although some faces were spotted looking through one of the slits, Peter wasn't one of them. I simply wasn't sure which white penis was his. There were two or three candidates for Sanjay Bunker himself, and looking again I was pretty sure which one was his. Then I looked at me on my back in the second DVD and looked at the various masked people. I guessed Bunker again.

So I rang Adam's and asked Peter if he could come around to discuss the seen DVDs. Peter said he could after 5 pm, but later rang back that Adam thought I might have something material to say and he was told to leave early. I stayed in my cassock and collar (only) and at 4:15 he rang the doorbell. Kathleen went to answer

it, expecting Winnie.

I opened the front door. I told Kathleen not to disturb us.

"You've seen these, haven't you?"

"Both of them. And Kathryn demanded that she see them too."

"She said something like you were doing your duty."

"Blending in."

"So do you know among these various white penises penetrating my mouth which one is yours? You told me you did not fuck me in the second video."

"You want me to show you?"

"You bet I fucking do. You didn't need to take advantage of me. How dare you?"

"To be there I had to participate. There was no other reason to be there. Adam's firm paid the fee and expenses. It was sixty quid to go in, and once in we had masks to choose from, condoms if we wanted."

"Did you wear one?"

"No. I wasn't going to fuck you."

"How did you finish with me in the booth?"

"You swallowed. Blimey, it was like having my sperm extracted. It just went straight in."

We spent some time looking at one after the other, and going back.

"It's one of two. I'm sure it's one of those early two and that slot to the right."

"Take your trousers off now and we'll look at the candidates."

"Now?"

"Yes now, you bastard, taking advantage of me. Get them down and, what's more, you can get yourself equally hard."

"Bloody hell, Linda. I don't know if I can."

"I'll make sure you can."

"OK, I'll do it."

So Peter was by the side of the screen and his penis was out. I told him to pull back his foreskin.

I said, "Look, neither of them match. They're not quite the same."

"The lighting."

"Your balls aren't hanging the same."

"They change. It is about that number."

"Two bollocks?"

"No: the queue for that slit at the booth."

"But I cannot see a match. It was you who helped lift me away after the multiple rape wasn't it?"

"Was it rape?"

"Look, you were there, with the supposed Canadian accent."

"Yes."

"Yes, that was you. Come here. Just come here."

I took hold of his penis, and put it in my mouth. I worked on it.

"Please, Linda. And in your gown!"

I released him. "You're lying. I didn't suck you off first time, just as you didn't come over me in the next DVD."

"Well, it was..."

"No it wasn't, Peter."

"Yes, I hid."

"So here is my suggestion. Adam has paid... what?"

"Hundred in total."

"He paid the sixty quid fee for you queueing up and putting your knob through a slit, yes? But you got in the showroom building a different way, hid and looked from a distance and emerged only at the end, with a mask you picked up."

"Er, yeah, em... Very good, Linda."

"You're sexually inexperienced, Peter. It wasn't just Adam who thinks you've had me. You told Kathryn."

"She wouldn't have believed me otherwise."

"She knows you have abilities of researching places and finding ways in?"

"Yes she does. Can I put my penis away?"

"No you can't."

"Adam paid me in front of her - which was him being deliberate."

"Ah. Now we have it. He had a thrill."

"What if I'd said I hadn't done it?"

"Kathryn has seen the downloads but she hasn't realised you were not involved."

"She's not as forensic as you. Linda, you are sexually experienced in a way some of us will never achieve."

"I've a good mind to extract your semen like you claimed. Put it away. Now a similar word to semen is sermon. Thank you for listening to Jenny's sermon and hearing her own deception. Tell Adam that she's an alcoholic and keeps lying down, like she is now, and is probably close to the edge mentally."

"I think I have a solution for information loss at black holes. Instead of re-radiating, the information supplies a white hole into new space and time. So resurrection is like a white hole."

"Sounds too close to needing a miracle to me, always a sign of weakness in making a religious argument."

"Could be," Peter responded.

He pulled up and fastened his trousers. "I'm sorry Linda for abusing your good name."

"You're not the first. As far as Adam and Kathryn are concerned, you fucked me in those videos. Now go."

"Bye, Linda. We're all looking out for you."

"I'll see you soon, Peter. You're a good lad, really."

Later on I told Adam in bed that I'd received these DVDs in the post; Peter and I had identified which one of the two suspected times was him servicing me.

"I don't believe it," Adam said. "To be incognito Peter had to join in?"

"You paid his fee. Anyway, we've checked."

"Did he enjoy it?"

"No more than listening to Jenny's sermon."

"That much? I'm not paying him for that."

"It told us a lot about her misusing her intelligence."

"I'll pay him a bonus but only for using his boner."

Vestal Virgins (Wednesday 4th September)

I read out the statements on Sunday three times and once on the Wednesday, and the new magazine would kick off with my humiliating article.

On the radio a news item was that the renamed *Report on the Managerial Efficiency of the Wytham Diocese* would be delayed at least until a few days until after the funeral of local minister Kenneth Osis.

Later, I was in the local library with Jenny (from Adam's) and Kathleen, where I was asking the librarian to get more theology and sociology of religion books for me via inter-library loans. "Anything by Marcella Althaus-Reid?"

"I'll look." She did. "Bisexual theology, What's that?" asked the woman looking at the screen.

"Polyamoury as plurality..."

"Goodness. Part of, part of..."

"Get me something by her or about her."

"If that's the sort of thing you want. We do think about you coming here so perhaps you should look at the shelves."

While I was at the shelves getting disappointed yet again, someone approached me.

"I am Carrie Chopin, and I have been asked to contact you in person. Would you would be interested in joining our group?"

She explained that they have a prayer, meditation and study group that keeps a continuous flame alive. The focus is always the local people. "We don't advertise ourselves, and when someone wants to leave we decide on who else we think might like to join us. This time we also want to increase our number by one. We act very quickly on our decisions and we're meeting this evening at the United Presbyterian and Congregationalist chapel."

"Good place to meet."

"It's defunct."

"But you meet there. What is the group called?"

"*The Serninsea Vestal Virgins.*"

"I'm not sure I'd qualify for that. For one thing, I have been married, and, for another, I am separated from my husband while seeking divorce."

"We heard this. We don't actually expect our members to be virgins - it is a reference to Roman educated women who kept the sacred flame. It's about a listening and watching oversight and praying for the towns."

"Is this a Christian group then?"

She explained that the group had Western Buddhist origins and became of no particular religious faith. It kept itself quiet and was not well known. Members sometimes did seek a connection with the *Holy Order of Sophia with Miriam Magdala*, a dispersed group with a spiritual home in France.

I asked her why me specifically but she only answered that they'd welcome my contributions. As for appropriate dress, clerical or otherwise, she said I could attend as dressed here in loose mufti. I explained that Wednesday was not my day off but I made every effort to keep the afternoon and evening free.

"Your clerical friend: is she coming to reside in the Serninsea area?"

"You seem to be very well informed. Jenny?"

"What?"

Carrie Chopin asked her, "If you are to be resident locally, would you like to join us? We seek to increase our number by one."

Jenny replied, "No."

So I suggested Kathleen instead. "Perhaps you don't want Kathleen to come."

"Well, we always respond to the unexpected. Are you interested, Kathleen? You are one of the Wickenby twins, aren't you?"

"Yes. I'll come with Linda but see for myself."

Four of us were then at Patricia's in the afternoon. It wasn't quite warm enough to be outside sunbathing again so we were a bit crowded in the conservatory. Jenny reminded us of her secularity.

So, in the evening, Kathleen and I arrived at the closed-down United Presbyterian Congregationalist Church chapel.

The Reverend Georgie Smith was there, inside a dusty chapel space, wearing no clerical collar and a dark green dress to her knees and same colour long socks. "Hello... *curate*."

"Yes. Hello."

"And you are going to the meeting through there?"

"With my friend."

"It's in the back room." She said, "They have it for now but this place is rather run-down to become a community resource. Don't let the Anglican church hall go the same way."

"Quite."

Through the building we were asked by one woman to go in that room and wait. There were cushions on seats circled around. So we sat down, staying together.

Suddenly Carrie Chopin appeared at the door, in a thigh-length, translucent, white 'gown' with a red waist cord - it looked like the wrapping put around scratchable cathode ray tube screens. I rather approved because that wrapping was the sum total of her clothing. She held above her ample breasts what looked like a miner's lamp.

Then I realised they were all dressed like that, and a lot of female flesh was visible. Looking closely at the thigh's length edge of each gown, each seemed to be dangling some kind of metal disc - from their nearly exposed pubic areas! Badges again!

One woman carried in a bowl of water, towel and flannel. Then six more women processed in, two of whom were of colour. One of those we knew very well, and Kathleen looked all excited and clearly surprised. It was Winnie Lott, in all her hardly concealed glory.

So obviously Winnie had not mentioned being in this group to Kathleen.

They sat in a circle, around us, and Carrie placed the lamp at the centre. Each woman had a metal hoop that pierced the clitoral hood and the disc hung from a second hoop. Wow!

Kathleen leaned and started to whisper, "I thought it was for..."

"Please," said Carrie. "We expect silence and order."

"Sorry."

"I am Carrie Chopin. *This* is the sacred flame. As the current Lamp Keeper I report in all honesty that I have maintained the flame continuously this last week since our last sacred gathering. The Sacred Flame is for the well-being of Sutton-on-

Serninsea, Serninsea, Titansea, and nearby villages. We, along with our sisters around the country, gather to pray for social well-being, and to study solutions towards problems using contemporary and historical texts."

Carrie sat down as another stood and said, "I am Paige Tuck, News Monitor. What is our concern for the week?" She sat down.

Another woman, Welsh in accent, stood and said, "I am Elan Efan, Education Keeper, and for our learning discipline we are studying economics through repair and renewal."

As she sat down, Carrie Chopin then stood and said, "*Transcendent Power and Maker of the Flame, we pray now for the good keeping of our towns and villages. We pray for Serninsea, Sutton, Titansea, Inglemere, Caffenmere, and all ings, marshes, parks and the coast. We pray for harmony and for their progress.*"

Elan now stood alone, saying, "Welcome to our new visitors. We know that they are the Reverend Linda Jupitas, the local Anglican curate, and Kathleen Wickenby, the archaeologist and model. We hope you will like us and that one or both of you will choose to join with us. If neither of you choose to join us, our retiring member will return until we find someone who does. After a second meeting, one or both of you would have to give commitment for a year, meeting once a week. This *must* become your priority commitment. At any stage, commitment to stay indefinitely is shown by our local practice of wearing a special hanging disc with a piercing through the clitoral hood - otherwise you leave after the year is complete. But to stay is to stay and then needs a negotiated withdrawal."

This struck me as similar to circumcision for identity and belonging purposes. So I asked, "Do all your sisters around the country wear these hanging discs?"

Elan replied, "Excuse me, I had not sat down. I understand you do not know our procedures."

"I'm sorry."

"To answer your question, the practice is being adopted by some groups and we think it may well be adopted by every group. Do you wish to stand and ask another question?"

"Er..."

She sat as Carrie stood. "Let's keep to the order of the meeting. We've had the necessary introductions and welcome and next is our concerns section."

Members brought their concerns by standing, giving their name and speaking, and then offering a prayer of concern, holding their hands out to the contained flame in the centre.

Bethany Gorge, the woman with the water, spoke about the doubtful future of SMS in Titansea. She said, hands aloft: "We pray that this business stays and prospers in our area."

The next person was Winnie Lott herself, a British West Indian, the Monitor of Bodies, who most interestingly, said, "We pray for those local prostitutes still involved in the sex trade as Bolingbroke Geese, that perhaps they can find well-paid work elsewhere. We are concerned to hear of the beginning and growth of Weburga Geese in these towns."

Gloria Mabaso, a British-African, Developer of Ideas, added a prayer for us too, and a hope that we would each find a personal deep joy. I just wondered how much they knew about me.

Nellie Richards' prayer was for the quality and standards of Sea TV, the local

community television service. She called herself the External Relations Monitor.

After these prayers came the study, and the study was understanding recycling goods as a means to economic regeneration. I thought this could well be interesting. Paige Tuck stood up and read out a section by Toynbee on what he called the 'biosphere', a conceptual way of looking at economic change spread about. This was apparently preparatory material towards a broader understanding of their specific area of concern. I could see here archaeological interest for Kathleen, who was listening intently.

Carrie standing announced that, "Our complete communal ritual is suspended for this week. We will do just the last part, the Mag-da-len-e Blessing. When someone does wish to join us for a minimum of a year, then we will do the whole ritual. Would you like to take part? You are free to turn this down."

"Yes," I said, not knowing what this was.

"Definitely," said Kathleen.

"Good. One of you come and kneel in front of me, please."

I did this first. So Carrie stood and began. The fact is I could smell her hair-covered sex and see this metal disc up close hanging down on two rings, so the disc was flat and outwards showing SVV CC. "Say with me, 'My name is Linda and I wish to be put under the mantle of Mag-da-len-e'... My..."

"...Name is Linda and I wish to be put under the mantle of Mag-da-len-e."

At this Carrie the Lamp Keeper raised her semi-translucent strange gown above her pubic hair and over my head, and then she bent over me, bringing her bare arms around me and pulling me in between her hanging breasts, touching both my ears. Crumbs, I wasn't expecting this!

"Magdalene, come down and bless this child of yours; O glorious mystery: heaven's body presses upon your child, for your blessing of the two-in-one, the one-in-two. Kiss my breasts - head side to side, Linda. Mag-da-len-e!"

I kissed each hanging breast.

"You have descended, telling us, to our hearts, how we must pray."

Wow!

Carrie then pressed her left nipple to my mouth, and squeezed her breast. This was her actual milk. Then, moving my head and her body, she gave me milk from the other breast. I had to think that Christine had missed a trick here! It proved to me that Carrie was no virgin.

Given this, I wondered what the fully secret ritual would be. She raised her gown up again to release me, and gestured that I should return to my place as I tasted the lactose.

Kathleen looked excited. She now kneeled. Again Carrie raised her semi-translucent gown above her disc laden hairy pubes and put it over Kathleen's head and then bent over her, saying and doing to her as she did to me. Thus Kathleen received her milk, running down her chin as she returned to her place alongside me.

Carrie and a few women went about doing the same to others and indeed all received the breasts and milk ritual.

This done, Bethany Gorge, the Keeper of the Washing, stood and asked if we would accept a further feet-washing ritual given to all. Sometimes this would involve removing guests' tights or stockings as well as shoes, but not in our case. We agreed. Bethany Gorge brought across the water to the centre and Winnie Lott came forward. Both of them cupping their hands with a little water, Bethany and Winnie

symbolically washed our feet with a delicate touch of their hands. When done, each of them kissed our feet one by one. Beth and Winnie then repeated the ritual with everyone and finally did each other.

The kiss of peace from Winnie Lott was to everyone separately, mouth to mouth, including Kathleen of course, and Carrie as present Flame Keeper received the final kiss.

The final ritual for Carrie was to go out of the room and return with a second lamp and long wax lighter. It was placed close to the working lamp. Paige stood and waited. Paige removed Carrie's gown and folded it to bend and place it on Carrie's cushion. Carrie removed Paige's gown, and folded it and placed it on Carrie's cushion. Now naked Paige took from the flame of the old lamp and lit the new one with the wax lighter. Once it burned, the older one was put out by naked Carrie. Paige put her gown back on and now took the burning lamp and it was her job to maintain it, as the new Keeper of the Lamp.

We two were asked to wait in a neighbouring room. It was full of discarded clothes in piles. Kathleen told me she had received a fantastic, moving experience. She'd assumed the hole in Winnie's clitoris hood was for jewellery.

"I think," I said, "that they knew Jenny would say 'no' to coming, and you were intended to be here."

About five minutes later Nellie Richards came into the room.

"What are those gowns made from?" I asked her.

Nellie answered. "Wrapping material, like for some household goods."

"I thought so."

"We get this material supplied; we make them; we replace them, as they do tear and get holes in them. Excuse me. I have to tell you: we think you looked concerned at our ritual. Is it because you are a National Church priest? We understood that you had taken part in different rituals recently."

"Are you referring to the Titansea Grand?" I asked.

"Yes."

"You seem so well informed. I was helping a friend, who had just left the National Church. She is in a new group."

"Did you get meaning from our ritual?" Nellie asked me.

"I thought it was beautiful."

"It was wonderful," said Kathleen. "I'm blown away."

"Thank you."

She went; we waited some more.

A further ten minutes on they processed into the room, and Paige was first in carrying the flame. Carrie was next with the extinguished lamp. The women became naked and dressed.

One of them, Hattie Schepsutte, the Clerk, dressed, said in a German accent, "Thank you, the Reverend Linda. Thank you for coming, Kathleen. Please, Kathleen, do not inform your twin sister about us, not even that we exist. Please neither of you say more to the Reverend Jennifer World. We asked her first out of propriety. Please keep our meeting secret as best as you can from the Reverend Colin Cromer and all others. We will find you both in the next few days."

There was no coffee or similar afterwards, and no socialising as a group. All they and we did was disperse.

"Of course you've plenty to say to Winnie," I said to Kathleen, "and she to

you."

Colin Says Keep Away (Thursday 5th September)

Now I was supposed to keep the Serninsea Vestal Virgins a secret, but next day, with clerical Jenny talking to some parishioners, I asked Colin Cromer after Morning Prayer: "Suppose there is a non-denominational group, even interfaith, let's say, of women who meet and do prayers and study. Would it be wrong of me, say, to join in with such a group, when they might do intercessions for places and learn about relevant things?"

Colin Cromer replied, "Well, if it was an ecumenical or interfaith group, then you would be an Anglican representative at either of those."

"Even if we change liturgies?"

"You represent the Christian faith. Our job in this world, as I have said before, is to preach the Gospel. It doesn't mean we have to convert everyone - as if we could; it doesn't mean we have to be aggressive; it does mean we represent it, do it, and live it out."

"Can't we live it out in a much more *participatory* way?"

He said, "As long as you participate according to your commitment to our formularies, then it would be acceptable. But this means you are subject to the authority of the bishops, and, of course, as a curate here, me. And, given all that has been happening recently, I think you must come to see me first."

"I'm just interested in what the boundaries are, that's all," I said. "Actually, Colin, I am getting fed up with this."

"Oh really. Well," Colin Cromer added, "let's see who this group might be. Indeed, there is a group of women in town who gather wearing very little - that would suit you - and keep a flame going, and make prayers, and do topics, and they are rather secretive. The Church does not keep itself secretive but proclaims. These women we would call 'Gnostic', if they think they possess some secret powers for the good of the area."

"I don't think they do," I said. "I think they are into redeeming, like we are. Colin, I am getting seriously pissed off. These are lovely ladies with beautiful rituals."

"You do not need to use that sort of language. This is a *church*. And it seems from your talk that you have already been along. Linda, they are not appropriate and it is about time you started taking instruction."

"I am fed up with you - and all the others - bunging me into a box."

Jenny came forward. "Linda. What have I told you?"

Colin said, "I know all about these misnamed *Vestal Virgins*. Virgin suggests purity, and they claim spiritual purity no doubt. Did *you* go, *Reverend* Jenny?"

"No."

"They do *not* claim spiritual purity."

"Don't you raise your voice to me."

"Linda!" said Jenny. "Calm it, please."

He said, "Take some advice from your faithful colleague. All right. I might meet some like them in a theoretical interfaith meeting, but they obviously don't do such meetings. The suffragan bishop knows all about them, and so do I."

"I bet he does."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Do you think *he* does everything in public? You said about rumours, after all."

"Pastoral matters, matters of sensitivity have to be private, as you well know."

"I've had enough of this. You know everyone in this town, and you think you know what is going on. But do you? *Do you?*"

"Test me out, then, Mrs. Jupitas."

"Find out for yourself, Colin. If you say there are rumours, follow the rumours."

Jenny then said, "Stop being ridiculous, Linda; the rumours around here are baseless."

I looked at her with dagger eyes, and she just stared back as if to say, 'Come on then.'

So I said, "I am going home, if I still have one. And you: come with me."

Colin then said, "Now there's a point," he said, "given that you abuse your home with every waif and stray."

"Me, Reverend Colin?" asked Jenny, with sad eyes.

"Definitely not. You are the one legitimate visitor to the curate's house. And, Mrs. Jupitas, don't bother about travelling with me to the Coroner's Inquest. You *are* going, I take it."

"Fuck that."

"Linda!" he exclaimed, and Jenny looked astonished. He said at me, "For God's sake, woman, are you going?"

"I suppose I *am*."

"You're off the rails, Mrs. Jupitas - off the rails. This is a very serious matter now."

"Look, Mr. Cromer, all they do is maintain an eternal flame, and their worship is for the towns, and their education as women."

"Well, the answer is you cannot be one of them, so long as you keep turning up here - if you turn up - doing *this* job. Carry on like you are and you'll break all your ordination vows. And, by the way, Hattie Schepsutte and Carrie Chopin were lost from us to this group, and they stopped coming to this church some four years ago on a claim of inspiration of some Gnostic groups. So they obviously decided they could not do both, and *neither can you*. They write and revise their own rituals, but *you... do... not*."

"I'm fucking going home. Goodbye." I started going, but I paused as he spoke and looked back at him.

"Serious matter, serious matter. Insolence, lack of deportment, foul-mouthed, bad - *terrible* - attitude. Rude! Go on. Go. Just go."

But then I turned, headed for the vestry, him jumping aside (he didn't think I'd hit him?) and I shut all doors including to the toilet.

Jenny waited.

All this raised an interesting point in my agitated body. How come he knew about them, but not the Confraternity, the so-called Theatrical Players, not the Bolingbroke Geese, nor the orgies?

With Jenny further on from Colin and looking to stare directly at me, I walked swiftly towards him.

"Mrs. Jupitas!" he said, as I passed and brushed him in the aisle.

"Mr. Cromer," I answered back. "*You*. Come on. Out!"

He called out, "Mrs. Jupitas, you've got the appearance of a clergywoman but the language of a whore."

Outside, I said to Jenny, giving her a shove and pointing back at the church, "Don't you, you fucking Nicodemite, undermine me with your puppy dog fucking eyes. I am being squeezed here - shafted - and you are supporting *him*. 'The rumours are baseless' - you *fucking* liar, Jenny Masters."

"I told you, you stupid sod, to fall in and conform. And I have changed my name."

"Well, come on *Shitface* because we can go shopping so you can get your booze to get pissed again."

"I kept my drinking down. So."

"Alcoholic! Get in the car."

"I am alcohol dependent, not an alcoholic."

So we went to this discount supermarket and Jenny went directly to select twelve bottles in two packs. As I went off elsewhere in the store, there was a tap on my shoulder. It was both Hattie and Paige.

I said, "Hia ladies. No I can't."

Paige said, "We were going to admit the difficulty with you."

"Then please ask Kathleen. She loved it and there's Winnie, of course."

"We know; Winnie told us, of course," said Hattie with her German accent.

"By the way, the difficulty is not with me. I thought you were superb. The difficulty is with this collar I've got on and where it is from. By the way, do you know Klärchen Sisse?"

Hattie replied, "I've heard of her."

"She might be interesting, possibly interested," I said. (If anyone could find out about her, they could.)

The ladies went off to the middle area, and I found Jenny at the checkout with her booze.

Later, on the Internet, I looked up about the *Vestal Virgins*, who supported the political Roman Empire, and they met their end thanks to a Christian Emperor. Within the confines of their service, and on pain of death if the fire went out, they were educated and liberated when women hardly mattered. The relatively recent authority on them was a Sir Cato Worsfold of Mitcham.

Here I had received a text message from Colin.

Starting tomorrow, in Morning Prayer and all services, you are to enhance our intercessions for the towns, by learning about local issues beforehand so that they go into the intercessions.

I supposed that he was listening to me, after a fashion. There was at least some working relationship. But I felt so constrained and I needed freedom. Jenny wanted me to become boxed in and I was wanting to burst out.

Coroner's Inquest and Pub (Friday 6th September)

Jenny had disappeared overnight, with no mention of where she was going. Adam

slept with me and said that she's a fully grown adult. The question was whether she'd be attending the Coroner's Inquest.

Diana called at my house and the two of us went in my Skoda SUV to the inquest in a meeting room in the Titansea Grand Hotel.

I said to her, "We could be made to be the villains here."

"Let's wait and see," she replied.

Both Wilsons were present. Colin Cromer was sat alone and indicated he wanted it to stay that way. No bishops were attending.

The Coroner's inquest was without a jury. James Arthur, County Coroner, mentioned the diary early on. He said, "I have to point out my frustration at not having acquired diaries that cover some ten months up to his death. He surely did not stop writing in these hardback A4 writing books. So I have nothing on recent deaths in his family, but I gather he was concerned about suicide attempts by his brother. I can only think that his inability to connect with women intensified. The Reverend Wilson, present here, and all others who saw the body in his home assures us of knowing nothing about recent books."

This meant that the Wilsons were giving a bare-faced lie. But if I stood up and said that Jim Wilson had taken the diaries, how could this be proved? Diana and I were also not mentioned in this context.

However, I was involved in an answer to a long-held puzzle. The Coroner stated: "One feature of his past life was a collection of some three thousand photographs he took of women models in states of undress. Ten per cent are of a model a dozen years ago who's identified as since becoming a member of the clergy. It has been pointed out to me that he catalogued them and a small number are missing. The executors will send all these photographs we do have to the person directly and I think for the sake of discretion she will remain unnamed. He refers to these photographs in diaries I have seen - quite often actually - and did drawings from them for a long time."

I shivered. I turned to Diana and nodded. Colin Cromer turned and looked at me.

(Over three sessions of two hours each, the younger Ken Osis took three hundred pictures of me at a brisk rate of me moving into different positions. However, I did do a few four hour group clothed and topless sessions when there were two models on - and two Colin received were like that.)

The Coroner continued: "Taking everything into account, and despite the likely diary absences, we have ordinary evidence to record what is clearly a suicide. However, if diary editions do come to light and the police decide that there is evidence that affects materially the suicide verdict, I will reopen the inquest. On the basis of my decision I release the body for funeral arrangements."

As some dispersed, Diana said to me, "He was a pathetic man, really. So he looked at those photos of you continually."

"I don't think I or we treated him well," I said. "At least he got to see the real me later on, not just a twenty-eight year old frozen in glossy prints."

Diana said, "Your mob seem to be gathered over there."

"Yeah. I'm just looking over there too. Jenny was here. No bishop."

Connie Wilson was approaching Jenny but Jenny was looking about, as if wanting to get away.

Diana said to me, "I want to be going. I'll wait outside. I might or might not go

to the funeral. I didn't know him really."

"He saw enough of your cunt: that's how much you didn't know him."

Coming towards me, Connie, still at a little distance, was saying to Jim, "He was a weakling," and then they steered away from me.

I felt like trash, myself. Ken Osis was a person everyone exploited, and everyone had emptied him out to the point where he followed one family pattern and took his own life. With no one talking to me, I rejoined Diana outside, drove and dropped her off at her house.

At my house I did some domestics. Eventually Jenny came in.

"Where did you go overnight?"

"See Terry."

"Any particular reason? About me perhaps?"

"I told him I'm trying to get you to see sense. He's monitoring you and your big swear words row with Colin. He knew about it before I told him. Terry knows about the Vestal Virgins and beyond. Their mystery and secrecy inspired him. The Hereteu Group in Hartlepool especially knows where those groups came from: a weird Western Buddhist group and there's some individuals' connection with the Holy Order of Sophia with Miriam Magdala. Two left your church to set up the Serninsea version some years back."

"It's concerning when you just disappear."

"Not you as well! Don't boss me around! Oh we'd be *great* together in Inglemire and Caffenmere. Fatima asked after me and says I should treat this like a sabbatical. Good word that."

I went and did some reading in the front room. With Keith gone I fancied making this into a kind of office or study, but a second living room was like an escape.

I found Jenny still in the kitchen, staring out of the window.

"You dislike Connie Wilson?" I asked.

"Basically, she tries to run everything. It's *Bishop* Terry after all, and he is supposed to tell her, but she ends up telling him."

"I can imagine."

"Terry is a bit scared. He thinks you want to hurt him like Adam wants. I said he was being paranoid but I refused to say it wasn't true. As a result, he thinks it is true. I know the bishops manipulate people. But I want Adam to stop it. Don't you think Adam should stop it?"

"I have wondered. We've already had one suicide."

"Quite," said Jenny. "I love it with him. He makes me ache, and few men do that with me. Mind you, he's got a wopper. Do you lot ever go to a pub at all?"

"No, I don't. Adam doesn't either - he became an alcoholic or near enough. Keith lost his moderate drinking habit as prices went up and up. I don't really do alcohol. The twins emerged from deceased alcoholic parents."

"I do go to a boozier at times," Jenny said. "Sometimes I go in clerical collar daytime but on an evening I like to go out and forget things. I like to drink after sex."

"I can smell alcohol now, Jenny. Colin Cromer sometimes goes lunchtime pubbing in a clerical collar for people to talk to him. He does that sort of non-specific walkabout and socialising to see if anyone wants his services or something to say. I have been with him, but only twice and not lately."

Jenny went to the loo as Kathleen came in. "I will go and meet Winnie Lot

tonight," said Kathleen. "I've been invited to visit her home. It's true: they wanted me, not Jenny, but Jenny had a kind of higher status."

I'd have gone to the library, and for a chat with Jagjit and Gurinder Kapoor, but instead I called Adam for support and he joined Jenny and me at a pub called *The ConSern*. Sat on seats at the bar, Jenny was rapidly getting drunk on local Theddle Pale Ale. Adam and I were both on soft drinks. We tried to keep off contentious subjects. However, Jenny, referred again to Barman's "wonderful fucking big prick" and she started going on about Christine and her "easy to fist fanny."

Adam said to me, in my ear, "Both of her parents died of alcohol related diseases. Why is she so reckless?" Adam said aloud that he'd heard Keith would be back in Serninsea shortly, but staying at Yojana's parents'.

Jenny added, "He's fugged Yojana Asthana more often than all the others pud together. So soon up back here, eh? Cheryl must be a bit smopple."

"I said, "My ex may do as he pleases."

The barmaid had been listening with her eyes wide open. Jenny noticed this and said to her: "Hey. My short of boss has losht all these women to a compet...or. Wanna join him? Barman is looking for replashements."

"What pub is that?" the barmaid Megan asked, throwing back her long black hair, leaning forward and showing a good rack plus hair under her arms.

"It's not a pub-ub and doesn'tut sale Pale Ale Theddle," Jenny said, now slurring her speech.

"You said a barman." Megan's constructed and angled grey flat eyebrows seemed to get closer together.

"It'sh not a pub but li'e an argy."

"I don't think I want a job in that," said the barmaid. "I think I'll go busy myself down in the cellar."

This caused Adam and me to laugh, but it had been said completely innocently. Megan turned, revealing a rose and thorns flower tattoo on her inner right thigh as she went through a door and down some steps. We saw the top of one on her back.

Jenny said, "I should be wearing my H badge now, like for that bar... barmaid. Like talent shpottun. See, I'm is trying an sep-ar-ate the goosh talk from the stage talk so people don't... know, no, don't aff to connect the goosh talk with thearer talk short of thing. Megan she's Furley ...urly. What?"

"Megan is fairly early at what?" I asked.

"Her frigging surname!" Jenny said. "Fur, as in 'eff you' - yeah, 'eff off you are' something - hee hee. "Mmm, Ull ee wy."

"Right," I said. "She's well tipped over. I think it is time we took her home."

So Adam and I held up Jenny to my SUV and, when indoors, got her undressed, dropped her on the toilet, and put her in between us in bed. She did go to sleep quickly and snored as well. Kathleen didn't return during the night.

Christine's Birthday & Request (Saturday 7th September)

A text from Christine announced that it was her birthday today. Forty-three. She would call around.

I looked at my shelves for a birthday present, being a skinflint - something of her trade from which she could benefit.

Soon the bell rang in the early afternoon. I welcomed her in to the sitting room at the front and she explained that she was in Serninsea for business and also to seek out a property for incardinating and ordaining Bill Masters and Pauline Junor at very short notice.

I had wrapped my present for Christine: the book, *A Marxist Looks at Jesus*, by Milan Machovec. "It is an oldie by a one time professor of Marxism who helped set up the Prague Spring, and it is simply one of the best Jesus of history books available."

She thanked me and kissed me. "How did you obtain this?" Christine asked, but I didn't answer and instead looked at her.

(She only got a copy because I had two. One was from student days and one was seen in a charity shop in very good nick and I got it as a back-up.)

Then Christine said, "You and me, we're a team. Let's do more together. I know your mate Diana doesn't like me."

She then said she had received many books and in fact wondered if I wanted to borrow one. She hadn't time to read it at the moment; Bill and Pauline had both read it before. Everyone thought it an excellent idea if I'd borrow it. "It's all about wandering bishops." She spoke into her mobile. "Bring it."

Leon came in from the car outside with a book: *A History of the Independent Sacramental Movement* by Bishop Arianwen Bron.

"Thanks." I told Leon to sit in my larger lounge.

"I received it from my house guests, Bishops Geoff and Luis, down in Eslaforde."

"Are they there now?"

"Yes. We are having a Council on my birthday! We've had some of it, and when I'm back we'll resume it."

"Why haven't they called here?"

"Deary, you are a National Church priest and because it is quicker to get a venue if I do it alone. Bill and Pauline's territory is up here; better if they were ordained *sub-conditione* and incardinated around here. I'd rather not use one of my terraced houses. Their home chapels are each too tiny. Otherwise, perhaps, something in Eslaforde or all the way down to Bristol. We can do the ordinations today at a push, or tomorrow, or Monday."

"Is she a heretic?" I asked, looking at the front of the book.

"Who?"

"Arianwen. The author."

"Her name means Silver Fair and Breast. She is a bishop in *Eglwys Geltaidd Mynydd Trawsnewidiad*, if I can say it properly, but it is apostolically sound even if she is rather Gnostic and Druidic. She's also ordained with the Holy Order of Sophia with Miriam Magdala, which claims to link to Jesus's own bloodline. I don't give that credibility."

"No. Nor me. Holy Grail stuff is utter rubbish. This one attracts some females into communities."

"You are looking beautiful today, Linda."

"Aw, thanks. What other books did you get?"

"Some fictional ones: *Story of the Eye* and an oddity with three stories: *My*

Mother, Madame Edwarda, The Dead Man. Both books are by Georges Bataille. *Madame Edwarda* is all about a prostitute who calls herself God. As for Bataille, the brothels of Paris were his true 'churches'. So we have sadism, torture, orgies, sex and death, squalor as spirituality. The profane is sacred."

"And that's just among wandering bishops," I joked. "I've never actually read *Story of the Eye* although I've heard about it."

"Bataille is right. I'll make time to read those. Why are you so radiant today? Listen: *places*," said Christine. "Any ideas of venues? You're local."

"For ordaining?"

"A standard Mass and Ordinations. Meanwhile, it's my birthday and I do rather fancy something nice. Where is Jenny, by the way?"

"Boozing, no doubt. If she's not with Barman again, she's getting pissed."

"Where is... Kathleen, isn't it?"

"Probably with her new girlfriend."

"Hmm. By the way, have you anything more 'you' for my birthday?"

"What do you mean?" Christine was starting to excite me in some deeper places.

She didn't answer me, this time but said, "Listen. Have you some ideas? *Venues*. Come on."

I said of the United Presbyterian and Congregationalist church.

Yes, she'd already looked there, but it was not available from Georgie Smith at short notice. It would have been perfect if a little run down. She said, "I told her over the phone about our intended use, so perhaps if I'd said a theatre group they might have let us have it."

"She lets the Serninsea Vestal Virgins meet there. Perhaps I shouldn't have mentioned..."

"Georgie thinks it's a women's prayer group whereas she thinks the likes of me are barmy clergy going up our own candles."

"They're virtually naked!"

"She's never looked at them in their uniforms. They wear computer covers. I know all about them. Some of these women link with the Holy Order of Sophia with Miriam Magdala but they are not a Church and do not seek out Apostolic Succession. They are spawned from Western extreme Buddhism."

"I take it that above the casino is obviously not available."

"Not to us. This place is remarkably short of venues."

"Not the car showroom."

"Definitely not! Come on, Linda. You and me: we are a team." Christine put out her hand and touched my blouse with her forefinger on my right breast.

"Christine!"

"What?"

"What are you doing?"

"Just thinking there is some time to spare. Linda, take me to your bed for my birthday. I want to slip in, do the deed, slip out quietly. No one need know."

"Are you talking about the ordinations or about me?"

"There's the rub."

As I pulled her out of the room, Leon wasn't sat in the lounge but stood nearby, and as we passed him he gave Christine a bottle.

She broke free, went into the bathroom, grabbed a large towel and folded it

coming in my bedroom. With both of us on my bed, removing clothes, she opened the bottle.

"What's that?" I asked, as she dropped the towel down.

"For dry skin," she replied. She was pouring it on her right hand.

Both naked, I was turned over on to my front, instructed to face away on my knees on the towel and lower my back. I said, "Oh my God."

"Precisely. You have it right."

One hand was under me, on to my breasts, gathered and pressed together in one movement. The other was doing gooey anal speleology. "Christine, please - please."

"It is my birthday, and your present to me is your arse and all that goes before it."

"Oh, Caro... You... shoudn't."

"I should and I will. This arsehole is *amazing*. If I go slowly here, you won't get any splits you got at the car showroom, but I *am* going in. You've wanted this from me all the time you've known me. Yes?"

"Yes. Christine."

I was getting incredible deep sensations, her left arm on my stomach now and pushing it up and releasing it in a rhythm. Pumping my stomach and he wrist action in my anus caused me to pee involuntarily in spurts.

My orgasm hit hard. "The divine descends into your deepest body! From the channel of your waste comes.... Beauty!"

As for the 'waste' part, I said, "I am so sorry." I wanted to weep.

"Listen. No. Praise God, Linda."

"Of course I praise God but..."

"I will go and wash and you stay there. Turn around to sit on the towel."

She headed for the bathroom and soon returned all cleaned up and poured gooey liquid over my right hand, and, on the bed, got on her knees herself. I wondered what would happen as I looked at her highest spherical hole.

I found that two fingers became three. She (unlike me) pulled her buttock cheeks open, and my sliding in and out meant more and more could go in. My eyes were bulging at the sight, my hand disappearing as she called out in responsive agony. This put an image in my mind I would never forget.

She said, "For your birthday girl: move your fingers about, turn your arm."

My hand was being pressed by this warm, wet, cushioning, as I moved my fingers and twisted around. I rubbed her clitoris with the index finger of my free hand.

She was clearly in transition towards orgasm. She said, "My God, my God, you are the Pure One."

Thus she shuddered, and did this with my invisible hand feeling contractions and retractions in her pressing warmth and wetness.

When it was time, my hand came out like a plop from a clean cave. She turned, grabbed me, pulled me in and pressed me to her. We lay together on our sides breasts to breasts for a good ten minutes, she looking deep into my eyes.

She said, "You invited me into your body, and I invited you into mine. Remember that God put the most beautiful front door you have next to the door where the bins go out. And that is the paradox," she said, "and something you've known ever since Keith widened the passageway. We are so fortunate. Linda, my love: do you know of a beautiful doorway beyond which a ceremony can take place?"

"Well... there is one place not used most afternoons." I ran my hand through her hair.

"Where would that be?" She moved my upper left breast with her right hand and looked at me directly. She kissed me on the lips and moved her head back again.

"The... parish church?"

"Ah," said Christine. She kissed me on the mouth again. When she withdrew, she said, "But how would that work?"

"We slip in quietly, lock the doors, switch the recording microphones off, do the deed, slip out quietly. No one need know."

"Slip in and slip out. When?"

"Sunday's tomorrow. Monday? Monday afternoon? He won't suspect me being near the church on Monday. He'll probably go out visiting. My day off is Monday; his is Wednesday."

"My fellow bishops are in London tomorrow, where they can meet many in Independent Sacramental Ministry. We will see you Monday, 3 pm?"

"I will have to see that the coast is clear. I'm sorry we can't be more open about it - but - tell you what - it allows me the quiet satisfaction of getting one back on Colin Cromer."

"Lovely Linda. I should still ask you about Jeremy Symes' old church. Wouldn't that be safer for you?"

"I don't have the keys. Colin may have a set, but I'd then have to ask him. Oh my God, Christine. You in my bed. I have only dreamed of this moment. Can we do the ceremony efficiently?"

"Oh yes. Half an hour - in and out. In and out, Linda."

"Then I'd like the satisfaction of in and out of *my* church. I want you again and again and again, lovely, sweet Christine."

The deal was struck and we kissed, and both of us went to the bathroom together. I sat to pee and smiled at her, and sorted out by cleaning what ceased to be my embarrassment. She smiled, and sat on the loo after me. We both washed our hands together, side by side.

Soon Leon came out of the larger lounge, and they left in her car. We'd communicate through encrypted texts.

The LAE Bishops Ordain (Monday 9th September)

I told Jenny I was going out with some pastoral visiting. I was wearing my white cassock.

"It's your day off."

"Sometimes, like when people are dying, the day you take off is not the usual one."

"I can come to a nursing home and keep the folks entertained."

"Sure, but it is sheltered housing I'm interested in."

With Jenny shaken off, my SUV went down to Titansea, where Christine's helicopter came out of the sky and landed. I took Bishop Luis Mariano Callas, Bishop Geoffrey Paul Virgo, Bishop Arianwen Bron and Bishop Christine Vine into my SUV.

We then went north, into Jim Wilson's most northerly territory, where we arrived at Bishop William Masters' house. He was with Bishop Pauline Junor. So they all had a conversation about what would happen and how. I was asked if I would take photographs throughout the ceremony.

Bishop Geoff had a further idea for me. "But why not also use my legitimate office for me to remove doubt about these Anglican orders of yours."

"I don't know about that," I said.

"Remember what I said about Old Catholic Bishop Arnold Mathew Harris?"

"I rejected this in Bristol."

"We could bond with this, like we never did back at school."

"Go on Linda," said Bishop Christine. I adored her.

"Ah," I said. "Now you are all talking. I like this idea of a religious version of our bonding." Also, I was just fed up with Colin Cromer's restraints. I could, with this, quietly rebel.

Arianwen Bron had a soft Welsh accent but she only said pleasantries. Other than her fake coloured red hair, she had an air of sophistication, wearing elaborate robes in light blue and white, whilst the rest were in cassocks of purple (and me in white).

While at Bill's, Geoff produced on his tablet the liturgy for ordaining a priest of another fealty for me to see. He then said that although the corporate Church followed the Seven Councils and the main creeds, in fact there was no test on any individual. Ordination itself was an act on the person, and that's how it could extend to me. Then Geoff prepared Bill and Pauline for incardination - membership - that while the Church they were joining eschews a doctrinal demand it is unswerving on a number of points: "First is a commitment to the teachings of Christ, however one understands the term 'Christ'; second, we guarantee for all our ministers freedom of intellectual development in their ministries; and third, we maintain apostolic succession and the validity of sacraments."

We all agreed terms for our situations, but Luis said I would not prostrate because I remained within my own "ecclesiastical fellowship."

Geoff said, "I made an educated guess that in this generally liberal Wytham Diocese you would be fairly liberal yourself. What is your view of ordination, roughly speaking, Linda?"

"There's the social anthropology of ritual as a doorway, and as a gift of Christian give and take that involves a change in life and a binding into the community in space."

"Fascinating stance," said Luis.

"Very liberal, my love," said Christine to me.

"And your grounds of theology?" asked Geoff.

"I think all the secular narratives are how things more or less operate. So religion is a means to some sort of overview. Our peculiarity is where Christ is like an art movement that has our attachment, and we do it by working through traditions and details and extracting various meanings and commitments as a way to frame one's self and direction."

"Blimey," said Christine. "I didn't know you were that far gone. I'm going to have to take you in hand."

"I'd appreciate that," I said, like a dependent child.

Geoff reminded me that they operated an open table Eucharist - that any one

can partake. "So you can take communion from us."

Then I had a thought, as they mentioned not ordaining minor orders this time. "Christine. What about Peter Marshall? He is a bit Pagan and Buddhist: would he be interested in any of these minor orders? What do you think? Or is he too involved elsewhere?"

Luis pointed out that minor orders are usually carried out as a learning and training process within the Church itself towards becoming a deacon and priest. However, there was nothing to stop them recognising involvements elsewhere.

Christine suggested that I ask Peter if he would be interested. I phoned him. It turned out that he was and suggested that Kathleen and Winnie would be as well. Adam gave him permission to leave work for the purpose and to have an observant eye on proceedings.

All this extra activity led me to ask the bishops if we could complete within an hour. "We ought to try to get out by 4 pm. School traffic will have gone, people are not yet going home from work; Colin will still be visiting. He usually continues to just before work-leaving time."

"An hour. No music, no processions: Christine can still censor, if it is quick to burn." said Geoff.

So I drove us down to near my parish church, and I held my keys.

Arianwen said to me that not only was she ordained into the Holy Order of Sophia with Miriam Magdala, but that with her west Welsh and southern French ancestry she was one of the descendents of Jesus and Mary. Her Eucharistic acts were therefore direct.

I parked near the church so that we could use the back entrance. Walking along the street were Peter holding Kathryn's hand and Kathleen holding Winnie's hand. Ah.

I gestured to them to go around the streets to the back of the church, and, carrying so much ecclesiastical clobber, we too went towards the gate to the graveyard and walk up where the vicarage had a restricted view over trees and a wall. No one was at the one upstairs window that had an angled overview. We arrived at the vestry external door, being shielded there, and I unlocked it to go in.

"No one say a thing or go beyond the vestry until I have walked to the box and switched off the cameras and microphones."

I unlocked the internal door. I went through and moving along the side of the church approached this box near a window. Inside it was labelled 'Communications'. There were some six unidentified switches in a down position and I put them all up. My new colleagues could now come in and did; I locked the external vestry external door from the inside. The internal vestry door was left unlocked.

I said we could not put any lights on because they would attract attention, so it was slightly gloomy for us.

Peter, Kathleen and Winnie were offered a simple alb and rope each from the church's own hanging collection, and then we acquired the 'holy handbag' (little used).

Bishops Geoff, Luis and Bill and Peter robed up, crammed in the vestry. Kathleen and Winnie undressed and dressed in the church. I was the one who did no more than add a stole. Kathryn was the congregation!

Peter assured everyone that he and the others had looked up the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia on its website and he approved of its liberality.

I made sure the wine and discs were available using the parish Eucharist set. On Geoff's instruction I also placed on the altar table a small stone, a bowl of water and a candle to stay unlit until used. Christine lit the candles at either end.

The bishops grouped themselves up behind the altar table, and the rest were on near pews. Kathryn took the camera for the 'proof' that these events happened; I wasn't sure about this, because, as well as potentially distracting from the service, we were breaking a few Anglican institutional rules and I'd prefer if events went unrecorded.

Christine then said, "Kathryn. Keep the focus on us and what we do; avoid general pictures."

I said, "Switch the flash off. You'll have to hold the camera steady."

So the service began. An Entrance Song was read out, and the Confiteor (removing the candidates of sins) followed, before Christine did her first (only a little bit) censuring. Then we had the Kyries, the Gloria, and only then came the Opening Prayer - this late positioning a legacy of the Anglican 1662 Prayer Book. Then followed the Liturgy of the Word, and this meant Isaiah 61: 1-8, Psalm 40: 1 done as a response, Hebrews 5: 1-10 and then the Alleluia Acclamation, with incense again up to the Gospel of John 13: 1-15 and a brief homily to the candidates. After this came a Litany to the Trinity.

The bishops came from behind the altar table to stand in front of it. First the Doorkeepers were ordained by the bishops into the LAE, reminded of its basis - follow Christ, develop intellectually, promote the Church; then I was ordained as a priest, *sub-conditione*; and then came the bishops. Geoff declared that their orders being secure, they did not need ordaining again. (There seemed to be a change of mind here - maybe when they robed?)

Bill and Pauline stood and each affirmed the summary of each ministry intention (pastoral to the agricultural area) read out by Geoff and then Luis. They then prostrated themselves in front of the altar table and the bishops. This intended to show that they had given up all other loyalties, although they had been loyal only to themselves. From that position each agreed to continue to preach the Gospel, to uphold the deposit of faith, be good shepherds, build unity, attend Councils, contribute to the new Confraternity with wisdom, and call upon God to work through them. Their incardination took place. Each bishop stood to receive from the Reverend Doorkeeper Peter: a book of the New Testament, a ring, a mitre, and a staff.

We had a Statement of Faith - not one of the Creeds - and after a censuring we arrived at the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia Eucharist, led by Bishop Geoff. It felt so very different from orthodoxy:

"We praise and bless this universe our home, and its spirit of life. And in this our island setting are the mythical four winds: with the blessing of Uriel of the dark and fertile earth, blowing past Saint Columba of Scotland, we have the cold wind from the north; With the blessing of Raphael in his golden cloak, blowing past Saint George of England, we have the dry wind from the east; with the blessing of Michael of the red flame, blowing past Saint David of Wales, we have the hot wind from the south; and with the blessing of Gabriel of the blue water, blowing past Saint Patrick of Ireland, we have the wet wind from the west. And east is for air, south is for fire, west is for water, and north is for earth.

On he went about the seasons and the wind direction, even:

"Plato said that earth is dark, thick and quiet. For Aristotle the earth is cold, female and dry. The north person, the earth person, is practical and material, productive and rooted and builds her nest as a place to return."

This meant raising a stone.

Later we had: *"Plato said that air is dark, thin and of motion. For Aristotle the air is cold, male and moist."*

This was about rationality. Hands with opened fingers were gestured.

"Plato said fire is bright, thick and of motion. For Aristotle the fire is warm, male and dry."

This was about energy and a candle was lit.

"Plato said water is dark, thick and of motion. For Aristotle the water is cold, female and moist."

This was about feeling and fingers were dipped in water.

I was most interested in the notion of the 'mystic space' as an introduction to the feeding and drinking ritual. Bishop Luis said these words:

"Here we are gathered

Around the food and drink of life:

Bread, the staple diet, representing all nourishment

And therefore becoming the body;

Pure water, representing all life flows

And therefore becoming blood;

Sustenance to live and have our being.

We come to this Eucharistic celebration

In a spirit of love and charity towards our neighbours,

Intending to live a new life, by following ethical precepts and holy ways.

So let us draw near with faith, and examine our conditions, for our thanksgiving."

We moved to an interfaith basis of comfortable words. I liked these, read by Bishop Arianwen:

"Jesus said, Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh them. Gandhi had this insight: "A nation that is capable of limitless sacrifice is capable of rising to limitless heights. The purer the sacrifice the quicker the progress. [Attenborough, R. (1982), The Words of Gandhi, 13]. Buddha told us to: Go forth on your journey, for the profit of many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the profit, the bliss of devas and humankind. (Vinaya, 1.21)"

After what seemed to me to be a fairly humanistic Sursum Corda, and an environmentalist with communal Preface, the Sanctus led by Arianwen said:

"Holy is this community, for there is no heaven beyond earth, but it must be here, in and amongst us, waiting for us to release its potential."

After the Prayer of Humble Access came a most strange (to me) Prayer of Consecration, led by Geoff.

"O Ultimate hear us,

For this ritual of bread and pure juice

Is the most natural, with the produce of the earth

And has caused no suffering to any living creature.

Jesus of Nazareth, when he prepared passover,

Knowing that time was short, on a night that he was betrayed,

Took bread, and when he had given thanks broke it

*And shared it among his company of supporters;
And then he took wine, and when he had given thanks, drank it
And shared it among the same company of supporters.
He said to them, "Do this often to remember me."
And they did.
And it symbolised that he, even he, could be put to death by the State.
And his followers do re-live who he was for them,
Water that became wine, [Raise the wine]
And which is in all that refreshes and transforms;
And we re-live what this made bread can be for us: [Hold some bread]
Bread and wine
Upon the plentiful earth:
A bountiful produce -
The food of life;
The life-force running through all that lives,
As in the running rivers and growing crops,
The ever continuous round of life and death,
And the demand for the ethical and moral life."*

I preferred this to the liturgy we Anglicans stated. If clumsy, this was fresher and ours was sterile. Also fresh was saying, three times:

"We come now, all of us, committed to a renewed direction."

And so we took Communion, and we had a Dismissal by Geoff to:

"Go out into the world and live, committed to a renewed direction."

That was it. It took under an hour and I felt that we had all bonded. We rapidly cleared away, and most of us got out of the additional clerical garb.

In my stoleless white cassock I asked people to wait outside at the back. I went forward to the box and put the switches to the down position. I returned to lock up and was satisfied nothing was left different. The censing smell would lessen.

I saw no one looking from on high at the vicarage.

I insisted that photographs had to stay anonymous regarding the venue; the Wickenby twins' uncle was to hear nothing at all about the event.

The Funeral (Tuesday 10th September)

I had an early message from Colin Cromer waiting on my phone and by email.

Do not come to Morning Prayer today. Await further instructions. If you attend the funeral at Serninsea Marshes [Jim Wilson's most southerly church, location of the vicarage] please sit alone or with whichever friend comes with you, for example Christine Vine or Diana de Groot. I would appreciate no communication from you or anyone with you. The Reverend Colin Cromer, Vicar of Serninsea.

Christine indeed did call at my house, parking her car, and she was wearing a simple black cassock, also my choice of dress. (The Bristol bishops with Arianwen Bron had arrived in Norwich, visiting Julian's hideaway and other ecclesiastical delights.) Christine also read the message from Colin Cromer.

She said, "Nah. It won't be about yesterday's ordinations and Eucharist. We were all discreet. Thank you ever so much. Kiss kiss?"

We kissed with our lips.

"But why should Colin Cromer be so sensitive about me, or Diana and me, about Ken Osis?"

Christine said, "It's a difficult day, perhaps."

I signed for a parcel that was delivered. Christine was being nosy, as were Kathleen and Jenny. Inside were three hundred or so mainly nude photographs of me. They were from the collection of Ken Osis. He'd taken almost all pictures sat on the floor plus some from a group event or two. In those days the studio did not do 'British Magazine', 'European Magazine' etc., but the website showed that it had changed policy, and my nude variety became known as 'Classic Nude'. The studio website didn't show nude examples, but whilst its vast majority of models to hire were eighteen to twenty-two year olds it had added a 'Speciality Mature' category where the oldest was forty. Anyway, Ken's photos were sharp and in focus. Some pictures of me were fairly revealing, partly because I didn't care. I recalled they were all done with a 50 mm Single Lens Reflex camera and no complicated lenses.

Christine said. "The photos Colin Cromer received were Barman's doing."

"I thought so," I said. "He was always undermining me. I suppose he is now, again, now that I have backed your side of things. Maybe that's why Colin is sensitive; he's at it again."

I took Jenny and Christine and picked up Diana on the way, who was grumpy. Arriving at the funeral, we said nothing to anyone else - on my instruction. The funeral (followed by burial) was being taken by the diocesan bishop, the Right Reverend Derek Imperial, with a sermon by the suffragan bishop, the Right Reverend John Terence Barman. This was our equivalent of full military honours.

Meanwhile, they'd learnt something about funerals in recent times, to make them more biographical in the sermon (that which had happened) and less remote or supernatural (what was supposed to happen).

The Baptist clergyman friend of Ken Osis, the Reverend Benajah Abernathy, with a big circular collar around his black shirt, gave an unscripted reflection. "This man *struggled*. He struggled with his family, his life, and his beliefs. So often I would be adding support to his bendy backbone. At the end there was some Unitarian interference, because he wanted to impress such a woman. A *licentious woman*, I said to him, and not to be drawn in by her charms, but he said, 'I must investigate, Ben.' He was even a little confused as to her first name. At least he rejected her erroneous beliefs. This final relationship failure followed his fleeting attachment to a woman who was evangelical all right but turned out to be cruelly unavailable. His quests for emotional connection always failed. In the end, he went the wrong family way and gave up. If either or both of these women are here today, may they ask themselves about the sin that has clouded them and darkened our true friend and fellow struggler. May the Lord resurrect his troubled soul and bring him to glory."

Diana, alongside, said to me, "I feel sick."

John Barman started the sermon proper after the Trinity declaration with the statement, "I have written this sermon in conjunction with the diocesan bishop here, and indeed my absent colleague Bishop Julian of Screddington has agreed with this pastoral statement."

Further along this speech, he said:

"This was a man who was good at the role given to him: a confessor of other established clergy and those clergy in training. Yet it turned out - although it wasn't evident - that he was, himself, a very much uncertain person who needed and used his own confessor with increasing frequency in later times. Perhaps we should all repent. We thought he was good for the role because he treated each person individually, was a conduit for clergy concerns, and he really could keep a secret. He wrote nothing down about their confessions in these A4 writing books he kept as diaries, although we lack the later books..."

Obviously Barman didn't lack them. The missing books included all the period Ken Osis was a confessor.

"He did lack friends, but we note how he valued the friendship of an evangelical Baptist man, a close friendship indeed. We have heard from him here today."

And later he also read out:

"Deaths in his family weighed heavily on him, perhaps too heavily. His unfulfilled desire for an intimate relationship was a life-disappointment for him. He lost active contact with his existing friends by becoming a clergyman far from his place of upbringing, and this role was a barrier to finding new friends, and he gained only a few friends among colleagues. Latterly Ken contemplated more liberal views to try and bond in a new potential relationship with a Unitarian naturist and even this failed, as will surely be outlined in the missing books."

The Reverend Abernathy nodded. Diana gave me a long look. Yes, again, this meant us.

"We really do need to pick up on colleagues who are at some emotional drift when the evidence is painfully evident: but of course it was not painfully evident when so much is held privately. This means we need to be more proactively sensitive and supportive: the pastoral radar must pick up weaker signals."

I noticed Connie Wilson. She gave me one of her looks suggesting that Diana and I were guilty, even though the Reverend Abernathy had included her as 'cruelly unavailable' in his reflection. She was a sexual monster.

After the funeral service Diana said to me, "He was a lost bastard. I'm sorry for that Baptist clergyman. By the way, do you believe all that sermon?"

"No. He's lying. He's got those books; he was speaking from their content. We are in them."

Looking about and rather lost, I gathered that some people would go to the graveside. Colin steered away from me, so I thought it better if we four left. Jenny wanted to stay. She would get a lift back with John Barman, she said.

Christine had decided she would not be welcome by the graveside, like me.

Bishop Derek was already by the graveside, so I was anyway unable to say hello. As I left with Diana and Christine, the Baptist clergyman spoke to my clerical collar, saying, "The Lord in his mighty justice takes away those who were good and yet slipped just a little. I am told that you knew him."

I looked at this man and was really angry, and said, loudly, "You do talk some bollocks," and walked off, forcing my two compatriots to come after me.

Diana said to me, "That was uncalled for."

After I dropped off Diana, Christine said she wanted to go with me to the woods and lake out at Carr Fen. I thought this was for contemplation, but soon learnt of her actual desire. She removed my black cassock and her own; my arse fell into

some boggy ground. In these woods, with only a wide tree and another to block the view into open land, she started seducing me and seriously so with her fingers and tongue. This was dangerous stuff among the trees. I reckoned that this passion for me was a reaction to the funeral.

When she caused me to orgasm, and spill much liquid down my legs, she called out, "God bless this natural woman!"

I hung on to her for some minutes, "Christine! My gosh." (I was trying to be respectful - I hated the common revision.)

"My gosh?' Don't you dare secularise it. It is 'my God' and nothing else." (She was quite right.)

"Sorry."

"Thank God and thank you, my love, for all you have done. Listen. We are going to keep a watch on you, Linda. Storm clouds are gathering but you may even avoid the rain."

There were too many people around for us to jump into the lake, but the lake would not have removed all the mud on our bodies. Some had got on to our cassocks, but we put them on.

Kathleen and Winnie watched as Christine and I put our cassocks into the washing machine. We then ran upstairs to the bathroom to share a shower. I enjoyed our clean up, but it was matter of fact. We continued to be naked, Christine showing some existing injuries on her drying body. Leon arrived after she rang him, with mufti for her to wear.

She dressed in front of him and me and looked at me closely before leaving. "You are a wonderful, sexual, servicing and sacrificing woman. Contact me, contact Adam, without delay, if there are immediate difficulties but otherwise take the roads offered."

Leon drove Christine to her helicopter for a trip to Norfolk. Her car stayed outside.

I stayed naked into the evening. Kathleen and Winnie did not join in.

Jenny stank of alcohol when she came in, and went straight to her bedroom. If she had been with John Barman, she was saying nothing. When I looked outside before bed, Christine's car had gone.

Chapter 18 Bolingbroke's Moment

Narrator: Linda *Bolingbroke Calls the Shots* (Wednesday 11th September)

I was in the church, and I was prostrate on the floor and naked, and in came Colin Cromer from his visits, and he started poking at me with a pole once used by sidespeople.

Adam was prodding me. "Linda. Look at the screen. The CCTV picture. It's your Bishop of Bolingbroke at the front door, with a shoulder bag." The bell went and went again and again.

The fastest way to get to the front door was to put my cassock on over my head downstairs. So I did.

I opened the door. "Ber-bishop, what..."

He walked straight in. "Tell the wanker to piss off will you? I know he's up there. I think your lounge will do. Sit on the sofa." He sat on a chair.

Adam's feet became visible on the staircase, and in fact Kathleen was upstairs with Winnie but did not come down. From Adam's pause and turn I took it that he told them to stay upstairs.

The bishop said, as Adam approached the lounge, "On your merry way, Magellan. I'm here to rescue this woman's ministry, and the last person we need here is you. So goodbye. Leave this house: you are no longer welcome."

"I need to be dressed and get my shoes on first."

"Don't leave me Adam," I said.

"No, I'd better go," he said. "But you're in our thoughts."

"Her thoughts will soon equal my instructions. Get dressed and clear off. Get your food and a shit at your own place, like you should."

Some minutes later Adam went out of the house via the front door, but Jenny came downstairs. She asked what was going on.

The bishop answered, "You'll be pleased to know that I am about to rescue this stupid woman's ministry. And I'd appreciate it if you would go in a different room and shut any door, Jenny."

She went into the kitchen and shut its door, and the bishop rose and shut the lounge door. He sat on the sofa next to me and removed a tablet from his bag to view it.

He said, "On this tablet is a video file and rather a long one it is. Over an hour. Clicking here you can see that from a high angle we have some peculiar people present in a church. Here is the peculiar Christine Vine, a self-styled bishop, swinging some incense that is the property of the parish - as is the censer. Some of these outfits worn are ours, but not the most elaborate ones. We seem to be playing a game of bishops and clergy."

My stomach hit my feet. My mouth was dry. I uttered, "How did... how did these.. I thought I'd avoided every sensor and switched everything off."

"Put them all off and they come on again and cause an alarm to go off in the vicarage."

"When was this arrangement done?"

"Sound and vision are recorded immediately at the vicarage computer and

there is a feed, if wanted, to the main television."

"We didn't put any lights on, so not to attract attention."

"Yes. Our cameras do very low light and, well, a September afternoon is bright enough. Anyway, at this point in the video I notice that you are being ordained. Funnily enough, I thought we had ordained you at Petertide, but perhaps you thought not."

"Oh dear."

"Oh dear indeed. So I have viewed - and I did so before the funeral - various other people being allegedly ordained as this, that and the other, and also a something parodying a Eucharist with quite a Pagan aspect to it."

"Oh shit."

"Oh shit indeed."

"I'm feeling sick. My guts."

"But not as sick as Colin Cromer felt. He watched it live. Perhaps you thought he was out visiting the great unwashed, but actually he was watching a nice bit of telly when the CCTV gave its alarm and he hit the zapper for the live relay. It is such a clever system, now. Having endured some of this private viewing he, well, contacted me. So I have a question. What do you think you were doing, according to his particular perspective?"

"We did... what you saw."

"No no. I know you like interpretation."

"What you said."

"No! From his perspective! Come on."

"I don't know. My guts, honestly, Bishop John."

"You have violated his altar table. You have polluted it. This is a sacred space - it is special - and it ought to be held in reverence. But your holy clowns came along and violated it. He cannot go there, cannot until I go, or the Bishop of Scredington, or Derek Imperial, or even all three of us, to perform a ceremony ourselves to clean this sacred space from your filth."

"It is not..."

"It is filth, and you have destroyed that man."

"Sorry. I need the loo. I do."

I ran off and shook as I lost control in the downstairs loo.

Returning, after spending ages wiping my arse, the bishop still had his laptop open.

"Before you so rudely interrupted me, I was saying that you have destroyed that man. He has been in this post for over thirty-six years, and some shallow curate comes along and wrecks the place. This is his life's work, the very place where he invests his being, and you, some upstart full of arrogance, barely out of being a deacon, come along and spread ecclesiastical manure all over his most treasured sacred space."

"Ugh."

"So the upshot is you are not going in that church again, not at all. He does not wish to see you. Tragically, he had to clap eyes on you at that funeral. He was already warning you over your obvious visit to the misnamed Serninsea Vestal Virgins, when you unleashed against him a mouthful of foul language, and now you may as well have defecated not under your stairs but in his church."

I got up and went out of the lounge and into the understairs toilet again, the

door left open, and threw up.

I heard him say, "Vomited this time. Amounts to the same thing in the parish church."

When I was out of the toilet, Kathleen was leaning against the wall next to the lounge door with her finger pointed upwards against her mouth. I only gestured at Jenny to shut the kitchen door, leaving Kathleen hiding and listening.

"Quite right; this is nothing to do with Jenny." He then said to me, as I sat down, "You've got sick on your cassock. Take it off."

"What?" I couldn't see any vomit on my cassock.

"Take it off."

So I stood and removed it over my head. I turned to him, naked, and he looked up at me. He told me to sit down.

"I need a towel to sit on." I went and got one from the kitchen (with Jenny wide-eyed), seeing Kathleen only on the way back.

He said, "Sit on it then. Look, I'm being pragmatic here. First of all, your ministry at Serninsea is *finished*. I think we know that. And it has been clear that you have been in the last chance saloon for a while now. Enough is enough: you've tossed over all the drinks. Think of how generous Bishop Derek has been to you. Imagine, given how highly he regards your attention to theological detail, just how disappointed he would be if he saw these video recordings."

"No! Please don't show him. Please."

"I probably have no choice, but he is distracted by this *Report on the Managerial Efficiency of the Wytham Diocese* coming up. As it happens I do have - thanks to his generosity - a lot of autonomy in running things around here. It affects you. So a number of things follow."

"I submit to you?"

"We will arrange that. Secondly, do not distract the diocesan by having some investigation come out by your lover Magellan. That has to stop."

"Yes. Yes it does. But how can I stop him?"

"Well, you can tell him either he does stop it or your career is ruined. No salary, no house. But, by the way, tell him in town. He is no longer going to come into this curate's house. You'd be advised to end your relationship with him. There are many people interested in you. There was Ken Osis, but he is dead now, thanks to you, and then there is Rabbi Maurice Neptune, but the person who will really need your care and attention is Jenny World. Keep Magellan away from her as well; he has already taken advantage of her."

"Yes, of course. Do you want me to go back to Stephen McPhail? I will. I will do what you want."

"No no. We are not mentoring you any more. We don't need that. Your next appointment will be your initiation, and it will be with me. I will initiate you into the The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players, the group here under the Confraternity Vanguard. You will indeed submit to me, and you will stay submitted to me."

"Yes. You're very kind to still consider me." (I was shaking.)

"I suppose to keep you on the payroll you will have to move to Inglemire with Caffenmere - my parish indeed - and Jenny World will be the Priest-in-Charge and you shall be her perpetual curate. I think she is able to take on the parish. It's not too demanding, after all. This leaves me with having to tell Colin Cromer about my

compassion towards you. He won't be very happy. Colin is unrecoverable. You will of course treat the altar tables of your next curacy with due Anglican reverence. Jenny World will see to that. And of course this means you have no more to do with Christine Vine - not a thing."

"I love her."

"My goodness me. You sleep with Magellan and you love Vine. Vine? She is a heretic and is trying to bring down legitimate ecclesiastical authority, all because of her ego. Look, I help this whole town function. I liaise and promote Titansea businesses; I get planning decisions approved that make places like Sutton more beautified; I promote the present economy and the archaeology of the economy: thousands of years of craft skills and so what if I had one object created? You and she tried to split me from our great benefactor, Sir Sanjay Bunker, going so far as entering the notorious car showroom and getting an SUV to show for it. Anyway, all that is water under your crotch of a bridge."

"The other car - I gave it away."

"I heard it had vanished. Who got it?"

"Only a neighbour, who was having trouble with their car."

"Not the one who reported you then, recently."

"No one reported me recently. I'm feeling ill."

"Let me help you; let's look to the future and be positive. Your coming submissions to me in private and in public are to be nothing but life-changing. I know you don't really have any choice but I want you to state now that you agree."

"I..."

"Hold on! So, here we go with the necessaries: Magellan's report is stopped; he no longer sets foot in this house. You wait for instructions from Connie Wilson. You will do exactly what she says, and Connie and Jim will prepare you for me at our chosen venue, perhaps out of town, and then I will initiate you. And sometime afterwards we'll move you down to my parish where Jenny can be in charge of you. You might need to directly oversee her welfare, of course. We can then expand our Vanguard here, as you and Jenny initiate many men and lesbians. Pity we lost Ken, so I'll have to do more. We can also get on with other plans, like expanding into South Wales for sure. Seeing as you like to invade female sexual parts, I might get you to work over that Rhiannon Fleetwood and get her fully on board. Now say you agree."

"I agree. Yes."

"You see. I am the model of compassion and rationality. Why are you pulling a face?"

"Because I am desperate to go to the toilet again and I haven't a lot more time to stop it. I don't have the full means to hang on."

"More sick?"

"No, my guts. They are churning."

"Ugh. I'm not like Sanjay Bunker so I'd better go. Well... Can I hear someone?"

"My stomach or Jenny in the kitchen." (I knew enough that Kathleen was creeping upstairs, but not as quietly as she might have done.)

"You get to the shithouse again and I'll let myself out. Connie will be in touch. Kiss the bishop's ring on my hand."

I kissed his ring. "Can I go?"

"God bless!"

I was spraying the pan when the front door finally closed, the toilet door nearly shut. I think Barman had looked into the front room, suspecting someone was in there.

With him gone, Jenny was now behind the toilet door, in the hallway. She said, through it, "Connie Wilson and Jim Wilson will harm you, Linda. I'm really worried."

"Let them. I deserve it. I deserve everything that is coming. Tell Adam to stop his report and to leave me alone. He must not do his report and not send it to the media. He must not do it."

After emptying my insides, I found my old plastic hairbrush, and ran its spikes vigorously through my hair. The game was up for me. I would submit.

Narrator: Adam *Discussing Linda* (Later Wednesday 11th September)

Peter, Kathleen and Winnie, Diana, Ann and Labhaoise, joined me at my place. Kathleen and Winnie had brought over bags of my items from the curate's house. Christine would come along in person for our meeting, because it mattered. She had been doing house calls among her tenants, and indeed she'd talk to Ann and Labhaoise about their latest renovated properties to buy.

Diana was furious with Christine when she arrived, saying that her meddling had caused Linda more grief.

Christine said, "We need to press on Linda the need to leave, to cut her links, to get out."

Kathleen told us what she had overheard: I was indeed banned from the house; Linda would get instructions from Connie Wilson so that Barman would initiate Linda at an undisclosed location, even out of town; Linda was not to return to the parish church at all; I had to stop doing my report against Barman for the media.

I said, "The ordinations have had the opposite effect." I shared a text message from Linda, who told me to stay away from the curate's house, stop the report and not to reply.

So I said to the gathered, "We need a date and time and a place for Linda's initiation to protect her from their punishment. Any idea, hint, on these?"

Kathleen said, "We'll have to keep watch, keep listening."

Jenny arrived, Peter letting her in.

Christine asked, "What are you doing here, Jenny?"

"Kathleen and Winnie were never going out to the town cafe."

"We might have," Winnie said.

"For pork pies," Jenny said. "Look. I could tell you Adam to stop the report you are doing. You know all that. I am telling you instead that I don't like Connie and Jim Wilson. They are sadists. I've contacted Liz Huett and said I am very worried for Linda. She's told me that Linda won't get harmed: it will be like Ken Osis and I shouldn't worry. He was strung up on a double A frame, shown a load of instruments and capitulated. I think Liz is wrong. I think they are going to hurt her, I really do. She has very sensitive skin: it is smooth because she has a biological legacy, let's say, and if they damage it she will suffer, including mentally. They have to be stopped.

That's why I am here."

"Thanks for coming Jenny," I said. I asked if Liz Huett *knew* that Linda would be all right, or had assumed it.

Jenny did not know. She was considering informing Sarah Deimos, their suffragan, who was starting to detect something wasn't quite right in her locality of that diocese.

"No," I said. "If you do that then the alarm will go off with a similar effect to my report being too early. It's why I haven't interviewed Sarah Deimos on her suspicions."

"Bigger all that; we must act," said Diana. "We could go to Linda's house and move her to a safe place."

Kathleen said, "She won't accept it. We'd end up doing the kidnapping."

Ann said, "You are still going ahead with the report. That's not in question."

I said, "We can tell them I'm not, but still do it."

Labhaoise said, "So long as we can get Linda safe."

"But that's the point," said Jenny. "I will try and tell Terry Barman to leave Linda alone, if she submits."

I asked Jenny if she could contact him and get a reaction. She went into the street to ring him.

Kathleen wondered if Linda might respond positively to an intervention from Christine as she was infatuated with her. Diana looked again with eyes of thunder at Christine. Christine said she did not realise Linda had reacted like this to her.

"Liar," said Diana. "You offer her goodies and she cannot resist."

"Yes we had sex, including *en plein air*," confirmed Christine.

Peter said, "I have to ask if anyone tipped off Barman. She went in around the walls so as not to trigger the cameras; she then switched off those CCTV cameras and microphones, but instead they set off an alarm and started recording."

"I didn't," said Christine. "In any case, I'd made love to her on the altar at Wheaton church - for the Confraternity Vanguard at that time - and there were no cameras in there."

Diana said, "You really are the worst, Christine Vine. You have exploited every vulnerability of that woman. She will think she is loved by someone, when you used her."

"Listen, she has nagged me and I've told her constantly that she could not afford me. So I gave way, that she could give me a birthday present. Perhaps you want the same Diana."

Diana stood up and faced her. "What I want is to give you a fist in your face," said Diana. "Or a kick in the crotch."

"Either would cost you a lot of money," Christine said.

I said, "Sit down, Diana. Christine, please." I told them that this was getting us nowhere.

While we waited for Jenny to return, I gave them other news - obviously Ann, Labhaoise and Kathleen knew this already - that George Wickenby was giving up as an investigator, and he was in negotiation to sell his business to me. This meant not just buying his premises, I told them, but also buying the information in his archive. A lot of this archive would be about his client John Barman, and about the Confraternity-obeying groups. Bizarrely John Barman could become my client, except he wouldn't, of course.

And then Jenny came back in. "Terry told me that they need to be sure that Linda will obey in the long term, and she had been extraordinarily resistant. But he will advise Connie and Jim to keep it moderately persuasive, so long as it is decisive." Jenny continued, "He could just tell them to lay off, but they must be telling him to make an example of Linda. They'll want to break her, to make her compliant. Jim Wilson wants to try out real blood-spilling biblical theology," Jenny said.

"Oh, come on," said Diana. "Surely not. It's all myth stuff."

"No, it is possible," said Christine. "The difference between him and me is that when I am sacrificial I take it whereas he dishes it out - he preaches discipline for others. It's just that I have more opportunities to take it and he has very few opportunities with consent to give it."

Diana asked, "Why?"

"Because he has a Puritan-style evangelical motivation and I am Catholic in my breadth of service."

"My God," said Diana. "You're all mad."

The upshot was just to keep monitoring movements and be ready to respond.

Narrator: Linda *Days of Waiting* (Thursday to Saturday 14th September)

I was back staying in bed, yet again. A further message to Adam on Thursday was again both to make sure he stayed away from me and to stop his report. Diana came in and told me to eat, but I was refusing food. She went on about me leaving with her to visit relatives (by marriage) in the Netherlands. I told her to leave the house and not return. So she did, after staring me out.

Kathleen I just about tolerated. She had her own room after all, and Winnie was her distraction.

Jenny stayed clear of me. I shouted out at her, outside my bedroom door, "Nicodemite cunt!" After all, Jenny was part of the pressure I'd been put under. I realised I would have to get back with her, but it wasn't going to be easy.

I just had glasses of water through Thursday from the kitchen brought by Kathleen. My hair was a mess. The West Indian food aromas drifting upstairs were tempting. Kathleen with Winnie asked me if I'd join them eating, but I didn't take up the offer.

Of course I was completely inconsistent. Come Friday, I did end up having a bite of theirs to eat, and it was delicious. When done, Kathleen and Winnie promptly took me upstairs and dumped me in a bath, not that I was smelling (because I don't). They scrubbed me rather vigorously, and made my hair decent.

Later that Friday, I rang Adam in person to press home the point that he cannot go through with his intended exposure.

"Don't worry. I'm distracted," he told me. "There is George's business to absorb."

"What?"

"He is retiring and I am negotiating a price."

"Bishop Barman is his client."

"And he will become mine, if he wants my business."

"I expect Wickenby is watching me."

"If he is it will be his final job. I shall tell him to stop."

"Anyway, you are not listening to me."

"I am. I'm not touching the report. And if Barman becomes my client, I am compromised."

"Why don't you listen to me? I've got nowhere to go. What shall I end up doing? Going to Wales and doing a farm shop?"

"They *are* trying to frighten you."

"No, Adam, I have done something very wrong - very very wrong. Why did I do it? Christine: it is Christine's fault. I hate her. I've upset Colin Cromer so deeply, and I am guilty. I deserve everything coming to me."

Some time on, I heard the front door open. I assumed it was Adam, so just floated downstairs naked to confront him with then Kathleen looking from behind down the stairs.

It was Keith, coming indoors. Keith? "What do *you* want?"

"I still have a door key. Do you want it?"

"Yes, though I'm not sure I'll be here for much longer."

Kathleen descended and disappeared into the large lounge.

"Why not? Might you move out?"

"We did ordinations and a Eucharist in the parish church, except they were independent bishops and used their liturgy. Don't you know?"

"On Colin Cromer's altar table? Why did you do that? It's the worst thing you could have done."

"To bond the group. Give it sacred force, you know. I was off my head. Too much Christine. I've been frustrated. Do you want to fuck me?"

"SMS told me to come up here and spend time talking to George Wickenby to secure our data."

"From Harwich?"

"I'm up from Felixstowe but it's because Wickenby is selling up to your lover."

"What lover? Adam is no longer my lover."

"Oh?"

"Do you want a fuck, Keith? For God's sake *do you want to fuck me?*"

"I left some papers behind, and I think some pen drives in drawers. Anyway, shall we sit down in the sitting room?"

"Why don't you want to fuck me?"

"Are you feeling all right? I had a sixth sense things were not right."

"I'm a nasty, horrible, person and they are going to punish me."

Keith said, "That's shit. They've never punished anyone. The most they did was with Ken Osis. They stripped him, hung him on an A frames thing, showed him lots of needles and whips and he gave in straight away. They'll chain you to that thing, you say, 'I submit,' and then you prostrate yourself in front of the bishop. You'll be naked, and then he will initiate you in the time-honoured way."

"I'll do it."

"Terry Barman will then use his good offices for your future, and you'll be fine."

"Are you here for a while?"

"I'm staying with Yojana for a few days. I sleep with her, as you know."

"Well, why won't you fuck me then?"

"I will if you want. Upstairs?"

Emerging into the hallway, Kathleen stood with her hands on her hips. I told her to mind her own business. Winnie was half way upstairs, and looked uncertain as I pushed past her. Keith followed me into my bedroom, and I both shut my eyes and opened them to look at him while he did the business.

"That was pathetic," I said. "You could at least have hurt me."

Keith then said, with his seed oozing out of me, "Terry will have to give you a shallow fuck. He is rather well-endowed."

"He could go in my rear."

"I think he'd prefer your vagina. But he will be surprised. You may have to explain first that you are not deep at all."

I started crying, and he just paused and looked at me motionless. Keith said that Adam would have to give up on his report completely, or I would not progress to Inglemire and Caffenmere, even if initiated. A printed report would have to be pulped.

"So you do know all about this," I said to him. "You know all about John Barman's plans for Jenny and me."

"For Jenny," he said. "You're optional. If Magellan produces that report, you are toast."

I told him to get dressed, leave me the keys and go. "I still want an uncontested divorce."

"That won't be our final fuck if you stay in the Vanguard."

"No, I suppose not."

He then told me while dressing that Colin Cromer wanted me gone as quickly as possible. "Whether you get the mothballed vicarage at Inglemire is another matter."

"Jenny needs someone to look after her."

"Rhiannon Fleetwood may do it - if not Wheaton, and certainly then not Wales. So you'll be dispensed with totally. Stop Adam and submit or you'll be out."

"Get lost, Keith."

He left me his keys in the bedroom. Kathleen came in to ask me why I'd taken him into my bedroom, so I told her again to mind her own business.

Despite time on my hands, I'd not watched Sea TV recently. On Thursday it had announced on its local news that SMS was closing, delivered in its usual deadpan and unillustrated way.

"This channel is shit," said Kathleen, on Saturday at 6 pm. "Repeats, repeats, adverts."

It did a follow-up report on the decline of the dock, and what this would all mean for our local area. Council politicians spoke of further railway restoration and recreating the casino into a bigger attraction. And up popped the Bishop of Bolingbroke himself - who else? - giving me a shiver. He said that the three towns could become a cultural centre for the east of Foss, as if this would draw in any more visitors. Also on was the local Member of Parliament for Serninsea and Eastern Foss, Stephen James Davison, usually an ignorant Tory twit. He was arguing for 'levelling-up' via better roads and a return non-stop express bus and even a guided busway to and from Wytham. He wanted to see an M16 to link down to an M17 and the M11 extended.

Sunday was next, and of course I would not be in the parish church. Where would I go, if anywhere?

Morning at Wytham (Sunday 15th September)

I decided to have a change of scene and go out to Wytham and a different church. I went in a blouse, a top, a jacket, tight trousers (that's what that minister wore), sensible shoes, and obviously no clerical markings. Why not that chapel I'd seen when at the ordination retreat? After all, I had some possible questions: what's the difference between the Wytham chapel, the Americans (including the charismatic bishop and the Zen minister in America), the independent bishop who had been Unitarian (plus those Free Catholics around him in Mayfair and Birmingham), and Transylvania?

So I parked ten minutes early. I was fortunate on arrival to discover that, whilst this chapel met only once a fortnight in the morning on a Sunday, this was the correct Sunday. Otherwise I would have to have stayed around until the afternoon service. How crackers is that? You can't build a church if it opens at different times on subsequent Sundays.

I was met warmly by an elderly woman at the door who gave me two hymn books, one purple and one green. The purple book was more recent, but the 1985 book itself seemed to have a radical edge for its time. I liked the words, as they were people-centred and didn't have a slavish, dogmatic content. However, I was only the fourth person in until a handful of people arrived more or less at the last minute.

I counted only ten when bearded Charley Darley, the minister, appeared in an open necked shirt and sweater and casual trousers to take the service. He seemed to have more at the top of his trousers this time.

He lit a chalice. There were prayers that seemed to me to be devotions, as no deity was assumed. One *Cosmic Prayer* linked all people and their unity to forms of energy, being and purpose; our individual lives are patterned under cosmic life and mystery is realised in truth. Well, could be, but how to anchor this? Another prayer linked us as growing from the soil, like trees, water flowing through, working with fungi. Charley joked that he was a fun guy afterwards. Not very solemn then, although he mentioned Schopenhauer and The Will in passing.

To *Beatitudo* (music) we sang a hymn that said we trust in life, each bearing a cross, praying for strength; given power and faith. It seemed theistic, this, but very loose. Another hymn had apparently familiar words of God giving strength, via difficult pathways, winning living fountains, and God as a guide. In what sense? I wondered. That was the green book. The purple book supplied us with the Hyfrydol tune and the idea that Earth was given as a garden to discover, within which to mature and be interwoven, and a Transylvanian hymn tune - ah! - *Sigismund*, with text from that land about a stillness and silence carried by the spirit to harmony and the essence of these allowing one to flower.

I thought my flower bulb had been choked off.

His sermon mentioned Paul Tillich in the usual inadequate selective way with his existentialism, and Schleiermacher before him on dependence, but Charley's message was mainly about how we are dependent on this life of localised chaos bubbling up into broader interactions and systems. There was a sense in which 'God' meant the interactions that resulted; indeed he said God could be for some what

results from all the cosmic powers at work, and within which we were always dependent and could never be entirely free. Here the actual atheist Schopenhauer and The Will as a kind of energy, "was relevant but possibly misleading."

Jesus was never mentioned, and funnily enough I thought it all rather refreshing.

Afterwards, he and a few remembered me, and was told that the Friday small crowd was generally a different one from the Sunday few.

As for my criticism of the times of opening, Charley said they would be returning the church meeting to a once a week at the same time because it was the only way to build. It meant other churches in his Foss circuit not getting a morning opening. In fact there were three he catered for, one much further down our coast at Wulfstan and one outside some village called Chapel Abbey in a small lane near Thermaby. No one attended that place, but they still took four services a year to extract trust money from a corporation via some bizarre historical link.

Charley was crafty. He wanted to engage me into debate, saying, "If I spoke of resurrection it would be in the context of all that I had just used."

I didn't exactly want to debate, so I said, "I'd do the same."

"You agree with us? Or me - others might put it differently. Meet Doreen Sharp again."

"I agree," I replied. Doreen silently put a saucer with a cup of coffee on it in my hand.

"But *you* have a different liturgy," he said.

"Yes," I said, "deriving from post-Easter Christian communities. But what is it all about?" I asked.

"Presumably, a focus back on an individual messianic figure, an appointed one," he said, teasing again.

"It depends how you identify the wrapping paper and what is wrapped inside," I said.

He said, "That's suggesting an old fashioned, classical Unitarian, essence-of-it objectivity."

"Anyway," I said, "I don't wish to be rude, Charley, but I wanted to appreciate your service and participate without having to debate."

"Oh," he replied, "That's very positive and possibly revealing. A postmodernist likes particular wrapping papers."

"So do I," I said, "but I don't want to debate!"

"What's happened? Something happened? You remember Rose Barnes? She's our Secretary - our hymn books greeter today."

"Hello Rose. You are pushing at an open door."

"Who loosened the locks?" asked Rose.

"The locks are tightening, actually," I responded.

Another woman, said, "Except we had nearly a dozen people in today for a whole area, and you'll have more than a dozen in a much smaller area."

Charley said, "Bernadette Bolt."

I said, "Well, Bernadette, where I am likely to go next I'll have less than a dozen and likely that's across three churches."

"Bernie, please."

"You're moving?" asked Charley.

"At best, yes."

"At best? Do they know what you believe?" he asked.

"Well, it's not my job to tell them what I believe," I answered. "I tell them what the Church believes."

"You live a lie, then?" asked a man, adding to the crowd around me.

"Dennis Wigmore has been here fifty years," said Charley.

"I don't live a lie, Dennis. I'd rather give people the tools for the job of thinking for themselves," I said.

"Really? Like we do? Openly?" Dennis asked back.

"If I'd have anyone listening. After I teach what the Church teaches, what they then choose to believe is up to them."

"I couldn't do that," Charley said. "Anyway, my Church doesn't 'teach'. What do you mean 'if anyone is listening'?"

"Well, between you and me," I told him, and the others, "there is a possibility of events unfolding that will devastate the local Anglican scene and leave me up a creek without a congregation."

"You're in some sort of a scandal? Is that why you are here?"

"No, *I'm* not, but some might suffer a bomb-blast that takes in a lot of collateral damage. I just have to fall in and... Oh, I don't know."

"You okay?"

"Yes yes."

"You do look drawn, Linda. You look a little sad, if you don't mind me saying."

"I can cope."

"We have a room we can go in if you'd like to chat one to one."

"No thanks."

"Is all this over in your neck of the woods?"

"Yes, but across Wytham diocese several bombs might go off. Imminently. We get privileged access to the media."

"Yes your lot do."

"I have some other questions," I said. "Doreen, Rose, Bernie, Dennis, join in if you want. My friend's worker, who actually has been ordained as a doorkeeper by some tiny episcopal group, goes online to your lot. And then my friend's still wife and her daughter came from Rumania and their little chapel has got gun placements to shoot at any invaders - it is apparently a very olde worlde version of your outfit, with a catechism even though you reject creeds, and then this same little episcopal group told me about some Unitarian bishop a hundred years ago or so in Hereford or Oxford ordained in India who mixed with one Unitarian minister as high as a kite when in Mayfair. Where is the consistency? Oh - I mustn't forget, your American wing has a charismatic bishop and some retired minister does Zen Buddhism."

"Why do you want consistency?" Dennis asked.

"Well, surely there is a common strand?" I asked back. "I'm utterly puzzled."

Charley said, "It all evolved from the left wing of the Reformation, but a long time ago, some slowly and defensively, some more quickly, some more diversely, and then a few strange deviations and diversions perhaps. This chap ordained as a doorkeeper. Presumably, he - you? - have been in touch with people who refer back to - I know who he is - the Herford chap. Herford his name, Oxford place."

"Ah, yes, a Unitarian bishop called Herford."

"Well, Herford left us, but J. M. Lloyd Thomas didn't. But it was a diversion really, and both were involved a bit with the Mayfair Congregationalist chapel you

mention. Lloyd Thomas was a Minister in Birmingham and the Society of Free Catholics constitution was signed in Manchester. So why the doorkeeper ordination?"

"It's something this Liberal Catholic tiny group do."

Rose said, "We have to be careful talking about tiny groups: we are going in that direction!"

"Yes, Rose, Charley - am I all right calling you Charley?"

"You have and you can. So did you meet them as well?"

"Via a friendship contact."

"We're all friends here, even though we're not Quakers! These clerical Liberal Catholics: how liberal are they?"

"Not very doctrinal at all," I replied. "But high. Strong on breeding."

"Hey?" asked Dennis.

"How they ordain. Lines of inheritance."

"That sort of nonsense," Charley said.

"I think so," I replied.

Bernie asked, "Do you envy them, Linda? Er, do you perhaps envy us?"

"Does it actually work?"

Rose said, "We carry on."

"But not with much impact - if I may say."

Charley said, "It's always more than we think. Campaigns, where we offer a niche, can work. Leading others towards equal marriage was one success. Important for me. Do you want to keep in touch with us? By the way, what of that other woman you came with before?"

"Christine is now in that Liberal Catholic group. They ordained her deacon *sub-conditione*, priest and bishop."

"Bishop indeed! Of whom?"

"No place as such. She does have a ministry."

Some older man listening in and coming nearer said, "Let's play a game then."

"A game?" I asked.

"Ian Doel," said Charley.

Ian continued: "Would you invite Charley to preach in your church?"

"Yes," I said, "I would, so long as he teaches what the Church teaches. I've been brought to a point to realise that Church discipline is important."

"And would you, Charley, invite..."

"Linda," I said.

"Linda to preach in exchange with you?"

"Yes - using material she actually believes."

I said, "So long as I could attempt to justify the connection between the wrapping paper, the goodies inside and the intended outcome."

Ian said, "Certainly. Shall we arrange it then?"

I said, "I'm afraid not. I'm already suspended for doing a liturgy in my church that I should not have done, especially as a curate. It's why I am here. I'm free to roam around. I'm suspended."

"Fascinating," said Charley. "Is that the bomb about to go off?"

"Actually, no."

"So will we see you again? It does not need to be reciprocal. Any time you

want, come and preach!"

"That's very generous of you," I said. "But I doubt it really because I've agreed I shouldn't have done what I did; I'll submit to my bishops and obey the rules. If you are in a body, and approve of its purpose, then you ought to obey the rules."

"You erred," said Charley, "and now you won't do it again. But while you are suspended, you've come here. Are you erring again? 'Erring' has become a postmodern word," he added.

"Oh, I know who you mean: that postmodern theologian," I said.

"I've forgotten his name as well. There really is nothing between us, is there?"

"Much more is related. Mark C. Taylor, that's him."

"What else is related?"

"I'd have to whisper it."

"So to the room then, you and me," said Charley. "Thank you everyone, but I'm doing the confidential minister bit now."

So we took our coffees through a door to what was his vestry.

"Go on, I am the only ears here."

"Good. Well, I can tell that you are transgender, and I am intersex. They are different, but we are gender cousins."

"What form of intersex are you?"

"Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome."

"Ah. Female but non-reproductive. And yes I am a female to male transgender. I've taken to changing the too obvious."

"I'm sorry but we had noticed before, Christine and me."

"And others too. I got into some trouble over that. Wood and brass it is for the nay-sayers now. Toleration is a funny thing: it is not quite whole and complete. If I may ask, now we are in here privately, why must you 'submit'? You are paid aren't you, like I am paid?"

"There is a 'What else would I do?' element to it."

"Oh, there often is," Charley said. "We have the odd vacancy - you know, historical trust money pays the wages - but you would have to train and learn, and show you are really interested in this odd and inconsistent small bunch of us."

"Yeah..." I said. (Crumbs, what was I implying?)

"Why do you have to submit?"

"I can't really go into detail because there are confidential aspects on the other side of this. I could choose you as a spiritual confessor. I don't have one at the moment."

"I'm friendly with a Presbyterian Congregationalist. It's not impossible. You sound like you are on a hinge or a doorstep."

"I think," I said, "I'm about to have the door shut."

He asked, "What did you do? Allow these Liberal Catholics to go mad in your parish church?"

"Well done: that's exactly what happened."

"Oh dear. It's a bit like us and the Baptist Union. The fault lines go back a long long way."

"Yes and why you can't be my spiritual confessor. I'll meet your folks back in there," I said.

Everyone else seemed to have a word with me, if only about where I was from. I just wished I'd been someone who might come again and add to their

numbers. I'd been nosey, and left feeling a little envious. I was instead committed to becoming boxed in.

Then I was especially naughty. I just could not help myself. Returning to the trainee minister, I asked, "Tell me, Charley, how are you outside of these confines? I mean, are you married?"

"Yes", he said, "to Alan over there."

That snipped my personal enquiry. Becoming a bloke, married to a bloke.

"Religious traditions," I said. "they are something to think about."

He paused slightly with my sudden change of topic. "Okay. Religious traditions are like art movements," he said. "Carriers of memory down a collective river that has tributaries and joins together, and even - pushing the analogy too far - splits and divides. Well, humans build canals."

"Perhaps I must now get back on my boat," I said. "Loos?"

I thought the disabled toilet was really good - full facilities and nappy changing too.

Back with them I said, "I'm going, and thank you ever so much."

I left, asking myself: when all the detailed theology is done, what is left? Liberals ought to be glad when anything is left - a sort of theism, and plenty of individual varieties of interpretation. Stick with the wrapping paper, perhaps. I didn't like his misuse of Paul Tillich. He was a systematic theologian, and I was not. Schleiermacher spoke to people of his time. Schopenhauer's *The Will* confuses.

I looked a round a few nearby shops but went back towards the car to drive home.

A car pulled up. It was Diana driving.

"Linda," she said. "Get in."

"What are you doing here? Are you following me?"

"Linda. My aunt Frances has a place for you to stay here in Wytham. You need to get safe. It's not safe in Serninsea."

"Get lost," was my response, and I walked on in the other direction from her car's.

I arrived at my SUV and at this point Diana walked over. "Jenny World says they are going to hurt you and we do not know where."

"Good. Then perhaps I can get on with my life and take up John Barman's offer. So thank you but hop it, Diana. Perhaps I can put right what has been so wrong. Go to your aunt's yourself and stop following me."

As I drove home I realised that I wasn't like Jenny, all secularised. There was something left and surely I could develop this. I could imagine being like Charley, although his church was too thin for me.

Too thin? What's that? So what about Geoff, Luis and Christine? I couldn't but think that their route was a fantasy of clergy without people, a fantasy of clerical nothings. Theirs was a 'play Church' that ignored the reality on the ground of struggling through secularisation to keep a congregation.

There was nowhere else for me to go. I would just have to take my punishment and fall in. I arrived back at the tied house in Sutton and felt weary.

Someone had posted the new parish magazine by hand. My written apology was not in there. There was a bland notice instead:

Special Notice: the Reverend Linda Jupitas will not be present at St. Sernin

parish church pending decisions about her future. She is not available for contact or comment and please direct any enquiries to the parish priest the Reverend Colin Cromer or any of the Wytham diocese bishops.

That's all it said, but it explained the complete absence of anyone telephoning me about my situation. My name was off the staff list as well. I tried the local parish website. Yep, I was off that. They weren't messing about. I must have become a serious *persona non grata*. I assumed that there must have been an announcement to the congregation to shun me completely. I'd been disfellowshipped far more effectively than the Jehovah's Witnesses do! My future in a real Church, and not a supposed (by me) play-Church run by Geoff and company, was set. The bishop had given me a road forward, and I would be ready.

A Call and a Vision

I went into the kitchen to prepare tea for myself. Kathleen and Winnie were dolling themselves up for a Vestal Virgins introductory social dinner, Winnie popping in for a third of a glass of red grape juice.

"Just before you go," I said. "Winnie. Sometimes you're here and sometimes, what, you're at your flat? It's fine you being here, but you realise I will have to move out."

Winnie said, "It might be difficult at my place. I don't have a flat; I am at my parents' and Kathleen has never stayed with me at my parents'. You've been very kind. We want to see first how we two get on before moving in with each other, whatever my parents think."

"Very wise," I said. "I'm pleased you're getting on so well. But this house goes back to the church soon. If I did move to Inglemire, and I was allowed to give you a room, well it is a commute for you two back into Serninsea."

Kathleen said, "You're really great, Linda. There is the new tram, we know, but when you have no job you can be stuck in a village and the trams aren't cheap."

They went out.

I went in to the kitchen but just could not be bothered to cook anything. So, I grabbed a loaf to carve, with mature cheese cut lumpily and chutney scooped from a jar into two large rough sandwiches, put on to an oversized plate placed on the table. So unbothered I was to even fill the kettle up, I grabbed a second glass from the cupboard like the one Winnie had put on the draining board and poured in some more of the red grape juice kept in the fridge.

I was sat looking towards the window, seeing the garden and boundary fence, holding and biting into one of the sandwiches.

Hang on. A man, darkened by the window light behind him, was sat on the other side of the table with the other sandwich in his hand and was about to take a bite. I put mine down directly on to the plate.

I said, mouth full, "Who the hell are...?"

He consumed a mouthful and swallowed. "What yer going to do to renew things, like?" he asked, looking directly at me.

I swallowed. "I don't know - how, what, how..." I was compelled to look down

at the big plate, and it was empty. I took a bite at my sandwich again and so chewed some more. What was going on?

He, however, holding the sandwich in one hand, drank from a glass of red juice. I swallowed bread and picked up my glass of red juice to take a swig.

Putting his glass down he said, "I'll say yer need a complete change; it must all end and come to new beginnings."

I looked about. Was there anyone else also suddenly present? No. Just him. He looked directly at me. He seemed real enough. But who was he?

He said, "Linda: hear me. All manner of things will be well."

Ah, I knew who it was. I looked directly at him.

"Ken? Ken Osis! Ken, what do you mean?"

I must have blinked. I did a double take, because nothing was blocking the window. There was nothing missing from the other sandwich now on the big plate. But a drop of grape juice containing a crumb of bread were on the table near that far edge. The seat he'd used was tucked-in. Winnie's glass was where it had been.

I think I was suffering from stress, and becoming delirious. When I picked up the other sandwich, I ate it all. Looking again at the wine drop I dabbed my finger on to it to taste it in my mouth as real, and it came with the bread crumb. Grabbing a cloth I'd dropped no crumbs on the table, although I did wipe it, and I completed the washing up.

Ice Baths (Monday 16th September)

The doorbell woke me on Monday morning. The CCTV showed Connie Wilson in black top and skirt and she let herself in with a key. I hadn't any chance to wash or prepare. I went to the stairs, with my wardrobed white cassock thrown over my head. "It's time," she said, inside. "Use your last minutes of freedom to brush your teeth. *Black* cassock and collar on."

"It's hanging in the downstairs toilet, which I need. I want my bag."

"Leave your phone here. You won't need it. You can have your bag."

A few minutes later I heard Jim Wilson and someone called Blackberry come in the back door way. After completing a shit, she was in the hall in a black cassock and collar and a long blonde hair wig.

"Keys," he said, "to your SUV. I'm insured to drive such a vehicle."

So I gave him them. Blackberry left the house by the front door behind Jim Wilson, to get in my SUV back seat, which he then drove away.

"Wait," said Connie. "We'll go out the back way in five minutes. From now on, 'Yes' is the only answer I want to hear, when it must be a yes, or 'no' when it must be a no."

After a long silence we left and approached her white Astra. If Jim had driven his bottle green Escort, I did not see it. She said, "Get in the back seat and lie down. Answer me!"

"Yes."

She leaned in and bound my wrists behind me in tight cloth handcuffs using velcro. She did the back seat belt and then she got in and drove off.

As we journeyed, she asked, "Have you got knickers on or a bra, Reverend

Jupitas?"

"No," I said. I realised I needed another wee.

"Your car Jim drove, that SUV, is the product of your illicit life. Answer me."

"Yes."

We arrived down the side of the two-storey Blue Diamond Club, in Titansea, a wall to the left and a side door into the club on the right. I struggled out and into the building to meet a female assistant in a corridor by that side door. The assistant, in black blouse and trousers, was wearing a white plastic badge with a B and a goose on it.

Connie told the assistant, "She needs a proper bath; don't let her out of that bathroom. It has a toilet?"

"Far end. Disabled."

I said, "I need to go."

"That is not a 'yes' or 'no' statement, Reverend Jupitas. If you speak out of turn again I will punish you. Don't let her out of your sight, Honey - yours or Strawberry's. Now then Reverend, you do what the two assistants tell you. If they have any trouble from you, they are to tell me, and I will punish you. You can go to the toilet when they say. You will have an ice bath in there. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Soon, Stephen McPhail will join me and tell you what is going to happen. For now we clean you. If the bishop comes here to see you, you will kneel immediately and not look at his face directly. If you do not kneel or you look at his face, I will certainly punish you. Do you understand me?"

"Yes."

Connie then said. "With no knickers on you won't be on your period."

"No."

"Shame. We might have used that. Over to you, girls. Start with the enema."

I went into the large bathroom with Honey to meet Strawberry inside, also dressed in black and with the same badge on. I reckoned they were in their early twenties. Strawberry took my cassock and collar and hung it on the door peg inside. My shoes were off and I was naked. Strawberry then left the room.

Inside this tiled room was a large free-standing central bath, a disabled toilet behind a door at the far end, with a large vertical mirror to that door's right. On the left side wall was a sink with a cupboard below it and a mirror above it. On the right hand side beyond the tall mirror there was also what seemed to be a massage table against the right wall and a long vertical rod on a stand with a liquid container on top and long tube downwards from it to a plastic tap and inserter at the end.

"Toilet," said Honey.

"Yes, thank you."

"Do not say more than yes or no!"

So I went into the disabled toilet, and pissed and shat as Honey held the door open. When I was done, she shook her head as I therefore didn't pull the loo roll.

"Now is the best time to have an enema."

Honey gestured for me to put my right leg up on to the massage table, which I did.

Strawberry came in pushing a trolley carrying a bucket of ice cubes and water, a sponge, two blocks of hard soap and a tube of some gunge.

Honey stretched up to disconnect the container with tube and took these to

the sink to fill it with water. Strawberry knelt and wiped my backside with the very cold wet sponge.

"Filthy cow." Strawberry then cleaned the sponge in the sink.

Honey stretched to reattach the container. Strawberry then greased my anus and the tube was pushed in. With the little tap turned, the water in the container back on the pole slowly disappeared into my bottom. So Honey repeated the process so that my bottom took in a second helping.

Strawberry found a large syringe in the sink cupboard, filled it and used the direct method.

"I don't think..."

"Be quiet," said Strawberry, and pushed on the syringe harder. "One more I think."

After one more I was ready to burst. At least she gave me the dignity of returning to the toilet cubicle where I ejected the water and everything else still up there.

While I was doing that, Honey was filling up the bath with cold water. Strawberry tipped in the ice cubes. Strawberry shook her head at me and so applied the sponge again and washed it in the sink.

Honey said, "Sit in the bath."

In it, I became freezing cold and my teeth started chattering. Then Honey partially filled the bucket from the bath, and tipped the water over my head, some ice cubes hitting me.

Honey said, "We have to keep her hair wet."

Honey and Strawberry then got me to stand in the water, and they soaped me with a hard block of soap each and their own hands. Nothing of me was left untouched as I tried to keep steady on my feet. They went between my buttocks. They even lifted my breasts, one each, to rub the soap bars under them. When I got down into the bath again, I was freezing. My feet seemed to be turning blue.

Stephen McPhail and Connie came into the room. She shouted at me, "Stand up straight when we come in!"

I got up, feet and shins still in the freezing water.

Connie then said, "Look straight ahead. Are you clean, Reverend Jupitas?"

"Yes."

"What have you prepared, Stephen?"

"So the double A frame is up, and we have a wooden bar to go between the two As that we raise to her crotch. Before we attach her with chains, there is a metal topped triangular 'horse' for her to sit on and wait."

"That's new," said Connie.

"It introduces pressure," he said. "The beam across the A frames has been adjusted to raise higher than before because she's got such long legs. I've taken in a good cat o'nine tails, a bullwhip, and various canes thick and thin. Helen has taken in a variety of sterilised needles and some large very sharp metal spikes like skewers. These are for her labia, breasts and hips. Jim can use them when releasing her sins through her blood flowing."

I felt sick, my lower legs and feet freezing cold. I could only think he had said this to frighten me and that they couldn't possibly do it. Nevertheless, my guts were churning again. I let out a fart.

Connie put her hand to Stephen. "I'm sorry Stephen, but I am going to have to

do this."

She punched me in the stomach, and I slipped and fell in the bath on to my knees. I was desperate, clamping my rear with my hands.

Then Connie said, "Take her to the shithouse, you two. She can empty her bowels."

Honey said, "She's already been and had an enema."

Connie said, "Well, we'll watch you give her another enema. Just the syringe. Four times of ice cold water."

This happened first, and I ran to the booth, to shit out the water and what else had come down.

Stephen said, "She'll need a whole new ice bath and soaping, and check she is as clean about her arse as if appearing in a DVD. The bishop indicated he wants to see her here."

Jim Wilson came in. "Hi. I don't think anyone followed us."

"Right," said Connie. "Let's leave Honey and Strawberry to their work."

The assistants both nodded and the three of them left.

Honey emptied the bath and Strawberry then left the room. I stood, waiting and shaking, as the cold water filled up. Honey instructed me to get in, and I was already so cold. I sat in and Strawberry returned with another bucket of ice cubes and tipped them out to bounce off me. I stood for the repeated hard soaping, with extra emphasis around my bottom, and then sat so they could tip recovered ice cubes and water over my head several times.

I was told to get out and stand near the tall mirror, and I would have to wait there. At least I was out of that bath.

Stephen McPhail came in again, holding a rectangular wooden slab that had wooden triangular raised edges along it. "Reverend Jupitas, come up here to me and face the door." So I did. "Kneel on this. You are about to receive a visit from Bishop Terry Barman. You speak only when spoken to. Do not look at his face. In fact, keep your head bowed. I cannot emphasise enough the amount of punishment you will receive if you so much as glance at him."

He went out. One triangle length went pressing under both knees, the next one missed, another two dug into my lower shins and the tops of my feet were pressing down on two more across.

Strawberry and Honey were by the sink. My legs were killing me. Then in came a naked man, and all I saw was his enormous penis. I thought that if he could get twenty per cent of that into me, he'd be doing very well. So, the Bishop of Bolingbroke had a huge curled downwards member.

"The Reverend Linda Jupitas. Soon a most holy act will take place, when I initiate you into our authority of the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Anglican Nationalabus*. It is otherwise known as the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the English National Church. It is our precious Vanguard. You will then be able to function in The Worshipful Company of the Serninsea Theatrical Players. Recently you were visited by your husband, and you also made love with him - which is very good. You indicated to him that Adam Magellan has become distracted by buying George Wickenby's business and lost interest in his report on my activities. You have not seen him since. Are these matters correct?"

I had to decide to be affirmative. "Yes."

"You see, on such news I have dropped resistance to the *Report on the*

Managerial Efficiency of the Wytham Diocese, now that your ex-temporary lover has lost his interest. It might even be that the report forces the Diocesan to resign and I take his place. More likely me than Julian Worsley. Do you think so?"

"Yes." I kept my head bowed.

"Thinking of that is making me a little erect. Look at it."

"Do you want me to suck it?"

"Now then, the Reverend Jupitas, don't talk out of turn!"

"I'm so..."

"Take your shoe off and kick her back with your toes, Strawberry."

That hurt, on my upper backbone.

He said, "Speak *only when you're spoken to!* 'Yes' or 'no' is enough. Do you affirm that?"

"Yes."

"Kiss my feet. One each."

I did kiss his bare feet, each one, as my legs went into bruising agony.

"Ah yes. Reverend Jupitas: your husband was so kind in buying out information about me from the Wickenby business. That information is too valuable for a useless prick like Magellan to possess. What you saw in him I do not know. I was Wickenby's client, you know, and he often followed you. And there's your friend, Diana, one of those who persecuted our late friend Ken Osis. Tantamount to murder, really. I'm so pleased about the way you dismissed her in Wytham, after your visit to the heretics on Sunday. And no doubt Christine wants to press her claim on you as her slave. She'll have had sex with you recently, to get her way. Am I right?"

"Yes."

"We are about to prepare you and we are thankful for the creative efforts of Mr. Stephen McPhail, his wife Helen, and of course Mrs. Connie Wilson for looking after you and to the Reverend James Wilson for his diversion with Blackberry and his up and coming *theological* preparation of you. Don't shake, the Reverend Jupitas". Say 'yes' to Honey and Strawberry in gratitude for their work."

"Yes."

"Soon you will have to indicate to Jim and Connie that you will submit to me, and, given your avoidance tactics recently, only when they are satisfied that you mean what you say will I do the initiation. But then your world will open up. You will be able to take up your duties in the Worshipful Company, initiating others. I will see about installing you as the curate of the Reverend Jenny World into the Inglemire and Caffenmere parish. You will both be very important in serving the Vanguard locally, as well as having occasional travels to Harwich, Hartlepool and surely South Wales. I am sure you will enjoy those trips and initiating new people. You're shaking. Are you cold?"

"Yes."

"Are you a little anxious as well?"

"Yes."

"You *should* feel some nerves. I will expect you to orgasm; I certainly will, inside you. Look, I'm getting hard already. Remember that we must praise God, the creator and recreator of all we can experience. Touch it with your tongue for my anticipation."

My tongue made contact with the bishop's penis end. He placed his hand on my bowed head and its wet hair. Without further comment he turned and left the

room.

Strawberry then tipped ice cold water over my head and down my back, followed by helping me up as I could hardly stand with horizontal indents in my knees, lower legs and feet.

Helen McPhail came in. "Cassock on and collar! Bare feet! I've had a warning call. Honey: please strip off, get a cream sheet from the stores, wrap it around yourself including up your head and get in the back of the second taxi."

With Strawberry's help, I put my cassock back on with the clerical collar properly positioned. My hands were bound in velcro restraints again around my back. My shoes stayed where they were.

Helen said, "Strawberry: thank you. Take your badge off."

Two black cabs faced the direction we'd arrived in and would continue on to rejoin the streets.

Helen said to me, "Look to the right when outside. Helen went first. "Face me." I got into the first taxi's back seat. Helen said, "Lie down and stay down."

At the exit back into the road system, my first taxi cab felt like it went into local streets.

Narrator: Adam *Where's Linda?* (Monday 16th September)

With Linda gone somewhere I moved swiftly to the curate's house and Kathleen let me in. I asked Kathleen, "You're sure neither of them gave any indication where they were going?"

"Jim Wilson and a woman were a decoy and then they left five minutes after."

"Who was the decoy woman?"

"Likely some sex worker."

"How did they arrive?"

"Walked, I think. They must have parked elsewhere."

"Connie Wilson has an Astra, Jim Wilson often uses it but also drives a green Escort."

"Where are you?" I asked Peter Marshall by mobile phone. He was at a visual observation distance from the casino building.

"Connie Wilson's Astra did not arrive here. The SUV is not here. I saw a woman going to the far door, and a bloke came out as well. They kissed. She went in, he went down the road and got in a car. She then came out, locked the steel door, joined him and they drove off. No one has come back yet."

Kathryn Wickenby was driving towards the Wilsons' vicarage, in the Serninsea Marshes. I received a call from her. She said, "Connie's car, from your description, is not back here, but the green Escort is here."

"All right. Let's try the Blue Diamond Club. Use the bypasses."

Diana arrived at the curate's house. I told her that Christine Vine was in London, but Christine was now aware that Mrs. Wilson had come to take Linda away. I showed Diana the house's outside CCTV recording.

Diana said, "The bastard even let herself in. The diocese will have the keys. I bet that's how they got into Ken Osis's house, when he was found dead. She is in real danger."

All of a sudden we had to get to the back of the house, because the SUV vehicle came back, accompanied by another vehicle. Jim Wilson alone got out of the SUV and into the other vehicle. I passed on to Peter the number plate. I could see Wilson looking around at the extra vehicles in the street.

Diana said, "Do you want me to follow that car?"

"No, we do better to predict where they've gone. You go to the parish church, I'll go to the bishop's house in Caffenmere."

On my way south I paused to receive calls that Diana had arrived at the church and then Kathryn had arrived at the Blue Diamond Club.

I asked each, "No white coloured Astra?"

"No."

"No."

I waited at the front of the bishop's house.

No one was reporting activity until Kathryn rang. "Two black cabs have gone down the side of the club. They're waiting."

"Two taxis?"

"One behind the other. Hang on. I can barely see a blonde haired - I think - woman wrapped in a creamy gown. If that's white her hair is darker. She's getting in a taxi."

"Which one?"

"Second. A woman has come out and now a blonde haired woman in a black cassock. First taxi."

"What they'd do to have a decoy, surely."

"They're going. Hang on. The first cab has turned left, away from the bypass. So there's the dock and Caramel Club that way. The second cab has gone towards the bypass. Ah, a woman has come out of the club's front door. She's smoking."

"Describe her."

"Black trousers, black blouse, twenties."

Anything unusual about her: headgear, badges, tattoos?"

"None of those. I wouldn't be able to see tattoos from here."

"Try the bypass but drive carefully."

Peter said he could see nothing at the casino.

Giving Christine the information so far, a reply suggested Wheaton and especially its old vicarage going up for sale.

Kathryn diverted for Wheaton and I told her to be careful looking around. I decided to call everyone else back to the curate's house, where we could have a conference on what to do.

Gathered together, we decided that Peter would contact the Unitarian minister in Wytham for anything he might have heard to give a clue of her whereabouts.

Keith had visited Linda before Sunday, when Linda had wanted to be treated like rubbish.

"That might have been to show willing," I said.

Diana said Yojana Asthana's SMS job had finished early; she had already retreated to work at the Maa Skelter Guest House of her parents. So Diana set off there.

Peter rang the number on the Wytham Unitarians' website for Charley Darley the minister. Peter utilised the speakerphone. The man with a high-pitched voice said, "She was anxious, but seemed to indicate that she could cope. She'd become

free-wheeling with her religion, but was committed to serving the institution despite being suspended or its equivalent." He added that there were a number of half-used larger Anglican properties in Wytham and so would take a look. He'd go as far out as Rabbi Neptune's property for extra parked vehicles.

It took some time, but I received a call from Diana: that she had even asked if a long blonde haired woman had checked in, perhaps with another smaller woman, but the receptionist's denial seemed genuine. "I think I was speaking to Yojana," Diana said. "I didn't see Keith. No Astra."

The only thing for it was to leave Diana in the area, to watch incoming roads, for Peter to go back to near the casino building, and Kathryn drove to be near the Blue Diamond Club again. A thought was the treatment of Ken Osis and that Linda herself might be hung up for punishment. It would need the right sort of room to do it. The McPhails reportedly had strange activity rooms and he made devices. So I went near there but there were no additional vehicles outside or near.

Kathleen and Winnie stayed at Linda's house, in case the telephone rang. (Neither could drive: Kathryn had passed her test and Kathleen had not.)

No one was seeing anything. Linda had simply disappeared. I asked Peter to think outside the box, but he had no ideas. Then he thought of the car showroom. Yes! Sanjay Bunker's money-laundering space. I went there.

When I arrived there were a few people coming out and going in. They were prostitutes and clients. I decided to go in as a potential punter. I could hear noises going on, but unless Linda was held captive in one of the booths or in a small room upstairs, she would not be there. The biggest space available was, really, the showroom - and it was filled with cars. I reported back to the rest my negative impression.

Kathryn said that everything at Wheaton was closed and she was coming back.

Of course it was still possible that Linda was in one of these places, but we had drawn a blank on all of them. The terrible prospect was that she was somewhere else entirely, via the bypass.

I ordered everyone back to the curate's house for a second time so that we could come up with a strategy.

Narrator: Linda *Second Location* (Monday 16th September)

The taxi arrived behind the casino building, in a minor Titantsea street. The route bumped over the preserved rail tracks to the dock; the road was for the dock itself. I was still down on the back seat, and then Connie Wilson opened the back door. She was now in black leather and shiny black plastic. Her breasts seemed to be covered by leather flaps probably held up by high press studs. A broad leather vertical belt was all that went around her crotch.

"Reverend Linda Jupitas: remember it is 'yes' or 'no' only to anything you are asked by my husband or by me. Otherwise you do not speak. You may have cause at times to cry out. We appreciate that, in our compassion. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Now here's a funny thing. There are two security steel doors, in a wheelie

bins containing passage from the main road behind a bit of the wall there, one door for our floor above and one for the casino, and yet, here we are, at an outdoors fire escape staircase to such a flimsy door above. I'm right behind you. The door will push open, and we'll be straight into the upper hall, where you will await instructions."

So I climbed these metal steps, still barefoot and with my wrists bound by velcro cloth restraints behind my back. When I arrived at the top, I had thoughts of rolling over the handrail to seriously injure myself or even die on the pavement below. I didn't: I turned right to shove open the fire door with its frosted glass, and when it opened easily I saw what I feared. The double A frames contraption was instantly menacing, laid out on translucent plastic sheets and some black bin bags partly unfolded. Around the hall and its carpet were beds, sofas and low tables. There were windows out to both long sides, curtains across them all, except for this fire door. At the far right narrower end there was a door and, I assumed, space behind. On the narrower wall far left was a single door and window from its left and double doors to its right - presumably for the main entrance and exit involving stairs behind the steel door.

The A frames' central feature was a low central plank - edge up - that could be hoisted up and down on a runner-ratchet device each end that was linked to a handle. A pole went along between each A at the top and one for each foot of the As - three poles in total. There were pulleys and moveable chains with wrist constraints on the top pole across; below on these lower poles were moveable short chains with ankle restraints. Nearby and separate was a 'horse' in the shape of a triangular prism of varnished wood lengths, with a shiny metal strip across the top of the inverted V.

Near the double doors was a box of top soil, alongside which was an emptied bag. We went past this through the double doors on the far right, and these led to a landing. The stairs indeed went down to a steel door. I guessed that it was an inner one of two that led to the dead end passage - turn sharp right to get to the main road.

On this high landing we turned left, directly into a compact area of clothes pegs, two showers and two toilets. There my cassock came off, placed next to my shoes already brought there. I was released from my wrists constraint, and I was walked to a toilet cubicle. Connie waited, door open, while I pissed. I wanted to shit but couldn't.

When I came out she said she'd had enough of me going in these places, and had this 'butt-plug' that went into my rectum. "That's where that's staying," she said. She didn't reattach the velcro handcuffs she held, but she did pull apart the press studs to reveal her breasts.

Marched back completely naked, other than for the insertion, I was paused at the top soil. It must have had honey added, because she rubbed some over my breasts and around my crotch and bottom, and it made me dirty.

Then she pushed me to the prism-shaped 'horse' and I had to struggle to climb up on to it. Connie Wilson's shove on my backside nearly sent me over it. I had to sit on this and view the A frames contraption. The blunt and polished metal edge pushed into my literally soiled crotch, and now the velcro wrist restraints went on again but at the front. It meant that my close together hands and crotch were all I had to stop me falling off, and the focussed narrow pressure came upwards.

Connie Wilson went behind me into the room behind the narrow wall, with a

window but its blind down.

My feet could not get a purchase on this 'horse' and thus my crotch hurt more and more. My close together hands hurt as I pressed them down to relieve my crotch. I feared losing balance and falling off and the honey with soil was an extra small irritation. When Connie Wilson came out with a trolley on wheels, I gasped. On the trolley were whips and canes as had been described back at the BDC.

Then she went back in the room, and was gone for some minutes. Next time she came out with a second trolley, and on this were vibrators of various kinds, short needles in clear packets and what looked like skewers in clear packets. I felt sick while still trying to steady myself.

Connie Wilson seemed to be arranging things on these trolleys when Jim Wilson in ordinary clothing and clerical collar came in front of me. He offered me a glass of water, which I could grasp and drink from but it meant me balancing by crotch only on this triangular horse. Given my dry throat I drank it all.

After drinking it I realised I felt a little drowsy but Connie and Jim told me to get off. In my attempt I fell in a heap to the carpet. Getting myself up, my walking was awkward, and only then did the Wilsons grip my arms. I walked on to these clear and black sheets and arrived alongside the A frames contraption. They turned me to face the narrow wall room with its door and window and the double doors to the right, to get my left leg over this low plank edge.

My right leg was stretched out straight and at an angle to have my ankle wrapped in a soft padded cuff with velcro fastening connected to a chain from large metal ring around the pole. My left leg went out straight for the same restraint and connection at the other lower pole. Thus my legs were wide apart. Connie Wilson then raised my wrists to connect with a chain contraption from above. My arms were bent but she then operated these chains so that my arms stretched straight and my heels left the ground. All Jim Wilson did was watch. Then she turned the handle so that the plank rose and pressed into my crotch.

Still drowsy, I wondered at what point Ken Osis had submitted: I recalled then that he did so when faced with instruments. Keith had said they had never actually punished anyone. I had wondered if all this and the displaying was to frighten me.

"I submit," I said, speculatively. I had to: I was hurting.

Jim Wilson nodded, so Connie came forward and punched me hard in the stomach, as she had at the BDC.

"I told you, 'yes' or 'no' are your only words as answers. Stop being insolent."

I started coughing, hanging on those chains and the plank was pressing upwards as I could not get my feet flat to the ground.

Jim Wilson pointed at my crotch area as pressed on to the plank, and Connie looked at him. So she asked, "Have you shaved that?"

"No."

"Have you waxed it?"

"No."

"You're obviously not pre-pubescent. Actually, I can't see any body hair." She was looking all around me very closely. Going behind me, I felt her hands push apart my buttocks. "There's nothing around your anus, either. You *must* shave under your arms."

"No."

"You've got a lot of hair on your head." She pulled my damp hair, from her

lower height. "Are you some kind of freak?"

"Yes."

"We might be getting somewhere."

She and Jim then walked away to that room, and I saw a cooker when the door opened. It was a small kitchen. He was last in and they shut the door, leaving me stretched and pressed. My leg muscles were tensing more. Words I could hear included Jim Wilson saying, "an opportunity," and "now is our chance." After some minutes they both came back, Jim now with a black preaching gown on.

These two came out and walked up to me. The busty, leather clad woman pushed her finger along the plank top and up into my vagina. "I can't understand it, Jim," she said. "Hey you, how come an alley cat like you is as tight as this?" Then she pushed with two fingers and it was quite unpleasant. She said, "Blimey, it doesn't go very far. Do you get decent fucks?"

"Yes."

"You do, do you? Hmm. Time for a device." She sniffed through her nostrils. Then she said, "Your young friend fancies himself as a bit of a magician."

"Who? Peter Marshall?" I asked.

She walked over to me and punched me in the stomach again, and with even greater force this time. She knew how to punch.

"Twist her nipples." said Jim Wilson.

"She is weird. There's hardly anything of them to get hold of."

For the first time, Connie Wilson picked up one of the instruments, like a microphone. Jim asked her, "Did you get that from the sex shop?"

"Yeah. While Honey and Strawberry were bathing her, I bought these vibrating things from our Titansea sex shop. Reverend Jupitas, these are all brand new and for you. This here is called a magic wand. Let's try it ourselves." So it was placed on the plank edge and on to my crotch, vibrating on the wood and over my flesh. "Perhaps your Peter Marshall could use it to make you disappear in a puff of orgasm. That's hellish big clit for a response wouldn't you say Jim?"

"Heavenly."

"We should be able to do something with that." She was already. "You are quite smooth skinned except for that exhausted arse spot. How old are you?"

I was silent, in fear of being punched again.

"Oh, quite. Well, are you forty yet?"

"Yes."

Placing the vibrator down, she picked up this multi-strand whip or cat o'nine tails.

I had to say, "Please don't. My skin mustn't break. I get easy infections. When I sat on my hairbrush it became infected. That's the old spot you can see."

She made the action of punching me again, but stopped short. She went behind me, and pushed me forward along the poles, rubbing along the plank edge. Its friction almost burnt. She did it in order to swing the cat o'nine tails more freely and it cracked across my back, stinging me.

"A few more for speaking out of turn, yet again," she said.

Ken Osis might have capitulated before anything happened but this option clearly wasn't for me. I was in real fear, because those needles and skewers were not for show after all.

Preparation Begins

"I think we should begin properly," said Jim Wilson. "Now then, the Reverend Mrs. Jupitas, I am going to prepare you for the bishop and his initiation of you, by removing your sins. This is very serious biblical work."

"I submit. I tell you I submit!" This was shouted through my drowsiness.

He said, "Connie. Two cane strikes on each breast. If she carries on like this, we will just have to do so much more to remove her sins."

Connie Wilson now pushed me backwards, my crotch burning again on the wood. She chose a thin, bendy cane, and from my right side cracked two painful blows on my right breast and then walked around to crack two more on my left breast. The sting was incredible each time and I suppressed my cry out for fear of more.

She then said, "I don't know why I am being so compassionate towards you." She then twisted my left nipple again. "They just don't look very developed to me, and on big tits as well."

Jim Wilson asked me, "Are you going to submit to the bishop?"

"Yes," I replied. I felt relief. She was going to stop. My arms were stretched, my crotch heated with legs apart, and my toes were losing feeling.

"The problem is we don't believe you," he replied. "We've had such a breakdown in trust. You were told you had to submit before and you refused. You ran away. You cavorted with the Vine woman. You helped her extract Sanjay Bunker from assisting the bishop's efforts in the divine erotic. It is only when the bishop offered you a future that you changed; you realised that your own sheer arrogance had upset your own selfish material wishes. Your case is infinitely worse than that of the late Reverend Osis and we must extract your sins. And we have a reliable model for it."

"No, please don't."

"Connie, love, she doesn't get it."

Connie came close and behind me, and inserted two fingers directly up my rectum. Surprisingly there was no particular pain from this ungreased insertion.

She said, "Hmm. Not sure about that. Anyhow, in these packets are some sterile needles and skewers. We are going to use these on you."

"No, you mustn't."

Jim Wilson said, "We'll just have to press on to stop the insolence. Do a couple early. Small pin in each labia and then the small vibrator upwards to the pins."

I screamed as she put each one in. And then she indeed took a standard vibrator, and slid it up my divide until it met the pins that had pierced me.

"No!"

A few minutes later she took the vibrator back to the trolley and went further back into that kitchen.

Jim Wilson said, "The Reverend Mrs. Jupitas, we've got to remove your sins for good. Can we?"

"Yes..."

Connie returned with papers.

"I have a sermon. Thank you, my darling wife. Let God approve of my words and our actions.

"O Lord above, the soldier's spear opened the side of your Son, our Lord and Saviour, on the cross, and from that gash flowed the mysteries of our redemption. Jesus is our true man-mother who gives us new birth through his body and feeds us with his flesh. His arms out wide invite everyone to embrace him. Before his necessary death, his body was wounded."

I could only think, as he turned into some mad horrific Puritan, that this man was mentally crazy.

"Blood protects you! Exodus 4:24-26 and 12:27 tells us that blood circumcision and the blood of the passover lamb have the power to ward off the destroyer! Animals were sacrificed at the altar to make peace between God and the sinful community. But they needed a correct attitude. Sacrifice is part of prayer, according to Isaiah 56:7, so blood intercedes for you! Genesis 4:10 has Abel's blood crying out to God, and blood is better than words in drawing God's attention, and Hebrews 12:24 tells us: 'But you have come... to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.'

"Blood establishes a covenant! Think of Genesis 15, the covenant with Abraham, Exodus 24:3-11 for the Covenant at Sinai, and then no less than Matthew 26:28, 1 Corinthians 10:16 with 11:25, and Hebrews 9:16-18 for the 'new Covenant'. Yes, these Covenants are set or sealed by the letting of blood.

"Blood makes atonement! Amen.

Have you, the Reverend Linda Jupitas, the right covenant with us for the blood you must shed?" he asked.

"What?" I asked, being half-dazed already.

Connie Wilson pushed me forward on the plank, and then took a heavy cane and struck my back before replacing it. She moved to punch me this time upwards below my right ribs, which so winded me that I started coughing, hanging with greater dead weight on my arms, and my crotch was burning hot. For good effect, she repeated the blow.

"It is a simple question," he said. "Are you willing to spill your blood for your redemption? If not, we will have to beat you until you are willing."

"No," I mumbled out.

"No?"

I was breathing heavily, or trying to. "No."

His wife went to the table and picked up the cat-o'-nine-tails and, pushing me back again along the plank, lashed it across my breasts. Shit that hurt.

"Are you willing to spill your blood for your redemption?" he asked.

I was breathing heavily, with a drowsiness that could not hide massive enveloping pain. "Can't."

She lashed me again.

"I'm trying to say..."

She lashed me again plus another upper cut with her fist.

I was shaking and coughing more. "Yeah."

She put the cat o'nine tails down on the trolley.

Jim Wilson then said, "Make sure blood flows from her."

"As we heard from my lowly husband - who knows his Bible - you are to be

shed of your sins to become acceptable to God. To be acceptable to God, you must shed *blood*."

"No no... I get infected. My skin is clear, very clear."

Jim Wilson said, "Don't punch her. We *will* get her sin out."

So Connie Wilson didn't. "Jim, I am so puzzled. She must have had spots as a teenager at least. That one on her arse is recent, and it is the only one. Reverend Jupitas, did you have spots?"

Breathing heavily, coughing again, I failed to answer.

Louder she barked at me, "Have you ever had any spots? Jim, look, I am going to hit her so hard she will probably pass out."

I was able to manage: "No."

"Hang on." (What else was I doing?) She walked off and went through the double doors. Coming back from my bag near my clothes, I realised, she had my hairbrush in her hand. "You sat on this mangy, spiky, plastic thing for that mark on your bum?"

"Yeah... yes."

"Seems to have lost some of its little balls on top of the spikes."

"Yes."

The bastard scraped it across my chest above my breasts. It really hurt, and left scratches. Oh no, now she ran it down each breast. Struth it hurt so much, especially across my nipples. I was becoming a dead weight to myself.

Oh no. Placing the brush down, she opened the first packet. She said, "Let's get to the business at hand. If you are fortunate, the blood will only run when I remove them. It will run, though, because if it doesn't, I'll make sure it does."

"No, no, please not my areole or nipples. They are under-developed."

Jim Wilson again said, "Don't punch her. Sin is surfacing: it will come out."

Connie Wilson said, "You really are so compassionate, Jim."

My mouth was getting so dry.

"I'll be kind then. This mid-length needle is going in to the side of your nipple."

It was my left breast first, and I clenched my teeth through searing pain as this needle held by its plastic tip was pushed in and poked out, and there was instant blood. Once the needle was in, that pain subsided somewhat against all the rest. Then she took her time to insert another needle in symmetry on that same breast, and I gasped as it went through but drew no blood. And then two more went into and out of my right breast, with no blood, and I was shaking on my toes.

I was cold, and now my shaking had become continuous and vigorous.

She bobbed down with another needle. "No please, I beg you." This next one was destined for my labia again. "It won't take it. No, please."

As she clenched her fist, Jim Wilson shook his head. She looked at him, and unclenched it. She said, "You are so strange. I thought about your inner labia, but there's hardly anything there. I'll be compassionate again. What about through your clit?"

"No no!" I started crying with real flowing tears.

"That is good," said Jim Wilson. "We have a real vale of tears. We're getting there. Go around it to begin."

Shoving a needle hard in and out of just beside my pubes, on the left, I screamed as loud as I ever have, to compare with Keith stabbing my spot in swift surprise. It was left side blood again, and I could see it dripping in large globules. I

was violently riving on my lower left side.

"My gonads, my gonads."

"It is sin," said Jim Wilson, "Look. She is sobbing. She knows."

The next small one went into my clitoris, and I could have hit the ceiling, screaming out.

"Now next up we have these skewers," Connie said. "They're not really. They look worse because they remind people of eating barbecues."

"Short pins first on the rear," said Jim. "The anticipation is breaking her. I think we are getting her now."

Connie opened one packet of pins. I was having difficulty focusing because my eyes were full of tears.

Round the back she said, "This careless spot. Let's jab it in there."

I screamed the loudest and returned to sobbing and shaking on my tip-toes.

"These tears are so good," said Jim. "Ken Osis cried so early we just had to prick his thumb. But this one, she's been such a problem until now. At last, some success, Connie. *But...*"

So the truth was they pricked his thumb and did draw blood. In contrast, I was inside a vortex of hell. I'd no idea how long this would go on. She was now putting pins in around my back and bottom like she did not care. It was like I was entering another condition, and it was so bad I was giving up responding.

She was walking around me, and looking. I was hanging with arms numb, my crotch was on fire, and I had the previous canings and whips still stinging and many points of pushed in pain. But when I saw the skewer held to my face and he nodded, I heard the female sadist say through my uncontrolled sobbing, "I am so compassionate I will thrust it into your right side, near your kidneys."

"Yes," said Jim. "The blood will flow from her side, and she will be God's."

This was such a searing pain I yelled the place out and then just collapsed and hung. My head was heavy to my right side. She had found a little bit of fat - my body is lean - and pushed up, through and out. She waggled it, and in a blur I could see the red liquid running down my leg. She had got my right side to bleed like my left. Blood was running on the plastic sheeting under my feet and the A frames.

The Jim said, "The blood of the sinner flows! Out comes her sin, and now you are going to obey. Answer me. Is obeying now your everlasting response?"

"She's a bit dopey," Connie said.

He repeated: "You are now going to obey. Answer me. Is obeying now your everlasting response?"

After I realised he'd asked me a question, and had asked it twice, I gave a quiet answer: "Yes."

"This is a wonderful time, for now everything is ready. Let us start to raise her orgasmic responses to receive her bishop. Insert those egg shaped devices, dear lovely wife."

Narrator: Adam *A Location Announced* (Monday 16th September)

We were all back at the curate's house, sat around, and I said, "Look, we're not solving anything sitting here silently. We need ideas."

Peter said, "Perhaps they've taken her to Wytham, Adam."

"Or Eslaforde, or Wulfstan, or Gravelby, or anywhere for that matter. On that basis, where do we start?" I asked.

"We start with patterns," Peter said.

Kathryn said, "Two vehicles."

"Yes, a decoy each time," Peter responded.

I remarked, "One cab turned left, away from the bypass. One went to it. And that's all we know. What else do we have?"

Peter again: "I saw those two leaving above the casino, but no other movements. If she'd have gone there, I'd have seen something."

"Which two?" I asked him.

So we looked at the photos he took in his camera, and tried to come up with names. Diana suggested Stephen and Helen McPhail.

I said, "Right. Stephen McPhail was Linda's mentor. Let's look them up."

We did Internet searches, and found them. Exhibitionists.

Diana said, "But he stopped being her mentor."

I said, "Consider that Osis had been frightened into submission by hanging him on an A frames contraption, and Stephen McPhail made these devices.

"Ingle Barrow. Perhaps Linda is down at Ingle Barrow."

"Then why were they at the casino building?" Peter asked.

"Collecting supplies, for all I know," I said.

"Or delivering supplies," Peter responded, "before I arrived."

Kathleen decided that Kathryn would drive her and Winnie to the McPhails. I said that no one was there when I had looked. No, I hadn't been to the beach, I answered them, as I had seen no advantage in doing so. They still decided to go, on the basis of doing something, and they might take in Caffenmere, and anywhere else they could consider.

Twenty five minutes on a call came from Winnie. "Helen and Stephen McPhail are sunbathing nude on the beach outside their flood defence steps. I've just walked past them and said, 'Hello, it's a nice day for it,' with a smile." I'm still walking north.

Peter said, "So they are not involved now. But they had been there, perhaps preparing something."

"Was it a distraction?" I asked. "You know about distractions. But don't let me think like a magician. I want you to think like a magician!"

"Lying on the beach nude could be a distraction," he said. "As in, 'There's nothing unusual about today,' when there is heavy stuff going on. Plus they may know Winnie."

There was a ring on the doorbell. It was Jenny.

"What are you doing here?" I asked her.

"Trying to do something about Linda. They are probably hurting her now."

"We know that. Where?"

"I contacted Stephen McPhail but he wouldn't tell me anything except they would lie in the sun. I told him they must not hurt her."

"Winnie says they are on the beach."

Jenny said, "They would be in the garden. They're on the beach so that they are seen."

"Interesting," said Peter. "They assume we are looking."

"Anything else, Jenny?" I asked.

"Terry is not answering, and nor are the Wilsons. Liz Huett again promised me they won't hurt her. I said they are furious with her and will. Jonathan Eyre told me that Linda has been very resistant, so I pressed him where they'd taken her but he said it is all need to know stuff. I told him not to hurt her."

"Is *he* involved?" I asked her.

"Not unless it involves sex. He's in Worthing."

"It *does* involve sex. It's possible they are taking her right out of the area."

"Nah," she said.

"Okay, then, in your opinion, where is she most likely to be?" I asked Jenny.

"Above the casino."

Peter said, "No one else went through the near steel door and not when Linda was being moved."

"There is the fire escape, dummy."

"What?" asked Peter.

"It's at the back street. It's daft when you go in there because there is the dead end passage for those hefty steel doors, but at the other side of the building there is the metal staircase to the crap fire escape door. It is a simple lock and stays open when people are inside."

Peter said, "That taxi could have gone over the preserved railway sidings."

That was it. Diana went in her car, Peter, Jenny and me in mine. Kathryn and Kathleen with Winnie were to make their own way to above the casino.

Narrator: Linda *Preparation for the Bishop*

Getting the small vibrating eggs past the needles caused more agony, but I was in such pain more hardly mattered. My tears were continuous.

Connie Wilson said, "I just don't get this. I should get twice or three times of these things in there. Huh. I've got a pack of six and I've inserted two only."

"Use the magic wand," he said. "Her clitoris makes up for it. Go for that."

"I think we need something from the kitchen."

I shuddered, like what was in the kitchen? She came back with a blindfold, that went around my head and was connected at the back. Now I could not see and my eyes started stinging.

These two eggs suspended inside me weren't going to stop. The magic wand joined them, and the combination was intense. I was half dead, aching, numb, with hot pain spots. I was more likely to completely pass out than come to orgasm.

She pulled out the vibrating eggs without any care, "I'm not letting you come to satisfaction."

Satisfaction? *Satisfaction?*

"Hmm, dribbly runny blood. I like it," she said. "There is a lovely long run of blood from your breast right down your front and, hey, it's joined another."

He said, "It's not a question of liking but purpose."

What she was doing was removing the needles, one by one, and ended with the pain of evacuating the skewer and its damaging consequences.

Then I felt the plank released from my crotch area, and suddenly her hand was slapping me on my crotch with short blows. The intensity of pain from removed

needles was made ten times worse from her short slaps. Then there was a pause, and I felt the whack of her hand across my backside.

After another pause of unknowing, I experienced that leather multi-strand whip again right across my back and arse. There was a further pause, and then it was sprayed across my front, and several times across my breasts. I'd no idea where or when this was coming next.

I could hear but not see both trolleys going along with two sets of feet walking. I could hear the kitchen door opening. I'd lost all energy, and now, bizarrely, there was no plank for support. I was literally hanging from my wrists. It was a welcome pause; perhaps she had stopped. I could hear inaudible chat and items placed on far away surfaces.

Then I heard a trolley coming again with only two feet walking. I expected something very violent while blindfolded. Instead, she stretched to take the blindfold off.

"Ugh! It is soaking wet, cry baby."

So Connie Wilson splashed my face with water from a glass and placed it back on the trolley among possible (out of focus) hair dressing items. My crying had stopped anyway, as if I'd ran out of water. As my eyes regained some focus, I could see my brush along with scissors, thinning scissors and a battery hair trimmer on the trolley next to the glass. My left side had blood all over it to the plastic sheets and bin bags covered floor below and the right side had one long run of blood from the side.

She said, "I am going to cut your hair. It's too long. It needs to be a new length, a length that represents your submission. You will look different. I think it needs to be thinner too."

"Please! This is my hair. I never have it short."

This time she did punch me, in my guts, with no husband present to restrain her. Then she tried a new one: an elbow in my back.

"Shut up. The bishop needs to see a new you. It will show him your neck, all round. He might want to love bite you, to make you his. You will not be a long-haired Reverend Linda Jupitas for anybody, but a short-haired Reverend Linda Jupitas for him. Hmm. The hair cut will be our final preparation for him."

So she altered the chains and my feet went flat. Except I was now leaning over to my left side in a curve because my legs could not hold me up any more. My arms ached all the more.

"Jim! Come! This will be quite a simple haircut. Nothing elaborate at all."

Jim Wilson came back from the kitchen, with the preaching gown gone. First he rearranged some plastic sheeting to the foot of this nearby bed. Both of them then freed me from the A frames contraption below and above, and they held me up. I was a dead weight.

"What a lump," said Connie.

I was moved under my arms to the nearest bed end, where I was turned around and placed to sit upon the plastic sheeting at its foot. My head fell forward, my body went forward, and I was going to fall on to the ground. So Jim Wilson pushed me up from the front and gripped my head with two hands.

Connie Wilson picked up two pairs of scissors and my hairbrush. She ran the brush through my hair, and cut around as if she had an invisible bowl, Jim Wilson adjusting his grip accordingly. She took to the hair trimmer. Then came the thinning scissors; they have an edge that sort of drags at the hair and takes only some of it at

a time. Its tugging made me hurt more elsewhere. She took hold of my hairbrush again, and scraped it through what was left of my hair. There was now much more hair on the floor than on my head.

"Perhaps she'll clean up her own mess afterwards, Jim. The Reverend Jupitas: have you been a sinful dirty bastard?"

I breathed first, in and out, and then said, "Yes."

Connie said, "There's no actual blood on her back and the sheets can be washed."

So they heaved me up and my arse touched the end of the bed

"Lie back, feet on the floor more apart: get those legs open and wait."

Off they went to the kitchen. This time they left the door open.

I heard Jim Wilson say, "You should have her in the presence of her blood."

Connie came back with a bowl of some water and a cloth and she cleaned my feet. She did not clean any marks or blood deposits. She returned to the kitchen with the bowl and cloth on the trolley.

This time Jim Wilson only approached me. He asked, "As a woman, shed of your sins, and compliant, do you agree to Bishop Terry inseminating you? You can say 'no', but if you don't agree, then our session is ended and you can make your own way home, and you can count your time in the clergy well and truly over. And don't forget, we have evidence on you. We know what you did with that poor man Ken Osis - and with so many others."

"Yes. Yes."

"Have you taken any birth control?"

"No."

"I shall pray for you. O God we recall Genesis 29 where Leah lends Jacob her servant Zilpah for childbearing. In Genesis 30, Leah's sister Rachel says to Jacob: 'Here's my maid Bilhah. Go and have sex with her. She can bear children on my knees so I can have children through her.' She subsequently had Dan and Naphtali. Lord, if this fertile child of yours here present bears the bishop a child, let the child grow in wisdom under her care and with his support. Amen."

I was in a complete madhouse. I could not move despite being unrestrained.

Now he said to me, "The Reverend Jupitas. You should ready yourself in a prayerful state. First the bishop is going to enter you. Once his sperm is in you, you will get off that bed and lie prostrate on your front on the floor. Will you then give him your life-long fealty and obey all the Vanguard bishops?"

After some breathing I said, "Yes."

"I will go and tell him that you are ready. Contemplate what a beautiful moment you will experience. You are now ready for your resurrection, from absorbing his seed into your womb and giving your commitment. When he stands between your legs, he will say a prayer and he will enter you. Are you joyful?"

"Yes."

"It will be the beginning of the rest of your life. A touch of the Kingdom of Heaven will come into you. God be praised."

He returned to the kitchen and closed the door behind him.

I started shaking. As much as I could, I decided to convince myself that what was coming ought to happen, and all would be well thereafter. My shaking did reduce.

Narrator: Adam *Friends* (Monday 16th September)

Diana's car and mine arrived slowly at the back of the casino building, having driven mine to the dock and seen the Wilsons' white Astra and the 2006 Lexus LS430 owned by the bishop. Kathryn, Kathleen and Winnie were around at the front.

Diana rang through to Kathryn that we were in position. Peter, Diana, Jenny and I went slowly up the steps in that order, to make as little noise as possible. No one was to tackle anyone physically. Kathryn and Peter each had a camera.

The plan was for Peter to photograph the evidence, Diana to attend to Linda, Jenny to try to confront the Wilsons, and me to run through and down to the steel door below and get them open for the others.

So, pushing the fire door open, in we went, but when we saw Linda lying there naked and blooded we were simply diverted by the truly appalling sight. Her hair was horribly chopped. It was an horrific scene of blood over her body, what looked like spots of soil, large clumps of hair on the ground. Peter was the only one staying to task: he did photograph her. As we froze, three burst out of this far door - a kitchen behind - and ran to and out of the fire exit, and I said to Jenny to go after them, but she was still frozen in horror, so Peter gave me the camera as he went in pursuit.

Diana was weeping her own tears bending over Linda. "What have they done to you? What have they done to you?"

Jenny went past two largely wooden and metal contraptions for the double doors to the right of the narrow wall with that kitchen window and door to the left. I forgot my role to obtain a glass of water from the kitchen.

"You bastards," Linda mouthed and whispered. "You have ruined... everything."

Diana looked at me, tears falling. Linda took all of the water in gulps.

Linda added, "One more step and done. Inseminated; initiated."

Jenny was back, alone: "I need keys. I'll try that kitchen." She took the glass back.

Peter came back in through the fire exit. "They went in three directions. I've never seen people clatter down such steps and run so fast, including the fat woman". He retrieved the camera and took another picture of Linda.

Jenny said, "Got them," and went back down those stairs.

Linda spoke further, very quietly, "Why interfere?"

Diana said, "Stop talking shit."

"Terrible person, taking my punishment."

Diana advised, "Let's get you up."

"The Bishop: let him complete his holy task."

Peter then took photographs around the A frames contraption and then looked at this triangular 'horse' with its metal edge at the top.

I heard clunking footsteps: Jenny returned through the double doors followed by Kathleen, Winnie and Kathryn. Jenny said, "I knew it. Wait 'til I speak to Liz Huett."

"Linda," I said. "My report is off to the media tonight. You'll be all right, trust me." I realised that this was hardly appropriate at this juncture.

Diana looked at me with incredulity.

"You bastard," Linda whispered. "I want the bishop."
Diana said, "He has fled. All three of them have gone."
"You bastards."

Peter now looked at a box. "Top soil with honey in it. How odd." He photographed that.

Diana asked for someone to go out the front, to see who if anyone was around. Winnie went out but turned left (and right) and returned with a bag, shoes and a black cassock with collar, which she laid on and near the triangular contraption. Then she went out again.

Peter went into the kitchen to look in there. Diana and I now started to slowly get Linda to sit up. Slowly, we made an effort to get her on her feet. Linda screamed and stayed put and sat. She started crying.

Jenny and Kathleen came to her, while Kathryn joined Peter in more photography.

Finally Linda stood up, helped specifically by Diana and Kathleen. Jenny removed a plastic butt plug from Linda's bottom, and the cassock only was dropped over her. I made myself useful getting the double doors to stay open. We brought up the stair lift and Linda sat in its chair. Kathryn and I went in front as it descended. Diana (with camera) was alongside and Kathleen behind as we all descended these steps.

Part way down Linda urinated, so we all just let it happen. Diana and Kathleen gripped her to get her to stand at the bottom.

Jenny and Winnie checked the showers and toilets and then zig-zagged back to descend the stairs like everyone. Peter, still with his camera, picked up her shoes, bag and hairbrush and also descended.

Moving past some very puzzled punters heading for the casino on the ground floor, we managed to get Linda into Kathryn's car back seat. (Actually, it was one of her uncle's cars.) Peter joined them too in the front passenger seat. Winnie stayed out with Jenny, Diana and me.

Before the car set off Linda said, quietly, "I'm sorry." She had defecated a small amount on to the back seat if inside her cassock. "I can't help it."

"Not to worry," said Kathryn from the driver's seat.

Kathleen alongside Linda then said, "We must contact the police over this."

Linda managed to say, slowly, "I gave consent."

Diana said, looking in from outside, "She's in shock, Kathleen. She is shaking. Try and make her warm; put your arm around her."

They set off. The rest of us returned to the side passage with the steel doors for above the casino and the casino, but because of the blocked end we had to go back in, lock the steel door from the inside, ascend the stairs, go through the fire escape and descend the metal steps to get to the street level again. Jenny and I in my car, and Diana with Winnie in Diana's car, drove off to Sutton.

At the house, Peter, Kathleen and Kathryn did not know what to do, because Linda was shaking in the car and wouldn't move.

Neighbours were looking but we didn't care. Mainly Diana and I got her out, and indoors, and into her front room, sat on her soiled cassock. I had to leave, because I had a preparatory appointment with the media. I left an instruction that was very obvious: no one was ever to leave Linda alone.

When I got back there late, I heard about a neighbour calling round asking if

the reverend was all right. Kathleen had told her she'd had an accident, and all was in hand. Evidently Diana had managed to persuade Linda upstairs, and was giving Linda a bed bath. Kathleen and Winnie were ready to remove the bedsheets made instantly grubby and add new ones. Linda had the equivalent of a potty to wee in.

It was heartbreaking because her naked body looked an utter mess, including her hair. I said to Diana that we had failed her. "We messed up because no one had ever gone to the other side of the casino building."

Diana said, "Why would we? I work in the casino; I've lived here pretty much all my life and I have never gone to the other side of that building."

Linda managed to say, "The Reverend Wilson gave me a sermon. Blood flowed to remove my sins. I was going to submit, and now I haven't. I'm finished now. Thank you all."

Diana said, "I'm going to sleep alongside her again, Adam. I'll be here for as long as it takes to see her well. You make sure you handle the media, Adam, and destroy them all. You destroy the lot of them."

"Oh, we're ready to run. Barman had dropped his opposition to the diocesan report. And the money we'll make: Linda will have her own church. I promise her that now. Ann is determined. And we will have an investigations workplace and people here will have places to live."

As I left the house, Jenny approached the front door, staggering around in the street. She was already drunk. So I helped her in, and placed her in the larger lounge, nearer the downstairs toilet. Peter emerged from the kitchen, with Kathryn, and attended to Jenny.

Jenny said, "It was my full. Thedde. El. I could ha' tol' you. I was ringing, ringing around, yeah, thinging they'd listen. Listen to me. Them. But they... didn't. Listen to me."

"It's not your fault," I told her, and then said to Peter, "Should mention that I might need you at the office day and night. Diana, Kathleen, Winnie: they'll look after Linda. Jenny can see to herself. Long long hours very soon, I'm afraid."

"Okay boss."

I went off to my office and accommodation alone and was ready to use the media and build a church.

Narrator: Linda *Medical Check* (Tuesday 17th September)

I'd pulled my knees to my breasts. A crab crawled out of my vagina and sealed it like it shut the door. Then came the Bishop of Bolingbroke with a penis that reached the ceiling and hung over my face. The head turned into Diana's face.

"Kathleen and Winnie have brought you a spicy soup, dozy."

I didn't want it. Aching and hurting, I started crying again as I had before sleeping.

I told Diana, "You've taken away what I wanted to do. All I wanted was to submit, move to Inglemire, just live a life."

"No," replied Diana. "These are horrible, horrible people."

Christine Vine arrived. Diana barked at her: "What do you want? You're half the problem."

"I've brought with me a nurse-practioner. This is a Senior Nurse, Sister Mabel. I use her private work for bondage and sado-masochistic injuries up here. Seriously, she can get rid of marks you think might become permanent."

"We know one another," said Sister Mabel Thorp.

"Try and sit up, Linda; you never know," Diana said, from within the same duvet. "Clear off, Christine." We both had nothing on, but it didn't matter, and Christine left the room.

Nurse Mabel removed the duvet cover exposing us both. She inspected me all over, used some creams to gently rub in, and had some tablets. "They weren't being very responsible," she said, expecting perhaps some sort of game had taken place. "There are criminal happenings here."

"I consented," I told the nurse-practitioner.

"To be clear, were the needles causing all these marks sterilised?"

"They came out of packets. They had plastic ends: the woman disciplining me held those ends. The skewer thing was different."

"Christine isn't as stupid as this."

"I didn't do it."

"Let me look at your vulva and vagina. Push forward a bit. I'll try to avoid any speculum" She pushed the labia aside.

"This bishop, Terence Barman, has an enormous penis."

"Have you seen it, nurse?"

"I shouldn't say but yes."

"I did, early on."

"Did he try and shove it into your small space?"

"They came in before he did. All I wanted was his sperm."

"What for?"

"To join his group."

"Hmm. Let me see your back. Turn around as you can." More cream went in. "Now raise up: let me see your bottom."

"They put in a butt-plug."

Still more cream went in. The nurse-practitioner made out a prescription for drugs. "I want two people responsible for seeing creams go on regularly and drugs are taken."

Diana said, "Kathleen and me."

"Full names!"

"Diana de Groot and Kathleen Wickenby."

"You are in bed with her: are you her partner?"

"No, I am her friend. We're naturists, if you are wondering. She had very limited mobility, though I suspect it is coming back quickly."

The nurse had her advice. "That's nothing but being in bed do some exercises, less stringent at first and more later. These are creams that heal from within outwards rather than from the surface first. You have smooth skin but it will never return to its former condition. There will be evidence of what has happened, unfortunately, even if slight. I can provide description if you need to go to the police. I will take photographs with your consent and need to write a description on my tablet here."

"For the police?" I asked.

"No, for medical reference. How you will heal. So we can monitor progress."

"This would not be NHS but private?" I asked.

"The NHS will receive all the details." Then the nurse-practitioner asked, "What is your mental state?"

"How do I know?"

Diana said, "Things have not gone well lately and this has been the worst. I'm here with her as much for her mental state as her physical ailment. She's a bit Stockholmish."

I said, "I don't need you for that. I do not show Stockholm Syndrome. I told you, I consented! I knew what was coming. Well, I sort of knew what was coming."

"No you didn't," said Diana.

Diana shook her head as Christine came back into the room, and presumably had been listening. Christine said, "I think Connie and Jim Wilson saw their chance to do something they've always wanted to do. They probably wanted to turn over Ken Osis, but they didn't get their chance. Did she punch you a lot?"

"In the stomach, mainly. Once in the kidneys."

The nurse-practitioner said, "Well thank you for telling me that. I'm going to perform a basic examination with my hands. It may be sensitive."

"It is," I said as she began.

"I don't get a sense of damage. If you start spitting blood or your water gets discoloured, you need to act quickly. How is your wee?"

"Same colour as it ever was."

Diana said, "I didn't notice anything."

"Defecating all right?"

Diana again answered for me. "Loss of control with shock, loose later, seems okay. She was forced to have enemas. She has problems in that department anyway."

"Have you been sick?"

"She has," Diana again said.

"Soups and simple meals, then. Go slowly at first, then try to recover. Who is Kathleen Wickenby?"

She was called in to the room, and Diana and Kathleen were told to rub in these various creams three times a day - some for some injuries and others for others, to make sure my drugs were taken, and to go and get more from the chemist.

Christine then said she would arrange for a hair-stylist to call, again at her expense. Christine then left with the nurse-practitioner.

Later I did try Kathleen's offer of soup and she offered some bread. The last time I had bread a certain Ken Osis was seen opposite me. I decided not to tell anyone.

Diana said, "Did I tell the nurse right about the enemas?"

"I told you all the sequence. It wasn't random violence. They were early on at the Blue Diamond Club. Above the casino was a sermon on the righteousness of blood-letting. I recall Jim said everything and Connie did everything. Very Protestant, evangelical."

Diana said, "More like black magic to me."

"No," I said, "It was full of Bible quotations. He also said a prayer in case I ended up having a child."

"Oh lovely."

"They didn't know I can't."

"Neither did I for a long time. What do they call it again?"

"Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome."

"Ah yeah. They didn't know. Does Christine know?"

"Christine was suspicious after I went to the gynaecologist with her. But she doesn't. The nurse should keep quiet."

"She didn't about Barman's prick."

The conversation stopped when Winnie came in. "The Serninsea Vestal Virgins are gathering tonight with special prayers for you."

My stomach felt like wrenching - not from that news, in particular.

"Get me a bucket."

Winnie went, and returned with one. "So Kathleen and I are going out."

I threw up into the bucket. "If you must. Don't spread it in public!"

"We wouldn't do that," Winnie replied.

Kathleen came in and took the bucket to wash it, bringing it back in, and soon after I heard the front door go.

"I must sleep. I realise that Adam was never going to hold back his report. He is a good bloke really. Did he say I would have my own church?"

"Yes he did. Adam and Peter feel guilty that they didn't get to you earlier. Peter feels especially guilty because he failed to examine the whole situation: a magician makes you look the other way and not see what actually is the case, but crucially he didn't see. He assumed the steel door was such that it was the only entrance."

Before I could drift off to sleep, Jenny came in.

"What do *you* want?" I asked, my head on the pillow and Diana stroking my hair - what was left of it.

"Elizabeth Huett is very annoyed at what happened. She says you were mistreated, and she was misinformed. I rang her when she was talking to Sheila Patterson, otherwise known as Anong. Anong contacted Carrie Chopin and that group is thinking about you tonight."

"That's how they know." I said.

Jenny said, "A lot of intelligence runs through the Holy Order of Sophia with Miriam Magdala and they are committed to spread details along confined routes. Elizabeth got me to tell her all what happened: first at the BDC and above the casino as according to your story. I don't think the Confraternity will stay together if the 'need to know' has excluded her."

Diana said, "She is complicit. I've never asked you about Linda being intersex - male genes."

"I've never discussed it with anyone, even when I hated her. And it's not something to reveal to the prejudicial National Church."

Jenny departed and at this point I drifted off to sleep.

Confined to Bed (Wednesday 18th September)

Later Wednesday I had a visitor from Wytham: the Reverend Charley Darley. He was brought to my room by Kathleen, and met me with Diana, both of us in bed.

Diana seemed embarrassed, pulling the duvet up. I said, "She's a friend."

She's looking after me and telling me what to do. We're naturists."

He said, "Fine. It's all about identities these days, isn't it? Don't worry about your appearances. I have mine removed on Monday."

"What?" asked Diana.

"My breasts. I've flattened them by wrapping. I'll have the operation and be fitted with a binder in theatre after my surgery. It's padded with cotton wool to help keep the suture lines flat and are supported post-surgery. Keeps the scars flat and not raised."

"Perhaps I could benefit from that," I mumbled.

"Six weeks I'll have to wear that binder followed by a micropore tape for three months. I'll have a physiotherapist to regain the full range of movement. There might be liposuction around the armpits for a flatter appearance still."

"Crumbs," Diana said first. "So you are a minister at Wytham?"

"I met Linda recently. I didn't then want to mention my operation. You felt tense."

Diana said, "Linda had a nasty run-in on Monday."

I said, "I'd been effectively suspended, like I said on Sunday. My training vicar had disowned me. On Monday they *physically* suspended me: this group used violence on me to force me to submit."

"I've heard of conforming to creeds," Charley said, "but not quite like that."

"It's not funny," said Diana.

"I apologise profusely," said Charley.

I asked, "Are you going to lose your vagina, Charley?"

"Yes, goodbye to all that - eventually. The brass and wood will no longer feature. Alan will have to adapt. It is difficult for him."

"Mine is so shallow, Charley. Like I told you." Now Diana was staring at me, rather fiercely. "I can tell him," I said to her.

Charley said, "Ah. Diana, you have to realise that friends are often the last people to find out."

"Well," said Diana, "when your sister told us of being accused of being a bloke, some of us had to do some mental adjusting."

"I am not a bloke, Diana, as I told Adam at the time."

"I didn't say you are a bloke."

Charley said, "Phenotype is very important. This is what I am changing."

"I am genetically male, with a female phenotype, identify as a woman, and I am bisexual."

"But you've never had a period because you would have been a bloke."

"It's not that. Diana!"

"You walk around in a naturist club. By doing that, you're saying, 'Look at me I'm female!'"

"I walk around naked because I was brought up that way, and I do affirm my body. As do you. Why is this so difficult for you?"

Charley said, "If I might say. Linda has grown up accepting the make-up of her identity, but it is still an unusual thing for someone else to learn - someone so friendly who did not know."

I said, "There was no reason for Diana to know until recently."

"And is shitting a lot part of this?"

"No, Diana, that is thanks to Keith making a different way in."

"Oh dear," said Charley. "I think I am learning too much. Perhaps I'd better go."

"Stay please Charley," I said. "Too many people have given up on me."

"I wasn't giving up on you; you two still have matters to discuss."

"You didn't answer my questions, fully," I said to him. "So *don't* go. All you really did was ask back why Unitarians have to be the same. Just saying."

"Ah, in Wytham. To make amends: the Hungarians and Transylvanians are down to one bishop only, and there is indeed that charismatic bishop in the United States and a Zen one. The Zen one has a history of being in the Independent Sacramental Movement and Sufism."

"That's new information," I said.

"I don't know if you've ever seen our Americans worship," Charley added. "It is more charismatic, often. Americans sing about justice and peace; it's a sort of left-wingism religion, at least for them in their context. The country is so far to the right it sees itself as a kind of middle class protest movement. I *must* be going. I'd like to call in on Georgie Smith before.... I can visit again but not for a while after my operation. If you can't do an emergency stop, like you can't after breasts removal, you can't drive. I'll be relying on others."

I said, "You'll always be welcome. See you Charley."

"So *are* you only suspended or, after such brutality, is it all over?"

"It's all over," I said. "I can't see how I can get back now."

"And the police?"

"I don't want the police involved."

"Then come and preach some time. You would help us. We have some gaps in the coming weeks, obviously. Let me or the Secretary know. Bye!"

First he shook Diana's hand, and by leaning forward Diana revealed her breasts. Then he shook my hand, but my breasts stayed covered enough.

Diana said, "You lot are weird, but interesting."

"Always interesting," he said.

"I meant her and you," she clarified. "Sexual minorities."

"Double tick," he said.

He left us.

I said, "You might want to go back to Aardse. He'll be worried if he thinks you're sleeping with a bloke."

Diana kissed my cheek. "Just to reassure - I do not think you are a bloke."

"I thought you only kissed blokes. Go in my drawer there and get the torch. I'll try and pull myself open."

Holding a torch, and me trying to open myself open with the pain it generated, Diana looked quite intently.

"That's where you pee and - yes, there is nothing. Oh, poor Linda. Linda!"

"Give it a break, Diana."

"What about Charley?"

"What about him?"

"His vagina?"

"He has a womb. I don't."

Kathleen put her head around the door. "Fancy something to eat you two? It's your next creams time, Linda."

So Diana said she would do it, and she did so, going around my breasts,

front, side, my back, bottom and finally my vulva. She said, "We are getting like John and Yoko."

"A love-in, a peace-in?"

"Yeah, it's nice," she said. "I like being in bed with you. Pity about the circumstances."

"I'm not stopping you coming to my bed at other times."

Kathleen returned with stew for two. Asked what was in it, she said aubergine, okra, squash, potatoes, beef and cornmeal dumplings.

"Winnie was a good find," I responded, before Kathleen left us.

When done, my friend with a lovely arse and breasts took our used food items downstairs. She returned with a drink. Then her husband Aardse visited, causing Diana to get out of bed and give him a hug. Yes, he could look at my injuries.

"I'm horrified," he said. "You've had a really bad time. Has Diana been helping?"

"Definitely."

"Aardse," she said, "her bruises are going down but there are mental issues with this sort of thing. I need to stay with her longer, and perhaps take her out when she is ready, and then I'll come home. Are you and the kids coping?"

"Yes, we're all right. They know you are here. How is Adam, Linda?"

"He's all right; he's very busy."

Diana got back into bed and Aardse sat on it to mention some difficulties at work at the college, to keep her informed. Then he said, "You've not been in bed, continuously, for such a long time since our honeymoon. Our honeymoon wasn't anywhere significant, Linda, and we were in bed having a love-in."

She said, "We can do it again, Aardse. One weekend we can stay in bed for two days."

Much later, with Aardse back at home, I was lying in bed on my better left side and I was looking at Diana very close to her face. Then Diana pulled me close with her enveloping arm, and kissed me. Now her hand was on my back, and went down to my bottom, and she pulled me closer.

"Be careful. It's sensitive. No - leave your hand there. It's nice."

She looked dewy-eyed at me, and gave me a kiss, and stared at me. I thought, Okay, so this isn't sex, this is just my naturist friend being very close. I put my arm around her waist, under the duvet of course.

"Good evening," said Christine, upsetting our closeness when Diana seemed to have drifted off. "This is Erika Küng, from *Herr Dezzine*, who does a lot of my women's hair. She's comfortable with your nudity and does more than just the hair on your head..."

I said, "Diana. Wake up. A woman has come to do my hair."

So here was an odd situation. With Christine gone downstairs before Diana saw her, I put my arse on to a seat while Diana stayed in bed. Erika Küng identified the useful electric point. "Do you mind if I wash your hair first. You have a bath?"

"You and me bathe her," said Diana. "I think you need a bath, Linda. You wash her hair. How long have you got?"

"Christine said your appointment had to be open-ended. I have finished work elsewhere; I can stay as long as you need."

"Oh," said Diana. "*Her* again."

So I moved from the seat and slowly turned right into the bathroom. "I'll have

a wee first."

With the door open I could hear Diana calling Christine downstairs.

"Oy, Christine. You may as well be useful. Where's the hottest place to go for a night of dancing in the region? Ardse and me!" she called out even louder.

Christine appeared downstairs to shout up. "It's actually a choice here."

I turned both bath taps on and in came Erika, Diana and Christine. It was quite busy in that bathroom.

Christine said, just inside the bathroom, as the bath filled with me in it, "My women, and blokes, go to two of the hottest places in town. They are better than anything in Wytham, Eslaforde, Rasa Market, Spaldswick... Saturday night the BDC has a dance night. It is expensive to join, though, and it's still a performance club with stage acts after all."

Diana said at her: "You cunt, Christine. How can you be so insensitive?"

Then I said, "Diana, I am feeling cold."

"It is warm," Diana said. "We can have it hotter. Put the cold tap off."

Christine said, "It's the ice baths. It's affected you. Best thing is to have this bath - don't make it over hot. I was *going* to say that the best place is the Caramel Club. It has a one night joining fee, or double for three months, and it is the place for continuous pulsing music that gets mesmerising after a time. It is not a performance place, but there are male strippers going around the audience and a few merging-in paid females, and it all happens on the dance floor. There are also dance hall bouncers for people who can't observe the boundaries. You *must* buy a drink..."

"I think it's full enough," I said. "I know it is warm: I'm still shivering a bit."

Christine continued, "If you go in the art room before nine pm and they do a geometric design or an animal design up your front and back, you get five free drink tokens - and those drinks in there are really expensive."

"That implies..." said Diana.

"It does," said Christine. "Indeed. You display body art."

"Aardse wouldn't like that. But I want to treat him, spending so much time with Linda."

Diana took a sponge to wash about my body, while Erika washed what was left of my hair with a shampoo of her own selection. Erika rinsed my hair, but then Diana told me to stand up and bend over. "I *thought* you would be, just a bit..." said Diana, as she applied the sponge between my buttocks.

"Can I sit back in a bit? I want to absorb the idea that this is a normal, pleasant bath."

After ten minutes of sitting, with Christine elsewhere, Erika said she didn't want my hair to dry itself.

"Right, out you come!" said Diana. Diana gave Erika a towel and took one herself. So Diana towelled my front, and Erika my back. Diana advised Erika to be gentle as there were still bruises and pains to consider.

"I know," said Erika. "I do Christine's hair."

"She does," said Christine, from outside the bathroom door. "Erika was at the Titansea Grand for me."

"Fancy mentioning that place," said Diana. "Did you go to the car showroom, Erika?"

"No."

Sat back on the seat in my bedroom, Diana took Erika's hand dryer to dry

around my body, using warm air. Erika, however, took to the scissors to make my hair neat. Erika then used the dryer, once the styling was done, and the mirror showed that my new short hair was neatly arranged - simple, really.

Diana stood with her own attractive front and said, "You look delightful."

"Are you partners?" asked Erika.

"Just friends," said Diana. "Seeing that we all love her."

With Erika and Christine gone, it was back to bed, and Diana got in as well, and said I now looked beautiful.

This continued, and continued, and it was like being love bombed by Diana. There was one moment in particular where she kissed my mouth, then kissed it again.

To sleep, she moved herself as close to me as possible. I was a little confused, but it was very pleasant.

I had to ask her, "Are you trying to seduce me?"

"Not at all. But I am trying to tell you, somehow, who your real friends are and not those who turn up with nurses and hair dressers full of guilt."

Narrator: Adam *In Wytham* (Thursday 19th September)

I went to Wytham alone, and in her dinner hour met the Reverend Margaret McEnhill in a park. It was partly cloudy and just under 20 degrees. She was with her partner Penny Schofield, who had Margaret's little boy, Kevin, playing there in the early warming afternoon. Margaret was an administrator at the now troubled diocese headquarters (near the cathedral) and often saw the three bishops and their officials. With her known lesbian relationship, Margaret had Permission To Officiate in her Wytham parish, but no position. She made herself valuable by feeding information about diocesan workings and certain individuals to Bishop Barman. Sometimes she hired George Wickenby. However, she worked both ways and also approached me as his competition to feed information.

The tension was high ahead of the publication of the *The National Church Report into the Managerial Efficiency of the Wytham Diocese*, as Margaret said it would be called. She knew that my report was coming out at the same time.

"Tell me," Margaret said: "Do you have a grimy office, with a frosted-glass door, half-open venetian blinds, and a cheap open bottle of alcoholic drink?"

"Nope. And when the new premises are done, at what were Wickenby's, they'll be bright and modern."

"Barman sort of trusts me. His last phone call had a woman in the background, suggesting he is with Huett in Middlesbrough. Jonathan Eyre is likely with Julie Manns and her new baby in Worthing. The Wilsons are not in their parish."

"What does Derek Imperial think?"

"He's narrowly focussed on the administration report, and thinks Barman has become unavailable because of that. He has learnt about independent bishops and the curate at the altar table in Serninsea, and is mystified."

"He approved of Linda."

"He is thinking of offering Linda a counsellor, probably via a York diocese, which would mean someone like the Reverend Cornelius Beddoe. If Linda can no

longer function as a parish curate, the idea is to offer Linda a temporary administration job here, like this one I do. Linda's no administrator! And I don't want to lose my job. Bizarrely, I could lose Barman's protection."

"Ann thinks Linda should tell all. We're giving her a church, so she would have to resign to use it. Maybe no one will come to it, if she's no good as a minister, so then - depending on Christine Vine - we'd turn it into some sort of office and small conference venue with a few massage and supporting facilities."

"Massage?"

"Relaxation. Some sort of attraction like that."

Penny approaching said, "She could keep her mouth shut and refuse any administration job. They're desperate for priests now, and no one will consider this diocese once these reports come out."

Margaret said, "Bishop Derek speculates that Linda must know these independents via Gretta Cox-Jenkins because she was once independent herself. But she is a Lutheran now."

"My focus will be on this Worshipful Company and other groups under this so-called Confraternity."

Margaret said, "I think your press reports will give rise to the question: 'How much did Linda contribute to her own downfall?' She and her friend did upset the priest to take his own life. People are very loyal to their Church; she has rocked the boat."

I asked if Barman would take revenge against selected people, including even my informants here.

Margaret said, "He'll be exposed for the manipulative person that he is. Even the brooch was an act of a conman among conmen, trying to be very significant in the community and overstretching. All charlatans communicate well."

"What about the situation in Hartlepool and Middlesbrough? What is the gossip there?"

"From what we hear, office to office, Huett has an arrogance of played innocence. She'll want to deny everything and then claim a different purpose. In one sense her outlook is similar to the innocence of Derek Imperial, but then his innocence is because his head is in the clouds."

Penny said, "Elizabeth does with Sarah Deimos and Harriet Leda what Barman does with me and Margaret. Sarah isn't stupid, but her hands are tied."

"Then I'll untie them."

Margaret said, "We're selfish too. Being here like this helps prevent ending up 'initiating'?"

"Nah. Husband Keith made all the difference for them and him to select Linda. The only person you can't pin down among that lot is Rhiannon Fleetwood, a priest emerging from Eyre's camp and was likely off to Wales. She keeps her distance, waits in the wings.

"That's where you have the Bishop of Mynyw: she's fifty-five with a string of lesbian lovers and the wopper of a rumour of a long-standing incestuous relationship with her niece, now forty. Bishop Niall Ifan at Casnewydd is just rampant. Huett and Asthana will have shagged them both."

Margaret said, "I think these personnel you take out may have to go independent."

I said, "Whether reassigned or removed, I'd like a person in Linda's new

church who could be close to what they do. This Rhiannon Fleetwood could function in our new church for Linda."

Margaret said, "She'd most likely stay..."

"Kevin! Closer!" Penny shouted out. Margaret's young son was soon to return to his infant school.

Margaret continued. "Those who knew her in the south west and then in Rochester say she is a really slimy and despicable person. Huett would at least act the innocent, of having her own agenda, if she can be detached from Barman."

"How can she be detached from Barman?" I asked. "They're lovers."

"Huett will want her innocence underlined in public."

"Assuming so, can this be bought about?"

"Jenny World has been in Fatima Tamuuz's vicarage for far too long. Get Jenny World to connect with Huett, fast, and they might both escape from the coming disaster."

"There is something called the Secular Clergy Foundation website. It's for priests who continue to function after completely losing their beliefs. There is one bishop who is a member: Sarah Deimos. One of the priests on the list is Jenny World."

Margaret asked, "People who've lost all their beliefs?"

"Completely. They want to leave but can't for the time being."

Margaret responded, "We didn't know that. You and we have a good two-way exchange of information."

"Just wondering if Sarah Deimos might have some scores to settle."

Penny said, "She doesn't function like that."

"Something else," Margaret said. "Christine went independent and acted in competition with Barman. I watched him become paranoid up here and he was forever asking me what I knew. So ask yourself how Huett would function in Serninsea for Barman if Christine takes over what Barman used to do?"

"So Barman and Eyre and the lot of them could themselves want Huett working with Linda and Christine."

Penny said, "There operates a twisted mind."

I suggested to Margaret and Penny that they might consider themselves moving to a new and independent church, and then at least they could get married. Linda might introduce a naturist, polyamorous, fully inclusive, liberal church.

Margaret said, "I need a wage."

"We might need an administrator," I said.

"But then Jenny World was trained as an accountant, wasn't she - it's on the Hartlepool website - and she won't be a minister again."

"I take your point," I said. "Accountants become administrators."

So it was time to arrange a rapid interview with Sarah Deimos herself, and consider the possibilities of Huett with Jenny.

Jenny came in with me overnight at my accommodation; she was easily persuaded to join me with her own task to look for "cruel Barman" (my words - she agreed) in Middlesbrough.

Interviewing Sarah Deimos (Friday 20th September)

"So today was the day that the *Report on the Managerial Efficiency of the Wytham Diocese* would have come out. But it has been delayed until Monday. And you may wonder what this has to do with you here in Hartlepool. Coming here I dropped off one of your priests, Jenny World, in Middlesbrough, to look up the diocesan bishop, if possible."

"So you know Jenny World. She comes from Serninsea. She is the curate here under Fatima Tamuuz. Hmm. I can see something nasty is about to emerge."

"I'm going to show you and Louise some photographs. Jenny was present when these were taken, and so was I. You will need a strong stomach to see these. The woman injured grew up with Jenny at school, and they are both in the same profession. Her name is the Reverend Linda Jupitas, a priest in Serninsea in the Diocese of Wytham. She tells me to put a 'the' in front of 'Reverend'."

"I know *whom* you mean," Sarah answered with reciprocal pedantic wit. At first the bishop received the photos in silence. "Ugh. I feel sick. What has happened to her?"

Her sister Louise looked away.

"Well, people in a group decided to teach her a lesson prior to sexual intercourse from a suffragan bishop intimately connected with your diocesan and a related group."

"Rumours. Rumours that I thought had something to them."

"May I call you Sarah? And the reason I asked Louise to be here is because your sister was Linda Jupitas's spiritual confessor."

Louise now said, "This is terrible. What the hell has been going on? This *is* hell."

"What I want to know, maybe to adjust my report that is coming out, also on Monday, is what you understood to be the rumours, Sarah."

Louise Deimos said, "What I want to know first is what state Linda is in - can I come to see her?"

"She is recovering. She is being looked after; she has spent most of her time in bed. She has creams and drugs, her skin will never be the same again, and I think she must have taken a mental hit."

Sarah Deimos said, "You tell me more, Mr. Magellan, because I am going to go ballistic over this."

"Please. This report of mine, coming out on the same day as the Diocesan Report, will have that impact. If you go ballistic now, there'll be less impact. Three directly involved have already run away and others are hiding. Once this is out, you can then go ballistic. But, before you do, let us co-ordinate around what you know about the rumours."

"Why, Mr. Magellan, did you not come to me earlier?"

"For precisely this reason. I have been carrying out an investigation on these groups in their attempt to recruit Linda. One group is in Hartlepool, and has been for some time now. Those photographs are the result of Linda's resistance. She was being punished - cleansed of her sins, they called it - prior to her capitulation that did not happen. Before I tell you any more, I want to know what you thought was happening."

Louise said. "We can say what we discussed."

"Yes please," I said.

"My view was," said Sarah Deimos, "that the situation in the vicarage was unhealthy. I knew that Jenny World had undergone various mental breakdowns. That's not quite right: let's call them episodes. So she was never going to be any more than the curate. But Fatima has been very controlling. She treats her own child better, and I don't know who is the father. But there were rumours of visitors to the vicarage, including episcopal. I could never substantiate the rumours. I did substantiate my diocesan bishop doing rather a lot of travelling out of the diocese, and it seemed with a bias towards the Wytham Diocese. She started covering her tracks too, so she would visit somewhere within the Tees Diocese having come back from Wytham. What this is about is a long standing affair between her and John Barman. That gossip was in some places and not others. The problem is she has come on to me about my partnership with Harriet Leda, who lives with me. I want to marry Harri, but I can't, obviously, and I haven't even found a way to make her public. There's not even a civil partnership. She never goes to any function with me. It is very annoying and the diocesan has pressed me to keep my secret, given where things are, because revealing her opens all sorts of questions - could be scandalous."

"She's got one on you. And there is the other matter."

"What other matter?"

"You, like Jenny World, are on the Secular Clergy Foundation website."

"Ah. I'm afraid you've now said something Louise did not know."

"What is that website?" Louise asked her sister.

She replied, "Can I tell you afterwards? Back to this horrific group."

"Up here, Liz," I said.

Louise said, "I've said to Sarah to go public with Harriet to break Liz's hold on her. I gave up Anglicanism for this local denomination, the Free Liberal Church, to encourage Sarah in her known doubts and with Harri. But it didn't work."

"Louise, I'm a low-level suffragan. My job is to do the diocesan's bidding. We of all clergy are the most constrained. Liz has all knowledge of Harri, stronger than my hearing rumours of Liz's behaviour. And when it came to Fatima, Liz told me to let her get on with looking after Jenny's welfare."

"You've been made passive," her sister replied.

"Does Liz know about my secret?" Sarah asked me.

"I don't think so. Jenny has said Barman knows she's on the website but I don't think he does."

Louise asked, "What does this website imply?"

Sarah said, "It implies that I ought to be doing something else, and, until I do, I act the part of a believer. All right?"

"I didn't know. I thought you were going a bit more liberal but hiding it. I'm the one who went independent, I thought for similar reasons. But now..."

"No. You *thought*. I stay traditional, in public. We need to stick to why Adam is here, principally. Look, there is something else. There was a proposal to start a place in Hartlepool called The Green Diamond Club. Hartlepool has this ongoing regeneration plan, and the councillors in their wisdom decided that it was not the kind of establishment they wanted. I gave my opinion to support them. So Elizabeth said it was her 'joke' that Middlesbrough would be more accepting of such a place. When I had a go at her over this, she said I should stop being so prudish. It's about doing massages and extra services, and then all these erotic dancers and so on, and

parties. But the proposer, Sanjay Bunker, he's called, said these establishments are very highly regulated. You cannot have orgies in them, for example. Well, thank goodness for that, but we don't want the rest either. Elizabeth said she won't waste her time or promote a prudish reputation by opposing it."

I said, "So if I tell you that Sir Sanjay Bunker partly owns The Blue Diamond Club Serninsea, would that surprise you? He officially shares ownership with a Mr. Stephen McPhail, but the real joint owner is the Bishop of Bolingbroke himself. There is a similar arrangement for the Red Diamond Club in Felixstowe, where the real part owner is Jonathan Eyre, Suffragan Bishop of Margate, and he cannot make up his mind whether to open one in Worthing, Brighton or Margate. Mainly they follow the restrictions of regulations, but they find nearby alternative venues for orgies. Linda, before she had the more systematic violence on her body, was taken to the Blue Diamond Club and subjected to ice baths and initial pain. The photos were taken nearby."

Sarah said she had to pause, and Louise brought her some water. Sarah then asked, "So how many of these places are there?"

"Three groups, if soon to be five: Serninsea, Margate, Hartlepool - they call it 'Hereteu' like your ancient name. Serninsea was named as if a theatre group. Margate is more complicated, because it covers areas around the south coast from Worthing to Ebbsfleet. There's Jonathan Eyre and there was Christine Vine."

"Somehow I've heard the name."

"We think Jonathan Eyre has spawned about twenty-five children, one recently. Jonathan Eyre had sexual intercourse with Linda, and reported it back to the group. Linda's husband was a member of the Serninsea group. Barman may have five or six from various mothers."

"Is *she* pregnant?" Sarah asked.

"No," I replied. "Louise: you left after John Barman was installed. You experienced the Wilsons in the Serninsea Ings deanery, and it is said if they weren't involved in the church they'd be in prison. They are sadists of a serious kind - demonstrably. What was your opinion of John Barman?"

"He was progressive, but it went with a huge ego. I read about that Serninsea Cross brooch, how it wasn't ancient and yet he still thought it useful. Very strange, that."

"Well here is something for you to contemplate. They considered recruiting you, Louise. But they decided they would have no purchase over you. Had it been Sarah, I think it might have been different, being Anglican still and your relationship with Harriet."

"Recruited to do what?"

"Have sex: with them, and, more to the point, passing body fluids to newcomers in the initiation process."

"I haven't had sex with anyone - ever!"

"They initiate business people, self-made people, people of some significance, into these groups. It is what they call 'theosexual', which means that initiators must be bishops or priests under apostolic succession, as they call it."

Sarah commented: "They apply Catholic theory to such sordid goings on?"

"It's an ecclesiology, I'm told, to facilitate and fix orgasm as the route into the divine."

"Utter drivel. And then they beat up people like Linda, when she resists?"

I said, "Linda partly agrees with all this, and Christine Vine is the intellectual behind it - now split away from them."

Louise said, "Ah yes. She walked out of the retreat for women becoming priests in the Wytham diocese. She and Jenny were in that bank."

"That's it," said Sarah. "I wondered what Jenny was doing down there. Fatima again. Yes, Vine was the other priest putting fear to one side during the robbery."

"Trouble is, Linda gets on rather well with her. My report seeks to keep Jenny out of this, and you too - but I am going to refer to rumours in the Tees Diocese. Hang on."

My phone was ringing. It was Jenny, who said, "She let me in and listened. I've come away to a safe distance."

"Jenny, I am talking to Sarah and Louise now. And, hello, it seems Harriet as well. Hello Harriet."

Jenny reported to me: "Liz said she is upset. I showed her the photos. She said she was promised they'd lay off. I told her I didn't like the Wilsons, Connie being Terry's backbone, and Jim preaching violence. By the way, Liz became very uncomfortable - his car is outside! The impression she offered is she won't accept it if he's been lying to her."

"Where are you?"

"Two hundred yards from his car."

"Keep a watch. She might chuck him out."

"Might? You're *right*. Front door, right now, suitcase too, and they are having a barny. Hey, I need to move a bit to be unseen. He's gone to his Lexus. Gosh, Adam, she's actually chucked him out."

"Brilliant work, Jenny. I must go. Bye!"

"I heard just about every word," said Sarah. Louise nodded. Harriet twisted her mouth. Sarah asked, "What do you want us to do, or not do?"

"Well, do nothing until Monday. The media burst will be Tuesday, because otherwise they might read the press Sunday night and then pull the diocesan report at the last minute. If you are asked, say what you told me, and I will back you up. The only problem, Sarah, is that this has gone on under your nose. Oh, one more thing. Do you know a woman called Anong?"

"Sheila Patterson?"

"You do. Well, she has had dealings with the Hereteu group. Extreme sex in Fatima's vicarage! I thought you might like to know that. Anong is background to the origin of several female spiritual groups up and down the country, and there is one in Serninsea. My information is that they are now harmless, if a little strange."

Sarah sat with her mouth open, and slowly looked at Louise.

Louise said, "I hope Akemi wasn't there."

"I might have to resign," Sarah said. "I've done nothing wrong, but what can I do? Anyway, if I can go cleanly, this might be the time to do it."

"I'll back you up. This disgusting occasion with Anong is in my report. Linda's husband was involved. By the way, he is with someone else now, and he is having an affair with Sanjay Bunker's niece. So, when married to Linda, he had, in effect, two affairs. His wife to be is now pregnant. Imagine how Linda feels about that. You know, don't you Louise?"

"This would be confidential."

And with me passing on that little bit of news, the interview was over. I left the

shell-shocked sisters plus Harriet, and returned south to Jenny in the street near Liz Huett's in Middlesbrough.

I took Jenny north, so I was back in Hartlepool again.

"She might not have chucked him out, but put on a performance," I told Jenny.

I watched Jenny with bag approach the vicarage front door, and Fatima put her arms around her and then started waving her finger at Jenny. Jenny gave me a glance.

So I drove back to Serninsea.

Narrator: Linda *Dance and Bed* (Friday to Sunday 22nd September)

Whether actual or theatrical, Barman's Lexus was no longer at Liz Huett's. He was definitely not at Caffenmere. Jim and Connie Wilson were still missing. The question was whether any of these three would surface by Sunday.

Friday was the first day I tried to spend any significant amount of time downstairs, shaking off a horrible dream of being beaten by Colin Cromer (!), and I spent more time downstairs on Saturday. Diana and Kathleen still did the creams, and monitored my drugs. There was a positive effect already. We also went shopping.

The Caramel Club date was not for Diana and Aardse, but Diana and me, she said Saturday afternoon. The lights would disguise the bruising and marks, and I would get to move less or more to the music. I confirmed I was willing and able to go for a dance.

We prepared with a little make-up (using hers: I actually did not have any!) but casual gear to go in. My short hair was still good from Christine's hairdresser.

The taxi we took paused as we used a cash machine. It took us on to Titansea, which made me shiver a bit. The Caramel Club was located at the Ingle Drain outlet north of Ingle Barrow, in Titansea, on the edge of the whole urban spread of the three coastal settlements.

Our approach was via the edge of the dock. We could see a dredging machine working, even in the dark, with its lights blazing. Diana said to me, "That's why SMS has gone, I think. The dock and the entrance is a no win situation. Leave it to silt up and make a sitting area on grass and flowers."

We arrived to quite a few parked cars in the street and in parking areas, and other taxis coming and going. We entered an area with a reception desk to our right side. There were entry doors to the dance area ahead and a door to an art room to the left. Beyond the reception desk further right was a short corridor. As it led to cloaks, toilets and showers, it reminded me of above the casino and sent another shiver down my back.

A small-breasted topless woman called Cashew (on her collar) behind the desk asked, "Membership is individual, £10 for two weeks, £20 for two months."

"Do we pay now?"

"You must pay before anything else."

We paid. "What now?"

"Entrance is £10 each, but we only take pairs. You are a pair. If both of you

undress over there at the cloaks to nude or bottomless, there is no entrance fee for either of you. No knickers, tights or stockings, but put your shoes back on. It helps create a great atmosphere."

"Same for men, Cashew?"

"Absolutely. You can hire a face mask for a £10 deposit each. You can only go in with at least one drinks voucher each, £6 each, so buy a voucher here or at the cloaks; or go in the art room there, for a design for only £10 each and we will give you five drinks vouchers each - and you can buy some more there. By the way, there's under twenty minutes left for the art concession.

"Does this apply to men as well?" I asked.

"Of course. Please go to the cloaks now because there is a queue behind you. Pay any entrance fee at the cloaks desk for a token because clothed entrants must hand over a token to security."

As a naked couple passed us and went into the art room, Diana asked me, "Do you want a mask, Linda? You'll want anonymity with your vocation."

"No, my time in the National Church is over."

"You don't know that," she responded. "Okay. We'll be nude and do some art," said Diana.

At the cloaks area we received a paper and first had to stand away and read its Boundaries Notice:

We say that the Caramel Club is the hottest dance venue throughout Foss. Therefore it is strictly for 18 years and over. If you appear to be younger than 25 years old, we require age ID. We can remove anyone off the premises at any time without explanation. We only accept pairs or multiples of people at entry, once you are a member.

You will see nudity and sexual acts. You may be approached by one or more of our dancers: they all wear white collars. They make themselves available for your entertainment.

We have a strict policy of consent. Those wearing red collars are enforcers. If you do not want to have contact with anyone, or end contact, you make it clear by standing back, closing your fist, raising your index finger and clearly waving it from side to side. No means no. An existing contact seeing such a gesture must end immediately. Any problem? Summons a red collar person.

There is video surveillance for your protection held by us securely for twelve weeks. At the clothing desk you may receive artistic masks if you prefer anonymity, for a cash deposit. Keep a close watch on your bags or use the locker facility.

Next, and strangely, there was a curtain area behind which to take everything off, so we did and then approached the cloaks desk again, who had the many lockers in their protected space - free on a first come and first serve basis, otherwise clothes and anything else would be in a pile behind their desk. There was one left, which we shared. Our bags were pushed in there too. We each received an elasticated strip to put on an arm - it would hold vouchers and immediate needs, and in our case meant a ten pounds note and five pounds note each. We said no to masks and ear plugs. Diana offered our own code word plus number for the locker content - 'MacCoinnich1743' - which they recorded. We went to the mixed loos thereabouts, quickly.

Drinks? In the toilets we saw this notice:

1 voucher = half litre soft drink

3 vouchers = litre alcoholic beer

5 vouchers = a short

10 vouchers = elaborate cocktail

Buy at cloaks, art room, bar right hand side

Up to five unused vouchers per person will be refunded

Naked, we avoided the double doors and the naked beefy red-collared security man there. In fact there was a further set double doors beyond him. Instead, we went through a single door on the left into the art room as the music boomed more inside there. We were just in time, arriving for the concessions, but had to wait.

Once the male artists were available, we lay down side by side and paid our £5 each. Diana opted for a reds and black geometric mirror design up her back and up her front drawn by Gauguin. I wanted a fox, in red, green and black, including its eyes around mine, its fur, and on my back, and a bushy tail down the back of my right leg, as created by Rembrandt. For this we collected five drink tokens each and put them in our elasticated strips and we bought five more each with the notes remaining.

I liked this art aspect. It was encouraged, and obviously added a little extra to the experience. "BDSM," I said to Rembrandt, who used some visible scars to assist his artwork.

Having those ten vouchers each definitely allowed us to go past another red-collared naked security man through the door directly from the art room into the dance hall.

The noise was deafening, but it kind of became mesmerising after not too long. It was minimalist music, and I had no idea when one piece finished and another started. But it did achieve a pulsing rhythm into the body, and I was pleased that my body could cope.

Diana and I danced and danced, holding hands, she going around me, coming in front of me, pressing me to her. She was the lead all right. After all, when had I last been to any dance hall, never mind one quite like this?

An incredibly muscular man with a white collar and long penis approached us. Diana raised her fist and waved her index finger. He went away.

Time just seemed to be lost. I'd no idea how long we had been there when we went and obtained alcoholic beers, using three tokens each. It was time to pause and drink.

We resumed dancing and she was brushing me with her breasts on mine. I paid attention to the dancing crowd, some of whom wore face masks, like butterflies with eye holes, a number of whom weren't naked and so must have paid the entrance fee. There was this naked black guy with a white collar on. I said to Diana, holding on to her and shouting down her ear, "I rather fancy him."

"You serious?" she bawled down my left ear.

"I wanna grab it!" I bawled back down her right ear.

Careful not to use the 'no' hand sign, he was beckoned over. I thus grabbed Walnut's large penis in my left hand, and started masturbating him. That was his job, after all. It wasn't long before I bent my knees, and started to use my tongue. Diana followed me in bending her knees to my right, and we shared him.

When, by going behind his collar, he produced a condom, Diana rose and

waved her finger side to side, and as a result he was gone. She grinned at me as she grabbed me for a woman to woman gyration, pressing her crotch to mine.

Suddenly we had a jolt. It was Winnie and Kathleen with sweat-faded designs on their naked bodies, the metal dog collars dangling from their vulvas. So now we made a female foursome. Some men without white collars were approaching us, but every time we gave the waved finger. One of those who touched another female was thrown out through those double doors by a big-breasted hefty woman with a red collar on.

We noted how intimate, really intimate, Kathleen and Winnie were with each other, and Diana started stroking me on my front and back in similar fashion. Anyway, rightly so, Winnie and Kathleen did go off into the crowd, to be on their own, leaving me with Diana. The whole experience was turning into a kind of waking, pulsating dream within a wall of noise taking over the body. I vibrated simply through the pulsating, dominating rhythm. This was infused with the blur of Diana's body in front of me with her roving hands. After nights of waking and sleeping alongside her, I wanted her sexually.

Yet it was she who bent her knees and dropped down, and put out her tongue. I did not wag my finger! In fact I moved closer, and put my crotch above her tongue. She was licking and making sure she was going in. Oh, she was good. After some time of this and starting to hold on to her shoulders for stability, we swapped, so now I was exploring her - and let's say she was a bit runny. Somehow, doing this, we were also dancing. I wanted to carry on and on, but instead she pulled me up to kiss me, and she meant it.

Now we were close, bodies pressing, and yet again we were waving fingers at interested blokes. And then one bloke ignored our dismissals and rested his hand on to my shoulder. Within seconds this black guy as enormous in stature as I have ever seen pulled him away and simply sent him through the first main double doors out. Wow.

On his return I wanted to suck that chap off as well and beckoned him over, but he pointed to his red collar and smiled.

We went into some directly available unisex loos. We were hit by their coolness (and smell) and my ears were singing and numbed, but, passing a slightly breasted and hugely muscled red-collared security woman, I said to Diana, "This is fantastic."

Given they were busy, we both pissed in the same cubicle, taking turns. I noticed just how much our obvious body sweat had smudged and deteriorated our body artwork. The security woman prevented a woman punter hoisting her bottom on to a sink. Anyway, we were soon out to adjust back to the volume and the hot humidity.

I still had no idea when the music pieces started or stopped. On and on it went - and soon we could see some women had their legs up and guys in white collars were fucking them. And then there was a woman with a white collar on and she was on top of this bloke. Gosh.

I got close to Diana's ear. "Shall we have a couple of blokes?"

"No way!"

"Just wondered."

"We're all right together. Just you see."

For my compensation, Diana's hands were round my backside and going

around, and then I realised she had a finger inside my vagina and one sensitively rising up my anus. She grinned at me and then put her head close and licked my sweaty (odourless) face.

Pulling her body to me even tighter, I shouted down her left ear, "Go on, get them right in!"

I widened my legs to help, and I was gyrating to the music with her fingers in me. Her face was so close I just snogged her, and she responded.

"Me!" I demanded. So she pulled me close, widened her own access, and yes I pushed a finger up between her buttocks and kept going. Two fingers slid in and up her long vagina.

"It's fifteen," she said.

"You're forty!"

"Centimetres!"

She was now gyrating around my administrations. At the front insertion she was spongy and wet and at the back insertion warm and pressing.

We snogged, and she was alternately extracting my tongue and getting hers down my throat. We were in complete harmony, and she hung on to me with one arm and slipped two fingers up my anus. And we stayed like that, clamped together for maybe five or ten minutes or more, but I couldn't tell how long. What did know was that both of us were perspiring over each other in the humidity. Any air conditioning was overwhelmed by all these bodies, all around, and us: so many engaged in open sexual activity.

Confident of resumption we relaxed from each other to obtain more drinks. We had them, and then indeed resumed.

It wasn't long before desire took over again. In a change I grinded my crotch on her right leg. Wonderful, and of course I reciprocated the facility of my right leg for her pleasure. Then I dropped down for tasting her gunge running down my chin, all the time going to the continuous beat beat beat sound. Reciprocating was the rule.

The music reminded me of Jean Michelle Jarre, but it may not have been his. Internalised, I'd become unaware of all other people.

We gravitated to holding hands both again, looking in each other's eyes, still gyrating, still pulsing, pulling us together, frequently kissing, then stroking, then more inserting. This was getting ever more intense, and my desire for Diana was overflowing.

I had a tendency to fall for individuals: Christine had been the latest. But Diana was different. I had a deeper, longer term love for her, and in this place she had overcome all her self-imposed restrictions regarding me. I was in her actual sex and she was in mine, and nothing was off-limits. The music pulsed on, and we pulsed in each other.

And then there was a change of music, and it slowed right down. So we took the cue, and danced together, holding on, slippery body to slippery body. I can't think that two people as supposed friends could be so comfortable with each other. I wanted to be all over her, and I reckoned she wanted the same. And this was how we wanted to be, and stay.

The sex had become intimate, as if all else had disappeared beyond the rhythm, and then the rhythm broke to a loving finale. Five hours we had been there.

And... it ended. It was time to go. All this had passed, and it must have been two in the morning.

We had to leave, to return to the cloaks area. We asked about our vouchers left over: yes, they'd give us cash. The code 'MacCoinnich1743' put the cash into our lockers for the time being, because the woman said we could have a brief shower if we wanted, and so we did, sprays of warm water for anyone to walk into. The showers didn't quite get rid of our well-smudged patterns. We were given a towel each. All sorts of security red collars were gathering as people were showering, drying and dressing and collecting their items. I recognised the white collared black guy labelled Walnut on his collar that Diana and I had shared, so before I dressed I gave him a hug and kiss. Diana did the same, and then we two kissed rather more.

This time 'MacCoinnich1743' meant collecting our bags and clothes. Thus we put on our clothes in the dressing and undressing space.

Outside in the instant cool there were licenced taxis offering to take us home. I felt a little deaf, and my ears continued to ring. We approached a taxi for us arm in arm. In our taxi Diana said to me, "What happened in there stays in there."

"Yeah," I said. "It was great."

"It was."

Back at mine we showered each other to remove the art design remnants. We dried each other for convenience, and got into bed all fresh and cool. We looked at each other, held on, kissed a lot, stroked one another in intimate places and eventually went to sleep.

Next day she was only my friend again, rejecting me in bed with a clenched fist and waved index finger. She said I should contact Adam, and tell him to come back.

When we got up naked I was stiff again, but this was a happy stiffness unlike the blows I had received above the casino.

We ate, and Kathleen and Winnie came down together to be four naked people around the table. But afterwards I felt tearful as Diana dressed.

"Don't cry," she told me close-to, and kissed me on the lips. "I was loving you yesterday, and all last week. I think you were loving me too."

I said, "We should be talking here not in the past progressive but the present continuous tense. Or the present perfect: 'I have loved you so much I cannot stop.' No?"

"The past continuous is right," Diana said. "I am returning to Aardse. But be assured, of the present perfect continuous tense: 'I have been loving you all my life.' You understand that."

Diana went out of the front door and gave me a little wave. She'd left me, and I went to the nearest settee in the long lounge and I did start crying. Kathleen came in with a box of tissues. Several times thereafter I tried to get hold of Adam, on this late Sunday morning, but there was no reply via any method of contact.

I went upstairs to find Kathleen again, knocking on her bedroom door. Invited in, Winnie was ascending up Kathleen's body under the duvet. I said, "If you get in touch with Adam, Kath, can you tell him to come back to me?"

"Sure," Kathleen said. "But can you believe it? They've published that diocesan report today, on a Sunday. I bet it's so that it makes less impact."

"Did you enjoy the Caramel Club?" I asked.

"We do. Third time. We never have sex with anyone else."

"I don't suppose I will ever go there again. They only let in pairs of people. I shall remember Diana and me there until the day I die. You know, I'm clear of

Christine and now I have to get over Diana."

"She replaced your pain with love," said Kathleen receiving Winnie's attention.

"But I want to love her!" I exclaimed back, and felt utterly frustrated, and was alone all Sunday. Hearing Kathleen and Winnie yelping did not make me feel any better.

Later on Kathleen came to me to rub in creams and supervise my drugs. I felt so sad. At The Caramel Club they all wore collars, and I wondered what would be my future in a clerical collar.

Chapter 19 Exposure and Restoration

Narrator: Linda *Diocese Exposed* (Monday 23rd September)

Monday morning I recovered from another bad dream, this time of Connie Wilson chaining me up for Colin Cromer to direct the violence, and this time happening in my bedroom against the wall.

The only person now rubbing in my creams for me was Kathleen. Despite the dream, I wasn't getting out of bed; she brought me breakfast on a tray.

"Cereals, toast, orange juice. Is that all right?"

"Fine. Your metal disc: had I gone through with it all, I would have received my own badge. The B and a goose."

"You didn't want one of those," she said.

"Linda, I've already seen the newspapers," said Kathleen.

"Bring me one."

"I mean online. Use your phone." Kathleen made herself scarce again.

I didn't. I felt my fingers freeze despite my brain's initial instruction.

Adam phoned me. Had anyone shown me today's *The Daily Morse*?"

"I'm a bit slow. I'm a bit fearful, Adam. I thought I'd read the diocesan report first."

"Yeah, and coming out yesterday made no difference. Well, our contribution to the show is on the road."

"Did you take Jenny back to Hartlepool?" I asked.

"Yes. Via Middlesbrough. And I interviewed Sarah Deimos in Hartlepool, and this is squeezed in to the report, and my paper asks how the Tees Diocese knew so little when its own bishop was running wild."

"Are you coming back to me?"

"I will; I have been working directly with *The Daily Morse*."

Finally, I looked around online. They finally called it the *National Church Report into the Managerial Efficiency of the Wytham Diocese* and it made terrible bedtime (!) reading, even at glances through it.

I got up. I saw the lunchtime regional news. Kathleen and Winnie decided that my bedding was disgusting after Diana and I had been rolling over it for a week with the creams and perhaps the odd secretion smeared in. So they washed the bedding while I watched the telly.

The bureaucratic mess had been mentioned on Sunday's television, but weekday regional news came into its own. The news summary on the report was that the diocese was incompetently managed just about everywhere. It had inept oversight in its management and the finances were in meltdown. The cathedral was at war with its bishop. Weak churches staying open should be shut down - I thought of Inglemire and its parish. The functioning churches had inadequate resources. Wytham diocese had the worst figures in the country for decline in attendance. The most failing deanery was Serninsea Ings itself.

But now this was being overshadowed by the splash in *The Daily Morse*. This laid out that under the umbrella of inefficiency, the Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke, John Terence Barman, was one of three bishops who ran secret sexual orgy groups

that forced violent sexual activity.

Adam had hardly left me out. In *The Daily Morse* report across four pages, I was the victim, big time, as was the late Ken Osis. Keith was described as grooming me, his wife, for the Serninsea group. It said there were sex parties for swingers in Serninsea, known to insiders as The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players, located in part of a former theatre. These involved clergy, local business people, other denominations, even reaching parts of Judaism and Hinduism. The Titansea Grand Hotel was mentioned, that Barman organised for accommodation and some events there - but not Christine's alternative.

Named as perpetrators were the three bishops; the brutal Wilsons (brought from the Midlands); the McPhails as exhibitionists, forgers, and builders of victim equipment. Business people were recruited. Available prostitutes - called 'Geese' (although all the initiated were 'geese' in fact) - provided services. The apostolic structure was explained, at least to the extent that ordinary people could get a hook on Catholic theory.

Elizabeth Huett with Hindu Yojana Asthana toured Wales to have sex with the bishops of Mynwy and Casnewydd in order to recruit them.

Suffragan Bishop of Hereteu Sarah Deimos was uninvolved but naive in not pursuing rumours, with all the gory details of happenings at the Fatima Tamuuz vicarage - Jenny not named.

The emphasis on Christine was on walking away and being in dispute. Jenny and Christine were mentioned at the bank robbery, putting them in a good light, but then they must have been at a sex orgy!

Jonathan Eyre had fathered an estimated twenty-five children. Julie Manns was named as the latest pregnant by him - Adam and the newspaper should have left her out? Rhiannon Fleetwood got a mention as a mother of two of his.

Sanjay Bunker didn't even get a mention, which was incredible, and obviously reflecting his power, but his niece was given as the Hindu in SMS and linked to my husband in Adam's search for Keith's affair.

Rabbi Maurice Neptune of Wytham was mentioned as knowing the perpetrators, as part of the wider religious connection.

I wondered what Colin Cromer would make of this, compatible with when I told him to 'follow the rumours'. He was mentioned as an innocent and unaware.

The diocesan bishop, another leader who knew nothing, made a statement.

The National Church Report on our administrative inefficiencies needs leadership to implement recommended improvements. As for the revelations of a sordid sexual nature, involving the Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke, and other bishops: as his diocesan I will accept his immediate resignation - not just suspension. The reports are deeply distressing.

Strangely, by the afternoon, Suffragan Bishop Julian Worsley of Screddington had resigned with immediate effect. The Bishop of Bolingbroke, John Barman, could not be contacted.

Christine rang the doorbell. Kathleen let her in and I was in bed again. Christine brought with her *The Daily Morse* in paper format. She had her own news that Liz Huett had become unavailable to anyone, Fatima Tamuuz had fled with her daughter, somewhere, and we did not know where Jenny had gone. Julie Manns

was in distress and unavailable, as was Jonathan Eyre.

"He's the wrong one," I said to Christine about Julian Worsley. "Maybe he has gone related to inefficiency."

"Maybe. Maybe he fears more. Listen, I'll tell you. The Right Reverend Julian Worsley doesn't do ordinary sex. You didn't see him at any of the parties either. He stayed clear of all that, unlike me. But look at his body. Well, I have. He has scars and puncture marks and all sorts. He has a bolt through his penis, the Prince Albert itself. Jonathan Eyre knew. It is why I came to Wytham Diocese from Kent and I made a one to one connection with Julian. But he has ecclesiology, whereas Barman doesn't."

"What?"

"It wasn't one-way with him. I had a safe word but I wouldn't use it: I took it all. He ripped my flesh. He did spare my breasts but did not between my legs. Worsley tutored me in suffering and I gave it back, but he did use the safe word."

"So Adam's report is incomplete!"

"It's a separate matter."

"He resigned!"

"Because he's principled. I am going to see Julian now. He knows I was coming here to see you beforehand. By the way, we stopped when he was no longer my bishop. My scars are authentic sacrifice."

"But where is Barman?"

"He's cancelled the forthcoming civic function: a lunch to discuss a proposed art gallery. Tomorrow *The Daily Morse* will refer to the fake Serninsea Cross brooch as arranged by him," she said.

"That's separate."

"He's become fair game on all his dodgy goings on. The paper will do more on the pals: him and Jonathan, and the affair with Liz Huett before she was a bishop. There is a lot of mileage in this for days."

"Barman and the Wilsons have got the missing diaries. Adam hasn't mentioned them."

"If you are concerned about their use, I'll ring Adam on a number he'll answer. Hang on."

"Oh great. A number he's kept from me?"

Christine asked Adam to speak to me and passed her phone to me.

Adam said, "Hi Linda. Yeah."

"Why haven't I got this separate number?"

"To keep it restricted. She can give it to you. But if you get asked for an interview, put them on to us on the usual number because this is all under contract. *The Daily Morse* has first rights to everything. What you *can* do is write a first person piece for the newspaper. But you'd have to resign, I think, and probably Jenny too. I am receiving requests to name the visiting initiating clergywoman to Serninsea - people assume it is Jenny. Will you do it, via *The Daily Morse*, for more payment?"

"The diaries, Adam, the diaries," I said.

"Tomorrow is also about the diaries," he said. "We can't *prove* that they've got them, but we can say they have the house keys: Osis made daily entries regarding what the coroner said on the missing books. If you do your own account, we neuter the diaries - I hope. My whole report will go public in a few days. Delaying allows *The Daily Morse* to control the news. I have a suggested title for your piece, although

sub-editors do change things: *Drawn into the Anglican Sex Cult* or something like that."

"What about 'From deacon to priest to resignation in months' or more like that?"

"Too neutral," he replied. "Shall I make the deal for you? It will go towards a new church for you."

"May as well. It is only yet one more humiliation."

Christine gave me the special contact telephone number, to be used only by me and when necessary.

I asked her to rub in creams for me, and tick a document Kathleen created to monitor that I'd had my drugs.

"Have you had sex with Adam?" I asked her as she pulled the duvet off and rubbed cream, starting with my breasts.

"No."

"You seduced me. Diana is right. Christine: I'm sorry, but you really are stark raving mad. Does nothing come outside some sort of religious explanation? "

"You're entitled to your opinion. Your back and arse, please, Linda."

"Do my upper legs first because I want to look at you. Jenny says you're an atheist really, beyond all this institutional guff."

"You are both entitled to your opinions. Let me do this."

After a pause I said, "Oh fuck it, I may as well sell my story. Do my arse."

"And your back and the back of your legs. Start with your back. The Anglican diocese will be weak for years to come. A lot of lay folk will leave, some priests will transfer. Suffragans will be hard to find."

Then I said: "That magic show, I did: I showed the outline of my vulva. Do I write about that, dear Christine?"

"Of course. And how you'll be in the diaries. Better get ahead of the curve. You never know: you might not have to resign. You could even be the one who forced them to clean out the stables. You control your account: make the case for yourself."

"You do realise what is *in* my story?"

"I do. Make it comprehensive."

"I think I hate you, Christine."

"Well, some do. It is the cost of discipleship. Diana does."

"You're manipulative too. Diana seems to dislike Adam, under her breath."

"I can't think why."

"Hmm. I've had a thought," I said, sticking my rear out further for her attention. "Barman wanted me to do as he said. Now Adam is getting me to do as he wants."

"No. Not the same."

Kathleen suddenly came in as Christine creamed my buttocks saying that I should take my antibiotics, holding a glass of water. And then she said, "Oh Christine, you're doing the creams. Look, she is getting much better already. Her bottom has improved a lot. Hopeful."

Christine said, "Some of mine were left untreated."

"Linda had such smooth perfect skin," said Kathleen.

"In a year there'll be the odd smudgy mark," confirmed Christine in that lost hope.

I took my medicine while Christine went over my legs.

"Done. You'll live. I'm afraid that, after the rainbow, nothing is quite the same again. But there is a Covenant and you are, like it or not, Linda, mystically attached to the Church."

"And, yet again, Christine: you are *nuts*."

"May God go with you, Linda."

After Christine had gone, Kathleen came back, stripped off, and got into bed with me

"You don't have to. Diana was doing this when I was spitting at everyone and yet really needed someone. Where's Winnie?"

"Visiting her mother. Diana is your friend. You are my friend."

Later on I woke to answer the telephone. Local commercial radio reporter Bill Battersby called me for any comment about the diocesan report.

I said, "Please contact the national newspaper *The Daily Morse*. Or, er..."

"So you've no comment at all, other than that."

"I have none at all. But I can give you Adam Magellan's usual contact details. He's the private investigator with all the source information and he can comment. After all I've been through, I am being looked after by my friends. You can say that if you want."

Developments (Tuesday and Wednesday 25th September)

Next day *The Daily Morse* went into detail about the 'Worshipful Theatre Company' with tales of Church framed orgies. There were many and these were news to me. There was element of initiating, of course. Jenny was now named as:

...the sexed-upon travelling initiating curate. Her Hartlepool vicar joined her Middlesbrough bishop in forcing Jenny World into sexual services.

Bishops sprinkled holy water and hands held high for the divine to come down in ecstasy. Crazy people! The newspaper did refer to the diaries written by Ken Osis that had gone missing, that would reveal all of the Wilsons' and the bishops' behaviour. The emphasis was on them.

The news element was that they'd all done a runner, with Julian Worsley the only one so far to resign publically, and the question was whether any of these Bolingbroke, Margate and Tees bishops would appear for Sunday services.

Then there was a whole article about Kay Sally Parker, the headteacher for decades at the secondary school, including about Annie Fenwick 'groomed' as a former head girl and leading sex worker. So now the school was embroiled in the scandal. Portrait pictures were published, including mine as: *Victim: the Revd. Linda Jupitas, married to the sex cult member Keith*.

Adam sent me a link, and so I found Annie Fenwick on Goosechat, naked and masturbating, talking away about her time in the sex cult as if she'd enjoyed every minute. Any newspaper could transcribe this stuff. Customer tips responded to every lurid detail.

Of course there wasn't enough on the theological construct all around these colourful events, as people would not understand. Did Adam understand? The press

wouldn't go deep enough on that. Barman was thus described in places as 'the worshipful bishop', 'the bedding bishop' and 'the very well-endowed bishop'.

I tried to sit up and type my own story on my laptop but I lost the energy to be bothered. Was it to entertain as well as be shocking? Doing this - or, indeed, not doing this - Jenny rang via Skype.

As soon as her face appeared, she started. "He's mentioned me. Is Adam doing it just for the money?"

"He wanted to keep you out. It's your prominent role - he can't."

"What about me warning you?"

"You knew what was coming: how I'd be abused: whipped, pierced, sex devices used, punched, all ahead of expected sexual intercourse and prostrating. Jim Wilson said my blood must flow, and it did. You knew this."

"I didn't! I only guessed they wouldn't spare you."

"I'd accept them and they'd still punish me. He wanted to come up with all this biblical stuff. You knew their thought processes."

Jenny said, "She should have given you a safe word. She didn't."

"No, Jenny; it was never a BDSM game. I was being *punished*. I was being *prepared*. I was supposed to take that man's enormous penis. I even had a prayer given if I was to get pregnant and have a child. Don't start imagining another reality."

"You said you consented. You did say that."

"I thought it would be the line of least resistance, for you and me to then function in Inglemire."

"Too late for that now."

"Are you with Fatima?"

"She's gone to who knows where."

"Who is with you? Anyone?"

"Yes, but I'll tell you later. I'm all right. Are you all right?"

"I'm coping."

"Does Christine keep making love with you?"

"No."

"Does Diana?"

"No, certainly not. Not Christine, not Diana."

"My clerical career is over, so I'm forced to move on now. I think yours is over too."

Diana called round later if briefly this time to ask if I was coping with the news. She knew all that had happened so could hardly accuse me again of being sluttish or on the game.

"Yes, but what about you and me as private news?"

Diana at my bedroom door said, "Don't push it, Linda. I'm married to Aardse and you have Adam. See you very soon."

Next day (after no Adam again) national television broadcasted the basics. The local radio made reference to 'the Church scandal of Serninsea'. I put my house telephone on answerphone and answered none other than supposed friends. The 1 pm regional TV news pictured the parish church plus a photograph of Colin and me at the ordinations - when he had nothing to do with this - with another separate photo of Bishop Barman. The TV news said Barman had now resigned, according to the diocesan, Derek Imperial, whereas the whole diocese needed his own leadership. As for Elizabeth Huett, this was on social media from the Archbishop of England, Right

Reverend David James Fraser:

For her despicable unChristian behaviour and associations, I have called for the immediate resignation of the Bishop of Tees, the Right Reverend Elizabeth Claire Huett, and will arrange for pastoral and administrative cover during the interregnum from the Suffragan Bishop of Hereteu (Hartlepool), the Rt. Revd. Sarah Deimos. Counselling is available for all those adversely affected. I give my sincere apologies for all who have been wronged in this scandal.

+++David Eoforwic Albion

Adam rang and I took that call, "Adam, before you start, that TV report: Colin has nothing to do with this."

"I did tell them that, but it's right on his parish. Yeah, *apparently* Bolingbroke has gone."

"Where geographically?"

"*The Daily Morse* is asking me that you make your article revelatory and show what you were forced to do."

"Oh crumbs. I was going to start it, but didn't have the energy or will."

"Size of a long sermon," he said. "Your story."

"Yes I will. I've become very lazy."

"What they'd love is a book and to have first British serial rights."

"This is getting out of hand," I said.

"Linda, we have to manage this the best we can. Skirt round the people you want to protect. The way to stop Barman approaching *The Red Giant* or similar is to write your story."

"Adam, I want our relationship to survive this. If you're exploiting me, it won't survive. I want to stay with you, so please don't let me down. I couldn't stand it if you are being two-faced."

"I get it. I'm handling this best as I can. Write the article. Do a good one, Linda. Oh, social media, the Archbishop of All England."

"I've got it. hang on. Ah, they've shared some phrases. Always a bad sign, that."

It is with not a little frustration and indeed surely justifiable anger that one of the suffragan bishops in my diocese has indulged in despicable unChristian behaviour and terrible associations of inappropriate personnel. I am therefore calling for the immediate resignation of the Bishop of Margate, Jonathan Hopkirk Eyre, given the emerging reports that have come to my attention recently. Stories emerging of his licentious sexual life and parenting some twenty-five or so children from many different mothers are unusually horrifying. I have asked for all those affected to be approached for counselling. The Bishop of Folkstone, Sarah St. John Spinks, will provide pastoral and administrative cover during the interregnum. I give my sincere apologies for all who have been wronged in this scandal, with not an unexpected reaction coming from many and thus damaging (yet again) the reputation of the wider Church.

+++William Kantos Albion

"Verbose tosser. So my story produces a whirlwind that throws me out,

Adam."

"Think of a renewal away from all these people. Do your ministry like Christine."

"Well, she's a bishop, but a bishop of what? And would I want to be her priest, given what she does? She's as mad as a hatter, Adam, with her crazy theology and ecclesiology."

"It's only a suggestion, but it's not my field."

"Anyway, I'd want a church and a congregation, and a congregation isn't going to happen. Christine and the rest are bishops without anyone else."

"Ann and I will give you a church. The congregation may follow. By the way. I've redirected a received call back to your phone. It's on voice recording. I've heard it, obviously. Let him go to The Lakes, the miserable sod."

I found it and I pressed to listen. It was Colin Cromer.

"Pass this on, Magellan, seeing as everyone is directed to you or the press. It's me, Linda, and please don't ring back. I'm very disappointed, with all I have learnt. You obviously knew more when you told me to follow the rumours, but you did not tell me about John Barman. I'm retiring, early, quickly. Bishop Derek says he'll see it's easy for me. But I want you to resign, to leave the Church, as well. I'm retiring; you're *resigning*. My telephone has become my enemy. I've had nothing but press, radio, TV, calling me. I'm going to stay somewhere else, leaving tomorrow: the Lake District probably. Why would I want to stay here? Write your resignation to Bishop Derek. Tell you what, why don't *you* move away? Perhaps you could do us all a favour, and take Adam Magellan off to Wales or somewhere like that. Nottingham was once good enough for him, before he returned and took Mirela from me to be his lawful wedded wife, which she is still. Join the rest of your strange family in Wales. But, wherever you go, don't come near Cumbria."

The recording ended.

Future Ministry Suggestion (Thursday 26th September)

I was told that builders had begun at Adam's and George Wickenby's old place. Kathleen told me that Ann had a plan months back. A church for me was always on the agenda.

I said to Kath, "It's like there's someone else running your life; they seem to know what you'll be doing before you do it yourself".

Bishop Geoff Virgo rang, seeing the national coverage, the angle being about the 'sex cult and swinging' group run by a bishop. He remembered that I'd hinted at odd things locally. I said I would be writing my story and resigning.

"Easy," he said. "We can incardinate you into the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia."

"Oh, yeah, great; but where do we here get our income?" I asked. Then I added, "I can answer that myself. All the money from this scandal - but it isn't going to last. And none of it is a salary."

Geoff said, "Do a useful exercise to help frame your mind: write down what sort of ministry you would do, or could do, because that's the way we would consider you for our expanding operation."

"Join Christine?"

"Yes. But you will need a Disclosure and Barring Service Check."

I fell about laughing.

He asked what was funny.

"Everyone in this scandal has one of *those!*"

"Well, it is required as independents are especially vulnerable."

"The point is, I'm not sure I could be a priest under Christine. In my own church I'd not want to take her orders."

He said, "We'd elevate you. You would be equal to Christine. You'd have different ministries."

"Me a bishop? Don't make me laugh again, Geoff."

"It's no laughing matter, being a bishop."

"How many words?" I asked.

Oh, about the size of a sermon," he said. "Essay or enhanced bullet points. Must rush - I'm going to a paid-for pastoral consultation. We do receive payments; we do have an income."

Two pieces of writing, then, I thought to myself, as alternatives to sermons. One for a newspaper on my bad times, and one on the good times to come. Except, as I began to think about it, I wasn't sure what to put at all, beyond doing parish-style ministry.

Then I became more creative in my mind. I started to consider what sort of liturgical changes I would make from the Anglican fixtures. They seemed to be more and more considerable as I sat with scraps of paper and the Anglican worship book. Perhaps a newer liturgy or liturgies could be done via an audio-visual method, or I could get liturgical materials published by a local commercial printer.

Adam at last came to my bed. He'd spent too long away, but all the time he was planning and carrying out his exposure details for the media that works late. He was consultant to all the journalists' articles. He was also considering my future.

I welcomed him back in, literally: we made love.

"Are you my future?" I asked him.

"Yes."

"Let me ask you a question: does everything come through Ann and Labhaoise?"

"Ann. Ann consults Labhaoise of course, but my business and personal support comes through Ann."

"So it does then. But if I'm your partner?"

"Don't question it too far, Linda. She won't interfere with us, just as I am not a father to their children, even though biologically they are mine. She approves of us and the rest is up to us. So far I've been your mate: you're now suggesting more."

"Possibly. I've grown distant from Christine. Diana is just a friend."

I realised that George Wickenby's place, now Adam's, would be at least a bolt-hole for him, as there were two bedrooms there where Peter and Kathryn might live. George had not lived above the shop for some years. Adam was completely gutting his present premises and next door, including incorporating its double garage at the end, around which went a tenfoot. It meant a small church and accommodation.

The Daily Morse, having effectively forced headteacher Kay Sally Parker to resign instead of retire - a sad end to a long career - now named participants at the 'Worshipful Theatre Company' orgies. Some were in the police: a male Chief

Inspector and two Detective Inspectors, one of whom was a woman. They were likely to face disciplinary action of 'conduct unbecoming' by police officers.

The Daily Morse gave permission for one television and one radio documentary, so long as it was referenced on key matters, and this would earn Adam even more. We were quickly descended on for interviews, and these went on for several hours, and some (like Christine) took part and others refused, with camera crews seen taking shots around the locality.

Meanwhile the newspaper wanted to make use of my naturism, so it did a kind of Mothers' Union style Calendar shot of me. We went to the moribund UPCC chapel (I don't know how they obtained the key) and used its reading lectern to hide my bits. At home I did a back perspective shot of me writing a sermon - naked.

I learnt that Adam was refusing requests for pictures of me and about me; they all had to go through our chosen newspaper. Of course there were pictures of me clothed on various websites; then some clever journalist had found two pictures of a younger me at the Saxiclite Naturist Club, my previous club, where in one I was lying on my front on some grass talking to a small group of people and in the other I was cross-legged and my breasts were for all to see. I was thus depicted in *The Red Giant*.

Other channels were doing their own thing in town, and of course interviewed people who were in the congregation at the parish church. Some remembered me as a weird child in a weird family - mentioning my elder sister and mother. Somehow my father and elder brother seemed to escape scrutiny, and Leila was missed out.

Counselling? (Sunday 29th September)

I'd decided to skip all churchgoing for Sunday, and instead Diana called around. We were moving about naked indoors, and she had a look at some of my writing for both articles.

Diana said to me, "Don't do the dirty on Osis, and keep me out of it."

About two in the afternoon, Adam had a shared lunch with Diana and me without shedding anything. The feeding done, he was on his way out for more media work when there was a ring at the door.

"Some clergyman," Adam called back as he half-opened the front door.

The visitor glimpsed me as I found my cassock in the below stairs toilet, still functioning as a quick wear device, while Diana put her knickers and bra back on.

"And you are?" I said approaching the door with Adam laughing outside.

"I am the Reverend Cornelius Beddoes, sent from York in fact, at the Archbishop of England's behest from a suggestion by the Bishop of Wytham."

"Don't you make an appointment first?"

"I thought you might be in. I did go to speak with Colin Cromer, the Vicar of Serninsea. His Grace also wants me to investigate the fabrication of the Serninsea Cross or Brooch, the end of the marriage between Jeremy and Emily Symes, and the vacancy of Caffenmere and Inglemire that not in the gift of the Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke."

"Are you decent yet?" I called out to Diana.

"It'll do."

"You did put on your black Anglican cassock," he said, still at the door. "I take it you intend to remain a priest in good standing."

"Oh, come in. You may as well."

Diana was in the lounge with her blouse over her bra, knickers on, but bare legs and feet.

"All I'm doing is coming to ask you if you would like to receive counselling. I am a trained counsellor myself, or we have the Reverend Billie Thatcher, a female counsellor, if you prefer."

"I prefer none of you," I said.

"I can imagine," he said.

"Sounds like you're here for more than offering counselling."

"I am but I am asking whether the aftermath of what has happened is traumatic?"

"Yes, with needles and skewers pushed through my flesh, and being beaten up by crazed individuals."

"Quite. The intention of these people was to 'initiate' you, was it?"

"That was the bishop's task, to get his enormous penis into my very small vagina."

"So he had shown you his penis."

"He did, earlier, at the Blue Diamond Club, after ice baths and having to kneel on wooden ridges biting into my knees and lower legs."

"And at the top floor of the casino?"

"It's not the top floor of the casino: it is above the casino. He stayed in the kitchen and was about to come out and penetrate my bloodied body."

"Oh dear. Quite. You were not given a code word by which they should stop this?"

"As I told someone else who asked that: this was not some BDSM game."

"I told Colin Cromer that this Vanguard decided that it overruled the Diocesan structure."

"It did."

"Initially you went into their mentoring, I understand, so a point must have come when you withdrew your consent."

"I was investigating them, as they were secretive. I wasn't happy with how others had been involved."

"Quite."

"Why are you asking?"

"I suppose because I am trying to measure the extent of the mental trauma."

"Because I normally *like* this sort of thing? Do you know what it is like hanging with your arms trying to come out of their sockets and only your toes on the ground, with a plank of wood on your crotch?"

"This is absurd," said Diana, alongside me.

"My questioning?" asked the Reverend Cornelius.

Diana said, "The measure of her trauma is her experience evidenced by her injuries. Undress, Linda, and show him."

He said, "I'm not sure that..."

I stood and got the cassock off. "Look," I said. "And these are a lot better than they were. I've taken tablets and had creams rubbed in many times daily." I did a turn so that he got the back as well as the front.

"Quite. I sense a sense of hostility towards the Church," he said, calmly.

"He's good, this one, isn't he?" said Diana. "Put your cassock back on, Linda."

"You are?"

"Diana, her naturist friend."

"Being from the northern province, they reckon I'm less attached considering your future career - given all the revelations. Your training priest, the Reverend Colin Cromer, thinks you should resign. His review of your curacy so far is, well, pretty damning."

"Because the suffragan, who had me followed, was always undermining me. Those photos that Colin was sent anonymously, for example, were from the bishop after Ken Osis took them years back."

"When you were a model. Being a model, one time, indeed demonstrably being a naturist, and known locally about your past: this is a difficult background from which to find you a suitable role as a priest in the Church."

"What *suitable* role would there be?"

"Well, we think we could value you in administration and preparing theological documents; the diocesan bishop could value you as a theological advisor - to flesh out his own theological investigations."

"Hidden away, you mean?"

"Your curacy here is ended, unfortunately - it's a question of loss of confidence. We could do a formal appraisal."

"Well, let me help you. Forget the appraisal and I don't want your administration job in Wytham; I *thought* I was being selected for parish ministry."

Diana said, "Instead, she was being prepared to be Bishop Barman's concubine."

"Not quite that, Diana."

"Ask the Wickenby twins. The elite in society took concubines, many of whom were slaves. Some of these women served as priestesses and held a very high social rank. They carried out an honourable fulfilment of religious duty."

"I wish I'd have known that," I said to my friend. "I'd have signed up straight away! Did they say this to you?"

"Kathryn did, talking at college."

Cornelius then said, "More seriously, parish ministry wasn't what you had expected. Right? Would you like systematic counselling, to examine your inner feelings and reactions?"

"No."

"Not even with the Reverend Rosie? She can go very slowly."

"No. I'd like to go very quickly. I'll publish my article - you'll have to wait for that - and then I am resigning. I might, just might, go independent; I also might go to the family farm in Wales and disappear into that."

"Don't go," said Diana. "You went to university once, and I was back from Rasa Market."

I looked at her.

She then asked, having looked back at me and pulling a face, "What about you and Adam?"

The Reverend Cornelius said, "So I report back that you are considering your future outside the Church and you don't wish for counselling. I'm not sure if we provide counselling for a priest who leaves."

"You look after your own only, then, when ordained?"

"It might be about available resources."

"Well, the Reverend Cornelius, you've said very little and far too much at the same time. I think it is time you went so that my friend here can remove her textiles and me my cassock and we can play a good board game or something like that. I'll dig up my own old box of *Coppit*, and we can have three colours each, and I'll thrash her."

He said, "Perhaps we should choose our words..."

"Let yourself out because I want this cassock off and I don't want to put this back on again. Indeed, I don't want to put it on *ever* again."

"You realise," he said, standing up, "that this house comes with your Anglican role."

"I *do*. So when I resign, they can give me a date to get out. Here the bed is mine, and the telly, and computer, but much else isn't."

He said, "I'll report back to the counselling team."

"Bye! Get 'em off, Diana."

Once he'd gone, Diana said, blouse, bra and knickers off, "For a moment I thought we were doing another Ken Osis."

"Ken had more about him."

"My gaydar was operating," Diana said.

"Anyway, I'm back with Adam."

"Hmm. Adam," said Diana. "I don't like him. He's paid more attention to the media opportunity than to you. You probably can get along with him, in a sort of 'fuck-buddy' way, you know, but when it comes to women he is just unreliable. It's a pity there isn't someone capable of loving you."

"Like you, perhaps?"

"We've been through this. I want to be your mate, your friend."

"You don't like Christine and you also don't like Adam?"

"We're surrounded by people who are in it for themselves. Christine is self-obsessed and I don't know what goes on in her head, and Adam is just unrelating. That's all. You need someone with love and purpose, who draws you in. Aardse loves me and draws me into his life and me into his. I dream of a romantic past and communities of women and men among the hills and moors and all that romance, but I am grounded too. Someone will come along."

A Building Plan and Resignation (Monday 30th September)

I checked on progress for the uncontested divorce from that bastard Keith, especially after he was named in Adam's revelations. There was no delay and there had been no adverse response. The process would still be quick. Good riddance.

I met Christine and Adam outside a sudden building site. Adam showed me his (Ann's, more likely) paper plans. His coming earnings from the newspaper were such that he had at last bought the next door property he had wanted for so long - from Ann, at a discount, who'd bought it much earlier and secured planning permission. In knocking the two properties together, incorporating the garage and extending it all backwards on two floors, there would be an energy efficient compact

chapel complex on the lower floor for Christine and me with accommodation upstairs and in the current loft.

The location was thus at the south end of Upper Road, north of two mini-roundabouts, one block away from the coast-facing properties of the Promenade Road, divided from them by a tenfoot and the gardens of those properties. The tenfoot at the back was tight and not easy for parking.

So I looked inside. We all wore hard hats. The double garage would be widened and blended in. It would be a chapel, and then a seating area linked to it to double for dining. Along the rear side a kitchen and several rooms were to be situated, and at the front side there would be a cloaks area and toilets. There would be only one staircase at the far end from the original two. The first floor would have a staircase starting alongside going up to the loft. The upstairs two floors would be private, with two large double bedrooms all ensuite and a kitchen diner on floor one and a large double bedroom with ensuite, lounge and study in the loft derived from both buildings (no extension up there). Adam suggested I would live there.

Adam said, "This is a draft plan. Offer your own ideas. There's a robing room, and there is a vestry, and then a consulting room cum library at the far southern side."

Christine said, "For downstairs, the seating area from the chapel, a dining area from the kitchen, incorporates the removed staircase space from that house. At the front side I'd like a wet room next to the cloaks. Look, I've got plenty of money: I can donate to running costs."

"Wet room? More showers?" I asked.

"It's a facility. Cloaks dry, alongside. People come for rest and relaxation, and this can include massaging and washing."

"Not sure about that." Gosh, I was considering a future!

Christine added, "Kathleen could bring her Serninsea Vestal Virgins in to the place, couldn't she?"

"Good idea," I said. "Why not a naturist ministry right here in town? But, more so, have art groups, meditation classes, and adding activities in this place. I dare say even do amateur dramatics."

Christine asked me if I had written out a ministry proposal.

I replied, "Yes, but only initial thoughts."

She asked if I had formally resigned.

"Not yet."

"Do it," she said, and then we can get you across to Bristol and incardinate you. Or, if you'd wait, they could come here when the whole building is done. If they make you a bishop, then that takes away any fears you may have that you must follow me."

"Can we even function together?"

"We can provide collective episcopal leadership, but also use the veto system we'll have to prevent unwanted impositions."

"The thing is," Adam said, "the place has to pay for itself."

"How?" I asked.

"Ann Dromeghda backs us initially but how you make it pay is yours to work out. Do courses, like meditation and so on. I don't know. Do massages!"

"I'd pay for my share in the use of these premises," said Christine.

"I don't share your theology."

"You don't have to agree with me. Yes, I may be drawn to a more normative twelfth century incarnate overall sacred theology, but all I need is to be satisfied that the *Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia* ecclesiology is sound. You are allowed to develop your own eclectic theology, and I am not going to interfere."

"Another thing," said Adam, "is that if you want you can apply for government training internships: I think the latest scheme is *Tasks with the Unemployed for Labour force Investment Purposes*. Get one for administration. I've now taken Peter on as a proper employee, as you know."

"What about your work - investigating - in the building?"

"Oh, I shall become a commuter," said Adam. "We're now decorating George Wickenby's place. I have promised Peter and Kathryn a suite upstairs there. We'll keep one bedroom spare there. See, I'd want to live here - with you, properly, Linda."

"Properly?"

"Properly."

"Well, I have my story outlined - needs a lot of editing - but not towards a book."

"Soon as possible," Adam said. "We need to strike but the iron cools."

"And I'll complete a ministry proposal. I suppose I should give it to you, Christine."

"Yes."

I decided to go from here to meet Jagjit and Gurinder Kapoor, newsagents and shopkeepers, with little Nashika playing around.

Jagjit said to me, straight away, "We have read the news with alarm, what has happened to you. We want to say that you, yourself, are always welcome in our company."

"Things came to a violent conclusion and I am resigning. It looks like I'm going to run my own church - independent. We'll have a kitchen. I understand the Sikhs are strong regarding the service of a kitchen. I might learn something."

Gurinder said, "We do have a darbar sahib - the worship space - in our terraced house gurdwara in Serninsea. At the end of the service we give out karah to the sangat, a halva made with equal portions of whole wheat flour, clarified butter, and sugar that indicates the equality of men and women. It's a sweet treat and should be accepted when offered."

"I'd want a food ministry."

"Prashad is blessed by offering of Ardas, a prayer. At any time we can provide a meal using the langar in a room in which there also is a couple of low single beds also acting as seats. The meal is given free to anyone who comes to the gurdwara, anyone who wants one. We two take our turn with the others in preparing food, which is most weeks because we are only about a dozen, as sewadars cooking and serving the food, and we all finance the meals too. Although we can eat meat, food in the gurdwara is vegetarian."

"So if we did something similar, would you object? It might be low cost food in our case."

"Absolutely not. There is a big demand. You might find many come to you who would not come to a gurdwara. The gurdwara is also our social space, so we have classes and clubs there and of course Nashika joins other children for some education in the faith and more formal learning of Punjabi."

"So your place is a single terraced house?"

"Yes. One of the Victorian bigger ones, however."

"Just that if we have a good kitchen, and I think we will, you are always welcome to use it. I'd hope we could share some services from time to time."

Jagjit asked, "Would we be able to carry out the akhand paath, the continuous unbroken reading of the scripture Guru Granth Sahib?"

"I'd love it; we'd be free to do all these sacred activities."

I went home - home for not much longer. I settled down at the opened out table in the long lounge. I used a word processing letter template, and wrote my letter of resignation. Part of it said:

I am aware that my training incumbent has lost confidence in me, telling me to resign, and he will retire completely. Given all that has been revealed, I do indeed resign as of the date of this letter or after any notice you require. I thank you for your support in the past, shown especially about my theological focus, but I now must move on. Tell me by when I must vacate the curate's house. I will sign all relevant documents to be released as a priest in the diocese and from the National Church.

I posted the letter in the very traditional manner: via a walk to a post box.

Newspaper Article (Tuesday 1st October)

Meanwhile, my piece in *The Daily Morse*, worth - in a package of new material - an incredible £10,000 for Adam, was published in full. I wish I received anything like that for a sermon!

My Encounter with the Anglican Sex Cult

I am the Reverend Linda Jupitas, and have been an Anglican priest and curate in the parish of Sutton-on-Serninsea, Serninsea and Titansea for less than two years. It has been an eventful two years, during which local Anglican leaders and others attempted to recruit me into their secret sex cult. As I discovered what it was, they took it upon themselves to punish me physically and sexually for my resistance and leave me injured.

As well as a priest I am also a naturist and have been all my life, as I am from a family of naturists. I also declare here what many people do not know: I am intersex. This means that although I look completely female, I am in fact genetically male. Let's put it this way: had my Church still not ordained women, I could have argued that they should ordain me genetically! And then there is a problem of whether I have been involved in a same-sex marriage! No one asked, because I do look female. My brain also tells me that I am female. However, I do not menstruate, cannot have children, and cannot even use IVF. I'm tall and beyond a head of hair and eyebrows, I don't have body hair and don't smell when I sweat. My hands and feet are large and so are my breasts. Folk like me undermine biblical fundamentalists insisting on binary genetics, who demand to call us men, as God made us male or female, when until recent times we were regarded as 'barren women'. Up in my family tree, Jane Margaret, born in 1852, my three times great aunt, a barren woman, may also have had CAIS - Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome. The

genetically altered copy of the AR gene on one of two X chromosomes happened twice in my mother's offspring.

I am now separated from my husband, who started an affair with a colleague. He intends to marry her and I wish them all the best, except that he has a further affair with a woman who was in the sex cult group. His partner for marriage nevertheless will have a child from his seed that I could never use.

I was selected for ordination after my husband was rejected. I know that this involved a positive intervention by the suffragan bishop, the Right Reverend John Terence Barman, the former Bishop of Bolingbroke and the centre of the sex scandal in my town. His reputation at large was as a progressive and an in-touch minister, whereas I was one person recruited by him for sex cult purposes. My training vicar in Serninsea knew nothing about this.

As reported in this newspaper, three bishops headed a sex ring on a belief that the orgasm was a direct route to receiving the divine. It was established under the principle of Apostolic Succession, that this Confraternity Vanguard group needed properly ordained bishops and priests to give it full legitimacy. By 'vanguard' they meant the group was giving history a push, and prompting God, being a fantasy that it was a leading Christian organisation to help bring in the Kingdom, based on the Divine Erotic.

This followed an affair between John Terence Barman and Elizabeth Claire Huett, who later became the Bishop of Tees until her very recent resignation following this scandal. Their orgasms gave rise to their theological insight. At the same time, Barman was a long time friend and sharer of sexual partners with Jonathan Hopkirk Eyre, Suffragan Bishop of Margate - including Huett herself. As has been reported here, Barman has probably six children from his activities with different women, and Eyre has an estimated twenty-five. I could never have any, of course. The difference is probably something like Barman's low sperm count, because none of these people believe in barrier contraception. Many of the mothers of Eyre's offspring are ordained. One evangelical priest considered for our diocese, with two children by Eyre, was redirected to Wales on the basis that I would be in the area with a new parish to do the sexual initiating. Of course, that won't happen now.

These bishops' theology involve passing body fluids securely at a time of initiation. (The nearest comparison I can make is the third level witches' initiation through sexual intercourse.) Their problem, in Serninsea, was a lack of women to pass their body fluids to make initiates. So they had plans for the Reverend Jenny World and myself to move into a parish, living in the same vicarage. Their initial intention was that I'd be the vicar and she the curate, but after my resistance they'd have made her the vicar and me the curate.

As they slowly revealed their otherwise secret Vanguard existence to me, by use of membership badges and suggestive remarks, I decided to investigate and then Adam Magellan incorporated this investigation into his professional processes. It meant that I entered into a phase of being mentored, involving having sex and once, in effect, being treated as if raped.

Theatrical talk was their deception, based on the fact that many orgies took place in the upper floor of a 1960s closed down theatre building. Upstairs was where I received the most intense sexual and violent abuse, as already reported in this newspaper. Downstairs and entirely separate is a casino. The talent scouts wore

white badges (a black goose and B on it, in Serninsea) to raise the curiosity of those who were to be recruited. When lay people 'of responsibility' were considered able to keep confidences, they were finally asked to join. They could refuse, but clergy ordained by a bishop and under National Church authority could not refuse. This was due to Catholic ecclesiology that a priest is the extension of the bishop, and is why a bishop is never invited to a parish church. When the bishops of the Confraternity Vanguard chose me, I had no choice. When I resisted, I was severely punished.

Bishop Barman knew that my marriage was in trouble and that I had taken a lover, Mr. Magellan, which I admit is against Church rules. Barman knew that I am a naturist, with progressive values. He constantly undermined my ministry, to disturb my confidence, wrecking my relationship with my training vicar in Serninsea. He tested me also if I could keep it all discreet.

You have read in this newspaper about the roles of lay people Stephen and Helen McPhail of the Serninsea parish and of the Reverend Jim Wilson and his wife Connie Wilson from the neighbouring parish to mine. For a time, Stephen McPhail was my mentor and had sex freely with me. This was before my resolution to extract myself from the group's grip.

Free of them, I made a huge mistake: I allowed a friend, who was an independent bishop, with others, to carry out a Eucharist and ordinations in my parish church on 9th September. I thought it was private and it would have disturbed no one, but CCTV still recorded and transmitted our activities. I was suspended, and faced being dismissed for polluting an altar table. However, the Bishop used his influence to promise me a ministry if I at last submitted into the sex cult arrangement. He'd got me. At the same time, I had to be punished for my resistance that had nearly succeeded, and at last gave the sadistic Connie Wilson and her biblical blood of salvation husband, the Reverend Jim Wilson, their chance to practice their violent evil on someone on 16th September. Jim Wilson wanted me to bleed on the biblical theology basis that loss of blood removes sins. As an intersex woman, I had particularly smooth skin, free of adolescent angst and body hair follicles. Piercing my delicate skin when being of my form of intersex is very dangerous: I can get infection easily and my undescended gonads are at risk. Now I have whip marks and punctures from pins, needles and a skewer that caused blood to flow. In a family newspaper I cannot go into further detail into what they did, but I was naked, hanging on chains, only my toes touching the ground, with my ankles chained to wide-out poles, and a smoothed plank of wood was pressing upwards. This followed being forced to have ice baths, kneeling on ridges of wood, and sitting on a triangular shaped 'horse' to wait for the main punishment event.

I am no angel. I enjoy sex and, yes, I have had multiple partners. I fall in love too easily, and I become obsessed by some individuals. Sometimes I cannot help myself.

At a conference in Margate, 23rd-25th April, I became obsessed by the attractions of Jonathan Eyre, Suffragan Bishop of Margate, Jonathan Eyre. With my husband discovered having an affair, I thought I could be in love with Jonathan. I had no idea that he was reporting on me back to the sex cult. A pregnant Methodist minister at the conference gained her condition from his seed.

All the time my husband was also informing the Confraternity Vanguard about me. I had no idea that he was constantly undermining me. Of course he was partnering someone else, and another as well, and was sexually promiscuous with

the group's members.

The now resigned headteacher of the local secondary school flashed her badge at me. (She was also my headteacher!) I went shopping with Connie Wilson to fall asleep on her bed, to wake to her having sexual intercourse alongside me with her reverend husband. Her shopping included a sex shop where, as an early threat to my disobedience, I might have had to offer myself to customers for sex, as well as approach people on a train for sex.

The Suffragan Bishop John Barman appointed a counsellor, also a member of the cult, who committed suicide. He had himself shown resistance, and so was hung up naked as I was later on, but on seeing what could happen to him, with whips, vibrators and needles on display, submitted immediately and obeyed. Although I tried the same strategy, I wasn't spared.

I became suspicious of this man as a counsellor. My naturist friend and I set up some naked based tests for him, to see if he'd tell on us. He never did. He was an honourable man. He confessed to me Connie Wilson's influence over him. At first he advised me to get closer to the Bishop of Bolingbroke. Then he warned me (based on his own experience).

I did not know it at the time, but Ken Osis kept daily A4 writing book diaries. My naked and sexual activities with him will be in them, but not my confessional material. The Coroner was frustrated that many recent volumes are missing. But this is simple to investigate: the Wilsons and Barman took those diaries. They were to taken to embarrass and constrain me more, as well as protect them from their wrongdoings. But it is too late for them: Adam Magellan has presented the whole story to this newspaper.

Some locals remembered me as a naturist child and teenager. My parents had a farm just north of Sutton-on-Serninsea. We had a shop, and we weren't naked all the time, but sometimes we could be seen as such out in the fields. There was a well-remembered incident when, as a young teenager, I came naked into the farm shop and my mother made no effort to shoo me out. The family had a naturist club, but when I was ordained deacon I had moved my club to another much further away from the east coast.

My older sister was discovered as intersex at puberty. She underwent operations by doctors. I also hit puberty with no periods, but my mother changed her view: I did not undergo operations to remove my undescended testicles and increase the size of my vagina. My eldest brother is genetically male and phenotype male. My youngest sister is genetically female and phenotype female. I am also bisexual, although my intersex sister is heterosexual only.

Friends matter to me. My close female school friend became ordained quite separately from me, and yet ended up in the same sex cult in its Hartlepool variant. Another friend at school became an investigator and is now my partner. My husband was a year above me at school, and I saw him as a home from home person at East Midlands University. I moved in with him, and supported his religious activities. I did not know the extent of the number of sexual partners he'd had. He systematically changed my body to give him sexual alternatives to vaginal sex. When you don't have a cervix, the vagina is like a small pouch. But, as a young woman, I felt it my duty to give him those alternatives, but his alterations led to health issues since, including how I swallow food with little sensation and dispose matter once the digestion process is complete.

I think my Hartlepool based friend, who has had issues of mental stability, simply ended up being in an exploited situation, despite her own love of sex. So she was coupled with me in plans to initiate people into the sex cult around Serninsea.

My punishment above the casino in Serninsea happened until my friends knew where I was and came to rescue me. The suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke and the Wilsons fled the scene. Initially, I was angry, because I'd been punished for nothing, when I had expected his sexual penetration of me. I was in considerable pain and I spent a week in bed, traumatised, on antibiotics and having friends rub in creams for my injuries. I came to my senses regarding whom to blame.

I kept being intersex as my secret, and the internal sex cult members did not know about it. At least my husband respected me this much, as did my Hartlepool based friend. Perhaps it was a line he could not cross; I would never doubt my Hartlepool based friend, who is herself another victim of these exploiters.

The diocese is in a spin because an official report also attacked its mismanagement.

There has been another somewhat related matter. Serninsea is rich in archaeology, as it is an area once used for repairing fine metallic and imported items especially in Roman and later Saxon times. The suffragan bishop promoted a fine piece called The Serninsea Cross, a brooch. He knew it was a fake, a product of the creative abilities of Stephen and Helen McPhail of the internal sex cult themselves. Stephen was my mentor! The bishop wanted to continue its promotion even after its fakery became public.

Serninsea is a somewhat isolated set of three seaside settlements with many people on benefits, with high unemployment and underemployment, and an active leisure sex industry. This suffragan bishop exploited this, adding to its problems. He has now been exposed to the world, along with his sex cult colleagues. It was a cult, because it relied on their authority; the cult has now been destroyed.

With all the revelations there have been, many have resigned, and I have also decided to resign. Too much has happened, and I intend to begin my own independent ministry. Some knew about my naturism but most didn't, few knew that I am intersex. Now these are on the level.

So I will open my own chapel in this town. It will be based on Serninsea's character and needs, but allows me to develop a theology with less emphasis on doctrines. I will join my colleague, a bishop of an independent Liberal Catholic Church, who before my investigating took a decision to leave Anglicanism and escape the clutches of the former Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke. I enjoy sex and I am proud of my body and so I have limited agreement with her 'theosexual' views. I will continue to promote the normality of social nudity.

Serninsea is going through the agonies of losing Systematic Measuring Services (SMS). There is the high cost of maintaining the inadequate dock and it is likely to be abandoned. With the collapse of the Confraternity Vanguard-led orgies, and loss of Systematic Measuring Services, I have been told that, already, prostitutes are cutting prices. There is a strong online provision; one female who masturbates to a webcam was part of the sex cult.

Serninsea needs to become better known, but not because of the scandal. It needs improved transport links and means to rejuvenate its coastal economy - rather than holding sex orgies to attract in other business managers. Anyway, we've stopped them.

Cheryl Mould Calls

I answered the door to my curate's house. "Cheryl! What are you doing here?"

"Visiting my mother."

"Nice lady of the parish."

"I read her newspaper and your article. I want to talk about Keith. He's not the person I thought he was."

"He turned out not to be the person I thought he was, either. Would you like a drink?"

"I had one before coming out. What am I to do about him?"

So I directed her to sit down in the lounge.

"I don't know. He did keep my main secret from the group, that I am now telling the world; even while he was preparing me for the group, unknown to me."

"Is he preparing *me* for the group, with these other pregnant women you mention?"

"I doubt it: because you're not an apostolic minister, nor any faith minister, nor a manager, nor a business person, nor a prostitute."

"I'm just a pleb."

"The group doesn't exist any more."

"This is awful," said Cheryl. And you say he has an affair with this woman: she is Yojana Asthana."

"I understand he's staying at hers now; it's a bed and breakfast but I don't think he's a paying customer."

"He's not here at all?"

"No: not here. I wouldn't have him here now."

"He effectively lied to me, and made me pregnant."

"I have to say that you knew he was my husband. This should have given you an insight into the character of the man. He cheated me, so why wouldn't he do the same to you?"

"I wanted a baby but I don't want to be a single mother. Is there any way to stop him seeing this Asthana woman, do you think?"

I doubt it. Yojana probably doesn't expect anything of him. She accepts that he is a cheat. As for the group, I don't doubt they will all try and set up something similar."

"I'm still having the child."

"So you should. And if you were up in these parts, I'd christen him or her."

"You're so good. You didn't like me at school."

"You've flowered since, that's for sure."

"I should have realised: Keith's school encounters with me were probably exploiting my reputation then. 'Mouldy by name, mouldy by nature.' I knew the phrase at his End of School Party, when Keith watched me in the lower sixth lower myself and urinate in the garden. Does this shock you?"

"No."

"Adam Magellan inserted his finger up me, also outside. At Malham and the Geography field trip, obviously before that, Adam saw me naked because I went into his and his mate's next door room to tell them to make less noise and I lifted my nightie. I was a..."

"Adam felt you up? *Oh.*"

"I was a bad girl. But Keith didn't have a go with *you* at school."

"Because my family were weird and his family were upstanding. He did, a little, at the party. My sister Lucinda claims to have had something to do with him before me, but I think it was after. She was one of many, I'm afraid, Cheryl. *But* I do have a question I'd like you to answer. Has your affair with him, and you now likely to change your surname to Jupitas, been running for six years ago or two?"

"It's true this much: I met Keith six years ago and had full sex. It was after open air fish and chips. I did with one or two, I'd say. Perhaps I'd better not say, Linda. No, I should tell you. Adam Magellan. I got my divorce nisi from Frank Little through, and I saw Adam in Titansea and he had me up against a building."

"You had sexual intercourse with Adam," I said slowly.

"That was the second time. Ten years ago, right, Adam left the police to start his own agency in Upper Road. One of his first jobs was investigating Frank Little for me; he discovered the affair and we had casual sex. Six years ago I had fish and chips with Adam followed by sex after my divorce."

"Does fish and chips have this effect on you?"

"And maybe the open air. I expected nothing with either of them. Adam married that Rumanian, didn't he, just after our second sexual encounter. I wonder if she ever knew."

"He is still married to her. She is one of his influences. The biggest is Ann, who taught us, and, by extension, Labhaoise who was beginning as her lifelong partner. He can't move without Ann's say-so. So I've learnt to tolerate that, perhaps. But I didn't know that Adam had been with you. He told me he'd had fish and chips with you, when we went to the restaurant after he did my investigation. He didn't mention the pudding."

"I wasn't a pudding."

"I knew about the Geography field trip and Adam; I knew about the party and Keith. Like Keith, then, he's been around the block somewhat. Not that you are a block either. I'm thinking about Adam being more like Keith than I thought."

Cheryl said, "They say that Adam cannot love."

"His formation as a teenager wasn't very good. Thing is, Cheryl, we're all damaged."

"Me too, and why I saw Adam and Keith. But two years ago I wanted to be serious with Keith. Now it looks like if I become a 'Jupitas', it won't be for that long either."

"You either tolerate him or become a single mother. So..."

"When I went to Harwich, that was a chance to start a new life again, with SMS likely to close down in Serninsea, as it is now clearing out. I'd become Cheryl Jupitas in time, I thought, also based on what he said about you - and nothing was said about exploiting you to a group. But... Perhaps he was into my bed like he was into anybody's."

"I should be mad with you, but you've taken him off my hands. I do have some reassurance for you as well. From how I've heard him, Cheryl, he does treat you like

his future. He sees you as domesticating him, in tension with being a wild animal. So you might be his future, but what future for you?"

"That's what I'm asking."

"Can you tolerate the actual man? I did, but I wouldn't now. You might be in a better position. Back at school, no one would have thought you would have domesticated anyone. He realises now that you, over in Harwich, actually want to settle down."

"Linda. You've helped me. I say to my mum that you are good."

"She joins others in her low opinion of me as a minister of religion. Well, they can move on now. And so will I. I still like your mum. But, Cheryl, I also like you, and glad that you took so well to naturism."

"Yeah. My wild side, but in a container. I'm going. Thanks. Thanks Linda."

"Decisions, eh?"

The Rabbi (Wednesday 2nd October)

Tuesday night I was into Adam's somewhat grubby bed in the sense that his sheets and duvet were little washed. This was a final night before the extensive building work downstairs would come upstairs. The before sleep fuck wasn't repeated in the morning; instead he put the wall-hung screen on before it was taken down. It wasn't for television but a morning of looking at 'Headgirl' or Annie Fenwick.

"She's got a special guest today," as indeed became evident as he started to view two naked women basically chatting to each other. "It's the barmaid Jördis."

"I thought you didn't drink."

"I don't, but I can still go in a pub occasionally. I do sometimes to track movements of people for clients. Annie goes in pubs a lot."

"To do things she hasn't experienced before."

"Here we go, she's starting..."

"Hi guys! We have a special guest today, and like me she's shed everything but has got a lovely butterfly mask on because this voluptuous lass I know is a bit shy. I won't repeat where this broadcast is from, but our guest is a local barmaid I met. She's called George, everyone. Go on, tell me some of the things you said."

Adam said, "I'm going to encourage them."

I said, "This is pathetic, Adam."

Adam has entered the room.

"Oh gowd," I said. I decided to grip him under the duvet to demonstrate real female contact.

Adam has tipped 10 tokens.

"Thank you Adam!" said 'Headgirl'.

"Thank you Adam! added 'George'.

George thus put out her arm to brush the breast of her host.

"Tweak my nipple and look at it carefully," said Headgirl, "By the way, guys, we're going fifty-fifty on tips today so if we get a lot George might do her own show."

"Don't know about that," said George.

Adam has tipped 10 tokens.

Tracey has entered the room.

Tracey has tipped 50 tokens.

Cumface has entered the room.

They both had Internet connected remote vibrators inserted, so each tip caused a buzz based on the level of the tip.

Headgirl said, "Finger in my bum. If our friends tip enough, do you want to experience that?"

"Just a little way in."

Adam has tipped 50 tokens.

Tracey has tipped 50 tokens.

Cumface has tipped 20 tokens.

Both responded to the buzzing stimulation. Headgirl turning her back to George told her to insert one finger up to her knuckle, and feel her anus's warmth and moisture.

"Adam," I said, "If you want that I've got one that was prepared earlier."

"She's doing new things, new experiences - Jördis."

"I somehow doubt it."

"You don't have to watch this. Your mate called me yesterday. Used my number."

"What mate?"

"That rabbi chap. I didn't think you were interested, now they've all run for cover."

"I think - I hope - he was different. I've had enough of this," I said. "What did Maurice Neptune want?"

"To see you."

"You should have told me," I said, getting out of his bed. "When?"

"Today, before lunch."

"Oh great. Look, don't you decide whom I can and cannot meet."

"Okay. Sorry."

Out of bed I pointed my arse his way and spread my cheeks. When I looked round, he was viewing the screen and not me.

"Linda, it's not the same. I'm interested in Annie's and Jördis's progress."

"And I'm interested in mine. I'll get dressed and go."

"To actually see that rabbi, in Wytham?"

"Why not?"

"His address, then..."

I put off seeing Diana in the afternoon. During the time of The Worshipful Company, Rabbi Maurice had shown some independence from them. Whatever, a trip out would give a change of scene. I still wanted to interrogate his intellectual mind So I headed directly over the Wolds to a rural road just this side of Wytham, and a string of spacious houses before reaching the city. I still wore sensible shoes, slacks, a blouse and a sweater.

"I'm Mrs. Roberta Garfield," said a middle aged blonde haired apron wearing woman at his front door. "He asked me to let you in; he will be back very soon from Wytham, once you said you were coming."

That was my opportunity to be in the loo before he came. It was separate, this one, and was as big as a disabled space with such facilities too.

I looked out of his front room of many rooms, a house on three floors too. This was a man of means. He arrived driven by a chauffeur, no less.

He came in to the room, "So wonderful to see you, and here."

"Yes, this is an impressive place. They must pay good salaries to be a rabbi."

"Ah no. I made a pile in London, in banking. I still dabble, some days, but I had a change of emphasis in my life. I did my training and I came here, a vacancy in the Reformist tradition, and I built up the shul here. So Mr. Magellan passed on my message."

"I get the essentials; he's very busy as you can imagine. You can also imagine that I am angry with that group and all that it did."

"So am I, still. Let me show you the house."

We went up in a lift! The largest bathroom on the uppermost floor had a central double-sized bath, with various controls. It was a wet room, and a shower that covered a large square area with its various sprays. The lighting was variable, and giving different colours. The toilet was joined by a nearby urinal. There were even air dryers for the body. All bedrooms also had ensembles.

Having moved down two staircases, we came to the main kitchen (there were two more). It was fabulous: roomy, three major ovens, an island and more preparation areas. Mrs. Garfield was his cook as well as housekeeper.

"This whole place lacks one thing," he said.

"Oh? What would that be?"

"A woman of the house. No, I do not mean Mrs. Garfield."

"Oh. Surely this place could turn any woman's heart."

"Moving on," he said. "Please come to my lounge." This was large. "I have held discussions in here."

The sofa I sat on was wrap-around, and would hold eight people easily. He indicated that I could put my feet up, with my shoes removed. So my bare feet went on the sofa.

"I will be going into Wytham again later; I'd like you to come with me and visit the shul."

"Yes, most interesting."

"Something I must say," he told me. "The Worshipful Company has collapsed, and indeed the Confraternity has gone as well, and I have to say 'good riddance' to it. From its actions it wasn't the set-up I had assumed."

"The logic of no choice for priests meant sexual violence."

"Contrary indeed to the pleasure that was Terry Barman's claim. He was my associate, my friend, even in another faith, and why I was involved. Accepting the Wilsons' sexual violence has broken my friendship with him."

"Christine Vine was opposed to his pleasure basis, as she sees it."

"I think she once said the difference between her Catholicism and Jim Wilson's evangelicalism was that she had it done to her and he did it to others. She insisted that it had to be one's own service and sacrifice and not imposed. But I reject both approaches."

"I've sent in my National Church resignation. I'm hoping to go independent. I'll have a church and accommodation, but it needs income."

"Ah. I would like an occasional base in Serninsea, for a small number of families there."

"Would you want to have access?"

"I'd like to see a mikveh built under Jewish principles."

"Explain."

"Six days down to wholeness and completion means six steps down towards a water pool, although not necessary. There needs to be a place to inspect and wash before submerging, and it is full immersion for ritual purity, for marking a change in life, and for conversion to Judaism. I told you much at the school. To repeat: many Jews immerse before the Sabbath and High Holy Days; many women immerse days after their menstruation; marriage partners immerse before their wedding day; and there are life-cycle events such as important birthdays, getting beyond personal loss, or after an illness. Indeed you could use it opening the building and starting a new ministry."

"It might enhance naturist ministry but I would not separate male and female. It could be used for baptisms, but I like 'moving on' ceremonies too. Good idea. What is the blessing you use?"

"It goes: 'Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding the immersion.' This is said before every use, except with the convert."

"Remind me of the structural regulations."

"Place it into the ground or the structure of the building at a minimum of twenty-four cubic feet of water or some two-hundred gallons. The water level should be nearly a foot above an average person's waist when stood up, to allow reasonably easy full immersion. Some of the water must be freely entering rainwater, but it must not flow when in use."

"We'll do this, Maurice," I said, "and your community can use the building. We will have toilets and a shower room, and there's talk of a massage room in the more religious and body sense - I hope. The chapel will be small, in what was the double garage, but open out into a sitting and dining area. There is a space to add on a mikveh at the end of the chapel because there is a back extension planned. You might want facilities for Jewish worship in the chapel, for the Torah scroll for example."

"That would be most generous. I'll send you all the details. Now, I have to level with you. There is a possibility that I will go independent too. If you will wait for me, I shall be examined for my involvement in the Vanguard group."

"When?"

"This afternoon: very rushed. At the shul. So I might be investing personally in your premises in Serninsea; I might have to open my own kehilla."

"A what?"

"Another word for shul. Synagogue. We can have ten in the congregation."

"Talk to Adam Magellan, then, as well. I'd value your theological and historical input. You might have to break all links Barman and the rest of them."

"Thank you."

"I also want to learn from the Sikhs and the community kitchen as well, though we won't have the resources for free meals. I envisage low prices and lower for people on benefits. If we don't have a congregation, at least we can have people coming in and out."

"You will be able to pursue your own theology," he said. "I could pursue mine."

"What is yours?"

"Hmm. Think of Joseph ibn Gabirol, the Platonist theologian. Twenty past ten to three minutes to eleven."

"Ah. 1057, he died."

"Matter - and I would of course include our bodies - are associated with God. All forms of matter derive from the essence of the Creator, although the Creator stands separate from them. The light and goodness of the creator leads to all our cosmic experiences. From memory:

"Thou art wise and from Thy wisdom didst cause to emanate a ready will, an agent and artist as it were, to draw existence out of non-existence, as light proceeds from the eye."

I said, "Sounds like one of Aristotle's observational misunderstandings."

"Why not?" he said. "Surely now you can become a rabbi. Surely now, just possibly, you will consider being my wife?"

"Oh, Maurice, please! Accepting that my Christian theology is rather tenuous, I still want to refer to the Christian Testament. You make me blush like a young girl entering puberty."

"I take the view that Paul took ex-Pagan Pagans, if you like, to be adapted Jews. His outlook was essentially Jewish. Christianity became distinct in the mid-third century."

"Tell me. Who was the first female rabbi?"

"It's a tragic story, of course. Regina Jonas born in August 1902 was the first woman to be ordained as a rabbi. She started out as a teacher but joined the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies in the Academy for the Science of Judaism and enrolled in the same seminary courses for liberal rabbis. Her thesis was on *Can a Woman Be a Rabbi According to Halachic Sources?* Using Biblical, Talmudic, and rabbinical sources, her answer was yes. But not according to the Talmud professor responsible for ordinations, nor later Rabbi Leo Baeck for reasons of relationship problems with the orthodox. But in 1935 she was ordained by the liberal Rabbi Max Dienemann based in Offenbach am Main. She became a prison rabbi whilst trying to find a pulpit.

"The Nazis placed her in forced labour but she still did her rabbinical work. In November 1942 she had her property confiscated and was forced to go to into internment at Theresienstadt. She continued as a rabbi and assisted Viktor Frankl, the psychologist, to help prevent suicides by questioning arrivals at the railway station.

"For two years she gave lectures, and helped organise concerts, all as a kind of distraction from the harshness of living. In 1944 she and most of the town were deported and killed at Auschwitz. But she was forgotten, deliberately even, by witnesses to Theresienstadt. She was rediscovered in 1991 as part of a research project on attitudes to female ordination in 1930s Germany by a Dr. Katharina von Kellenbach, a researcher and lecturer. Details were within one-time East German archives. In 1999 her thesis and witness were published by Kellenbach.

"Bea Wyler, who had studied in New York, was the first female rabbi to serve in postwar Germany, in Oldenburg, from 1995. Alina Treiger, who'd studied in Potsdam, became the first female rabbi to be ordained in Germany in 2010, followed in 2011 by Antje Deusel, the first German-born woman to be ordained as a rabbi."

"And all I know about is Constance Coltman, the High Church Congregationalist first trinitarian ordained minister, and Getrude von Petzold before her, a Unitarian minister. *She* was German, and went back to Germany to help her fellow nationals struggling under wartime conditions."

"Linda, future rabbi or not, please stay the night, here. Enjoy the house more.

There's a spare bedroom. Drive back tomorrow."

"There are several! Oh, I don't know," I said. "I've brought nothing with me."

"You're a naturist: your shoulder bag is enough. Roberta will find you everything. So come with me to Wytham now, and, after my meeting, do see our mikveh and let us have a meal out."

I sent a message to Adam. I'd see Maurice's shul or synagogue and the attached mikveh, and have a meal.

The chauffeur Joseph Meiman came to us and told us we should leave very soon. We both were driven to the place of worship. Joseph then went out of the building.

I loved its layout where the congregation met. Seeing the mikveh would give me a clear idea of what was needed, even if mine might be for wider use - but Maurice said we had to go to a particular corridor outside a room suitable for interviewing.

Rabbinical Discipline

A woman and two men arrived in the kehilla or shul, wearing long black gowns, and Maurice suggested that we sat down as these three stood above us.

The female introduced herself to me. "You are the Reverend Linda Jupitas? I am Rabbi Lily Jonas, the dayan of this beth din gathered to interview Maurice Neptune, using halakhah laws and customs, about his participation in the Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players. Being the dayan means I am adjudicating this case and we seek to come to a rapid conclusion about it."

"I'll go for a walk or something. How long will you be?"

"We may be up to an hour before we would then like to ask you some questions - alone."

"Me?"

"You are in the media as the victim of what took place."

"I was the victim, yes." Ah, this was the basis of my invitation.

"I am accompanied by Rabbi Evan Kaplan and Rabbi Solomon Kohler and we form the beth din to examine this situation."

"He wasn't involved at all in damaging me," I said of Maurice. "I wouldn't be here if he was."

"We wish to understand his involvement in this peculiar interfaith involvement. We will interview him in this room here, then you, and then him again, and then we shall go away to consider our decision."

"What for?"

"Possibly conduct unbecoming. Sanctions can be from nothing to asking for his resignation for gross moral turpitude."

"I'll wait then," I said, and did as all four went in.

With my guts churning somewhat I found a toilet and later returned to the seat. I couldn't hear what they were saying inside the room.

Then Rabbi Evan Kaplan called me in, as Rabbi Maurice walked out. I was at once side of a desk and these three at the other, with Rabbi Lily Jonas in the middle.

Once settled, Rabbi Solomon Kohler asked me, "What do you understand by

the term 'Abramsexual'?"

"I've never heard it. Oh, I think I can work it out. I've heard of Christosexual. It must be the Jewish equivalent."

"So Maurice Neptune has never used this term with you. He hasn't said he must be Abramsexual with you."

"No. He didn't get the chance."

Rabbi Evan Kaplan asked, "You had a time when you were 'investigating' this group, and you did have sex with individuals. Did you have sex with Rabbi Maurice Neptune? I'm thinking of the summer."

Rabbi Lily Jonas said, "I'd like you to give a full account as possible. Do not spare us the details."

"Oh, well, I met Rabbi Maurice first in June at a school in RE teaching time. I knew then he was connected to this shadowy group because he wore this badge that others wore. Then in mid-July some point, my suffragan bishop - he was Maurice's friend - had contacted my training vicar that I was to do some interfaith work with Maurice. My training vicar Colin Cromer joked that with my theology Maurice - Rabbi Maurice - might be arranging my transfer to Reformist Judaism."

"You call him Maurice. Are you familiar with him?" she asked.

"Only like politicians use first names! So in July I met him in the Serninsea area and walked in a park, and had some historical theology discussions that certainly tested my knowledge. Well, he was well beyond my knowledge. The idea was to stay overnight at the McPhails - that would be at least four of us - and to be honest I was attracted to him. This time he talked about a relationship with me, and the difficulty of me a Christian priest and him a Jewish rabbi. I remember he said in the park that if there was a conflict with them, he would be on our side."

She said, "He was, as they say, chatting you up."

"You can imagine that made me happy. Don't forget, this was in the context of that group and hierarchy forcing me to be a member, priests having no choice, so he was taking my side and opposing them. And what happened with me and him sexually was nothing, absolutely nothing."

"Nothing?" asked Solomon Kohler.

Because he was with someone else, a regular partner, I think, and he said I'd get on with her. She rejected Augustinian theology, and was clever. She was younger than me, but I thought she could be knowledgeable. That's right, it was all about somebody who was influenced by some Islamic Kalam school and Greek philosophy, rational arguments."

"Saadiah Gaon," said Rabbi Solomon.

"That's the fellow. Oh, and there was something about time flowing implying a beginning. Much was Aristotelian. These two talking were a bit like us two. The woman is younger than me, half my age, and she was sexualised, really. She's a webcam performer; I know a man obsessed with her as a performer."

"Rabbi Maurice, by any chance?"

"Definitely not."

"Maurice is older than you."

"In the context of tis group, the young woman fell asleep between us and so I had no sexual contact with Maurice at all - even if I'd wanted it."

Rabbi Solomon said, "You were in the same bed as Maurice and his young lover."

"I was being acclimatised to multiple partners and people in a group having sex with each other."

"Who, on this occasion?"

"At breakfast there was Stephen and his wife, Maurice, Annie the young woman, and me. And then I said to him one to one that it must be him and me only next time."

Rabbi Lily Jonas said, "I see. We've asked enough. I'd like to say thank you. I have to say that you are making a sordid set up sound almost honourable."

"I think it was, in his case. First of all, we were all duped by Bishop John Barman's shop window of being progressive, when in fact he was corrupting. All I'd say is that Maurice was in that group because he was looking for a partner. And I found him interesting. Clearly he did not mix with that group very often, but he turned up because he'd heard I was to be there, and I found him engaging one to one and later with the others. He is a minister and acted like a minister. And another thing. I'd no idea I was coming here for some interrogation or interview. Perhaps I have come under false pretences but Maurice and I have had genuine discussions about my independent chapel having a mikveh, where I will be a minister of religion myself."

Rabbi Lily Jonas said, "Again, thank you. If you would ask Rabbi Maurice to come back in."

I waited outside after he went in.

When he came out fifteen minutes later he said that we would leave them to begin their deliberations about him.

There was a local park nearby where Maurice told me about a once prosperous Jewish community in Wytham. Like him they were involved in banking but in the mid-thirteenth century the locals skapegoated them over an injured child. Later that century came the nationwide expulsion of all Jews. Their exclusion lasted until Oliver Cromwell's time.

Water and Food (Wednesday 2nd - Thursday 3rd October)

At a distance we could see the three rabbis leave. So Maurice invited me back in to the shul.

I now saw the mikveh and he asked me directly if we should use it there and then.

"Not if you're under discipline!"

"Forget that. Hopefully they'll provide a script to read out that clears my name enough. Meanwhile I want to mark the beginning of a friendship and co-operation. It is unusual for a man and woman to mix, but I was in this Worshipful Company and you are a naturist. Shall we do it? Come on!"

"Yes," I said. "I love rituals that I don't know. I experienced a creative one among some women of concern for Serninsea and its area. Very strong, very powerful."

The shul had its own toilets and shower cubicles, male and female, close to the mikveh. So we went in the respective places, to urinate and evacuate and wash, and thank goodness there was a bidet - a belt to add to the toilet paper braces.

No clothes on and outside the mikveh itself we inspected each other's orifices

for absence of blockages. We checked our mouths, noses, ears, anuses, genitals, and that we had no jewellery or similar being worn. I didn't wear jewellery anyway.

He said, "I shall give the general prayer, and you are not a convert:

"Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al ha't'vila.

"For you, I translate:

"Dear God, you created the universe from a womb of water. You made me in your image, pure and holy, according to your divine will. I thank you for my body of beauty that has rhythms like the sun and moon, the seasons, the Shabbos and the Holy Days.

"You go first, Linda. Submerge completely, and stay under for a few seconds. I will then come in, submerge, and we can leave together."

I descended into the water, submerged and held my breath. He followed and submerged. I reached out for his hand and so we came up for air, walked up and out together. We dried ourselves together, in the male bathroom, and got dressed. Joseph was found in a small lounge or waiting area.

I said, getting in the car with him, assisted by Joseph, "We are a team."

We went to Luciana's Restaurant for a meal, facing each other across a table, behind a curtain from a few other diners.

"They have here mainly, but not exclusively, Ashkenazi dishes. Choose something different from the usual."

"How about some borscht: beetroot soup with sour cream? I've not had that before."

"From Ukraine," Maurice said. "We'll both have that. Let's order it all. Go on."

"Hmm. Brisket - braised meat from the chest of a cow. Not sure. No. Cholent. It's a..."

"Slow-cooked stew of meat, potatoes, beans and barley. Eaten on the Sabbath, often - but not exclusively. You didn't fancy stuffed fish - gefilte, filled with chopped fish, eggs, onions, matzo meal or crumbs, spices? They do it here the old way. These days it often means poached fish cakes, with a matzo meal."

"Let's do that then. Yes."

"Sweet?"

"I'm looking. So much is unusual, but clearly people are coming in."

"Distinctive cuisine is favoured these days."

"Rugelach?"

"Chocolate chips or jam in a flaky pastry spread with cinnamon sugar. It is rolled, and baked."

"Jam," I said. "Prefer honey."

"Then look at teiglach. These are marble size balls of dough in a honey syrup."

"What is flodni?"

"Sweet pastry, layered and contains apple, walnuts, currants and poppy seeds. Hungarian."

"That," I declared.

During what was a delicious meal, and so different, I asked Maurice, "Do you, being, you know, more liberal than most, demythologise - that sort of thing?"

"Let me tell you. Judaism is already demythologised. Genesis 8, after the flood. Read it later. But I can recite to you something that is its source, and almost romantic. It's the eleventh canto of the Gilgamesh epic."

"You know that? Your memory for facts and beliefs!"

*"I sent forth a dove, and let her go,
The dove went to and fro,
But there was still no resting place and she returned.
Then I sent forth a raven and let her go.
The raven flew away, she beheld the abatement of waters,
And she came near, wading and croaking, but did not return.
Then I sent everything forth to the four quarters of heaven, I offered sacrifice.
I made a libation on the peak of the mountain.
By sevens I set out the vessels,
Under them I heaped up reed and cedarwood and myrtle,
The gods smelt the savour,
The gods smelt the sweet savour,
The gods gathered like flies about him that offered up the sacrifice."*

"Wow!"

"Genesis 8 demythologises all that." Maurice resumed eating and I looked at him intently.

"So like me: *But there was still no resting place and she returned.*"

"Yes," he said. "Marry me."

"Maurice. It's so complicated at present," I said. "I am with Adam, and he has money to spend on a church."

"Very important connection, but I want you in my bed."

"Ah, well, 'Ceci n'empêche pas cela,' I would say."

"Which means?"

"Something like, 'This is not counted out by that,' or, 'This does not prevent this,' so that both can exist."

"I might have thought also that you were sensitive after your ordeal," Maurice said.

"I'd have thought you were cautious after the beth din."

"Absolutely not," he responded. "You know, you *did* suit that group: if only they had treated you properly. Well, I will treat you properly and I hope you treat me properly."

"Of course."

Thus it was that back at his pile I had my first ever direct impact on a somewhat desensitised circumcised penis. I adjusted my effort for the years of rubbing on underpants. I began to work on it by hand in his jacuzzi bath situated in the centre of his large bathroom. And I continued in his large bed, with lights made red and blue in the room.

"So much sex is a ritual," I said. "But I like rituals."

He knew how to sweet talk a busy girl while being masturbated. "I mentioned a Platonist theologian before. I have another. Joseph Pakuda, ten to eleven to

eleven twenty. Keep going! He said there was too much ritualism in rabbinic Judaism. You have to add the... inner life duty to the ritual and observance duty. The striving for the inner life... that rose in stages towards meeting God. God gave us our, phew, souls, placed into our bodies. Revelation and reason can... overcome tendencies towards evil. Be sincere, humble, repent, self-examine and be... ascetic."

"I am being sincere with my hand, and humble, and in fact I think I can work you now inside me."

It was so pleasant the next morning to wake in his luxurious and large bed and to be fucked again so nicely. We walked in his wet room and shower sprays were coming from different directions over our bodies. And Mrs. Roberta Garfield cooked a Jewish-compatible English breakfast.

Before he went off to his shul to do some work, pending a decision, he spent an hour (with me by his side) doing some financial dealing. There were rows and columns of figures, and graphs, and he was buying and selling shares and bonds, losing money in some cases, but making large instant profits in others. He said he could now afford the month's mortgage, but then told me he'd been joking in that he owned the house outright.

As I got into my SUV, I said, "I will consider your suggestion seriously and carefully."

"The mikveh?"

"No. That is settled. I mean, marrying you. You are a wonderful man."

"I am very pleased."

"I cannot decide soon, but I am thinking hard. But I am useless domestically."

"I have Mrs. Garfield. I cannot drive, and so I have a chauffeur, Mr. Meiman. Whatever you do, however, keep Adam Magellan on board. We need the chapel, the synagogue."

I drove myself back to Serninsea, feeling somewhat recovered from recent events. Whilst I wanted to stop 'falling in love' with these people, I'd make an exception for Maurice. I felt relaxed and good, and it was back to somewhat secretive Adam (both ways, now) and the plans.

Adam fucked me on Thursday lying in our bed, but I was thinking of Maurice's skill in me. Adam had nowhere else to go presently.

Resigned! (Thursday to Friday 4th October)

Later Thursday Adam left me a text message:

Cheryl has thrown Keith out, although gossip from Harwich and Felixstowe (I have acquired some contacts) is that because of the widespread announced child on the way she may try to reconcile if he can commit to her. Keith is in Serninsea staying with Yojana, even with no SMS and no sex group here any more.

Tough shit for him, I thought. It wasn't his own bed any more but he had to lie in it. Cheryl - brave enough to come to me in person - had to decide whether to reject the Keith she had discovered or tolerate his wanderings. Meanwhile, at my home, I'd received a posted letter from Derek Imperial. This was super-quick, given all that

must be on his plate. It said:

I am sorry to receive your resignation letter. I accept, reluctantly. Administration has added some documents for you to sign. You have been caught up in a local scandal of unprecedented proportions, and you have caught the ill-wind of the recent diocesan report. There is much to put right, needing my leadership. You have the makings of a fine theologian and I watched your progress with interest. I hope you can put these talents to good use in the future. You do of course remain a priest. If you try a different diocese I will give you a good reference, and the same with a secular job.

++ Derek Wytham

He wasn't resigning, despite another typically turgid website piece from the Archbishop of All England, the Most Reverend William Blair Rothach:

Whilst it is certainly not the case that the Diocesan Bishop of Wytham, Dr. Derek Imperial, has indulged in the organising of inappropriate sexual activities in the east of Wytham Diocese, and nor has he any any connection with such activities in a limited number of other dioceses, including my own, nevertheless the tenuousness of his position is related to the conditions that have passively facilitated such activities throughout, the negligence towards which The National Church Report into the Managerial Efficiency of the Wytham Diocese makes thorough reference. This negligence derives from active inefficiency and incompetent management. It is not for me directly to dismiss (or indeed appoint) brother and sister bishops; nevertheless, my position does have some moral authority at such a moment as this. The timing of a private investigation with media exposure - unearthing strangely ritualistic sexual practices - with our own (more mundane) investigation into overall incompetencies, hardly gives excuse to assume a renewed leadership when it was precisely such leadership that has been lacking up to this point in time. The Wytham Diocese cannot be expected to recover unless at first the extraction of its fundamental problems of oversight and action are completed, for that is the personalist (and personnel) model we understand: that new life and strength comes after a painful action of severing. Every gardener knows the value of hard pruning for the removal of dead wood along with the weeds for achieving the transformation beyond. The current diocesan bishop surely appreciates this theological insight and should so act.

+++William Kantos Albion

He never could say something in a few words when twenty were available. And to think what his own suffragan bishop was doing with me under his own blocked nose when I was at Margate, and with the suffragan's latest pregnant result in attendance. Bill Blair Rothach's head was loftily in the clouds.

It took one day to see a response from the Bishop of Wytham:

The Rt. Reverend Dr. Derek Imperial, Bishop of Wytham, welcomes the words of the Archbishop of All England, the Most Reverend Professor William Blair Rothach, and commits to the effort to prune and remove dead wood in the diocese towards its transformation. The bishop gives his prayers and good wishes to the

Archbishop in his retirement and taking on the Oxford Lord Skidmore Chair in Contextual Theology.

My own guess is that Derek Imperial fancied himself for the Lord Skidmore Chair in Contextual Theology just like he wanted to be in the House of Lords.

After One Night (Friday 4th October)

Adam at my house, with news of the builders making good progress already, asked me about what happened with the rabbi.

"I stayed with him overnight. He is a lovely man."

"You see, I thought I would try and arrange something where we - you and me - started to have a more normal life. Our accommodation *together*, coming up, and then you go off with another man again."

"I checked on the mikveh, Adam, because I want that, given the nudity involved. I'm not saying the church is going to be like in a naturist club, but I want a nod to it. And the Reformists will have a base they can use in Serninsea."

"You didn't have to go on and sleep with him."

"I seem to recall I was in your bed before it all gets changed there, and you were more interested in two women online than me - one of whom indeed the rabbi and I have slept alongside for real."

"That's just it: she was on a screen only. You went with a real man."

"I just loved his posh bathroom and his huge bed: a bath that is a jacuzzi with electronic controls and showers that spray from different angles, and an enormous bed. After the Ashkenazi meal I didn't want to drive back."

"You didn't have to sleep with him."

"I was offered a separate room, but I wasn't going to sleep in a separate bed."

"It's as if you've learnt nothing."

"Adam! You've never been bothered about this before. Our relationship has been loose. You've been absent so often I don't know what you think."

"It's not as if I wasn't busy, and you had Diana for company. One bedroom above that church will be ours. That's what I think."

"Well, now you say so. The three bedrooms could have been my bedroom, your bedroom and the bedroom of Winnie and Kathleen."

"We'll have a spare bedroom, maybe for visitors," Adam said.

"So you're disappointed in me. Well, I'm not blaming you, but communicate better to me. You've not said from where you'll run your business in the short term."

"I am disappointed. Anyway, I suggest you read John Barman's article. There might even be some truth in it. All right, Linda, we will incorporate the mikveh, all the ensembles can be wet rooms, and we'll have your bed taken over that easily fits three. After all, if Maurice Neptune should call..."

"He won't, to stay over. Wytham is his present base. I was more interested in his house. And his historical theology. But what about when Jenny calls, Adam? Remember her? I'm not going to stop you."

"We'll deal with Jenny, as and when. So you like posh, but I'm afraid our accommodation won't be posh. It will be enough. There'll be an upstairs small

kitchen and a seating space, but you can get all communally downstairs."

"I'll find out, shortly, by when I must leave here."

Bandyopadhyay? Barman Writes

Adam let me use his phone with his subscription to *The Daily Wireless*:

The ex-Bishop of Bolingbroke, John Terence Barman, breaks his silence on the Serninsea-centred National Church sex scandal, with his own exclusive account of what happened regarding its organisation. He writes:

'Calling the Confraternity of bishops and its authority system a 'sex cult' as the Revd. Linda Jupitas has done in The Daily Morse is a glib piece of journalistic misdirection. Our operation was no such thing: it was properly thought through, based on sound Catholic and ecclesiastical principles, with a collegiate bishops-based structure, and employed the incredible yet simple insight that our sexual selves are - as Sigmund Freud came to recognise - primary drivers in the body and surely constitute incarnate access to the divine.

And, if we ask the Revd. Jupitas about this, she will surely agree. She approved, as a naturist, of the central status of the body in all things religious. We do, however, question the extent to which her naturist view is Pagan, whereas the source of our operation was incarnate Christianity. We did not practise some third-degree Witchcraft ceremony but an initiation based on the deeper meanings of body and blood - the material and life-giving energy together - as revealed throughout the biblical witness and in how God meets us as corporeal sexual people.

We had a properly constituted Confraternity, a leading Vanguard structure of guidance and activity, and we bishops consulted widely.

The fact that the Revd. Linda Jupitas agrees is reflected in her continuing association with the Revd. Christine Vine, who, now in an independent setting of 'wandering bishops', is establishing precisely the same vanguard structure of recognising the divine through the sexual body.

One day our revelation will prove to be the most valid, giving us the means by which we can all see the beauty of the divine through the very active being of ourselves and in the man who was human and God at the same time - for in this actuality we glimpse the beauty of holiness.

Just because an investigator and his priest-lover can make money by breaking us up does not mean that this truth will be silenced. The Revds. Vine and Jupitas are, after all, acting our way. In the end, theirs has been nothing more than a turf war against the properly constituted Confraternity Vanguard within the National Church. The Revd Vine in particular, joined by Jupitas, set out to substitute this with their own.

++Bishop John Terence Barman

Not true! After Adam had gone I contacted Christine, who gave permission for me to write a reply as she was included in this, although she said herself that the reply would have to go through *The Daily Morse*, as this was indeed a press turf war.

"Where did they find him?" I asked her by phone. "He was thrown out by

Elizabeth Huett."

"He obviously found them." Meanwhile, Christine said to me, "By the way, if you want to earn a lot of money fast, to help finance your new project, you could always go and see San Bandyopadhyay again."

Having had Adam's rebuke about Maurice Neptune and read what John Barman wrote, I decided to turn down the idea. "Yeah I could, but I'm done with all that. If I don't stop, I'll never escape this pattern of behaviour."

"He'd still pay you handsomely if you did some naked housework and that sort of thing. It's money for old rope. He would be hands off. He'd like you to help out in one of his offices and reward the workers by your naked presence. Bethany his housekeeper might also fancy a break."

"Well, Bethany the housekeeper will have to arrange her own holiday and how he can keep his hands off her."

"Two thousand quid?"

"No thanks, Christine. Speak to you later."

Replying to the Resigned Bishop (Monday & Tuesday 8th October)

Monday and Adam had gone off to London 'for meetings' - I'd learnt not to enquire too much on this score. I was getting a little paranoid: was he 'seeing' Christine? Of course he could - but was he?

I did call round at Adam's to look at the noise and dust everywhere. Ann and Labhaoise were present, monitoring the situation, and then Ann made it clear without prompting that she would not accept any investment money from San Bandyopadhyay. She went on that if I wanted money from him, it would be up to me and at my own personal risk.

"No sweat. I'm not interested. I told Adam so."

Ann pointed out that my letter had been published in *The Daily Morse*, for no payment to Adam this time, and because it was a letter, they allowed *The Daily Wireless* to reproduce it, less the square brackets.

Readers may be aware that [in a rival newspaper] Bishop John Barman has surfaced to write his own account about me. He makes factual errors, as I have come to expect of him and his self-promotion.

The then Revd. Deacon Christine Vine walked out of the retreat before ordination as she was disgusted with Bishop Barman's desire for sexual entertainment. The structure and purpose he claims for the Confraternity was principally her idea, and yes she joined another group to put it into practice and became a bishop to do it. But hers is now based on consent and, although she is positive about sex, she has shifted the emphasis to service and sacrifice that we make personally, and not in sexual pleasure as with Bishop Barman's pursuits.

To my personal cost I'd tried to investigate what Bishop Barman and company laid out for me, only to grow increasingly concerned, and yes, I flipped sides to the new Bishop. Bishop Barman should use her proper title.

Cults are defined sociologically as leader-dependent. The three bishops took authority upon themselves, and, like a cult, when they ran away on exposure the

structure collapsed. They certainly had none to force people like me and the late Ken Osis to participate.

I am very positive about my body and sex. I am an intersex woman and proud naturist. This does not mean I approve of what I discovered to be the case in the Anglican sex cult: that the pleasure of some relied on the abuse of others, including me.

The Revd. Linda Jupitas

Ann asked me, "Can Adam use your house for working, because the other place is also being extensively redecorated?"

"Sure," I said. "He didn't really have to ask."

"Adam is actually in London today, consulting his wife and Christine, but is travelling back and will see you later."

I pointed out that I was going to take a break in Wales, with my family, and I'd very much like him to accompany me.

She said that with all the media contact pretty much done, and a pause in his work, and with places being trashed and rebuilt, he would probably accompany me. Indeed, she would recommend it.

I contacted Christine by text to tell her I was going to Wales, and surely Adam would come too - especially if Ann recommended such a break. Christine sent a reply:

Before you holiday in your wellies, can I have that ministry plan of yours? Soon as possible. I'm having my own trip to Bristol. Adam was positive today. Don't forget to renew the police criminal record check.

What had been done to me was beyond the criminal. Nevertheless, I drove to Ingle Park and got on with the listing task, and tried to be creative:

Ministries:

Local congregational (like a parish) ministry

Ministry to Naturists throughout the UK - mission to known clubs (Gymnology)

Ministry to Intersex

Minister to people with alternative consenting sexual behaviours (Marcella Althaus-Reid?)

Minister to polyamorous and variable consenting relationships (Marcella Althaus-Reid?)

Ministry through using theological training and education

Ministry analysing the local economy and culture with a religious response

Support for others regarding mental and other health issues

On the latter I was thinking of Jenny. The list was sent straight away to Christine. I did not do an essay the size of a sermon after all.

Back at home, late on, Adam arrived back. His wife Mary Ann had given approval to his accommodation and working changes, sharing a room with me, and my church. I just wondered, listening to him, what was it with him and getting consents? He saw Yootha Ann as well.

Adam had been messaged by Ann about my holiday. Unsurprisingly, therefore, he said to me that a holiday would be a perfect idea for us while the builders were making both places unusable. Peter and Kathryn were at his father's.

Adam then said, "Introduce me to your family."

"I'd love to introduce you to my family, Adam."

"Let's go then. Tomorrow? Is this possible, or do we have to wait at yours for a few days?"

I rang my mother in Wales. The only change was that Lucinda and hubby had moved to the town. The farm annexe they had lived in was soon to be used as a holiday let. Mum would like to see Adam; she remembered him as a teenager (though we avoided my parents when sexually experimental).

Adam decided that Peter could look after the little jobs, to be closed off with reports. As a result I gave Kathleen and Winnie an extra set of house keys to pass on to Peter. Peter and Kathryn could even stay over if they liked.

We went in the dark to Ann and Labhaoise's house for his clothing and items in bags as recovered by Ann and washed. They were washing all his bed linen. Their house was modest, given the money they were making. The two children (sired by Adam) were upstairs.

I took him back to mine for an overnight sleep. Given the long journey ahead, we resisted sex. At least he saved me the indignity of going online, and neither of us mentioned Annie Fenwick as 'Headgirl' or Jördis appearing as 'George'.

In the morning Labhaoise contacted Adam for us to travel via his place under transformation. I was worried: was there a hitch? Post had arrived there. So we got out and looked from the doorway. We saw lintels going in and all the banging and crashing for joining up with next door to the north.

Klärchen Sisse came out of the end terrace to the south with her dog Dieter.

I said, "Sorry about the banging and the crashing."

"I know it is temporary. I just need to reassure Dieter more, cuddle him and let him lick me. We go for a walk away from the noise. We go to see my friend Salome Lichtblau and her lovely dog Hendrik, and all have some fun."

"See you later," I said, without further judgement as she bent down, the dog licked her face and they walked off with her hop and a skip.

Now Labhaoise with a hard hat on came to the door and out to us. She gave Adam a letter. He read it and gave it to me.

Dear Adam Magellan

I am Roland Mitton, Professor of Interpretive Sociology at the Glastonbury School of Folk and Ethnographic Studies at the University of Somerset. I specialise in the Sociology of Religion, ethnic expression, and folk histories. The School of Interpretive Sociology hears that you and your associate, the Reverend Linda Jupitas, have been pivotal in the recent exposure of the activities of the ex-Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke in the wider context of his diocese under investigation for inefficiency of practice. We further understand that you have building works in progress to begin a new independent church.

I am tutor to my mature Ph.D student, Alfia Shrimpton, who wishes to make a study of how you will establish and develop your new church. If you agree, she proposes to use ethnographic methods, although there may be some confidential

interviews. We cannot show you the progress of her work as it might affect your decisions. Her intention is to be as invisible as possible.

We will reimburse all costs that incur to you as a result of any of her activities. We also propose a one-off payment of three hundred pounds to compensate for her presence, that may last a year or two. She would like to visit, and I would come as well, initially, once the church is ready to begin.

Please let us know if you agree to this using the above address as soon as possible, so that she may get started as you get started.

Professor Roland Mitton

Copy to Alfia Shrimpton, Ph.D student

"What do you think?" he asked me.

"I'm always in favour of helping researchers. Three hundred quid will be good. Why is he contacting you?"

"Christine told me in London that the professor was approached last week by Geoff Virgo and Luis Callas; they'd thought the professor might be interested. Obviously, he acted for his student. He's in Glastonbury; Geoff and Luis live in Bristol and they know the professor. Peter has spoken about this chap before: he appears on television a lot."

I rang Peter, with Adam close.

Peter told me that Roland Mitton's most recent programme was all about how the mediaeval monastery system had 'total ideological domination' via the Church year and control of many economic necessities. Feudalism operated for sure, and the Church calendar produced a year-round thought world grounded in the economy - and the monasteries owned so many farming and production facilities. One can even talk about a mediaeval industrial revolution, with different mills on monastery land and obligations on locals to use them. This was all busted by Henry VIII. The need then arose for a poor law by the State, administered locally. Mitton also studied Pagans new and old, helped by the fact that he was one.

I said, "Christine said she's interested in a twelfth century universe of theology."

Peter added, "The professor could be interested in our archaeology."

I told him he could use the curate's house for business and personally with Kathryn, with Kathleen and Winnie looking after the place.

That was that. I switched off the phone and we got into my SUV to drive to Wales.

Heading towards Wytham Adam said, "I fancy a week of fuck all."

I responded, "Reverse that to 'All fuck' instead. And when they are banging through walls back there, I hope that we'll be banging each other. You all right with that? Are you?"

"Yeah."

"I'm liberated, Adam. All that horrid shit is behind me. I want wasting. Gather all your bodily forces and waste me rotten."

"What's the farm called?" he asked.

"Ystad Bodaod Bacsiog."

"What? Us tad what?"

"Rough-Legged Buzzards Estate. We had them on the marshes during winter and into spring. Now it sounds like Bode. Clever."

The route took us eventually on to the Shrewsbury bypass and then I tried the B road that Lucinda uses. The B4386 took us along a Roman road in part, and into Powys and Trefaldwyn, and then on to Y Drenewydd, and then Caersws for the B4569 and Trefeglwys and past Ystradfaelog.

Chapter 20 Holiday Breakdown

Narrator: Linda *Holiday Break Begins* (Tuesday 8th October)

It was typical to see my dad in his wellies and nothing else pissing freestyle into a manure box near the farm house and its garden, holding a mug of tea with a hand above.

Halting the car to our mutual laughter, I said, "This is my dad, Leonard, you can see, and in there at the window is my mummy who likes to be called 'Lavender' not Lilibet. Her real name is Elizabeth but we are all the 'els'."

"*Els Bells*," said Adam. Getting out of the car into some drizzle, my partner told the old man, "Hello! I'm Adam."

"So you're the Keith replacement," my father said, helpfully. Trust him!

Already getting out of the car from the driving seat, I said quickly, "Keith is history now and gone his own way. Probably already separated from another woman and now with an affair."

My large hanging breasted mother appeared to greet Adam, "Hello Bach, as they'd say around here."

"Adam," I said, to introduce him. "Do you remember him?" I think his eyes were falling out of their sockets.

"Barely," said mummy, appropriately, as Adam looked down at her extensive pubic hair and mother looked at my head. "You've got the annexe because Lucinda and Dyfed are living above the shop. The furniture shop will become flats only and they'll move to a tourist shop with a little basic cafe and accommodation above. The furniture business will be online only."

"Everybody's doing it," said Adam to me.

"Doing what?" she asked.

"Rebuilding, renovating."

"Do have a meal with us tonight. It's one of our chickens. Running around it was. Larry is here."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because he is visiting from London."

"Oh." Larry came out of the door, naked too, shook hands with Adam and looked at me.

Adam said, "You're not vegetarian then: not alternative that way," Adam looked at me.

I said, "Now they look after these animals best they can."

Mother said, "Can't beat a chicken that was running around. And the eggs have such rich yolks. Different coloured egg shells and Dyfed and Lucinda will sell some in town and tourists can choose their eggs in a nice little cafe. What happened to your hair?" Father was staring at me as well.

So the annexe was the place to strip off and empty my bowels before going over for the evening meal. "Come on," I told him, once out of the bog. "Get the textiles off."

He obeyed. Walking over to the farmhouse, Adam said to me quietly, "When everyone is like this, it's easier to be the same." That was better. Leila arrived back

from college as we stood in mummy's kitchen.

At the table Adam sat and said, "I think I need to tuck my bollocks in."

My mother responded, "Then careful leaning forward when you eat, Adam."

"I will, Lavender."

Father said, "Pull 'em out lad and lay them on the paper on the seat. Welcome to our table." I started chuckling.

Leila came to the table wearing nothing but knickers.

Mother said to her, "Take your knickers off."

Leila replied, "We have company and the string is showing."

The meat and the arable was all from the farm. My father said about the learning curve he'd been on, with help from other farmers, and both mother and Leila were attending Welsh classes. Leila at college was expanding her employment chances by adding the language to her office training.

Adam was well-satisfied by the meal volume and variety. He told all how he'd had a lifetime of not eating properly, and relying on instant meals and fast food, trying to add in vegetables.

"I don't exactly cook very well either," I told him in support. "Be careful. Get to fifty and you'll be stuck overweight on the muck you eat."

There was an obvious enhancing activity for us in that annexe, and to take our time too. It was quite pleasant that first night, feeling somewhat tired. A good sleep followed.

First Full Day (Wednesday 9th October)

I knew that Adam wasn't perfect. He was just familiar and I could live with him. He wasn't deceitful, like Keith. Adam had his weirdo aspects, but who didn't?

He needed encouraging, so first thing first morning was connecting our genitals again and encouraging his emotions. He did without Annie on her early shift, on his tablet, but then Jördis wasn't appearing for instruction.

A little later in the morning father knocked on the window, and the two men went off on a tractor and a trailer (one on each) to go and see the extent of the farm. Adam took a windbreak anorak and in case of rain. My father's skin was leathery and the rain never bothered him.

Eldest sibling Lawrence knocked on the door. I opened it. "What do you want?"

"It's time we squared up. You know Lucinda is avoiding you - again."

"That's between me and her. She took my stuff, I took hers."

"You were jealous of her cuddle time with dad. Can I come in?"

"If you must." He did and he shut the door. "Well, say your piece. What has it been - ten years since you last tried to excuse your behaviour? Come to say you're sorry. You nearly choked me to death with that thing. You were a bastard then, and a bastard now. You could have left cuddle time alone in my mind. It was like more love from him."

"More love? Only like what I did. And later you went off with him - Adam - for more. How come you've got back with him now?"

"None of your business."

"You're so naive and you always were - you were sixteen and stupid. The likes of your subsequent husband and Magellan were fucking around all over the place."

"Nothing to do with cuddle time then, your visit now."

"Luce and dad were doing fellacio and fucking."

"So you said."

"He's stopped now only because Dyfed is on the scene. Probably mum has had enough. Tell you someone else dad fucked. Oh, find out for yourself. You envied cuddle time. You encouraged me."

"I didn't and by default I don't believe you."

"You asked, 'What's it like?' and I showed you."

"I didn't ask you to *do* what you did."

So why did Luce stroke herself when looking at you?"

"She gestured with her hands and arms. Dad used to pull it a bit, but you were always masturbating in front of me. 'Look at this,' you said. So when I asked, 'What's it like?' it didn't mean you had to do it. I expected words. It was about them. I thought they were cuddling, and why was he cuddling her and not me?"

"You wanted it in your mouth and up your cunt. You wanted to know what it was like."

"You knew I had broader questions: like how someone was going to do it in my case. I didn't ask for a demonstration."

"You're naive but you're not that naive!"

"People avoided me, because of this fucking family. But I didn't ask you to show me *in* me. And then, when you held my head, I thought, shall I bite you so hard it could injure you for life? You pushed it in me so hard. Daddy wouldn't have been doing that to Luce."

"She was operated on, and you weren't. That was his chance."

"Her mouth is the same size."

"She sucked him off as well so she had control and didn't choke."

"You are sickening. You are just horrible."

"You wanted to know what it was like. Anyway, I've heard you don't choke with Keith. Want to show me?"

"None of your business."

"Look, it's going hard."

"Thank you brother for spoiling my life-discoveries later on. Yes, Jenny and I got Adam to come along. I was asking, even two years later, 'Are blokes the same as you did to me?' So *we controlled him*. Fucking hell, I was a month older than my sixteenth when you did what you did to me."

"You were old enough. You never forgive anyone. Wank me!"

"Why should I forgive you? It's still rape, especially if there's fuck all down there."

"I remind you that you asked me why anyone would put that in their mouths, never mind that dad was doing it with Luce. You could do it now."

"Why would I do anything now?"

"If you've gone back to Magellan you can come back to me."

"I asked for words."

"We've all read online about you going through the Serninsea population. You gazed at all those cocks and fannies at Saxiclite. I bet you imagined those lads at

school."

"That's exactly the point. I wasn't like that at Saxiclite or school. And thanks to you raping me I didn't go after boys until the Adam opportunity arose. I talked about what girls at school were saying and wondered why anyone would want to put that in their mouths."

"Anyway, you're lying. As you always do. You secretly knew what cuddle time was."

"*I did not!* I did not know secretly what was meant by 'cuddle time'. Leave me alone."

"We were teenagers; you had changed; you were sexy."

"No excuse whatsoever. There's no other name for it, what you did."

"You could have taught me. I bet you can now."

"You stupid sod. Why do you think Jenny and I received Adam? We knew nothing. All I knew was what you'd done."

"Because you wanted to know about cuddle time. *Practically.*"

"I've had enough of this. Fuck off Larry and go back to London. Don't talk to me."

"Suck me off then, for old time's sake."

"Why didn't you stick your cock in *Luce*? Perhaps she wasn't quite young enough, naive enough. Go on, fuck off."

"Because dad was doing it! You weren't. Why should dad have her and me no one when you were having no one? We could have set something going ourselves."

"Fuck off," I said again. "Just get out of my fucking life. Just go, Larry, go."

"What do you lot call it? 'Reconciliation'?"

"Don't you fucking quote my religion back at me. Has that been up anyone's arse lately?"

"Then let me put it up yours."

"This time I'll fight back and do you physical damage, like I've had done to me."

"We could have had our own cuddle time, back then. I wasn't damaging you with what I did." Larry left the annexe.

As for his core point, at that time I did not know what was cuddle time. But after Larry's actions on me, I did know if not for sure. I was always trying to give daddy the benefit of my remaining doubt. I didn't want a cuddle time from my brother but from my father. I wanted to lie down with him and let him stroke my body and I'd stroke his, and I'd have learnt about what the penis did, but it was always with Lucinda.

I came to realise that 'cuddle time' was daddy taking advantage of Lucinda's vaginoplasty. Perhaps mummy said no to the doctors not simply because she'd read all this literature but because she knew what daddy had begun with *Luce*'s vaginoplasty.

When Adam returned he asked me what was wrong.

"Just my brother. We don't get on. I only really get on with Leila, and then only a bit because she laughs at me. You know my sister is CAIS like me, but guilt and sympathies went her way first. Larry thinks he's okay because his androgens obviously worked. Leila is genetically female."

"You have biologically created tensions. I guessed that a while back."

"Forget it Adam. Adam, I am so sorry about how I once treated you when you

were a teenager. So can you say nothing more, and just be my new loving partner please?"

Adam and I (clothed) went out and saw the nearby reservoir and forest, though in the forest we got up to some clothes removed naughty business, which I really needed from him. We braved it, and fantastic to shag without any time pressure on an open hillside and to get a bit muddy and mucky, to wash after in a flowing stream and dress again.

Adam spoke to me, mutually clothed again and walking. "You said about being sorry."

"I am."

"What I don't get is this. Geoff and I knew your family was a bit weird. I'm not criticising."

"No."

"And on a farm as well."

"Yeah. Some people thought we imitated the animals. It's not as if we had many animals."

"So we thought: Linda, she'll be a bit advanced, like, surrounded by nature. There it was otherwise: the situation of you two playing around, finding out, and not much knowledge."

"There was an inverse effect. When you're surrounded by flesh, when you have some animals, you think you know, but it turns out you only know your narrow universe. It was only with Keith that I got to learn more, widened my outlook, took on new ideas, experimented, and was physically changed. I owe him a lot, strangely. My family looks liberating but it was suffocating. The best thing they did was come here. I love my mummy and dad, Leila, even Lucinda, not Larry, but every time I come among them, and I try, I start to suffocate again. I wanted you to see them, and now I want us to go home."

"Why not Larry?"

"Because he's been a bastard all his life. Leave it at that."

We arrived back to the farm. Dad had an outdoor shower made in the farmyard - he would get muddy through work of course. Stream or no stream, we made use of the outdoor shower.

I learnt that Larry had gone, no messing, while we were away in the forest. Mum looked at me. Perhaps she suspected more than she was letting on.

Our evening meals were to be in the farmhouse, and a chance for this family to gather (except Lucinda and Dyfed, so far).

Leila was completely shaven below, re-exposed post period, and had a habit of raising her legs up on the seat and so giving Adam an eyeful. Oh dear. What did *she* know about now absent Larry and me? This was the point. As far as I could tell, mummy suspected something and I supposed daddy knew nothing of that day. Leila made fun about Lucinda and me as competitors, at any opportunity.

My mother tried to manage the family, with schisms from sexual abuse. I'd now experienced more, in Serninsea: she'd asked about my hair to no reply but had said nothing about the marks that were on my body. She and the rest of them could read the news like anyone else, but no one beyond Larry was saying anything. Maybe they were waiting for me to say something, and assumed that, perhaps like they were doing, I was putting the 'sex cult' abuse into a box to be concealed out of sight.

Lucinda Sets Up Adam (Thursday 10th October)

Mummy found a moment next late morning to ask me alone, in the yard, "Why did Larry suddenly go? What happened?"

"We had an argument."

"You've had an argument for years. All I'll say is that naturist girls often see erect penises even of their brothers and learn to accept that boys are rude."

"I have to ask you - what was 'cuddle time' between Lucinda and daddy?"

"All you need to know is that your dad comforted Luce after her operations healed. Lucinda was upset for ages and also because you were left untouched. He cuddled her because of her 'why me? going on to HRT and all that.'"

The conversation was cut short because Lucinda and Dyfed were calling in just to say hello to Adam, with some food shopping brought with them. Adam came out of the annexe.

Lucinda said to Adam. "You're the replacement man."

"That quip has been made," he said. "I'm my own man."

"You're an investigator and, well, we have Harrington and Mathias, a private investigator firm, just getting started in Y Drefnewydd and with an office in Caersws, not far from Llanidloes; Mr. Harrington bought furniture off us, and with Mr. Matthias is setting up home and office. They'd like to compare jobs and how economically sound it is as a career."

"Difficult, usually. Did well recently. Would you like to meet?"

Luce said, "What he'd really like to do is draw on your experience for a job he's got on. There's a little bit of travelling around mid-Wales involved."

I said, "Could be interesting, Adam. Thanks, Luce."

"I can arrange it for tomorrow, if he's available."

Daddy came down from the field and waved.

Then Dyfed, saying very little, and Lucinda both went back to town.

Adam and I only were soon in a field, with windshield anoraks on, and Adam referred to Lucinda. "She is one fine beauty. Leila is like, em, taut."

"Am I not so proportioned?"

"You and Lucinda are so similar."

"Perhaps if Leila went online?"

"Wouldn't work. I don't know Annie at all. She's a sister of someone where we have history."

"I want to ask you about Cheryl Mould. You found out from me about Keith and her, but since I've found out about you and her."

"Who from?"

"From whom. Cheryl. Ten years ago, six years ago. I took you for a meal and then we fucked. You'd done the same with her."

"Cheryl was a one off."

"Two off. It doesn't matter, Adam. Was there anyone else I'd know?"

"You're asking?"

"Curious."

"I don't know all those you know. You know of my significant others," he said.

"But watch your diet, chubby. Fish and chips before sex."

He said, "There might be aeroplanes overhead so keep the anoraks on. I've no fish and chips now. I fancy landing in a good place, even if there are pilots passing by above thinking we're cuddling."

"Yeah, we can have our own cuddle time." He landed his plane in my short runway.

Daughters and Father (Friday 11th October)

It was the third full day there, and the two of us visiting were indeed invited to go into the town and see my sister and brother in law's business changes. There was rain in the air. However, on arrival at the new cafe and trinkets shop, she wasn't present. Dyfed was busy preparing the premises, with accommodation upstairs. He wanted to offer the widest choice of coffees, including my use of honey, spray cream and chocolate powder!

Lucinda came in, and she said the aforementioned Mr. Harrington wanted to see Adam; he was a private investigator and she'd just told him that Adam was in town.

"I'll take your Adam to the investigator," she said. "He does want you to put your fresh mind to an existing missing person enquiry."

Adam said, "I'd be interested in this."

They went off. I thought, why didn't the investigator, Mr. Harrington, come and pick him up directly? Still, I was alone with Dyfed. We continued to talk a little more, and then went outside for a walk down the street.

I just could not help myself - I responded with desire when he looked at me and smiled. This was happening yet again and I had to fight it.

He said to me, eyes sparkling in the light, "I always like walking and talking with you, isn't it."

I said, "We had a good time, you and me last time, and we behaved ourselves."

"O Duw, rwy'n amser da."

"Dew?"

"Yes, a good time," he translated. "Lucinda wasn't too hapus [happis] though afterwards."

I said, "There's no boil on my bum, this time, but a residual mark. Other marks now, I'm afraid. I'm trying to be uncomplicated with Adam, at last."

"I think I understand."

Lucinda appeared walking down the street.

Once near she said, "Adam and Elwyn have gone off now. There's a train at Caersws and, if they are on time, Elwyn can go over the sites where she had an affair and where she may have gone missing."

"Who?" I asked.

"The student who went missing."

"What was her name?"

"Dunno. There's no trace of her. No money transactions since. Probably dead."

"This is a very serious case," I said. "Adam says he often helps the police. He can review documents, check their procedures and revisit sites."

"It's not the police. This Harrington chap is being employed by her family to put some extra perspective in because so far the police have drawn a blank. The family wants some hope.

"Adam does that too: provides some hope. That's what I was supposed to be doing, too, as a minister."

"As a minister?" Lucinda asked. "Some hope, more like."

"Well."

"Anyway, I'm going back to the old shop flat to sort stuff out before we leave that place. You still showing Linda around?"

"Only a little bit," Dyfed said.

"Don't be too long. Don't be *tempted*."

"We are not tempted," I said, firmly. Off she went. "How can she say that?" I asked him.

"Because you always take what is hers, she told me."

With her gone a while, and walking around with him, looking at the variety and style of shops, I asked Dyfed if there was a place I could go for a pee.

He asked how desperate I was, and so was able to piss for Wales and more in the new shop.

"All right?" he asked. "You were quite noisy."

"Yeah. Fine. Oh, hang on." I'd received a text on my mobile phone from Adam.

Just parked in time! The train is coming and Elwyn and I are going as far as Llanbedr Pont Steffan where this missing person was a student. She had taken part in the food festival they had a year ago, based at the college.

I texted back a message.

I'll come and pick you up when you are back. It all sounds fascinating. Enjoy the experience, but sad that someone's gone missing for so long.

Dyfed walked me back to my car. When we arrived, I turned and gave Dyfed a kiss on the cheek. I then apologised. I went back to the farm alone in my SUV car. Grrr.

So I joined my naked and wet father - me wearing an unbuttoned plastic coat only and wellies - going around doing some farmwork.

He said to me, "Larry had a chat with you about 'cuddle time'. I haven't done cuddle time with Lucinda since Dyfed, of course. How would you like to have cuddle time?"

"Er..."

"You're never too old to be with your dad."

"Like Lucinda used to enjoy?"

"Yes, exactly the same way. I don't regret it. I have my own room high in the farmhouse where I retreat. Even your mother asks before she can go up in there cleaning."

"Yes, daddy. Yes."

"You won't regret it if we have cuddle time, you and me?"

"No, daddy. Yes."

We walked back towards the farmyard and house, him pissing as he took his fancy, and I squatted too, feeling comfortable about that too. Cuddle time and me!

Inside, our muddy wellingtons came off, and my wind-breaking coat. Dad grabbed a towel and rubbed himself all over. My mother took the towel off him; her face went wide eyed when my daddy said to her, as we moved on, "We're in my room."

Up the stairs we went and a further flight into the roof space with skylight windows and a door at the far end side alongside a double bed. In between there was a decent landscaped train set and another table with two computers on it and a fifty inch television.

I said, "Your man cave. Yes, you had one at Serninsea."

I got on the bed from the left side and he from the right near the door. "Come to your dad."

I put my right arm around him - still a bit damp - and he put his left arm around me, and pulled me to him. My breasts squeezed to him, which had happened before, but now his hand roamed around my buttocks.

This was an actual cuddle, a time to be close to my dad. He was going stiff, and I was oozing inside.

"Well?" he asked.

"I touch it?"

"It sure wants cuddling too."

"Of course, daddy."

I took hold, and for the first time ever masturbated my father. He'd tugged at it before, in front of me, but now I was doing this seriously and properly, looking at what I was doing.

He asked, "What's it going to be cuddled by?"

"It will... go in, daddy. Years of dilation, like."

I slightly jumped as his hand touched my crotch. It was such a very intense moment. His fingers slipped in me. I must have been pouring liquid by now.

He said, "You are so wet. Lucinda was, when younger. I'm swelling up and everything. This could be so quick."

"Put it in daddy. Come inside me."

"Let me look, first."

He did, as he adjusted position. I opened myself, and I told him to taste me. From applying his tongue - he said it was sweet - it was easy for him to move above me, and he went into me with a thrust of his rock hard penis.

This was something I wanted. I knew all the objections, but this is what Lucinda had experienced and bragged about, and now I was taking something she had enjoyed - if she'd enjoyed it. I was enjoying everything. Never mind Dyfed, this was daddy!

Daddy said, "Yeah. I can feel it's different. I'm pushing up against something whereas with Luce I went in deep. They did a very good job on her."

"It's amazing," I said. "But... if you want to go deep, there is another way."

"What if I come in there?"

"No problem. It's better, actually. But look, you might get something unwanted."

"I'd still like to try it." He came out of me.

So I turned about and got on to my elbows and knees, and daddy paused a little to look because he was trying not to come instantly. Nevertheless, up and in he went, and he went in deep, and it took only a few thrusts, and he ejaculated deep in my rear.

"I never did this with Luce," he said to me.

I felt *great*. I'd not only levelled her with cuddle time, I'd done more. And when he came out of me I turned to make sure I did more again, by absorbing his penis in my mouth to my throat, and despite the taste of my rear I took him so deep I licked his balls.

He said, "She never did this, either. How do you do it?"

I didn't answer - couldn't, but set to work this way to prevent him going soft. He was excited enough to stay hard. As a result he was able to go into my vagina again, pushing, and working me with a little more freedom.

He soon ejaculated into my vagina, and it all ran out.

What followed was a lot of strong cuddling and mouth to mouth kissing after this, and then he said, "I never ejaculated twice with Lucinda, not even when she was seventeen and in the early days."

So that was three things I had over her: he'd been down my anus and not hers, deep in my throat and she couldn't do it, and he'd ejaculated twice.

Soon the grip and kissing lessened and I looked closely at his face.

He said, "I did not love Lucinda more than you. I helped her. Larry was right but he was uncooth with you; he couldn't control himself."

"You knew about what he did?"

"Weeks after he'd done it, it turned out. Your mother was suspicious something had happened. I didn't object in principle. So when I thought about giving you cuddle time as well, I didn't, partly because of your reaction, but also I did worry about your plumbing. Lucinda did need my comforts."

"Did mummy refuse my operations because you went with Luce?"

"No, not then. She knew, eventually, what we were doing, but Luce was always positive, so your mother tolerated it. She was pleased to know something similar had not happened between you and Larry."

"Thank you daddy, for this today. It was beautiful."

"I think we'd better finish," he said. "Tell nothing to your mother. If she asks - insists - then just say you lay down with me and chatted."

"Yes, she'd better not know."

"And don't brag to your sister or she will create a stink."

"No. I'm just so satisfied, daddy, that I have had cuddle time with you."

"You could have one each time you visit."

"I don't know; I'm really happy at the moment."

He had a sink, shower and toilet beyond the door, so I cleaned myself up.

Narrator: Linda *Dishonesty* (11th to Saturday 12th October)

We walked past my mother, who was baking and she gave us a look of thunder. As I said nothing and she asked nothing, I could see Dyfed's car arrive outside and he go

into the annexe. So I put the wellies back on and went across into the annexe. Dyfed was sat there, handling some furniture magazine, his body going on display again.

"She wants her space every so often, to do something different. I think she's taken this habit from you."

"Is that what she says I'm like?" I asked him.

"That and the unending competition between you two."

"So she told you to buzz off."

"She's probably testing me," he said. "Testing me near you."

"Oh right," I said, "We had better behave ourselves again. I might see where Adam is going, do some Internet searching and map work."

I then thought about my daddy, and that I must never mention this to anyone.

"You look a bit reddish, flushed, glowing," Dyfed said.

"We went into the fields."

"Do you fancy a game of *Reversi*, bach?"

"What's Reversi Back?"

"No, Reversi. You don't want to be on the computer or phone *all* the time. It's in this box here."

"I wasn't."

"Searching about Adam and his colleagues."

"No. Right. Well, okay."

He told me that on an eight by eight board, it's all about strong squares, weak squares and opportunities. You can only go when you reverse a line or lines, by placing a counter at one end that turns the opponent's counters to yours up to where you have a counter on that line, starting with four in the centre as black-white, white-black. But there are risks, especially turning over a line of five, he indicated. You win when most of the completed 64 squares are covered with your colour.

I had flashbacks to my daddy fucking me, licking my crotch and me sucking him off - affecting my concentration.

Dyfed actually spent a lot of time advising me on where to go, not to go, and why. He said, "You think you've got everything, or at least enough, and suddenly it reverses. And you can occupy a strong square, say at the corner, too early, and your opponent late-on sneaks in alongside and gets the benefit, and nothing can be reversed back."

Hmm. He might not have been talking about *Reversi*.

I lost the game. Dyfed said the extent of the number advantage reflects the comparative play. I had 24 of mine at the end, and he had 40.

Mummy came over and, looking at him and not me, said we could have our tea in the house now. So Dyfed and I went over, and we explained that Adam was going to Llanbedr Pont Steffan on a mystery case of a disappeared woman.

For some reason Leila sniggered and I could just hear her say, "Disappeared man more like." She pointed at her visible crotch. Daddy gave the odd smile towards me.

I got a sense after the meal and a bit of television that Dyfed and I were being watched, and watched more when returning to the annexe. I put my hand on his waist as we went, partly to reassure my mother.

This time I set about Internet searching on the annexe computer, but before I got anywhere he said, "Oh come away from there; come and lie with me. Let's lie on the bed and talk about good things."

"I'm getting suspicious, Dyfed."

"Yes I know," he said.

"You *know*, Dyfed?" I asked, in the room and lying alongside him.

"What do I know?" he asked.

Silence followed! Then there was a text message about the train journeying and being at the college. Elwyn and Adam were staying overnight in a bed and breakfast *Gwesty Teifi* in separate rooms at Llanbedr Pont Steffan. I looked it up, just on my phone, and it was a real place.

I said to Dyfed, "So it is real."

"It's as real as your body here."

"Your wife is my big sister, and she is jealous about you."

Then I shivered as he raised his hand and lowered it to my crotch.

"What are you doing, Dyfed?"

"Open it," he said, as he fumbled his fingers between my legs.

"Dyfed, I'm lying down talking to you. Stop it."

"You've hardly said a word, isn't it!"

He paused his hand. Then a phone rang in another room, almost as if expected.

"O cachu," he said.

"Leave it," I said. "Pick up the message later."

"No, of course I can't. She will want me to go back. She is either at the old place or at the new."

The call taken, his expectation was confirmed.

"Are you going back?" I asked.

"Oes, Duw. Rhaid i mi fynd."

"It's a shame."

"Pity," he said. So he dressed up. He left me on the bed and soon drove off in his car. Indeed feeling horny, and with dew, I finished myself off, thinking of daddy, and eventually dropping away to sleep.

It was in the night when I returned to Internet searching, on the annexe computer, diverted by some very personal pictures of Lucinda and Dyfed, and I became satisfied (if that's the right word) that I was being told something that simply wasn't so.

Llanbedr Pont Steffan once had a railway station, but not any more. And it had a shorter, awkward, anglicised name.

More than this, when I looked to see if Harrington and Mathias had a website, I discovered instead that Richard Harrington played Tom Mathias in a series called *Hinterland*, or *Dusk* when translated from the Welsh language version. The fictional base was Aberystwyth.

Next day, Saturday, having mulled things over, with a tasty breakfast alone, Dyfed turned up, on his own again.

"To be honest," he said, as his first words, "I think she's avoiding you." He came in and started undressing.

"I'm ringing Adam."

"Is that wise? He could be busy." He completed undressing. "Don't ring him if he's busy. I've not eaten; fancy something?"

"No, I've eaten. I'll cook you something. Did you have any supper with Lucinda?"

"We got a Chinese in. Ordered two chow mein at the Chinese."

"You'll be getting fat. Mother's grub was enough for me. But today is another day."

I cooked him rich eggs and solid flavourful bacon. When done, I said he could show me the local countryside from his car.

And so we were dressed again, and off we went. We went into a number of small towns, passed a few reservoirs, and I enjoyed the trip. But my mind was elsewhere.

"Why do you resist me?" he asked.

"Because I want to demonstrate that I can. I need to resist."

Back at the annexe I said he should stay with me. So he did.

Dyfed said to me, "I'm sure Adam will be home tonight. It will have been an exciting two days for him."

"Dum de dum de... Hello Adam. How are you doing - where are you?"

"Er, yes, Linda, so good to hear from you, so far away still, and we left Llanbedr Pont Steffan station earlier and the college there."

"On the train?"

"Yes. Stopping train, and a long way. Yesterday we paused from the train on the way at Cyffordd Dyfi and its view out: it's where the student went missing. The outside camera there wasn't working. She was not seen again. They say there was a sighting beforehand in Machynlleth. So the way the timetable works, we went back to Machynlleth and it's an interesting place with the clock tower. Then we took the train into Aberystwyth, and then the connecting train to Llanbedr Pont Steffan for overnight and this morning got some background on her and looking at some police papers. We're back in Aberystwyth now. Coming back very soon."

"You stayed at the *Gwesty Teifi*, you told me. I looked it up. Very nice."

"Oh yes. Two rooms. I'll be back later today. The trains aren't exactly fast. Elwyn has his own notes; we have been comparing methods of archiving and cross-checking. I got to talk to her college lecturer early this morning, but I can't see how he was involved, same as the police. She is missing, but not necessarily dead. Machynlleth is her home town and the question is why she vanished at Cyffordd Dyfi."

"Quite a mystery," I pondered aloud. "What was her name?"

"Er yes, Sian Lloyd."

"Oh, like er... presents the weather forecast?"

"Nothing like this happens in Serninsea," he added.

"No, very rare, except on television," I added.

He said, "Perhaps there is more opportunity for investigating in this sort of hinterland."

"Probably. Well, I'll see you much later today then. Dyfed is with me. He went home overnight but we did play *Reversi* yesterday. I'll have to teach you. It's about strategy."

"I'll come directly to the farm. Bye then."

"Bye then from here."

"So he was at Llanbedr Pont Steffan," I said to Dyfed. "Tell me about it. It's a sort of hinterland, he said."

"I don't know. Do they call it that? I suppose so."

"There's a railway there, and a college," I said.

He was looking at me.

"But there isn't," I pointed out. "It isn't a college, either, but a university. It was once a university college, but now it is a university."

"Coleg, prifysgol...."

"Dyfed, there's no railway there. It's Lampeter in English, the university town, but it's a long bus ride from Aberystwyth. Cyffordd Dyfi..."

"In English 'Cyffordd' is Junction," he said. "Railway station."

"Yes. Back to Machynlleth. There is indeed a complicated timetable. He's right about that. But not about the other."

"Beth?"

"Who's called Beth?" I asked.

"Sorry. I meant 'what', isn't it."

"He is just giving me a load of porkies. Aberystwyth to Lampeter? That's by a bus. My sister, your wife, is doing this. She has fed him the story, and he hasn't checked it, and she *knows* I will find out that he was lying. Your wife, Dyfed, has been fucking my man, and I'm supposed to perhaps realise it too. And you know it."

"There must be another explanation," he said, feebly.

"What's more, Richard Harrington is an actor. And you were called away last night and I think you saw Adam. Did you two men bang her together? Has she got one up on me?"

"I think this is ridiculous, Linda. I wanted you alone, remember."

"My sister steals whatever is mine. This was supposed to be Adam and me getting close before we go and live together in our redone premises."

"I think she thinks the same," he said.

"What?"

"That you take everything that's hers. Only when your family sort of left Serninsea did it change and she met me of course. But I'm worried about her appetite."

"*Appetite?*"

"Sexual appetite. She has been round the farm a bit."

"Leave that thought alone," I said to him. "I'm considering why, if Adam and Lucinda can do this, why can't we?"

"Indeed. Come on!" he said.

We went on to his and her bed. He started playing with himself, and touched my breast. Having thought otherwise I told him I couldn't, not now, but he could play with himself if he wanted. I watched him, and pulled my leg open for visual assistance.

Somewhat later on I said, "Sorry but come on your own body, Dyfed." I suddenly sensed that what had happened between my father and me was wrong, competing with my sister.

I got up to find some kitchen towel and handed two squares to him. I said I wanted to try at least a more conventional life with Adam and do more in terms of a relationship.

I wasn't going to let Lucinda win. I couldn't tell her about me experiencing cuddle time. Rather, just as I'd told Cheryl Mould about being prepared to tolerate, I was going to have to do the same. After all, my man fantasised about an online performer.

Moving about the annexe I said, "Before I kick you out, Dyfed - don't you dare

go yet - I've an idea based on mobile phones. Calling a friend... Hello? Peter!"

"Good to hear from you, Linda."

"You are my lamp, Peter. I suppose it costs, does it, to ask your engineer friend to tell us about mobile phone use and where from. I want to demonstrate Adam's location to a friend."

"Nope. Adam has an app in his phone, as I do, to tell each other where we are."

"Oh, and do you know where he has been recently?"

"Yes, it also gives a list."

"Simple question then. Has Adam been to Aberystwyth, Machynlleth, Cyffordd Dyfi..."

"Er... nope. No, he's been in one place and overnight. But I do believe he is on the move at present."

"Oh. I wonder which train he caught, Dyfed?"

Peter said, "He hasn't been to Dyfed. I just told you."

"Dyfed is the name of a man here, Lucinda's husband, giving me a fiction that Adam has been on a journey."

"Oh. Oh dear. Has he been with someone else?"

"He's been enjoying my eldest sister. Thank you Peter. You're a good man, a lamp indeed. Bye. You see, Dyfed, Peter once had every opportunity to fuck me and yet he didn't. I later saw his penis and didn't succumb. You wanted me to take you, because your wife has been taking what is mine."

When Adam was back, with Lucinda, I dismissed Dyfed and demanded that Lucinda say nothing. I barked at Adam to come into the Annexe and slammed the door.

Narrator: Adam *With Lucinda* (Thursday 10th to Saturday 12th)

On Thursday I was told by Linda's sister Lucinda that there was a private investigator firm called Harrington and Mathias in Y Drefnewydd and with an office in Caersws. Next day, despite drizzle and rain, we went into town and saw the new cafe Dyfed was busy preparing. Lucinda joined us with a message that Mr. Harrington wanted to see me. She took me to see him as he wanted a fresh mind to a missing person enquiry.

I was naturally curious and interested, and followed her, but we only went to their old furniture shop. With no furniture downstairs, except the odd seat and empty cupboard, she took me up a bare staircase to the accommodation upstairs, and led me into a bedroom about to lose its bed, other remaining furniture and carpet. She said he would be along shortly, but asked me to sit and hold on to the seat's back behind me as it was old and unstable - the sort with vertical wood slats within the frame.

"What are you doing?" I asked her.

"Stroking your arms."

Then I realised she had quickly attached a pair of handcuffs to my right wrist, attached to the seat back slats, and this left me dragging the seat as I stood up.

Next she showed her strength, similar to Linda - both of these women had

strong muscles. And so it was her two arms versus my one arm, and therefore my other wrist also became connected to the seat back slats.

Lucinda said, "They'll come off in a minute, but I don't want you running out. I am, however, going out. See you shortly. Mr. Harrington may let himself in, and if he does he can unlock you."

I was left handcuffed to the slats of this chair. It would have been possible to smash the chair, but sometimes letting someone do something initially leads to finding out more.

Lucinda wasn't long gone. "Hello dear Adam," she said when back. "I've told them you're getting the train with Elwyn Harrington. Unfortunately, Messrs Harrington and Mathias are fictional, I'm afraid. The thing is, as we speak, your partner, my sister, has the hots for my husband. She took him last time and she'll take him this time, only because he is weak and she is sexually aggressive. So it is about time we evened things up, and you can spend some time with me."

"Really," I said. "She said she didn't."

"I remember you vaguely as a teenager. There was the rumour then about you and a teacher, never mind about you with my sister and Jenny Masters. I know that your life since has been complicated and wasted when it comes to women. But my bisexual sister has that advantage over me, so I stick to a lesser pool available of men only."

"A man eater," I said.

"I want what is mine. She steals what is mine, like Dyfed, and I'm taking what is hers now."

She undid the handcuffs, so I bade her goodbye, and walked out of the bedroom door and went down the bare stairs to find all ways out locked.

"You disappoint me," Lucinda said, from the top of the stairs. "No one is coming, so you may as well come back upstairs. At least let Dyfed and her get started; they won't have started quite yet."

"Are you serious?" I asked her.

"Deadly. I can show you that your new partner is disloyal."

"Actually, we have a loose relationship. I've never had a claim over her."

"Really? Suits me no end. Come back upstairs then, Adam."

I ascended the noisy staircase. "No claim at all. She's been with a chap called Maurice Neptune in Wytham only a week ago. Stayed overnight and in his bed. I was disappointed, but she showed loyalty to Keith in a way I've never expected or wanted. Be nice if it changed."

"So my husband really is in danger - again."

"He might be."

"I want your mobile phone, Adam, and we can tell her stage by stage that you are on your way. You'll be able to tell her afterwards about the important missing person enquiry and how you offered your services. So when I send it it'll say that you and Elwyn - that's Harrington - have gone by train to look at where she may have gone missing, if there is time according to the train timetable."

I gave her my mobile phone and told her to get on with it. I sat on the seat and she sat on the bed.

I said, "I think you've thought this through quite well."

Then she undressed, telling me not to read anything into it because, as I knew too well, she was a naturist, just like Linda. It was only when she had undressed that

she pressed send.

Just parked in time! The train is coming and Elwyn and I are going as far as Llanbedr Pont Steffan where this missing person was a student. She had taken part in the food festival they had a year ago, based at the college.

"Oh look," said Lucinda. "She's sent a reply. Hook, line and sinker."

I'll come and pick you up when you are back. It all sounds fascinating. Enjoy the experience, but sad that someone's gone missing for so long.

She lay on the bed and told me to join her. She said, "She's not expecting you back any time soon, and that means tomorrow, laddie." When I didn't join her by invitation she said I should suit myself.

What did happen was that I talked to her about me being in the police, about how Ann Dromeghda had always featured in my life, and, with her partner Labhaoise Vlahos, I was helped to start the private investigator business. Indeed, they were now helping me renew the two sites after the retirement of my competitor. And I went through the news of the two reports that shook the diocese and making me a lot of money, and what may emerge afterwards, for Linda and Christine Vine.

Sitting on the seat was having an effect on my backside and back, being very basic, so in the end my resolve melted somewhat and lay on the bed with Lucinda, although I was clothed. She started touching my clothing.

She said, "We're still paying for the heating in here. You could at least loosen up." She unhooked my trousers and unbuttoned my shirt, and then I heard a noise as she put her hand down my trousers.

It was Dyfed coming in, and he saw her deliberately compromising me and herself.

He said, "I will say it for the hundredth time: I did not have sex with Linda."

"I know you did, and you will later."

"For a wife not to believe her husband is a serious matter," Dyfed said.

"I'd believe you but it's the way she denies it. What do you think, Adam?"

"I don't know."

"She's just had sex with a Maurice what?"

"A rabbi."

"A rabbi no less! Is she changing her religion?"

"It's not as far-fetched as you'd think. 'It's an ecumenical matter,' as Father Jack would say."

Lucinda said to Dyfed, "You heard him. Go on, prove yourself as resistant then. I'll give you a chance. You fancy her don't you."

"She looks like you but I do have you; it's she that fancies me."

"Ah," said Lucinda. "What did she say?"

"She said she is resisting me."

Adam sighed.

"That's my sister," said Lucinda. "Adam is staying with me overnight."

"Am I?"

"Yes you are. She won't suspect anything, Adam, because as far as Linda is concerned you will spend the night in a guest house at Llanbedr Pont Steffan. I

looked it up."

"Tell you what, Dyfed," I said. "You've just let yourself in with some keys. Toss them to me, and I'll go to the farm instead of you."

Lucinda said, "What shall we eat later, Adam?"

Dyfed said, "Much as I'd like it otherwise, my wife has to carry out her feud, Adam, and if I was you I'd just let her get on with it. I'll bring you some Chinese food from down the road - later. Two hours."

I realised that if he went through the door, I could jump him and get out myself. Trouble was Linda's resistance was low. I owed her a church, and Ann and I would stick by this, but suggestions that Linda might move towards a normal life with me seemed a limited hope at this point.

When Dyfed came back I'd already passed the point of resistance. I was kissing and discovering Lucinda's body. I'd stayed clothed, if accessible, simply because I knew he'd return. So it was that he brought back two meals, and a furniture magazine arrived in the only and late post, and he made it clear he wasn't staying.

After we'd eaten I did strip off, and decided to make hay with Dyfed's wife. And she was so like Linda, except that when I entered her I went much further in. I started to enjoy how the schemer could space things out and make things last. She was just fascinating. Her appetite for sex outstripped her appetite for food. I found an energy for sex previously lost: with this woman who looked like Linda but wasn't, her very open access sister.

Later on Lucinda gave me a text message to send and I was more than willing to make out I was innocent in all this.

It's all been very interesting today, backwards and forwards on the train, and eventually took the slow stopping train to Llanbedr Pont Steffan and the college where the missing woman was a student. I am staying with Elwyn - separate rooms! - at the Gwesty Teifi in the town. See you tomorrow when I can tell you all about what we have been doing.

Then she thought I should ring Linda, but when I rang up Dyfed answered and he ignored what I said to tell Linda, and used the call as an excuse to leave there. Lucinda was unconcerned: Dyfed was going to the new premises to sleep there.

I suggested it was evidence that they had not had sex.

"No," Lucinda said, "what's happened is she has either tried to seduce him or has seduced him, and he is running away. He can't risk staying overnight with her."

Lucinda was working on me again, like a whore on piece rates. Still, I enjoyed her company overnight, and she showed me a warmth that Linda had not. She did become close and sweet and we slept together in close, physical contact.

Then Lucinda looked at her mobile phone. "Oh. My app says that Dyfed is at the farmhouse annexe for his breakfast. Did he ever leave her?"

In the morning I was all over Lucinda and she was all over me. I was enjoying her, and I bet this is how Linda had been with Maurice Neptune. Linda and Lucinda obviously each had a voracious sexual appetite that one man (or woman too in Linda's case) could not contain.

The holiday turned out to be 'all fuck' except with Lucinda. I looked into her of course: these surgeons had done a fantastic job with a make-believe cervix too. I

really wondered why Linda would prefer to keep pushing her vagina with dilators every day.

At this point I was quite happy to go down the road with Lucinda and enter a cafe - not Dyfed's, as his wasn't operating yet - and enjoy a full breakfast. But Lucinda wanted more sex and storytelling.

After he thighs gripped hard, Lucinda gave me a summary of my time with Elwyn Harrington. It was up to me to add my own imaginative narrative as I did often in reports to gloss over what had happened minimally.

But before I might ring Linda, she rang me. So I had to be positive and welcoming of her call, with Lucinda grinning alongside me.

"Er, yes, Linda, so good to hear from you, so far away, and we left Llanbedr Pont Steffan station earlier and the college there."

"On the train?"

I described the zig-zag journey Lucinda said was necessary yesterday because of the timetabling on the line. Cyffordd Dyfi was supposed to have a camera outside that might show the student's movements but it was not working - of course it wasn't. Machynlleth next was to check out an earlier sighting. Lucinda mouthed 'clock tower' so I got that in as a point of interest. So then it was to Aberystwyth and on to Llanbedr Pont Steffan. This day we'd come as far as Aberystwyth to interview her professor - I could not see how he'd be involved - and we'd be back soon.

Linda said she'd looked up my apparent accommodation online and it did exist. Phew.

I came up with some nonsense about Elwyn having his own notes and comparing how we archived and cross-checked material. I further said that Machynlleth is the student's home town and the question is why she vanished at Cyffordd Dyfi.

"Quite a mystery. What was her name?" Linda asked.

I hadn't thought of a name. I invented Sian Lloyd.

Linda recalled she presented weather forecasts. I skipped that and mentioned an unknown motive. We'd not had a case like this in Serninsea.

"No, very rare, except on television," Linda said.

Lucinda whispered that there was more similar space across west Wales, so I said, "Perhaps there is more opportunity for investigating in this sort of hinterland."

She told me that Dyfed was with her, and how he went 'home' yesterday after playing *Reversi*. She would teach me how to play and use strategy. I said I'd see her at the farm, and bye from where I was supposed to be - Aberystwyth.

The call over, Lucinda opened her mouth with delight and then hugged me. Gosh, it was yet another session with her. This was more than brilliant.

To be honest, she was wearing me out. I was reverting to using my fingers and hands. Still good.

She said, "I haven't had a sex-shock session like this for a long time. Well, since meeting Dyfed. He didn't know what had hit him."

"I can imagine," I said. "I'm shell-shocked."

"Sex-shocked," she said.

"I'll have Post Traumatic Sex Disorder."

"Good," she said.

Lucinda explained that Elwyn Harrington would have dropped me off in town, so she would drive up to the farm with me. However, she also told me that her ideas

came from a television series, where Richard Harrington played Tom Matthias. I wondered if Linda would know this: she and we hardly watched much television. So we arrived at the farm, and immediately hit a wall of hostility from Linda - including towards Dyfed, surprisingly.

"Well, it's bye bye Dyfed. Sorry but fuck off Dyfed. Get lost Lucinda. No, I don't want to hear *anything*, Lucinda. Get lost. Adam: in! In here now!"

Linda slammed the door on grinning Lucinda.

Inside Linda clenched her fist and I was keeping away from her. I admitted that Lucinda told porkies from the off. She'd said about Richard Harrington playing Tom Mathias in Hinterland, and that's what Lucinda thought up, if using the name Elwyn.

When Linda told me there is no such railway to Llanbedr Pont Steffan, closed due to Dr. Beeching, I claimed that this was *my* doing so that she'd know it was not true. Linda had also discovered that I could not have visited a college because it is a university there, as at Aberystwyth.

I told her that effectively I'd been kidnapped, and I expected Dyfed had enjoyed sex with her.

"No." All this was enough for Linda. We were leaving. We would find a room at her naturist club.

"Aye."

"Adam, we have too much to lose, you and me. She has again taken what is mine, that's all. Get undressed, let's go to bed for sex and sleep, and we will pack for tomorrow, and just go. I'm really horny and he nearly tried something on, and I said he would not."

"Yep."

"I am glad my family are here in mid-Wales, because any closer to Serninsea and I think they'd do my head in."

Unfortunately, regarding sex, she found me incapable. "I fucking *hate* her," Linda said. "She's used you up."

"Yes," I accepted. "It'll have to be fingers."

Narrator: Linda *A Different Holiday* (Sunday to Thursday 17th October)

I sent an email to my mother wishing her the best and that we had to leave in a hurry.

We stayed, of course, at The Bever Wood Naturist Club. Adam had his tail between his legs, almost literally. He did as I told him, and I took the sexual lead. My sister would not wreck my relationship. So I literally put my family in another mental slot, including daddy, and decided that Adam was still my man. In any case, I needed a home and a church, and he was providing it.

Who should come along into this place on Monday but Keith, with pregnant Cheryl on full display. She wanted to meet me again, so she dismissed him and we two sat on seats facing each other. Cheryl said they were coping if still going through a difficult time.

"You knew about his unfaithfulness all the time," Cheryl said.

"Originally I thought that Yojana was a distraction. She wasn't."

"You knew about this group. I didn't. How can some of them have been religious?"

"Belief in an incarnate body. Describe your toleration for reconciliation."

"Oh yeah. He is with me only from now on."

"Good job the group collapsed then."

"I suppose I should thank you and your new partner for that. I forced Keith to come here, because you came here. I didn't know you'd come here. I wanted to see here and her at the coastal accommodation."

"Cheryl, I've no axe to grind with you. But I warn you. He was very attached to Yojana at that accommodation. He wasn't attached to her because of the group, but despite the group. Our information is that the group tried to spread him and her around a bit. He was her mentor, and they grew too attached. Plus the fact that she was the big boss's niece. How is your pregnancy?"

"I think I'm over the worst. Or the birth is the worst."

"Right."

"The child needs a father," she said. "I'll go and find the future father now."

"That's up to you," I replied, getting up. We gave each other a naked hug and her round tummy touched my flat one.

"I'd like to find a club near Harwich or Felixstowe. It feels free, this."

"Yeah," I said, and I left the room, saying, "See you around."

Tuesday morning my father directed my brother to have me, in all orifices, with Adam and Lucinda looking on. I opened my eyes and shook away these moving images, prodding Adam to perform in reality.

Adam had a message from Ann and Labhaoise that progress was good back in Serninsea. Peter let it be known that all was ticking over. There were now standard answers going out about the scandal, when there were requests for information. He said there was mail for me from the diocese.

I asked him to open it, and it was a month's notice to leave the tied house. I was sure we'd be out before then.

Keith kept his distance while Cheryl said hello as many times as we saw them.

Jeremy Symes and Lindy Peacock returned from a time away, so we had some incidental chat with them.

In the computer suite on Tuesday I sat on my towel and found the National Church website. Derek Imperial put on it that these had been very difficult times and he thanked people for their prayers. He had considered resigning but management for change was needed. He thanked the Archbishop of All England for his concerns. He said that he would appoint in an emergency a Priest-in-Charge for Serninsea. Serninsea would be extended to include Caffernmere and Inglemire. The priest would also cover Serninsea Marshes. This was a huge area.

Colin Cromer was on leave, but he would retire immediately after. This seemed sad to me: some thirty-six years in one place that had come to a rapid end.

Feeling tired, I lay down at the indoor pool, under the glass, and I asked Adam what we would do about Jenny. He said that we should at least invite her to stay at the new accommodation in the spare bedroom.

So, back at the suite, I found email addresses for Fatima's vicarage, although the website referred to ongoing replacement services, readers and visiting priests. She had fled as well as the Wilsons, as well as the bishops. I sent a message there,

and then sent one to the diocesan bishop's place, though Jenny might have fled as well.

We would like to invite you, Jenny World, to a live-in administration job in the new church and accommodation emerging in Serninsea. Linda and Adam.

There was a reply by Wednesday morning. Jenny sent it. It gave no details of where she was.

Sorry, but, I don't go anywhere without Liz Huett. It's a positive development. It has to be a no. We are having a difficult time trying to work out a future. Jenny.

"Leave it then," Adam said. "Let them sweat. But we might have to be flexible."

"Huett?"

"With Jenny."

Having given an indication of perhaps pursuing a naturist ministry, with positive interest from Jeremy Symes, Adam and I left Bever Wood and headed for the Saxiclite Club on the Wednesday. I was known there, and on the brief stopover they said they would be interested on an more interfaith basis. Fine.

Then it was on to Wytham, and Maurice Neptune knew that we were both coming along. That Adam felt unsure about this stopover was his hard luck. Inside, Mrs. Roberta Garfield gave us a tour of the house, and so Adam saw all the fixtures I'd told him about. So he knew that what I'd said about the place was true.

Maurice arrived back from the shul.

"It's all been explained to wider numbers," he said about the scandal in as far as he was affected in his ongoing ministry. "I'm still waiting for the Beth Din."

So we three went into his long, broad garden, with a wild flowers area, and it was rather cool. Maurice conversed with us about Jewish rituals, and I said that I wanted to adapt some of these without 'causing violence' to their integrity. I told him of wanting to develop a liturgical book, and he expressed an interest.

He told me that if I wanted him to do an inaugural sermon that suited Serninsea, then he would preach on Hosea chapters 1 to 3. I knew what they were about: the prophet and the prostitute. "For your new *Liberal* what?"

"Apostolic Ecclesia..."

"I will preach a full postmodern interpretation of Hosea and Gomer, but you will have to include it as a reading. I don't want to have to explain the whole thing. It needs to be read well," he said.

I replied, "It's not well-read."

"Adam," he said, "are you intending to take Linda as your wife?"

"No, I am married."

"You are going to be together, committed to one another?"

"I will live with Linda. She's like a good mate."

I felt a little deflated at that.

The rabbi asked Adam, "She will be your closest love, your advisor, the one to whom you turn?"

"No," he said. "My wife is too far away, but my close advisor on all things Ann

is a lesbian. I love her very much. I did father her child, and Labhaoise's as well, but the relationship they have is with each other."

I was starting to think I might punch Adam.

Maurice said, "Linda is special to me because she has a most interesting theology. Why is she special to you?"

"She's another piece of my life's jigsaw. We go back over twenty years, Ann a tiny bit longer. Mary Ann is the newest woman on the block, I suppose, and she has an adult daughter."

Maurice asked him "Do you stray from Linda?"

Offended by being a piece of a jigsaw, I said, "He's just enjoyed my sister."

Adam then said, "Linda likes to see other people; yourself, I understand."

"She needs a husband," said Maurice. "Be her husband or let her find deep company with another man. One who understands and can develop her personal religion, for example," he said, meaning himself.

Amazingly, we were invited to stay overnight. So we did. Adam and I had our own room, with a roomy ensuite. The bed was superb. I demonstrated that I was with Adam and not with Maurice.

Another dream had my mother telling me to accept Larry forcing himself on me; she nodded that daddy had penetrated me. I woke to realise this was opposite of the truth.

Thursday then and Mrs. Garfield cooked us a nice breakfast before we said goodbye to her, Maurice and his chauffeur Joseph.

We returned to my tied house, soon to be untied. Kathleen and Winnie had looked after the place while we had been away. Peter and Kathryn had enjoyed the place too. We didn't say too much about our time away.

Chapter 21 The New Church

Narrator: Linda *A Nightmare Turns Real* (Sunday 20th to Tuesday 22nd October)

Keith was present, and said, "He cannot hurt you with my instruction." I was breathing heavily. "Do what I have taught you."

So when Larry grabbed my head from behind and shoved his hard penis into my mouth, this time I did not choke but stared at him as it went to my throat.

Daddy was going to take me from behind, lifting himself high.

John Barman behind Larry said, "I'm impressed. We need you in our group."

I had a sense of the dream going into reality. Breathing heavily and out of control, Adam asked me what was wrong. I was struggling at each breath. It was just getting worse. Also, I had diarrhoea as well.

Adam decided to call an ambulance. The act of calling an ambulance bizzarely helped me calm down but I felt very weak.

I was breathing badly though, and with weakness. Two hours later and with Diana present, and Kathleen with Winnie looking on, two male paramedics ran me through some tests. They were concerned about my erratic breathing and weakness, and so off I went in an ambulance accompanied by Adam (not Diana) all the way to Foss Hospital Trust in Wytham. Kathleen and Winnie had packed a bag for me. On arrival I was wheeled in and received tests at Accident and Emergency. Adam was nearby while this happened, and later sat with me while I waited in a booth for entry on to the wards.

I was found a ward and Adam left before the darkness came. He said he'd get the last bus back to Serninsea.

Next day, Sunday, the main medication seemed to be rehydration via my wrist, and mainly water with antibiotics. A nurse pointed out that I was peeing a lot less than I was drinking, saying it while she creamed my scars. This nurse had read about me in the media.

Time dragged and I spent a lot of time having naps.

Diana turned up to visit. She told me she went to Wytham Unitarians first! A local man had preached. She wanted to experience them first hand, given her one-time impersonation of being one.

"What did he say?"

"About sixty-five years ago a Unitarian called Monroe Husbands went backwards and forwards in America putting adverts into newspapers asking whether you were a Unitarian without knowing it. Unlike what happens today, he started fellowships when he could collect together some interested people. An example was Anchorage in Alaska. Today Anchorage says it is a fellowship of diverse people who nurture each other, attempt to act ethically, try to develop spiritually, improve their minds, to help create a caring community of justice. The place is rooted in its local community and the landscape. We in Wytham and Foss should not hide our chalices but light them in public."

"Very good," I said. "Someone was listening."

Then Diana said she spoke to the nurses before coming in. She'd said that she thought I'd been exhausted by too many traumatic events, one after the other.

My physical health had taken a knock. The nurses said I have pneumonia with a lot of phlegm in my system, diarrhoea, and some mental confusion early on.

"They also suspect you've had anal sex, and might have been infected that way. Have you persuaded Adam to have anal sex?"

"Er, yeah, I insisted."

"So you've also got diarrhoea, despite more control over your bowels now." Diana also said that my short hair was a constant reminder of the abuse I'd received.

So I told her about Larry confronting me again over what had happened when I was sixteen.

"Your brother raped you? I didn't know that either. And you without a cervix - and I didn't know about that for such a long time."

"The rape was two days after a hospital visit that meant no operations."

"What date? I bet you remember the date."

"6th May, 1995."

"Your brother - not your father?"

"Father? Why do you ask? My brother... is bad enough. I don't know how to relate to you Diana. I treat you as a friend. I'm not telling you everything, but you think I should. I'm trying to make a relationship with Adam, but I don't fancy him like I do others. I fancied the rabbi when I was with him; I fancied Lucinda's husband, and resisted him; and I love you but you've only responded the once and I'm supposed to think no more about it. This positive side of my balance sheet is as confusing to me as all the horrible things."

"And you thought you could cope."

"Diana, I love you."

"But I am married and I can't do two people at once. Anyway, I don't respond to women."

"I am not a man!"

"I didn't mean it like that. You're in a weak state, so this conversation is badly timed; I'm trying to be honest here, which you haven't been with me."

"I don't want to argue," I said. "I'm not up to it."

"No, my point exactly. Can we change the subject? I've been fascinated this week about the filming and editing with *The Jacobite Gap Years* new season. I was investigating - remotely - the Factory Studios at New Lanark."

"Diana," I said, "you're starting to bore me now."

"How could we be lovers if you don't share my interests?"

"There's an admission!"

"I *love* the books and the TV series."

"Not the same thing."

"I've just finished book three again."

"I see. And I'm the one with some mental confusion."

"I just love to imagine myself back then; it's so romantic."

"It's historical bollocks," I said. "At least, Diana, you're raising my outlook beyond self-pity."

"I've brought you book three, if you want it. At least look at it. Pass the time."

"I gave up on book one and book two. I've only ever glimpsed three."

"You don't want it then."

"Yes, I'll take it. Something to look at."

Soon Diana had gone, and the long hours stuck in hospital continued

including more hydration treatment with antibiotics, with added paracetamol, plus nurses doing my creams. Perhaps I could change my name to Philip Marlowe.

On Monday the doctors did their round, and they decided that I could be discharged next day. I was sufficiently well (if weak) to return home if looked after by friends. I was prescribed oral antibiotics to begin on Tuesday as Monday included my final and short hydration treatment with injected antibiotics. Certainly I was peeing a lot more.

So on Tuesday there was a long exit process from the hospital, at which point Diana met me to drive me home. Her kiss was on my lips and she put her arm around me.

I told her in the car, directly, "I want opportunities to make love with you. I mean I want you, Diana. Stop holding back. Tell Aardse that you have to do it. He'll understand. And don't worry about Adam."

"I don't give a shit about Adam," she said. "He's the last reason preventing me."

"What happened with him that has caused such hostility?"

"If you don't know... Well, look at him and his women. That's all I'm going to say."

"I'm one of them."

"You're at the end of the queue. Ann comes first, then Mary Ann. You're third."

"Then I want to share a bed with you: Wednesday afternoons."

"No, Linda, no. Aardse has accepted as much as he can, staying with you. He thinks my mind is in the fictional clouds and neglecting my emotions towards him. I'd better stay at home this time."

"On which point," I said, "you can have your book back."

Adam slept alongside me and Kathleen monitored my drugs and creams. Nurse Mabel Thorp called in. Kathleen and Winnie said that the Serninsea Vestal Virgins were praying for me.

Ministries for a New Local Church (Friday 25th October)

I ventured out on Friday. The rebuilding now looked good.

Adam told me that in the subordinate church business I would have complete controlling rights to use as necessary. However, his holding business could dissolve the church business. Christine Vine would have access, he said, but it was up to me how she came into the church building - I should be reasonable.

While there, Christine indeed came in and already knew these arrangements.

Having asked about my health, she said, "We'll have anything from sharing to me just having a base and you and I being separate."

"If we are in the same ecclesia, we must be sharing somehow."

"Or acting independently. Ministries under the same ecclesia can be very distinct. Bill and Pauline have theirs."

"I'm just getting to understand all this," I said.

Meanwhile, Christine invited me to view her ministry, so that I did not accuse her of attachment to sex for the sake of entertainment.

"I haven't."

"Nevertheless, do you want to come out this evening?"

"Yes. I'll see what you do."

As a result, I sat in the back of her car, with Leon Agnew driving, and I was alongside a rather heavily built chap - all muscle I was told. I shook his hand as he said, "Fawn Bold."

Leon drove down Titansea and some nearby Serninsea streets. Christine said, "I haven't seen her before."

Christine's window lowered and she spoke to this street sex worker. "Twenty-five quid but only after you get in, talk and listen."

"Are you the police?"

"No. These are my friends. Have you heard of Mar Werburga?"

This woman got in alongside Fawn. She called herself 'Barley'. She said she took a mixture of crack-cocaine and heroin, and needed to fund this.

Christine stated: "Fawn is showing you some free condoms and sterilised needles. Do you want them?"

"No."

"Look, Barley, you take those drugs and you risk becoming paralytic and in pain immediately afterwards. Instead, I'll take you off the streets into one of my terraced houses if you go on a detox programme."

"Can I have my twenty-five quid?"

"Only after you take this card. It's got a number on it to contact me or my people. If you are being controlled by a pimp, ring. With our work the police will leave you alone, but they will go after the pimp."

"He's my boyfriend."

"Take the card. Right. Here's twenty-five quid. Think about becoming a Weburga Goose to help improve your life."

Off she went.

In these hours of several street encounters, one prostitute called 'Mag' said she wanted to get off drugs now. So Christine drove her to a house where she was received by some scantily clad women, and she received fifty quid.

"This all needs financing," said Christine, "but I can afford it. My leading client after all is that man, Bandyopadhyay, with too much money and who thinks he can buy his pleasure and control people. Well, I'll take his money off him and I call the shots. You knew him all too well, but the shine has gone off you now that you've resigned from the National Church."

"So have you."

"I wasn't a priest when he was my client."

This street experience was indeed the rough end of the Serninsea sex trade: I'd spoken about it, but never seen it. Christine was hoping to mop it up, eventually. Apparently she had been doing this in some other places, such as Eslaforde and Wheaton.

She said, "This is my ministry, and while I'd be glad of help you should do your own ministry in the future."

We called in at the police station that stayed open overnight. They knew her, and she reported on what had happened. This desk sergeant wrote down some details for a file they kept.

Back in this car Christine also told me that Yojana Asthana with more responsibility on her shoulders had started to develop the coastal guest house. The

place was receiving a cash injection from Bandyopadhyay, her uncle, and would be expanded. It needed trade, said Christine, which meant more conferences.

Christine revealed that she had been to Bristol in her helicopter, so I asked what she had discussed.

"Your likely incardination and ordination, and my ministry you've just witnessed; and about Jenny with Elizabeth Huett, and whether Huett could come into the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia."

She commented that Elizabeth Huett was 'the best of the old bad job' and that she could work with her again.

"Is this wise?" I asked.

"You've been a bit out of touch, understandably. The thing is, if we incardinated her, that would satisfy me," said Christine. "She'd come with your friend Jenny."

"Make her...?"

"Yes, an LAE bishop."

"Surely *not*."

"If you are bishop, we can out-vote Huett, although she could exercise vetoes. So I want to be sure of her good intentions. The diocese of Tees is now vacant for a bishop. Let's hope Sarah gets it."

I said, "I doubt Sarah will accept that. Have you been in contact with Jenny?"

"Jenny was in contact with me. I said you were in Wales, in the bosom of your loving family."

"Are you being sarcastic?"

"I was being positive. I was being flowery. Truth is, she thought I was being sarcastic as well."

"It's all chiefs and no indians in the LAE," I said.

She agreed with me, as it is often the case in independent sacramental ministries. Christine wanted to incardinate me very quickly, but they in Bristol did not. "They want to come here and do everyone in one grand ceremony in the new church. The LAE Confraternity Vanguard needs a relaunch, probably before you are elevated."

"So I *am* going to be 'elevated', as you put it."

"It makes sense. Your rights to run the local church ought to be matched ecclesiastically."

"Well, thank you for telling me, in a car, seeking new street sex workers."

"Now's as good a time to say as any."

"I'm going to contact Jenny," I said. "Perhaps we can tell her that Huett doesn't love her and is using her."

"Love is a tricky term regarding those two. More like dependency, now, with each on the other."

"Jenny's all right to come; Huett is different."

"Jenny doesn't trust you; she is not sure about Adam, and sees me as blunt and uncaring. Tamuuz was harsh and overpowering but Huett reassures Jenny."

I said. "This will be Jenny's chance to become secular."

"And therefore Jenny would not do any more initiating."

"Surely no one is going to do any more initiating," I said to Christine.

"What we do has still got to be eucharistic."

"I would incorporate the mikveh or something like that. Do we really need an

exchange of body fluids?" I asked her.

"Here is your liturgical task, Linda: produce a substitute demonstrative ritual to indicate that the orgasm is a divine insight."

"Ah. I'll try and come up with something."

"One more thing," said Christine. "I have no objection to Professor Mitton and Allie Shrimpton coming to do research, but you might have asked me."

"Sorry. It was last minute as we were leaving for the bosom of my family. Adam received a letter and it was a quick decision."

"I have been fairly pivotal in events," she said. "I did have *some* influence in gaining a new church, a new place for you."

"Thanks. No, really: I mean it. The professor is her tutor and she will do it. She'll do 'thick research' and all that, I'm sure, so she will have to be in on decisions-making and so on. For the most part, we shouldn't notice her. As I understand it, the initial interviews she'll do ought to be brief. Could be interesting."

Christine said, "I've sent you a link already so that you can download my Body Eucharist Initiation ritual and try to adapt it. Don't make it too liberal, or at least keep its ecclesiology sound."

"You've already thought of this."

"Indeed."

Leon dropped me off at my soon not-to-be curate's home, and Adam was already in bed and I joined him.

I said to him, after telling of Christine's approach, "So my idea of a Body Eucharist initiation is to use the mikveh, of bodily submersion and re-emergence, to then go on somehow to the more standard gift-exchange symbols of bread and wine. Christine still somehow wants the orgasm recognised. I need to be creative."

"Your business."

"I'm informing you."

Adam then said, "Perhaps someone like Carrie Chopin has an idea."

"What a useful point, Adam! Yes, she just might. I want her group in the new church as well. It's so exciting for me."

"Good."

"A new dawn."

Jenny, Elizabeth and Another (Tuesday 29th October)

They were in my tied house lounge. I asked the Reverend Jenny World and Bishop Elizabeth Claire Huett, "Are you both staying at Yojana's?" I sat with Bishops Christine Vine, Bill Masters and Pauline Junor.

Elizabeth said, "Before we begin, I want to give my profound apology for what happened to you, Linda. I did not think they were going to harm you. I took him in first as the scandal broke but I threw Terry Barman out for lying to me. However, I did not like your article or Magellan's various writings."

"You were involved with them and you can't deny it. You had the affair with Barman."

"He was a single man and I am a single woman."

"Well, it's not exactly Church rules."

"Church rules are wrong. Even you think that."

There was a ring on my doorbell.

I went and opened a door to a tall redhead in black leathers and high black boots, like in a *Girl on a Motorcycle*. I said to her, "Yes?"

"Been told you're having a meeting," she said in a Somerset or Norfolk accent. "I'm the new researcher. My professor said he will meet you another time. Alfia Shrimpton. Allie."

"Do I know you?"

"We met at Margate."

"Oh wow! We *did*. Come on in. How did you know about here?"

"Professor Roland Mitton and I were peerking at Adam Magellan's church and saw only builders. They're tricolating the church suffin masterous. We went to the other place, also with builders, and a chap called Peter told us of your having a mardle here."

"Norfolk words?"

"Sorry. Bit nervy. Try to avoid them, bor."

Inside I introduced her.

Alfia said everything would be done in confidence, and she would make notes afterwards, and hopefully the professor and she would introduce themselves properly fairly soon.

I said that Elizabeth had just apologised for what had happened to me earlier.

"What was in *The Daily Morse*?" asked Alfia.

"Yes. She didn't agree with it," I said. "Apparently."

"I meant what I said."

Alfia then said, "I won't ask any more questions. I will interview - soon."

"All right," I said. "We have to decide to take you in, a bishop who once ran a diocese. This is very different. To me, the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia consists of loose chiefs without indians, or at least the indians are like hunter-gatherers, forever moving through, unlike farmers on fixed land."

"Interesting thought," said Pauline Junor.

"I sort of understand that," said Elizabeth Huett.

Christine Vine said, "We have our own Confraternity. I decided, and the Reverend Linda agrees, that it needs adjustment in the new situation in the whole LAE ecclesia. Meanwhile, we'll have our own ministries. If you want to join us - you don't have to - then you need to draw up a document to suggest your own ministry. And you would have to be self-supporting."

"I've come in a relationship with Jenny."

Jenny said, "I want her here or I'm not staying."

Bill Masters said, "We'd like you to stay, my niece."

I said, "I thought you were in a relationship with Fatima Tamuuz."

"Fatima is a bit cold-hearted," said Elizabeth.

"A bit?" asked Jenny, rhetorically. "Anyway, she's vanished."

"Does Adam approve?" I asked, thinking he must or they would not even be here.

"Yes," said Jenny. "Adam said Elizabeth can move in."

I said, "In which case, there will be a room for you two, with a wet room ensuite. There is no general bathroom on either floor upstairs. There's to be a double bed in your room. There is a kitchen and a seating area in the upstairs with ongoing

stairs to the high loft bedroom. But you may prefer the busy - we hope - kitchen of the church downstairs. It will be quite communal."

"Fine. I'll sleep with Jenny. We have been."

Jenny looked at her uncle and said, "Well, you're gay."

"I've said nothing."

"Adam and I will be in the top bedroom, and Kathleen and Winnie will be on your floor. The bedroom and ensuite will be your only private space. If you were used to large accommodation as a bishop, think again. And you, Jenny, can become secular, and end the pretence."

"Yes."

Elizabeth said, "Fatima knew Jenny's secularity, the extent of it, but I didn't. And I know any ministry by me is unpaid, so I will have to see if I can find some work."

"I intend to be supported by the church. Adam owns the business, and the church is one business branch; I will have the right to run it, but I'm not yet a bishop. Although I will have that right, I intend to have decisions taken by a religious board, and Adam will have his holding business board. We are going to be open and liberal but will follow the basis of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia."

"Which means," said Christine, "that you will have to be incardinated, Liz. We also, as a standard, ordain *sub-conditione*, though we are pretty sure your orders are valid. As for the Confraternity: Linda is taking my liturgy used once at the Titansea Grand and is adapting this, with advice from elsewhere."

Elizabeth accepted all of this, and I shook her hand, as did Christine, and then we had handshakes with Jenny.

I said, "We don't have to be friends, you and me, Jenny, but we can reconcile."

I asked in general after Yojana. Christine said Keith and her had broken up, and it left Yojana feeling sad. Elizabeth agreed.

Elizabeth had one further question. "If I was Terry Barman, would you have accepted me?"

"No. Nor Jonathan Eyre. I had passionate feelings for him very quickly at Margate, where I met Alfia here..."

"Call me Allie."

"...but I realise these feelings were foolish, because nothing was reciprocated but exploited. And your feelings for John Barman?"

"My feelings were dissipated in how we later organised matters. I took him in, at the scandal, but things were already different. The Confraternity Vanguard created lies, and that wasn't what was intended - beyond necessary secrecy. Its collapse exposed how we related."

"I don't want him visiting. None of that bunch are welcome. Look, I will reconcile with anyone," I said, "but it has to be on the basis of trust. I take it, with Jenny, that we can trust you, and on that basis you may, Elizabeth, join the team. I have my differences with Christine, but we are in a team for necessary purposes. So we are becoming like a group helping each other out, and so when the accommodation is available, just move in."

The meeting over, Christine took Allie off to one side. I could overhear that she was talking about accommodation, and it would mean Allie having her own house. I even saw Christine give her a key.

"She's paying me rent," Christine said to me directly, "as part of the expenses of her project. We may as well make sure Allie is settled and can do her tasks."

"Where will she be living?"

Allie shook her head and Christine said, "She has asked me not to tell you, or anyone else. I think we have to respect her anonymity."

"But you know."

"Someone has to know." Then Christine said very quietly, "I could see how you were looking at her."

"Don't be ridiculous," I said, not quietly, with Allie looking at the back of Christine's head and a portion of my face.

I went to the front door to head for a liturgy ideas meeting with Carrie Chopin. Allie ran after me, and asked me in future to tell her where I was going.

I said to her: "Follow me then. It is really lovely to see you again, but I don't want to compromise you. You have been keeping well, I think."

"Yes, and you are right," she said in her Norfolk accent but choosing national words. "This has to be about me doing research, and I'd like some distance even as I follow you around. I just would like to blend in and do my work. Try to imagine that I am not here, but also that I kind of join in so that I am like everyone else - if you can do that."

Carrie Chopin Briefly (Tuesday 29th October)

With the builders still doing significant work on both floors upstairs, but much completed downstairs beyond final painting and some adding of decorative fixtures, Carrie Chopin and I had a fairly productive meeting in the new vestry at an installed computer on liturgical ideas. Allie looked uncomfortable, somehow.

Carrie said about what they draw upon: real, actual lives 'written on the body' and she pointed me to online examples. However, they are secretive about their specific rituals. Liturgical intercessions could be enhanced, I thought.

After this brief encounter, and with Carrie gone, I asked Allie why she seemed somewhat distant. She'd not looked at Carrie and was sat well back.

"I'm not any more out of it than I should be."

"Uncomfortable?"

"No."

"Okay. Yes, you are a researcher...."

"I'd prefer it if I could blend in and be unnoticed."

"Blending in means you come within the pastoral concern of this church."

"I will mainly join in with activities and observe."

"There might not be a lot to see."

"That would be of interest in itself."

Diana's Breasts (Wednesday 30th October)

I received an anonymous text message. I don't know from whom it came, although I

had my suspicions. It showed that certain characters had only gone away, perhaps to come back again.

Today is the Feast of Chestnuts or the Chestnuts Ballet. It was celebrated in Rome, an orgy reputedly in 1501 at the Vatican Apostolic Palace. We would have celebrated this in Serninsea but for you. Pope Alexander VI. Important men were entertained by fifty courteous women, becoming naked. Chandeliers were placed on the ground as phallic symbols with chestnuts scattered for the naked cortes to catch with their mouths. The clergy and other guests became naked and had sex with them, with, according to Burchard, "prizes offered - silk tunics, pairs of shoes, hats and other clothing - for those who were able to perform more acts with the prostitutes." The Pope rewarded the three men who ejaculated the most often.

My researcher called at the curate's house. I showed her the anonymous message, about which she said nothing at all. Diana via the same phone told me to come to Patricia's as per usual. On the basis that we might discuss church things, Alfia came with me.

Diana and we two arrived at the same time, let ourselves in (she had the key) and undressed, to lie on the seats at either side of the conservatory.

Without a word Alfia undressed and bought in a seat to sit naked. Oh she was attractive.

"How's it going then?" Diana asked me.

"How is what going?"

"The latest on your transfer to another church."

"It looks interesting. New sleeping space into the loft, and extension out the back, the garage incorporated, and a layout of useful compact rooms."

"You can't make people turn up," Diana said, "and certainly not pay money. Anyway, Catering at Foss Upper Coast College are interested in putting students in the community kitchen. "

"Thank you. But what you say is a challenge - where the money will come from?"

"And you're happy to put yourself in the hands of Adam Magellan."

"I'll obviously want to see the legal documents, but if they match with what I'm told then I'm happy with that. I have control rights regarding the religious company."

"I wouldn't trust myself to Adam Magellan one bit. He can change the documents."

"You don't know that."

"Bet he can. He runs away. He doesn't support people."

"There's Ann as well."

"Because he's a weakling."

"Diana. We are all faulty; no one is perfect or close. So we overcome that with attempts at solidarity. It's not easy. I'm discovering that you are quite an intense person."

"Don't you start being a shit as well; I couldn't stand it."

"Diana, what is all this?"

"Aardse and I are having difficulties - and he thinks you're behind it. I don't want to talk in front of your friend."

"She's not my friend, she's a researcher."

Alfia said, "Everything is confidential."

"Diana. What *is* the matter?"

"You just float through life, don't you; nothing matters to you. You're one of the most amoral, couldn't care less, people I've known. You are right to stop being a minister of religion."

"I haven't stopped being a minister of religion."

"You're leaving a Church that pays you a wage and joining a play Church."

"It is definitely not that. You're being hostile."

"You should not be a minister of religion. You don't have a moral compass."

"Diana. I don't have to hear this. You're supposed to be my friend. I'm thinking of going."

"Yes you would, given what you are. Take her with you."

"That is it. I'm going to go." I got up and swung my legs around. "You're impossible. I'll talk to you when you are less intense - if you are any time soon."

"No, I can't bear it." Diana stood up first. "No, don't, please."

"I'm at a loss," I said.

"Then hold me."

"Yes, of course." So I stood, and held her, and her grip pulled me in. "I'd like to help," I said.

"Aardse doesn't want you to support me."

"You supported me, and I am very grateful."

"Don't pull out on me. No, don't."

So I kissed her to reassure her.

"I'd breastfeed you."

"Hey? Can you? Why?"

"Not now, no."

"Why say that?"

"Just in my head. Forget it. Look, we'll get dressed and go to our homes."

In the car with Alfia I said, "Look. You say nothing about this to anyone. Why was it so easy for you to undress?"

"It was the situation; I blended in."

"So what did you think of what you saw and heard?"

"I don't have an opinion."

"Hmm. It almost looked like a mental breakdown. Do you agree?"

"Please do not ask me."

"I can see we're going to get on - not."

In the evening I received a call from Patricia. Alfia had gone to her secret house.

"Aardse doesn't want to talk to you because you keep having sex with his wife."

"I didn't then. She was acting strangely."

"Whatever, he says next time you meet it is strictly social. He says you've dragged up some difficult issues in her life."

"Like what, exactly?"

"She is anxious and needs to calm down and reorientate, according to him."

"And what about the difficulties they are having?"

"He said things have been difficult but the cause is at your end."

"Ridiculous."

"I'm just the messenger here."

"Well thanks for the message, Patricia. You obviously know more than I do, about her hostility to Adam and uneasiness with me."

"I'm sure things will get back to normal with all the relevant people eventually pressing the reset button."

"I'm pressing it now, but it's failing to work."

"It's too early. Take it that Wednesdays are off for the time being. And Diana thinks you might fall for this new woman who follows you around."

"Highly unlikely, I'd have thought. I recall her at Margate but so far here she seems rather strange."

Gathering the Group (Thursday 31st October)

We had our first ever 'staff' gathering together in the dining and seating area of the new church. People were encouraged to look around the ground floor of the building. There was still a lot being finished up the flights of stairs.

Present were Adam and his business partner Ann Dromeghda, and the Revd. Margaret McEnhill, whom Adam wanted as a non-executive external pair of eyes and ears.

Bishop Christine Vine, or Mar Werburga, was joined by Bishop Bill Masters, or Mar Simili Anseres, but not Bishop Pauline Junor as she was visiting her elderly parents in North Yorkshire.

Our lot present were the Revd. Doorkeeper Peter Marshall, the Revd. Doorkeeper Kathleen Wickenby, the Revd. Doorkeeper Winnie Lott, Kathryn Wickenby, Bishop Elizabeth Huett, and Jenny World.

Specifically invited was Carrie Chopin to represent the Serninsea Vestal Virgins (if with her two Doorkeeper 'sisters'). Similarly Rabbi Maurice Neptune joined us, who would take services for Reformist Jews.

Up on the high big screen online were Bishop Geoff Virgo, Mar Arcturus-Virginis, and Bishop Luis Mariano Callas, Mar Sexwulfus-Sexburg, both founding bishops of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia. For the time being they could hear but not see us.

Further present were Professor Roland Mitton, a long white-haired round-spectacled chap in a donkey jacket and jeans denying his age, and Alfia Shrimpton, his Ph.D student, with her long natural red hair and rather pleasant smile, in a stretchy black top, tight moulded pink trousers and bare feet in sandals. I thought she was gorgeous, and realised I was doing it again.

I overheard Allie tell her professor, "Fortunately, my period has finished." Fancy telling him!

Before our formal meeting, the assembled looked at the chapel, and the extension into a mikveh at the end was almost ready to fill with water. Maurice approved; it had been done properly. The chapel could be screened off with long folding doors, or it could effectively extend into our seating area.

To the south was the untouched property in the original three house terrace.

We had now two front doors facing approximately west. One at the north end, the public end, consisted of double doors. At the southern end, of what had been

Adam's workplace, was the residents' private single door. In an open plan arrangement, that door faced the one remaining staircase, up to our private premises, where on two floors we had three ensuite double bedrooms. On floor one with its up and down staircases we had two ensuite very large bedrooms (one and two) with a kitchen diner facility. The staircase into the adapted loft of both original houses arrived at a lounge before a study and the large ensuite double bedroom for Adam and me.

There was parking for two cars easily in front of the lost garage and at the back for two as long as no lorries or vans wanted to pass - but it was a right of way for service vehicles. Such access meant moving our vehicles.

People looked around the ground floor. Going south to north we created a wet room and showers with a plunge pool that contained only one set of steps in and out (it would easily take four people), with enough room for a massage table and double airbed. Access was through a northern and western cloaks area. The cloaks' doorway went into a space that led to the private staircase, or across to unisex WCs space that also had shower facilities at its north far end wall.

East and on the other side of the wet room was a consulting room with library, with a back door east beyond the south side of the extension to the tenfoot, and a second east door directly into the extension vestry and robing room. This vestry extended further north than the consulting room, and so had its own door into the seating and dining area at the back end of the staircase. It also had its own door within the extension to the disabled WC and nappy changing room.

Beyond the disabled WC with nappy changing space northwards was the east side kitchen, with open access west into the dining area. The kitchen had its own eastern back door outside and a door northwards to a storage room that was extended from the garage. The storage room was next to the mikveh, completing the extension.

The mikveh had optional privacy provided by more folding doors to the chapel, and going down the southern parallel steps would have participants' backs westwards to the chapel as when coming up the parallel northern steps. Coming up they walk around, and so holding up towels could shield people. Three could go easily into the pool in procession, submerge and walk through the water, to rise up the other steps and walk around its eastern and then southern perimeter. The altar table was at the west end of the chapel as the mikveh was to the east end.

Anyone coming through the northern west-side double doors into the seating/dining area could go ahead for the kitchen, turn left into the chapel, go right to the cloaks and then unitary toilets, or go the furthest south to the cloaks for the wet room or indeed the consulting room with library.

We had just received foldaway tables for the dining area and seats, bought from a closed Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall. (They had moved to bigger premises.)

For our formal meeting we used three long tables in a line and some seats.

Adam began by telling us that he wanted Margaret McEnhill to act as a non-executive external set of eyes and ears for his holding company and she had agreed. She was a priest from the National Church but her main job was as an administrator. She had been an informant during the scandal.

"For the purposes of voting," Adam said, "on business management matters it is me, Ann, Peter, Margaret and Linda. However, on some critical matters, I can

outvote you all as the executive, but Ann might stop me. On Ecclesiastical matters it is straight voting for Christine, Bill, Elizabeth, Geoff and Luis, and of course Linda, but I have to tell you Linda can exercise a veto on matters inside this church because that's the business side insertion into the religious. Jenny has declined any decision making or title and we welcome as guests Carrie Chopin, Professor Roland Mitton and our new researcher Alfia Shrimpton."

"Allie, please. Namaste." She put her hands together and gave a short head bow.

Adam continued: "Can I welcome them both here all the way from the.. What is it?"

"Hello," Roland said. "The Glastonbury School of Folk and Ethnographic Studies at The University of Somerset. In studying the early development of this independent church my postgraduate student will be completely confidential and you will all be anonymised. Namaste." He also put his hands together and gave a short head bow.

Geoff on the big screen said, "We seek to include Kathleen, Winnie and Peter in our deliberations. They will proceed to major orders very soon. We also have negotiations with Reverend Margaret Lindbeck in the North East. She has agreed to join our body. We will ordain her as bishop, soon. Meanwhile, we know the University's School at Glastonbury well," said Geoff, on screen. "And we have met Professor Mitton and indeed I think we prodded him towards considering our new development in Serninsea in the LAE."

The professor nodded. "Such a low horizon, towering skies."

The postgraduate student now had a beaming smile. She said, "We've come to see you bring your church into new life."

I responded, "We're not 'New Life', of course, who are Pentecostals; we are just grateful that we are not dead." (That was a sort of music joke.)

Adam resumed: "Alfia is going to make her own notes afterwards, apparently, and her intention is to be as invisible as possible.

"Allie, please."

I thought, she was hardly that. Her breasts had her nipples headlights on, and they were shining at me.

"So, let us begin," said Adam. "Margaret McEnhill is acting as Secretary for this meeting. I am the Chair, but I'll hand over to Linda for much of it. The Company is Magellan Investigations Holdings Ltd. and it owns both sites, here and nearer Titansea. It is owned by me and partly by Ann Dromeghda here. The other site is for Magellan Investigations Ltd., run by me. This site is for Magellan Ecclesiastical Ltd., owned by me but run by Linda Jupitas, and I invite her to sign the document now, with me and with Ann Dromeghda to formalise all this. It does not have to affect ecclesiastical authority: Linda's crown is regarding this property and what happens in it but she demurs to ecclesiastical authority in running things, I'm told."

I signed it when it was my turn. I handed the document back.

Geoff said, booming into the dining room, "This is why we want Linda as a bishop. Or one reason why."

Adam then said, "What Magellan Investigations does stays in Magellan Investigations. And similarly, what Magellan Ecclesiastical does stays here and with Linda. This document gives Christine, Bill and Pauline access to the downstairs ground floor of this building, unrestricted and uninterrupted, but I am afraid I won't do

this for you folks in Bristol or Elizabeth here now. We can amend the document later. Your access depends on Magellan Ecclesiastical and its decisions. Linda cannot change this access basis; only Magellan Investigations Holdings can. Got that Maggie? Linda, please."

"I'm giving access to Geoff and Luis. I'm also extending it to Elizabeth. It is usual for bishops to have unimpeded access to their churches."

Ann said, "Can Magellan Ecclesiastical voters please vote to agree with this, excepting the three it concerns to invite in?"

I responded: "I propose. Peter seconds. That's everyone who can saying yes."

Margaret said she had noted his in a separate column.

I continued. "I thought about using some location names. Geoff and Luis have approved, but I'd like their agreement here shortly. We in the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia will introduce the Province of the Anglians. No 'c' in that. I looked up some maps of ancient names, but I thought, 'No, let's keep it simple,' and thus our dioceses are: Scotland and the North, North East, Midlands, South West, South, and East. Here is the list: the Bishop of Scotland and North England will be Reverend Margaret Lindbeck..."

"To become Mar Akelda," said Luis on the big screen. "She's new to us. The ordinations we'd like at seven p.m. on Sunday 17th November."

I said, "Yes, fine. But to continue: from that day the Bishop of the North East will be Bishop Elizabeth Huett; the Bishop of the East will be me, eventually, Linda Jupitas; the Bishop of the Midlands is Bishop Christine Vine, Mar Werburga; the Bishop of the South is Bishop Luis Mariano Callas, Mar Sexwulfus-Sexburg; and the Bishop of the South West is Bishop Geoffrey Virgo, Mar Arcturus-Virginis. Bishop Bill Masters, Mar Simili Anseres, and Pauline Junor, Mar Populari, have asked to be without diocese. We respect that. We new bishops will receive our ecclesiastical names on the day of ordination, the 17th of next month. Peter Marshall, Kathleen Wickenby and Winnie Lott will all become deacons. Is this correct, bishops?"

All four said 'yes' together.

Christine said, to hammer a point home, "Listen! All those ordained bishop participate in the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali, a Society to determine overall direction and policy, and gatherer of the Synod of Bishops. Ecclesiastically, this local church here has to be tied into the whole Church, the Society and its Synod. The Society is for direction, study, reflection and action. It expresses core ideas and purposes. Everyone under its actions will receive a badge with a W and a goose on it. This will mean Werburgh and not Werburga as before because we are adjusting the Society after discussions."

I continued. "Yes, it is all apostolic. This church is for the Parish of the Upper Coast in Eastern Foss. We leave it rather geographically undefined. The ministry here is local, and we will facilitate Christine's ministry that specialises among the sex workers."

"For which I am one myself," said Bishop Christine.

"Carrie, Kathleen, Winnie!" I called out, "Your group are welcome to use our church. No charge."

Carrie said, "Thank you. We shall donate. We will carry out our rituals here. We will pray for the towns and your church. We will study. Thank you Linda. We have our own discs too."

I said, "Elizabeth joins us after resigning from the National Church. Christine and I held discussions with her. She states that she wants to contribute with us; we have gone over the past. She comes as a bishop, and an equal partner, one to be incardinated into the LAE."

I proposed and Christine seconded her place; every one of our team voted in favour.

Adam decided to hand out keys. Rabbi Maurice said his group would meet earlier Saturday, and suggested later that day we all use the mikveh as a kind of launch into the future ritual.

"Brilliant suggestion," I said. "Naked and all orifices open: these are the rules of the ritual. What we do here will be rooted in the locality and won't be incompatible with naturism. I want something of the naturist ethos in this church. Also I want it inclusive. To overcome the transgender issue, the toilets are unitary. There are male pissoirs in there at one end. Men have penises; get over it."

"Exactly," said Kathryn.

Christine then said, "The mikveh needs apostolic blessing: the rabbi and Judaism will have their own."

I asked, "How?"

"When they come along."

"No, us."

"Via bishops, naked, submerged."

I proposed, Peter seconded, and everyone agreed!

"Hymn books," I said. "I rather like the ones the Unitarians were using in Wytham. A bit less dogmatic, a bit more focussed on realities. Any objection, bishops?" None came. "Peter. You are in touch. You do it and send us the bill. Is fifty all right, Adam?" He raised no objection.

Winnie asked, "What about clothes?"

Christine said, "I will arrange ecclesiastical gear. In fact, I have been. But what we also need is some modesty gear, simple covering, for the approach to the mikveh and what will be a new Body Eucharist and connected Initiation Ceremony. They should come off easily, before people process into and out of the holy water. Either them or nudity."

Kathleen said, "We Vestal Virgins have similar. You see we have nothing on below, but obscured. I'll take basic measurements so we can make some quickly. "

I said, "They would work very well for us as well. Adam?" I moved the 'baton' back to him.

"I have been looking out for apprentices, as revised by the authorities, these being for me. It's the Personalised Individual Development Scheme of Specialised Tasks with the Unemployed. I had a look at the list of applicants. There were one hundred and seventy males and four females interested. With Peter's help I found four for interviewing. But, differently, you did get labour for the kitchen, Linda?"

"I have decided I am not going to apply for government dole workers. I don't like the schemes. I hope and expect Kathleen, Winnie and Peter to provide assistance to me. However, Foss Upper Coast College, in Serninsea, mentioned to Diana de Groot about having some students in the community kitchen. We will also have them provide lunches to Magellan Investigations on delivery, unless you come here."

Kathryn said, "We can ask them to develop menus as part of their training."

"Yep," I said. "Magellan Holdings has, I am told, rejected offers of investment from Sir Sanjay Bunker, and this includes for this church. I am very happy about that, but it does not affect Bishop Christine's work."

Christine said, "I receive regular payments from Sir Sanjay Bunker, and have bought and received properties from him. But there'll be no direct connection here."

"What else?" I asked. "I'm still working on the liturgies. At the forthcoming ordinations service, that will inaugurate this local church, Rabbi Maurice Neptune will do the sermon."

He said, "I have appropriate material for Christine and you."

"Now, in this Church, my intersex will not be hidden. It won't always be relevant, but it won't be private. We are not Anglicans now, full of double talk. I want to eradicate that. The inclusive rainbow is a given. So we need all that has been said turning into motions, don't we?"

Margaret said, "Everyone except me take a break. Use the kitchen now for refreshments and bring me one."

"There is one thing," Adam said, "Why is Margaret Enhill here not included in your ordinations list?"

"Because she hasn't asked," I replied. "Do you want ordaining?"

"I don't want to leave the Anglicans. I am in administration in Wytham."

"That's the answer, then," I said. "Coffees?"

Then Geoff, booming, said, "We wouldn't incardinate you but we could do you sub-conditione like we did with Linda."

"I'll think about it," said Margaret.

Peter said, "You've also forgotten equal marriage."

I proposed, Peter seconded, and everyone agreed!

All those physically present except Margaret went to the kitchen. I returned with her coffee. Margaret then said, "Not to be minuted as it will just have gone out to the media: Rhiannon Margaret Fleetwood is to become Priest-in-Charge of Serninsea and Serninsea Marshes as well."

"What?" I asked firmly. "She was going to Wheaton, and then the latest was she was being redirected to Wales as a reconsideration. Now she is coming here?"

Margaret said, "Well, she was never actually involved. They are so short of priests, and few are willing to come here. And the moral standing of a priest does not affect the efficacy of the Eucharist."

I called Elizabeth over. "Rhiannon Fleetwood is becoming Priest-in-Charge over two parishes, not one."

"Oh dear. It's not someone we want around," said Elizabeth. "Don't let her in here; I don't want to meet her."

"Well, there goes down ecumenical relations," I said. "What Churchship does she have?"

Margaret said, "Similar to Jim Wilson but without the sadism, and is it for real?"

"Not quite," said Elizabeth. "She's a Puritan who thinks our behaviour tells us nothing about salvation."

Margaret added, "She has a history of annoying people. Whoever gets to meet her finds her irritating, undermining, nasty in the sense that they'd rather do without her. If she changes the parish church, then you might get some people here."

Kathleen did a search and showed me her phone. Rhiannon Fleetwood was

appointed as a diktat stop-gap, with the parishes expected to endorse her. And Serninsea would now stretch to Caffemere with Inglemire.

Then I noticed Hattie Schepsutte come in. Carrie Chopin and her then took Alfia off to one side. Kathleen and Winnie added to those numbers. Alfia looked uneasy again. I could hear them.

"I didn't want to ask you before. Are you joining our Vestal Virgins?" Carrie asked.

"No."

"You ought to join, Allie," said Hattie.

"No, I'm here to study this church getting started and establishing itself."

Carrie said, "Well, it's your decision against sacred trust."

"Yes it is."

I was slightly puzzled at this. They weren't requesting but expecting. There was a history here.

I decided to break up their meeting, and call people around the tables.

"You don't have to sit," I said.

Margaret read out our decisions in the fashion of proposals voted upon and accepted.

Then I spoke. "I just want to say this, briefly. This is a new venture, and I never expected it. As a curate I was constantly undermined, deliberately so, as you have all read. This time I hope to show I'm good enough - please don't respond. We have an opportunity here, within independence, for stability and growth, and we have theological choices. Among colleagues as a collective endeavour, we are not trying to be good, but aim for solidarity - support one another, support those outside. We might attract in the curious and the interested. Thanks everyone."

Roland and Alfia then made a fairly rapid exit; they gave a thanks to Adam before disappearing. Carrie gave a limp wave to me. Our meeting had ended.

I decided afterwards to get started on a sermon on reconciliation. This was more about Elizabeth than anyone, but it would be impersonal and abstracted to principles. I was not sure when I might give it.

Adam said bye to Margaret McEnhill.

I approached him, "It's up to you, of course, but why is a priest from the National Church taking your minutes?"

"Because she might be interested in yours, and she was and is my informant."

"But our business informs her side."

"Her partner is called Penny Schofield. That should give you a clue. Barman is dead meat, and the information traffic is definitely our way."

First Use of the Mikveh (Saturday 2nd November)

In the new building, the downstairs was complete and both floors upstairs had their finishing touches made. It was not long to go before moving in.

Maurice Neptune was in town; the Reformist Jews had already met in our space. I stood viewing the plaque below ours. It stated, *Wytham Temple of Reformist Judaism in Serninsea*. Temple?

The reply was that the meeting places, like Wytham, were considered by

Reformists as the equivalent of The Temple. This Serninsea building was an extension of the Wytham 'kehilla' (temple, schul) because it did not have its own Ark, an *Aron Kodesh* or holy cabinet containing a *parokhet* (curtain) for the Torah scroll on a wall facing Jerusalem with a *ner tamid* or eternal lamp above it.

I responded that we could still get one put up by the builders. Unfortunately the east facing wall was the mikveh itself. Still, the principle of a cabinet and a light that stayed on was a broad one - the Vestal Virgins kept a mobile flame all the time - so I ordered a cupboard with curtains inside and a light above it to go on the north wall beyond the altar table (all of this, arguably, in the wrong position - church altars themselves usually face east).

Nevertheless, the Reformists had already used and approved of the mikveh.. So in fact they were its first regular users.

Gathered around in the seating area were Bishop Christine or Mar Werburga, Bishop Bill Masters or Mar Simili Anseres, Pauline Junor or Mar Populari, Bishop Elizabeth Claire Huett, and me. Also with us were Alfia Shrimpton and Roland Mitton, and then the minor reverends Peter Marshall, Kathleen Wickenby and Winnie Lott. We put the screens on and went online again to include Bishop Geoff Virgo, Mar Arcturus-Virginis, Bishop Luis Mariano Callas, Mar Sexwulfus-Sexburg. Elsewhere Jenny and Kathryn were operating and recording from fixed-site cameras for Bristol's own reception.

Roland Mitton quickly told me that he'd spent time visiting the area and meeting various religious groups and ethnography academics in Wytham and beyond.

Given the relaxed and happy condition of his student in his company, I was beginning to think there was something close between them.

I said to everyone, "Before we start, I'd like builders to put in a shallow cabinet with a higher light that stays on. Do we have agreement? Do we need a formal meeting for this?"

They muttered not, but to bring the decision to the next meeting when it happened.

We had a technological development to report as Jenny had a newly functioning small operating panel in the vestry with robing room, and it governed the cameras that went online.

I made a point of asking Allie and Roland together. "Are you all right doing this? We are doing nudity. And professor, with your student!"

"It is fine by me," the professor said. "Allie can do her work."

"May I ask, Allie: why did Carrie Chopin expect you to join the Serninsea Vestal Virgins?"

"May I ask back that I am allowed just to melt into the group and not answer such questions?"

"There you go," said Professor Mitton.

"Carrie must have had a reason," I persisted.

Allie replied, "She may have had several, for all I know, but I am here to study this church and it is enough to know that they are relocating here. I had a look in the defunct UPCC chapel for a while. I doubt that the place is even safe."

"Quite. Downstairs there looks rough. They met upstairs."

"I'll take note of your comment there. I will return to my work, please."

Bishop Christine, as the senior Bishop present, would guide us liturgically, but

the work was largely mine, after seeing Carrie Chopin.

Christine began: "Today we bring into full functioning the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali* or the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia. We will do it by intimate means of some rituals, and Kathleen has a number of translucent gowns available and we go naked into the mikveh itself.

We all went to the cloaks area by the wet room (the one for massages) where we undressed and put on these open front thigh-length gowns. In the tradition of using the mikveh, we removed all jewellery and checked those orifices so they were clear. That was a bit of fun: Allie checked mine and her professor's! She sniggered as she pulled his bottom cheeks apart, as then she pulled mine apart. I thought it better I did Allie's instead of her professor, and she was beautiful. Such a neat vulva with lightly trimmed red hair and less of a rosebud anus than mine. She was so confident and took all this in her stride, while others muttered about this practice. The Jewish mikveh has a specific person to do the checking, apparently.

There was a camera in the cloaks area, and it was on. Under Christine's instruction, we each of us stood before full-length mirrors for thirty seconds understanding the intention of relaunching the Confraternity.

We moved with spiritual focus over to the chapel itself, including Allie and her professor, where bread and wine were waiting and candles were lit on our altar table. On cushions Bishop Christine sat with Allie's professor and me, Bishop Pauline with Peter, Bishop Bill with Allie, and Bishop Elizabeth with Kathleen and Winnie. Over in Bristol, Luis sat with Geoff, both undressed.

Christine used the 14 point Liberation Sans sheets of printed liturgy, each put into laminated protection.

Christine stated, "*In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In Christ's Body, the Church, this Mass incorporates a Sacrificial Service of Initiation into the Vanguard of the Church under the guidance of the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali or the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia.*

"Listen everyone. This is a readjustment and relaunch of the aforementioned Confraternity. It is a Vanguard Society of guidance, education and action. We affirm the body and the sexual body. When we are finished, we will each receive a badge with a W and goose on it, now for us the Weburgh Geese and Ganders, not Werbuga as it was. It's about the Abbess, not me. Listen.

"*We are all theosexual, Christosexual and Spiritsexual beings, aware of our lifespan, bodies and sexuality. God be praised: in his depth God is the source of our corporeal selves and the Holy Spirt moves all through us. In our Communion: gain awareness of our bodies.*

"*Rabbi Jesus Messiah, having himself published his religion to the Jewish people for the salvation of the world, had his Apostles complete the work he had begun, by them preaching his Gospel to everyone and making disciples to truth.*

"*If you have acted with others without your neighbour's consent, you should seek forgiveness and make amends. Reflect upon this now.*

"*Our body is our flesh; our blood is the life flowing around the individual body, and for this we must embrace life with mutual consent and positivity. We are never disembodied.*

"*O God, unto whom all bodies be opened, all desires expressed, and where*

no secrets are hidden; Cleanse us and prepare us by your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and our people, and magnify holiness, through the Christ Body in his Church. Amen.

"Our Corporeal Guide with his feet that walked this soil: have mercy."

We said, *"Christ have mercy."*

Christine continued: *"Our Corporeal Guide: have mercy. Glory be to God on high."*

We said, *"And peace with service to all."*

Christine continued: *"We praise, we bless, we worship, we glorify, we give thanks through our bodies to God."*

"Christ, assist in removing our wrongful intents; the one who sacrificed for love, show us how we sacrifice for others. Holiness come to us through the grace of God."

"Our Corporeal Guide be with you."

We said, *"And with your Spirit."*

Christine said, *"Let us pray. O God on this day, bless our gathering. We repent for past wrongs and theological certainties for which we were not qualified. We humbly beseech you so that in all our thoughts, words, and works, we may tread a holy path to preserve we the people in wealth, peace, and godliness."*

She paused and continued: *"We believe in Baptism, Initiation, the Holy Eucharist, Absolution, Holy Unction, Holy Matrimony, and Holy Orders. Our Corporeal Guide Christ and his immediate followers gave to His Church a body of principles we call theo-ethics. Perhaps some of the original teaching has been lost; and we have picked up additions through time. What remains we, as the Church, took on the purpose of interpretation to that end. We believe that God is Love, Service, Truth and Light. We hold to the Majesty of God, the Church-guiding Community of all, and we know that we do serve God best when best we serve our neighbours. So shall God's blessing rest upon us, with peace for evermore. Amen."*

Christine looked at all of us.

"Listen, everyone. Put your own palms together, and then turn your wrists so that your joined hands point to the floor. Look at your given bishop partner directly in the eyes. Lean in to your bishop until your foreheads touch together. This is the 'kiss'.

The professor and I touched Christine's forehead with ours.

"The bishops please either hold out your hand or hands or touch with invitation."

"Touch me Christine," I said. Roland nodded. Everyone wanted to be touched and were - on our foreheads.

Christine continued: "Bishops say, *'Blessed be your mind'* to each of your people." All of the bishops said this together as appropriate.

"Touch or hover your hand or hands at your charges' breasts or chests: Bishops say, *'Blessed be your breasts or chest'* to each of your people." All of them said this together, as appropriate.

Everyone was being touched. Christine lay her right hand on my right breast nipple and then on my left breast nipple behind the material. Her touch give me a tingle. Her left hand was placed on Roland's chest.

"Bishops say, *'Blessed be your stomach'* to each of your people." They all touched their charges and said these words.

"Bishops say, '*Blessed be your lingam or your yoni*' to each of your people."

I nodded. Christine said to me, "*Blessed be your yoni*, Linda, and she turned her hand downwards and touched my sex. Crumbs. My prostate gland was secreting. "Blessed be your lingam, Roland." With his nod she placed her hand on his limp penis.

"Bishops say, '*Blessed be your feet*' to each of your people."

The bishops said this and the soles of my feet were dabbed by Christine's right hand and the soles of Roland's feet dabbed with her left hand.

I noticed online that Geoff and Luis were saying these statements to each other, touching each other.

Christine said, "Those who have been blessed, say without touching, '*Blessed be your mind, breasts or chest, your stomach, your lingam or yoni, and feet*,' back to your bishops."

We said these words, and I wanted to touch Christine. She shook her head at me.

"The bishops: please place your arms around your partner or partners, as a hug. People: feel the bishop's warmth, making the connection deeper. Maintain the hug through the next part."

My and Roland's arms were down, Christine hugged us both into her.

"You may all now close your eyes . *As you breathe in, hear the white clear breeze bringing in life-force. Breathe out and follow the breath into the chapel.*" I could hear my, his and her breath.

"Whilst you continue to hug: *Imagine a soil banking that surrounds you two or three like a cradle in which we are surrounded and nurtured like a womb.*

"Imagine a red fire and feel the heat against the skin.

"Imagine fountains of blue water shooting from the ground and cooling your heat.

"Bishops: release your charges." Christine let go of us and sat back, as did we.

Christine said, "Excuse me, Linda and Roland." She rose, and took a chalice, and in its wine she dipped a larger communion disc from the short pile and placed it in the mouth of Bishop Bill. "Don't swallow." The bishops with two charges had two wine soaked larger discs in their mouths. "Bishops, and people help them: you are to bite the disc or discs in half, and people take half a disc. Get close and help each other."

Christine sat with two, for me and Roland. We came close, and, me before Roland, she bit into the discs, and touching her lips with mine, I acquired half a disc, and so did Roland, touching my face with his. I smiled as I swallowed and Christine smiled to us both. She consumed her disc halves.

"*The Body and Blood of Christ*," she said, at that point.

"Bishops. Finish this procedure with a wet lipped kiss. So it was that Christine kissed me on my lips and then kissed Roland. My prostate gland was secreting more and I was worried about leakage.

"Bishops. Hold hands with your charges and let us proceed to the mikveh. In there we shall go in one by one."

Then Christine released my hand, and we stood to listen. She said, "*Blessed are You, Source of all Life, Who has kept us alive and sustained us, and enabled us to reach this day, and lead us into the future.*

Our coverings were discarded. Christine went in first, and then Roland, and then me. I went down the right steps and was hip height in the pool. I squatted and my short blonde hair became fully submerged. I rose up, and made my way to the left steps to go up.

Haviung walked around, Christine gave Roland her acquired towel to dab his body and then he passed it to me. Other towels went from the other bishops to share.

I was interested in Allie emerging, after Bill. She was gorgeous, like a Venus coming out of the sea.

When we were all out, Christine instructed us to form a circle, holding hands, as we all did naked, damp, and everyone with soaked hair.

She said, "*Holy Spirit, we thank you for our food and our love. Ever guide us; and so lead us in obedience. In response to the commands of our Rabbi Jesus Christ, we have all participated, by a solemn act of worship and ritual before God and this assembly, our dedication to work with our minds and bodies to live the Gospel and go out and make disciples of faith; and may God bless us all. In the name of the God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.*"

That was it. Christine received a round of applause for her liturgical direction, and her presidency indeed. And the two in Bristol joined in.

She said, "Excellent. Well written, Linda."

The gowns went back on to proceed over to the cloaks area. When I dressed I looked at Allie and Christine with longing for each. Jenny and Kathryn said what had happened was recorded to DVD for our later viewing.

At home in bed I showed Adam the ceremony on my laptop. I asked why Margaret McEnhill had not joined us.

"Because she is not allowed."

"Ah, yeah."

The fuck he gave me just was not enough to satisfy my longings. I wanted Christine, or this Allie. Actually, her professor was an attractive older man.

Pay for Itself (Tuesday 5th to Friday 15th November)

I found Adam in our new second floor bedroom. The screen opposite the bed was on, and there was Annie Fenwick as 'Headgirl' with Jördis appearing as 'George' and some clothed male.

"She'd left 'women' and was on 'couples'. That's Jördis's boyfriend, apparently, but 'George' goes between both of them."

I decided to strip off and do a star shape in our large bedroom. "Adam. I am real and available and they are on screen."

This was such a disappointing first encounter with the bedroom, the bed and some other furniture having come across from the curate's house earlier in the day.

Elizabeth and Jenny viewed their first floor large bedroom, as did Kathleen and Winnie. Like the kitchen diner there, both ensembles were positioned in the top floor of the east side extension.

Adam switched off so we took a trip to what was once Wickenby's, and Peter and Kathryn had moved in days earlier into their new rooms together. The second

bedroom (with ensuite) there was unoccupied.

Allie was spending her day with her professor.

I went to lock up the bungalow. In there I read a message sent electronically from the Beth Din, the key part of which was this:

It seems that a number of people were duped by the apparent progressive reputation of the former Anglican Christian Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke, the Right Reverend John Terence Barman. Instead he was cultic and managed sexual exploitation within what was called The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players.

One of those duped was the Rabbi at Wytham Shul, Maurice Neptune, who had made friendly relations with this exposed and dismissed bishop and that group. Presented with several women of different ages within this group, the rabbi looked for a female partner from within its number, and was especially attracted to the theologically-informed woman who became the victim of this group, then the Anglican priest the Reverend Linda Jupitas.

It is clear that Rabbi Neptune had no part in the violent treatment of the clergywoman, and indeed early on showed intent of treating her as his partner against the sordid demands of the group. We interviewed her and she was herself interested in his overtures.

We rule that the rabbi showed conduct unbecoming in associating with this group; it was definitely not appropriate interfaith contact.

We therefore advise that Rabbi Maurice Neptune should take more responsibility for his teshuvah: his actions and inaction. He should state repentance and focus on bringing himself towards a higher holiness and purity and therefore God. This is the model for community and nation, starting from the individual. A rabbi is principally a teacher in the broadest sense. Any need for another, similar, Beth Din will result in harsh consequences.

Thus I locked the house for the final time and posted the keys into the Anglican vicarage.

Back at the worship centre and my accommodation (Adam elsewhere) I had my first bath there and heard Jenny having fun with Elizabeth somewhat below me. I recalled sixth former Jenny's noises from all those years ago.

Next day, Wednesday, Christine and I met, with Allie listening, to initiate several *consultancies*, as we called them, where people would come in for our *Interfaith Meditation Classes*, *Pastoral and Healing Advice Surgeries*, and *The Relationship Facility*, and we worked out the fees and when we should waive them.

Workers came to put up a holy cabinet in the chapel, and it had a lamp placed above it with LED lighting.

The professor left for Somerset. "Good business for... Yojana Asthana's family?" I speculated to Alfia in the afternoon, who was in incredible all shiny leather gear with an orange stripe up each outer leg. Her boots were all orange.

"No, he came to my house and stayed with me after I moved in."

"And you were comfortable with that?"

"Entirely."

"I'm concerned now that you are on your own, because you're not mixing with

anyone here."

"I mix with your people when I do my work."

"That's not the same thing. Do you go out, Alfia?"

"Allie, please. Sometimes, for a drink."

"Pubs?"

"Theddle Pale Ale is nice. I really don't want to discuss my own life."

"You could have joined the Serninsea Vestal Virgins."

"It would have interfered with my work, and I don't want to join them. I'd like to merge in please and otherwise leave me alone."

"Allie, you can hardly 'merge in' with that gear on."

"Would you like me to change what I wear?"

"Absolutely not. Not if it expresses you."

"I have tried to merge in."

"Well, you've been naked twice."

"So were you. I've seen you naked three times."

"One more time? When?"

"In Margate. I drew you."

"So you did. Yes you did. You're an *artist*, Allie. Can you pursue your art here?"

"Please do not ask me questions about me."

"Allie! In this church I have some concern for your welfare. That's my point."

"Thank you, but 'no thank you' is my point, Linda, please."

"Suit yourself. Or leather suit yourself."

"I'll change it next time."

"Allie - no! No, you must not. Wear what you want to wear. If you change what you wear because of my comments, then I will get angry."

"I won't then."

I started seeing people for free pastoral visits - because I met them in the street. Allie wasn't allowed in those. This was also helped by some people not liking the instant evangelical turn of Rhiannon Fleetwood in the Anglican parish.

The Reverend Rhiannon Fleetwood had hit the ground running. But here was a woman with a reputation for religious aggression in Rochester and I heard she'd come from Taunton Theological College. Alfia might have known her. But most of all, according to reports, she oozed insincerity. I let it be known that we should keep away from her.

The first meeting of the 'Gymnology' naturist club in the church on the Wednesday evening had four new people turn up - we'd restricted this to mixed couples and women only to begin, and so received one man and three women: Louise Saraga with James Saraga, fifty-three and fifty-five, Sally Torrance, sixty-two and Paula Campbell, thirty-three. James and Louise were naturists and unknown to me, Saxiclite and Bever Wood. They went to Studland about twice a year. Sally Torrance tried some brief naturism at Fraisthorpe, north of the estuary. Paula Campbell was new to it, and I think she was being motivated by a television programme called *Naked Dating*.

Diana did come, thankfully, so we met again, having lost the afternoon get-together, but she seemed wary of me. Allie and me made seven. We just talked. Thus I viewed red hair both ends Allie yet again. I imagined seeing Jeremy Symes and Lindy Peacock but of course they lived at Bever Wood.

I told Louise and James about Saxiclite and Bever Wood clubs. Paula turned out to be sensitive; Diana said she should have no concern about her pubic area in naturism: everything was equal, and we all have them. I said about my intersex basis, and that I am always hairless, always supposedly exposed, and it did not matter one jot. I asked them to consider some of the religious implications of naturism: what was religious or spiritual about accepting and treasuring our bodies in a social setting.

I sent a message to Jeremy after the first meeting with what we had said, as relevant and in general. I thus asked Bever Wood, through him, if they were interested in my naturist ministry. I asked if Lindy had any religious stance.

We'd also quickly established a quite busy funeral ministry, the easiest way to gather fees from rites of passage. I was already known to the undertakers, who'd ignored before Anglican protests about the propriety of other funerals. Thursday I was asked to get to the crematorium at short notice.

We made a push for same sex ceremonies for marriage, including applying for registration. Other ceremonies, such as our willingness to do polyamorous weddings, would obviously be unofficial. Our fees included writing up bespoke services.

We even set up *Worthwhile Communication Training* sessions, to add professionalism and respect to business communications. This was given to Bishop Elizabeth to develop, which she did and rapidly. We achieved some clients there too. She indicated that she would have come into the naturist meeting, but I'd seemed to indicate it was my fiefdom. I told her this was not so.

Christine told me we could frame massages within a more pastoral package. We wanted to provide services to the body that were of the soul as well, non-dualistically. I agreed with that, and could see the twins doing this task for payment and to give the church some of their income for using the facilities.

Then we had a visit from two women. They were Hannah and Tilly McClelland.

"You remember us? Sisters?"

"Oh yeah."

"We've moved on since we were family farm workers. So have you."

"Yes. What can I do for you?"

"We craft-brew, at our own farm, Thedde Pale Ale. It can be purchased around here."

"I have drunk it," said Allie, "but I have to lay off alcohol." (Oh?)

"We'd like to know if you'd be interested in selling it from your kitchen. You could get a licence and make your place more attractive."

"Em, no, I don't think so."

"Monks do drink," said Allie.

"Yeah, they get everyone *e/*se pissed. I want to deal with people eating, not drinking beyond the necessary."

Allie then said, "Can I interview you two?"

I asked her, "What has this got to do with your research?"

"It isn't. It's about relatives on a close farm who might start brewing."

"Your relatives?"

"Yes, as it happens."

They nodded, so Allie went off with them.

After about half an hour, she came back.

"Well?" I asked her. "What happened? It wasn't research, so you can tell me."

"But it is private."

"Look, love," I said, "if you and I are going to get on then you need to learn to be civil. I am not the Spanish Inquisition. You said there is a close farm with relatives. Having told me that, what did you agree?"

"They'll sell some expertise to my, hmm, aunt and uncle in Norfolk."

"Well, I'll remind you that Jenny has become drunk consuming their Thedde brew. That's all."

Friday 8th and I heard Elizabeth and Jenny rowing inside their room.

"What's the matter?" I asked Elizabeth, when she emerged from the room.

"Basically, she's a lazy cunt and I'm bored with *her*. You know she's a hypochondriac, on top of everything else. Half the time she gets pissed and vomits. She's obsessed with a syndrome she does not have: she always has to use water-based lubricants, use unperfumed soaps and washes, and in sex demands endless foreplay so she doesn't dry up..."

"It will be difficult here," I said. "A diocesan bishop is very busy and now you are here with a lot less to do."

"Yes, what a disaster *that* is. No longer 'Tees of the Diocesans', am I, stuck in this place with her. She thinks if she doesn't have sex constantly she'll end up like a prune. I'm going out."

"It's dark and late."

"Perfect!"

Elizabeth solved this with a job at the Blue Diamond Club, in managing events and staff rotas, gained the following Tuesday 12th no less. It was a convenient moment. The previous manager had been 'found out' regarding attendance at the parties above the casino, and had left this post. I didn't quite understand the problem - surely he *would* have attended.

I commented on that Tuesday: "It's half-owned by John Barman."

"No it's not," Elizabeth replied. "He sold his half to partner Sanjay Bunker, given his loss of income, and Bunker is looking for a new partner. Christine is most likely to get half share. So Bunker gave me the job."

"Connections?"

"Sort of."

As a result of this secular appointment, Bishop Elizabeth asked me next day to accompany her into Titansea. Diana (perhaps Aardse?) had called off our Wednesday get together again (13th). So on this Wednesday afternoon we walked and it was to the Blue Diamond Club, with Alfia along again, complaining that her period had just started.

"Em, why are we approaching here?" I asked.

"It will help you get rid of your bad memories of this place. Terry Barman part owned it, and he had another company called ATC Club Services," she said. "Above the Casino, it meant. Christine bought it at a recent auction and gives her access to above the casino, but she doesn't know what to do with it."

"The Church has nothing to do with this 'above the casino'. Christine's ministry is separate."

"But it comes under the LAE Confraternity."

"Well, as you say, she doesn't know what to do with it."

"She wants to retain a range of connections to businesses, their people and the hotel too. They brought in managers' and others' spending money. A lot of demand has gone out of the town, she says. I know that the impact on Hartlepool is less than here."

I said, "I don't want it, and not in the LAE. We changed the Confraternity for this very purpose."

"She can still operate parties."

"Make them secular - from in there. I don't want to go in."

"Run them from here?"

"Why not?" I said. "Just not connected with the congregation I want to build, once we start doing services."

"Come in and..."

"No, Elizabeth, no. Sorry. My stomach is churning." At this point I left Elizabeth and I walked back with Allie back to the new set-up.

"You see my problem," I said to Allie.

"You're making policy decisions, informally, possibly emotionally."

"I suppose I am, Allie."

As for secular activities, Jenny signed up with Computer Office Training on the Thursday - elsewhere.

Of course I was in limbo at this point. I was not yet a priest of the LAE, never mind bishop. Next day on Friday 15th, two days before the ordinations to change this, a woman approached me alone and said, "I am from the *Wytham Courier*. can I have an interview?"

"Only pastoral," I replied. "We are still under contract for exclusive press coverage. You are free to report on our adverts, and we have been advertising our ordinations."

Allie also wasn't about when a message came from the committee of managers at Bever Wood (now including Jeremy and Lindy). They seemed interested in my ministry, and in my reply I suggested a Lecture if they wanted. I considered a talk on the theology of naturism based on naturist history. I would provide pastoral services at that time.

I wondered where Allie was and went upstairs to find her at the top floor, into the study space, laying back.

"First of all, this place is private, and secondly you look worse for wear."

"Arrgh."

"You've missed someone from the local rag wanting an interview, and a message back from Bever Wood interested in our ministry. What the hell are you doing up here?"

"I might 'a' been reading... something about Liberal Cacolics but Oi blundered over the chair."

"You're pissed."

"I ent too ferce today. Am all of a muckwash."

"Why are you pissed?"

"I had a *jat*. Janny. The floier... belah. We jammed aboit. We were drinkin' bare."

"You both took your clothes off?"

"Noi, bo'ehls o' bare. She's 'aving problems. Liz a bet, Liz."

"You have no right to be up here. This is private. How dare you? You have

your own house so go to it." She got up and looked very unsteady. "No, you'd better stay there. I don't suppose you could even go safely down the stairs."

"Can't 'elp bein' fumble fisted. Oi wanta be gittin on hum soon. Don't wanna chorr yar space."

"Come and lie on our bed. Are you going to be sick?"

"Narr. Don't need a gazunder. H'yer got any warter?"

I held her to take her across the lounge and around into the bedroom, where she could lay on the bed, and then got her a glass of water from the ensuite.

"Thass a bootiful big bed. I wannit."

"Buck your ideas up, young lady, or I am in touch with your professor, and he can come and take you back to Somerset."

"Arrgh. Don't spluttergut in 'is direction."

"Do you want to undress?"

"Narr."

"When you're ready, and you are able, go downstairs and go back to the house Christine gave you."

"I'm a bit of a rummon. Sorry, Linda. Keep yew a troshin'."

Two hours later I went up and she'd gone - she'd slipped away.

Chapter 22 Ordinations

Narrator: Linda *Day Before the Ordinations* (Saturday 16th November)

I wanted to try and get things right with Diana via an electronic exchange. She'd come to the Gymnology session so she agreed to come for the Sunday evening ordinations. Patricia and Arthur would be out.

Talk about finery. The robes, delivered on Saturday morning (pew!), were the full set. Bishop I would be. I popped out to do a funeral; I had already seen the closest bereaved and Allie accompanied me to the crematorium.

With one day to go, Bishops Geoff and Luis were on the train, with a live call from the bishops in the afternoon put on to the big screen in the dining area to just me (and Allie). The call was a bit blocky and interrupted, but we communicated. They were staying in Wytham overnight and would travel across on the day.

Geoff said that we would use the mikveh and transform ourselves from nudity in the water to clerical regalia in front of the congregation as part of our acts of submission to the new Ecclesia. Directed by Geoff and Luis, Peter had written some liturgy, so this would be different material again. The liturgical changes would have dramatic impact and further suggest 'presence' and be truly transformative. Well, one didn't have to be Umberto Eco to realise that a trick would be performed.

I raised an objection. "The symbolic exchange," I said, "ought to be as worthless and uncluttered as possible."

"I don't understand that," said Bishop Geoff, vanishing and then reappearing.

I had an explanation. "If you do the theory of ritual, symbolic exchange, from an anthropological viewpoint, the material effort is not actually in the symbols themselves. Marcel Mauss tells us... Oh what was it?"

Allie said, "The kula ring."

"The exchange is pretty worthless, but the boat trip that goes around the..."

"Trobriand Islands."

"...is quite an effort. The exchange is necessary, but materially the object is insignificant even if invested with high significance. In the Eucharist we have wine, but it's never that good, and those unleavened discs aren't much. My liturgy, from Christine's, involved effort and emotional risk. We shouldn't turn ritual, which is human, into a stage-show spectacle."

"That's a lot to take in on a train," said Geoff, with Luis nodding. "But the notes to be issued mean this is more Derren Brown than some charlatan faith healer. The spectacle is understood as naturalistic."

Luis responded: "This is a creative period. I'm sure what you use will settle down. If we have an outside congregation tomorrow, we ought to cover up a bit and be less intimate."

"What do you think, Allie?"

"You know I don't have an opinion!"

"But if you merge in, and act as one of us, properly, I might ask your opinion."

"That's not troshin'," she said, showing a bit more Norfolk.

Geoff then said, "We don't have 'one of us' among the laity. We have an open table, not confirmation: there will never be lay members in the LAE."

Luis then hoped that we were not disagreeing at an early stage.

"I'm asking questions only," was my response.

We closed our remote meeting. They went off the screen and then I said to Allie: "I've missed a number of meetings with my friend Diana on Wednesdays. I've asked to see her, socially. So I'll see you later."

"May I come?"

"This is not a church event. You can do your notes or however you do it. Downstairs too - not in the study space where you were slumped. That's private."

"Do you discuss church things? Is she coming to the ordinations?"

"I hope so."

"Then can I come?"

"We lie down naked and chat and have private matters."

"May I come please?"

"Come on. Walkies, Allie."

"We're walking?"

"No, Allie, I was being rude."

"Am I a dog on a lead?"

"Do you want a drink of water before we go? Or I can take a bowl. I'm sure Diana can put some water in a bowl."

"Do you think I need to piss in the street, Linda?"

"Actually, I need to piss now. And more."

"Unlike a dog, I'll go inside now as well."

So we went to the unisex toilets and went in the neighbouring cubicles. She waited for me outside.

"You got the squits?" she asked me.

"Mind your own business."

"My period is nearly over, fortunately."

From there we went to my SUV, squeezed off the tenfoot, and we went to Patricia's.

I introduced Allie to Diana, again, the result being that I still lay down like Diana and Allie sat naked (yet again!) in a seat brought in to Patricia's conservatory.

Diana justified Allie's trip by asking me, "Tell me, why have you taken in Elizabeth Huett to your church?"

"Because of Jenny and no other reason, and we'll see how Jenny adjusts and if Elizabeth is satisfied working at the Blue Diamond Club."

"The what?"

"The BDC."

"That says it all. You must be mad."

"It might also be because Jenny claims she has dry vagina syndrome."

"She told you that?"

"It's since she's stopped having sex with so many other people and Fatima."

"That's not a cause."

"Jenny is believing things about her body under stress."

"And do you know what Adam thinks about Elizabeth Huett being there?"

"He doesn't seem to be objecting."

"He'll be using her one way or another."

We dressed to a strict time because Patricia, Arthur and the kids all came in at once.

Diana said, "Have you heard this, Patricia? Elizabeth Huett has moved in over there. Apparently it's because she is Jenny World's girlfriend."

Patricia asked, "What was that rescue for, then? To take them in afterwards?"

I said, "Elizabeth didn't know what the others were doing or the extent of it."

"You're too forgiving at best," Patricia said to me.

"Good," I said. "That is the idea."

Patricia asked, "Has she apologised?"

"Yes. I believe her." I then asked, "So the big question is, will you both, plus families, come to the ordination service tomorrow?"

"No," said Patricia.

"I'm afraid not," said Diana. "You're being naive."

I was disappointed.

We were leaving, and Patricia said, "Nice to meet you, researcher Alfia."

"Keep yew a troshin'."

"She's a true Norfolk lass," Patricia said.

"Sorry. I try to hold in my dialect. Jonnie and I used to practise reducing it."

"Jonnie?" I asked, outside, with Diana departing.

"Are you all right, now, Diana? You were a bit stressed before."

"Yes, thank you. Bye."

"Well?"

"A kid I knew, when a kid. We were country yokels then. I'm telling you too much."

"No you are not."

"I'd rather keep my life in the background."

"Get in the car then, unless you need to piss in the street first."

"No, I have bladder control."

"Unlike me I suppose. I'll tie you to a drainpipe."

After an hour on at the church I received a copy of the liturgy. I was reading it when Diana rang.

She said, "We've been talking. Patricia and me. We still say you're a fool regarding Elizabeth Huett. However, it's important to you, this, so we will come along."

"Excellent!"

I learnt that Christine, Bill and Pauline had joined Luis and Geoff in Wytham. They were making last minute decisions. Presumably after becoming a bishop, I would not be so out of the loop, nor Elizabeth - once she was incardinated. We were not to know our ecclesiastical names until the ordination itself.

As Adam came in, I said to Allie, "I fancy something like Mar Saturnin. What do you think?"

"Out of this world," said Allie, and started giggling.

"Why are you giggling?"

"A joke."

"You laugh at your own jokes? Hang on: you already know my ecclesiastical name."

"If I did I wouldn't tell you, but whether I don't or do shouldn't concern you."

"It does concern me. It concerns me that Christine has told you, but not me."

"You assume a lot, Linda. I'm a researcher and that's all."

"That's your non-answer to everything, Allie."

"I'd better go outside and mark my territory. I might have some out there."

"Oh shut up Allie," I told her.

Then we paused and I said something remarkable. "If you are a participant as well as an observer, then you ought to be a participant in the Liberal Catholic sense. I want you to be ordained as a deacon."

"What?"

"You're not deaf, suddenly. Be ordained as a deacon. Come on the inside. It doesn't compromise you and I won't demand anything - me as a bishop."

"I'll ask Christine if she agrees."

"Oh, of *course*, you must ask Christine."

Allie's mouth was open but she didn't say anything.

The three of us having eaten, I suggested to Allie that she might like to go back to her house as I wanted time alone with Adam. But she asked if she could use the settee in the vestry for sleep, and use other facilities. "If there were overnight developments, would you let me know?"

"Are you all right?" I asked her, in front of Adam.

"I'll get by."

"I suppose if you're here you'll stay away from the boozier - and stay away from Jenny."

"Will Jenny stay away from Allie?" asked Adam.

Allie said, "Thank you, Adam. I'll avoid Jenny. I like this place. I ought a' be ordained. Oi'd loike tha'."

Towards the Ordination (Sunday 17th November)

It is good to make love ahead of important religious rituals. Thus in our bedroom, I actually wore my robes, open, and sat upon Adam. It was also important, I felt, that he should come inside me, which required care about the robes.

Before he did I asked Adam if he had "the word on the street" about local religious groups in competition.

"I hear Rhiannon Fleetwood is overstretching from the marshes to the southern villages. Then there is that Vineyard type group starting up."

"That's more a threat to her than us. In any case, providing evangelical-charismatic entertainment doesn't always pull in the crowds."

"Keep fucking while I get the Internet on screen," said Adam. "Swivel around to have a look."

I rotated on him as the screen came on and he used the handset and on screen keyboard to get to a website.

PENNOW UK's National Director designate, Pastor Benny Chapman, describes the terrific work of God in the UK that traces its origins back to a prayer meeting at St John's, Rainham, in 1965.

Peter Vine was a former missionary at Rainham in the 1950s and declared his own influence as from Ezra Brierley, leader of the Kent Charismatic Band (1877-1939). Peter wanted what Ezra displayed in his life and outlook. Ezra declared, from his Bible, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy." He, realised his own

sinful nature, needed holiness, and understand that salvation is costly.

Peter took this up himself and spread it to clergy colleagues. He and they were selected by God to spread the Holy Spirit. But the focus had to be on God.

Yet the breakthrough happened in the early 1970s. Daughter Daisy Vine displayed holiness, singing of grace, love and beauty. Her father Peter then achieved lift-off with Days of Prayer lasting a whole year in 1973 to 1974, and late in September 1974 buses and walkers gathered to deliver great numbers. On the eighth of that month, late, and into the early morning of the ninth, all sorts of miracles happened in scenes reminiscent of the Book of Acts. A woman's depression ended there and then for good, a man gave up his walking sticks - they became crosses for the church - and several already committed to further ministry became ordained.

One clergyman from that night's Spirit blessing, Martin Burton, went on to form the Vine Network, and another, Patrick English, became curate to Holy Trinity Mayfair and its expanding Anglican presence with planted churches and marketed courses for the conversion of England and beyond. His curate, Slavoj Capra went to York and created a northern charismatic revival based on teachings about social targeting from America. He became a bishop, the bishop who coined the phrase 'Christ's Lymphatic System'.

And now we have spread far and wide, including to the much troubled town of Serninsea, where sin is rife and we must turn the settlement to holiness, channelling the love of God. We will thus move forward with God.

Putting in the effort I said, "I noticed 'Vine' on there."

"Daisy Vine is her grandmother, mother's side. Her brother is a Roman Catholic priest."

At this point, Adam ejaculated into me, and I was careful that the run off stayed away from my robe.

Christine herself on arrival agreed with me about Allie, that we added Allie to the deacons ordination count (I didn't care for the minor orders). I kept quiet about my new knowledge.

I joined Christine for the kitchen supplied breakfast trialled by students. We were then joined by a stocky, elderly, balding character.

Christine introduced him, saying, "This is Mark Oldfield. Mr. Oldfield, a client of mine, was a barber until he retired, in Ebbsfleet; a long time back my father went to him and did his proper apprenticeship with him."

I said, "Well it is very nice to meet you Mr. Oldfield but other than a quick meeting with you this is a very important day..."

Christine said, "This is an arrangement for hair. Mr. Oldfield can cut hair and do all the necessary down below, with just his cut throat blade and simple soap and water."

"Not necessary," I said. "Hairless already."

Elizabeth appeared, and said, "Ah, Mr. Oldfield! We meet again. You could remove my unwanted hair around my pubes, sir."

Then Jenny came along and asked me what was going on. So she wanted the same service, and could, she said, because her vagina was dry. I couldn't see the connection. And from the North East came in a tall, short black haired woman, the Reverend Margaret Lindbeck.

I said, "Do you want your pubes doing?" as a way of introduction.

"And you are?"

"Linda. Oh, sorry. There is a rush on in the wet room with a man and a cut throat razor."

"No thank you." (Oops.) "I hear you have a kitchen. I can see it."

"Lots of lovely grub over there, yes. We may have students doing a full service."

Allie came out from the cloaks area naked. I was trying to count up how many times I'd seen her like this. "Look!" she said, partly parting her pubic lips. "Just a few swift cuts with his big blade," she said

"Allie," I said, "we are open to the public. Go back in and put something on."

"It was exciting! Don't square me up. I'll go back."

Soon Margaret came towards me with some fish and chips. I said, "Good choice of breakfast."

"They were practising frying. Durham is a long way; I had breakfast. By the way, is pubic exposure normal here?"

"Not when our doors are open to the public or until we warn people. She comes from Norfolk."

"Is that what Norfolk types do? I'm from near Durham."

"Sounded wrong. Sorry. So you discovered the LAE."

"Online. I was ordained by the Catholic Liberal Apostolic Church."

"I don't know it."

"It wasn't quite what I wanted. Too up the candle."

Allie came out clothed, back in her black leathers. She sat down next to Margaret and said, "When I went back he did into my bottom as well."

"Allie *Shrimpton*, meet a respectable clergywoman recruit to the LAE who has come all this way from Durham for the ordinations. Margaret Lindbeck, this wayward child in her leathers is *Allie*, who is researching how this church is getting started and she will be ordained deacon."

Margaret said, "Who did 'into your bottom' then?"

I thought, this is getting embarrassing.

Allie said, "Mr. Oldfield, who is a retired hairdresser. I pulled my bottom cheeks apart, he foamed me up again, used his cut throat and I don't have a hairy bum any more. Nice to meet you."

I said to Margaret, "Allie's idea is that when she does her participant observation she disappears into the church activity so that we don't notice her."

"Why I'm becoming a deacon."

"The only thing is, Margaret, we notice her very much."

"Why don't you have it done?" she asked me.

"Do some research on CAIS intersex, Allie."

"Oh. So, you imply nothing will have grown then since Margate when I saw you down there."

Margaret asked, "Down there or down there?"

"This youngster is an artist - I posed and both of those."

Christine came out, having also been treated by Mr. Oldfield. "Hello Margaret. Good to meet you."

"Mutual, Bishop Christine."

All his customers came out, and then Mark Oldfield himself.

Christine said, "Three hundred quid, Linda."

"Adam and I will authorise a cheque for three hundred pounds."

"I won't take it," said Mark.

"Mark!" said Christine. "All right. I'll see you for a free session tomorrow evening."

I put my head in my hands.

Then it dawned on me that the ordinations might cause Margaret to reveal more than she might realise.

I asked her, "You know about the submerging and the clothing element?"

"Yes, I am fine about it. No one knows me here, anyway. Did you think I was embarrassed? I can lie on a beach with nothing on like the best of them."

"Excellent."

"I've read all about you," she said.

There was some hanging around, and Allie disappeared.

Narrator: Linda *Further Towards the Ordinations* (Sunday 17th November)

After an hour, Allie came in through the double doors with Klärchen Sisse and her dog Dieter from next door, and both women had gleaming, shining hair. For that matter, the German shepherd's coat was shiny too.

I said, "I'm sorry we don't allow dogs in other than guide dogs, Klärchen, because we serve food here."

"Come on Dieter, we know when we are not wanted."

"No, that is not my point," I said, as Dieter and his mistress left the way they came in, pursued by Allie, her now fluffy hair rising up as she moved off.

Allie returned. "I think she understands. She is a very interesting person."

"Well, tell me about her," I said. "Like how she gets on with her dog."

"If you don't know already, I can't tell you."

"You are starting to irritate me," I said to her.

"You know I can't..."

"Oh sit down. I suppose I'd better get my hair done as well. Where did you go? Oh, come on, you can tell me that!"

"I went with Klärchen and this time she wants privacy."

"From me, you mean? So you have superb hair and mine looks shit?"

Allie responded by saying nothing.

Then Geoff and Luis came in to distract me from my temporarily silent researcher, and so we did some basic movement rehearsing of parts of the liturgy to come.

Only now did Margaret tell me she was upset that she wasn't given the position of Bishop of the North East, seeing as she lived in Durham.

I said, "I suppose it is because Elizabeth Huett was stationed up there."

"I live there - and I've done nothing wrong."

Diana and Patricia drifted in. Patricia said, "Are you all going to get your kits off?"

"Translucent gowns. But yes, off for the mikveh - the pool. It's a serious ordination," I said to her.

Rabbi Maurice Neptune entered, and kissed me on my mouth. "Become my

wife," he said again, immediately. Allie's eyes widened.

"It is a lovely offer. You have your sermon?"

"Indeed I do," he said.

As the hour drew close, everyone expected was present. Some other people were gathering. I counted ten people I did not know, plus three so far recognised from the parish church: Tracey Graham, Tom Bowler and Ralph Thickett. I was pleased to see naturist tryers Louise and James Saraga, Sally Torrance and Paula Campbell. Peter, Kathleen, Winnie and Allie were ready. Those to process went to the cloaks area as more people came in.

Geoff (with Luis) spoke to Margaret, Elizabeth and me with Allie listening. "Elizabeth, your Church name will be Elizabeth Claire Mar Triangulum Australe."

"What's that?" she asked.

"It is Latin for 'Southern Triangle' and is a constellation in the night sky."

I was resisting a grin. Next...

"You will be Margaret Mar Akelda. It means 'Healing Spring' and comes from an Anglo-Saxon princess."

That sounded lovely. So what was my name to be? Mar Saturnin?"

"Linda, your Church name will be Linda Mar Reticulum."

"What?"

"It means the second chamber in the alimentary canal of a ruminant animal. It is also known as the bonnet and as the kings-hood."

"Come on!" I said. "It sounds like *arsehole!*"

"We've made our decision."

"Someone could ask, 'How's Mar Rectum,' and I'd have to say, 'Take your trousers down and I'll tell you.' Allie, stop laughing. You are supposed to be invisible."

"Invisible my arse - or your arse," said Elizabeth, that caused Allie to hoot with laughter - with hair bouncing.

Luis said, "Christine likes the name because it's about sorting out particles, and reflects your rationality. No, we are not changing it. It is not a negotiation: the bishops name you as a parent names a child."

I'd never known a child named something close to 'Arsehole'.

Luis and Geoff left us with no further comment for the robing room and returned with Christine, Bill Masters and Pauline Junor - all in full robes.

Among ordinands, close together in the cloaks area, Margaret turned out to be the only person with retained pubic hair, and it was very thick, extensive and black. The Rabbi had the function of checking our orifices. Margaret was the first of us to pull her arse open, and she bent over rather obviously. Winnie and Kathleen were not allowed to keep their hanging discs on. Allie opened for inspection as if it was an everyday occurrence.

Those to be ordained (including me) put on these translucent wrappings - bare arms beyond. Kathryn had been chosen by Christine to lead us from the cloaks area, and her role was to carry over her arms the white albs and purple albs (gowns) and amices (for the neck and shoulders), plus cinctures (girdle ropes) with, on top, the rest of the heavy ecclesiastical gear that we all would wear subsequently. Kathryn herself wore a cream simple robe.

Adam opted for sitting in the seating area. Diana and Patricia were in the chapel itself. Jenny was in the vestry, operating cameras again for a recording mix.

Kathryn called out for people to be quiet. "The bishops and ordinands are coming!" she then exclaimed. The place went silent.

Allie whispered to me. "Rhiannon Fleetwood is in the seating area. She is like a cat in the dark." Hmm. Allie's cat - alley cat?

I did not know what Rhiannon Fleetwood looked like, but obviously Allie did.

The Unusual Ordinations Service

The altar table was white sheet covered, with two three candle candelabras either side of a large metal cross. In the open holy cabinet to the west was a 3-0 Om symbol to the left and a Star of David to the right.

For the procession, high quality compact disc ecclesiastical music was played and the people were singing *All Are Welcome Here* and then *Canticle of the Sun*. The hymns were chosen by Peter, Kathleen, Winnie and Christine. Christine asked for the second processional hymn: not in the Unitarian hymn book.

During the singing, Kathryn led us slowly and purposely towards and into the chapel. Being translucent in covering, we ordinands were received with some gasps from the congregation as we entered and turned to the mikveh. Kathryn diverted to a small table at a short distance from the altar table at the eastern mikveh end to place most of the robes, but she kept the albs, amices and cinctures and picked up white towels. Rabbi Neptune behind her went up to the mikveh; robed Mar Simili Anseres, Mar Populari, Mar Werburga, Mar Flacillus and Mar Arcturus-Virginis went to sit behind the altar table. A number of cameras fired their flashes and mobile phones were busy. Adam had agreed to take many photographs of proceedings.

With the existing bishops sat, we, the candidates, were stood with our backs to the people and in front of the mikveh to the right, and were with Rabbi Neptune.

He said, "*Dear God, you created the universe from a womb of water. You made us in your image, pure and holy, according to your divine will. We thank you for our bodies of beauty that have rhythms like the sun and moon, the seasons, the Shabbos and the Holy Days.*" I remembered that he had used these words for me.

There were more gasps as our translucent gowns dropped to our feet. Kathryn bent down to pick these 'covers' up, and lay them to the side, although we could not see this. A few 'wows' were heard as we each (with about thirty seconds in between) walked down the steps into the water to submerge fully into the vertical hypercube pool and then walked up the other steps to emerge, our backs to them again. The rabbi and Kathryn held up towels that partly blocked our full frontal views once we'd walked around the mikveh perimeter and approached the congregation.

When we were all done the rabbi said, "*Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who is pleased regarding the immersion.*"

With Kathryn's help we put on the albs, amices and cinctures as our basic initial religious clothing. Three of us to be LAE bishops wore dyed into purple amices and albs - most unusual. The other three had white ones on. The rabbi sat down near the side altar table.

Now we came near the altar table, all bare-footed and hair soaked, and it was at this time I was able to see briefly some faces of attenders. Aardse had joined Diana and Arthur had joined Patricia. Then I noticed and nearly waved at Charley

Darley, the Unitarian minister. I wondered what Charley Darley thought about us having ordered Unitarian hymn books. There was also Jeremy Symes and Lindy Peacock, and George Wickenby was sat next to Adam. Carrie Chopin was present with Gloria Mabaso from the Vestal Virgins.

My stomach lurched when I recognised Bishop Jonathan Eyre. What the hell was he doing - visiting Elizabeth? I wanted him gone and could do nothing about it. The collared redhead I did not know was sat with him: I took it that she was Rhiannon Fleetwood, Allie's 'cat in the dark'.

Elizabeth in the purple gown, alongside me, said to me quietly, "I don't know why he is here. And I don't want her near me either."

But the biggest surprise was to see Colin Cromer alongside Mrs. Carter in a corner of the dining and seating area alongside Andrew Walter and Laura Kingswood. Would Colin want to speak with Rhiannon Fleetwood, who had replaced him?

Christine spoke to the congregation. "Welcome everyone. This is a service of incardination and ordination of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia. We have just seen these ordinands go through a ritual cleansing in preparation for new ministry. To submerge into the mikveh and come out again is like a rebirth into the future. Our service today reflects the local ministry in this Parish of the Upper Coast in Eastern Foss in the Diocese of the East in the Province of the Anglians."

Peter, Kathleen, Winnie and Allie were first to lay prostrate on the ground. When prayers were completed for Allie, she stated, "*I give my allegiance and obedience to the bishops of the unbroken Apostolic Order of the Universal Church as represented in the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia.*" Allie rose smoothly on to her knees and was ordained deacon and received a Werbugh white and black goose badge. She sat on a reserved seat.

When prayers were completed for Winnie, she also stated Allie's words. She got on to her knees and was ordained deacon and received the same badge design. She sat on a reserved seat next to Allie.

After prayers for Kathleen, she said the same, rose to her knees and was ordained deacon and received the badge. She sat next to Winnie.

After prayers for Peter, he said the same, rose up on to his knees and was ordained deacon and received the same badge. He sat next to Kathleen.

The ordainers were Bishops Geoff, Luis, Christine, Pauline and Bill.

The Right Reverend Elizabeth Huett came next, lying prostrate alone for prayers. I could see that some could see up her cloak. She was exposed to the world. She stated: "*I give prayerful service under God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and loyalty to his Sacred Universal Church.*" Rising on to her knees, she was consecrated *sub-conditione* as bishop. Now, back down prostrate again, she stated from the floor, "*I, Bishop, give my allegiance and obedience to the unbroken Apostolic Order of the Universal Church as represented in the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia.*" She was incardinated into the LAE.

Bishop Geoff announced, "Welcome into the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia and rejoice for: Mar Triangulum Australe, Bishop of the North East!"

Bishop Elizabeth got up and stood facing her colleagues at the altar table. At this point, Kathleen acquired and presented her clothing. Around her neck Elizabeth added a pectoral cross with a special braided cord plus the white plastic badge containing a black goose image and a W. Her stole was simple; she could change it

later. On the right arm she put on a maniple, a narrow strip of the same material as the stole and looked like a napkin. Then came the chasuble. Bishop Christine now presented her with a mitre (divided tall hat) and a crozier (shepherd's crook). She went and sat alongside the bishops.

The Reverend Margaret Lindbeck came next, who lay prostrate as Elizabeth had done. First, she was incardinated as a priest. "*I, priest, give my allegiance and obedience to the unbroken Apostolic Order of the Universal Church as represented in the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia.*" She was thus incardinated into the LAE. There then followed a straightforward consecration, yet (thus in reverse order of Liz) by the bishops including now Elizabeth, adding the same consecration submission: "*I give prayerful service under God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and loyalty to his Sacred Universal Church.*"

Once she was standing Kathleen assisted Margaret with clothing. She received her pectoral cross with a special braided cord and the same badge as Bishop Elizabeth. Again, her stole was simple. On the right arm she put on a maniple. Then came the chasuble to be the top layer. Christine now presented her with a mitre and a crozier.

Bishop Luis announced, "Rejoice for: Mar Akelda, Bishop of the North and Scotland!" She went and sat alongside the bishops.

It was my turn. My processing was similar to Margaret and Liz. I lay uncomfortably on my front in the purple alb, and my arms out, just as they had done. "*I, priest, give my allegiance and obedience to the unbroken Apostolic Order of the Universal Church as represented in the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia.*" I was thus incardinated into the LAE. Then I said, "*I give prayerful service under God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and loyalty to his Sacred Universal Church.*" I got on to my knees and was ordained bishop by the original bishops plus Bishops Elizabeth and Margaret.

Kathleen now presented me with my robes, just as the others had received and of course the pectoral cross and the white and black goose badge. Christine gave me a mitre and crozier.

Bishop Geoff proclaimed: "Welcome into the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia: Mar Reticulum, Bishop of the East!" Now I sat at the end. There were eight bishops now.

Then Bishop Christine rose and stated, "All our new bishops have joined as full and guiding members of the Society that is the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali*, which is our ethical and practical body guiding the work of the Church. All members of the Society come under its protection and guidance; the W is for Werburgh, a Saxon nun, and the goose is the animal for whom she cared and brought back to life - also a symbol of the Holy Spirit."

Some into strict Catholic dress might have noted a certain simplicity and minimalism. We lacked a tunic and the dalmatic (representing the sub-deacon and deacon). Apparently it was a case of practicality and the variation within this group from others.

There was a hymn, *All Heroic Lives Remind Us*, and then a long Bible reading from Peter, the Deacon, being Hosea chapters one to three, followed by another hymn, *Past. Present, Future*.

Now it was the time for our guest preacher, Rabbi Maurice Neptune of the Reformist Jewish tradition. I had not seen this sermon.

"Some of you may have been shocked with the Bible reading we have had for the inaugural service in this place. As your preacher, and a rabbi of Reformist Judaism, I asked that the whole of the Hosea chapters 1 to 3 were read. I noticed how people did listen and were showing surprise on their faces.

"A strange juxtaposition exists there between the minor prophet Hosea and the prostitute and wife Gomer-bat-Diblayim - and God seemingly demanding some very strange things. What do we have is but an instructed marital crisis and an analogy with the marriage relationship of God and Israel. It's the Word of Yhwh that comes to Hosea, including to marry a prostitute and to have children that God rejects, and there is some doubt that they are even his. So the Hosea-Gomer forced marriage is also a metaphor for the God-Israel marriage.

"When a text is embarrassing, when you think it should say x but instead says y, then there is a heavy temptation to push it towards x by interpretation. You can do this by saying what is really happening, or perhaps through what is called 'escape by metaphor' where it all stands for something else. When you have all that about the children of Israel descending into idolatry, the assumption can then be made that all that is harlotry is in fact idolatry, and some start to make excuses about what an ethical God would do. This has occurred in various commentaries. Sometimes the wife Gomer is cleaned up, as in some midrash, or she disappears entirely, such as in the Targum Jonathan, and in the Babylonian Talmud she's promiscuous but he is a bit of an idiot, or not quite fully-formed, and so it goes on in many re-interpretations through to the present day. For Luther, Gomer allowed herself to be called these nasty things and Hosea do them for the sake of reforming the people, whereas Calvin the purist does what the Targum did: erases her. Perhaps it is all a romantic and tragic love story: more modern scholars tried to agree and fix it accordingly.

"Don't do these changes and of course the problems start. The text begins with the word of the Lord coming to Hosea in the reign of Uzziah and the reign of Hezekiah, and thus in the Judean time of c. 783 to 687 BCE and in the Israelite time of c. 786 to 746 BCE. So this is two places and two times and a little disturbing. When then?

"Let's avoid the no marriage claim and that it was pure allegory regarding God and Israel and Israel's idolatry. No, it's not a dream. Let's not take it either that Gomer is simply guilty of idolatry or stands in the place of those who are. Idolatry may be the context of being a prostitute, but being a prostitute is given. Oh they say she 'played' the harlot, but she was not playing. Allowably she might be a prostitute for the cult of Baal, or a straightforward street prostitute. Let's chop away these literary devices.

"We take the text as it is. We are not assuming history or any such thing: it is text and we take the text as given. How can it be so distasteful? Is God understood as distasteful? What sort of love is it among the sinners? Very tough love, if it is love at all.

"Each suspect child is given a rejectionist name and by God as follows:"

(I thought of Mar Reticulum!)

"Jezreel is translated as: "God scatters," and refers to the fact that the northern kingdom will be scattered by the judgment of God. It suggests eschatology, an end-time. The name indicates treachery, as well.

"Then comes Lo-Ruhamah, meaning 'not loved', 'not pitied', 'no mercy'. The analogy is that God no longer loves Israel, but the child is not loved too. Some think

it's Gomer that is not loved by Hosea, or Gomer does not love the child. Let's keep it simple: it is the child that is so named, named by God.

"Third is Lo-Ammi, meaning 'not my people', so rejected as of kin.

"The analogy with Israel is less of a covenant, then, and more of a divorce.

"So she is a whore and by children we have an imminent judgment (Jezreel); a people not loved (Lo-Ruhamah) and a people rejected from God (Lo-Ammi).

"In Chapter 2, as Gomer will pursue her lovers for her income, God says in response he'll put thorns in her way, and build a wall to block her, by which she'll realise her first husband was best among her lovers, and, because God had bankrolled her with food, drink and clothes - she didn't know this - he'll take the items back. She'll become naked again and knowingly lewd. This is after an existing threat to strip her naked and make her as the day she was born, after the necessity to take the harlotry from her face and the adultery from between her breasts.

"Yet into the wilderness God will speak tenderly and offer hope. He'll purify her from Baal names and offer a covenant. So Chapter 2 switches to a vision of God's love and reconciliation and for sure Chapter 3 includes God's love and his offer: loving an adulteress, Israel will come back and seek God and also David their King.

"That's all right then. Except it isn't. If someone threatens you, and then tells you he loves you, aren't you going to be suspicious? Threats and then love do not equal love.

"But there is more contradiction. Beyond the apparent deep symbolism and the broad symbolism, there is the way that the contradiction forms a kind of both and neither state of chaos.

"Taking her adultery from between her breasts and stripping her naked is violent titillation, and yet it is also returning Gomer to a condition of naked purity. She goes on to seek her lovers who'll pay her way, but God will put resistances in her way. He'll punish her for the feast days of the Baals. She still pursues her lovers, and it seems God changes strategy. Now he is good to her and offers her hope by a covenant and then enacts it. Now she does not sin, and the people are restored.

"Yes, but... so much of the text jars and must be read as it comes. Jezreel is a history, there's Achan and the Exodus. The therefores lead on to contradictions. She is effectively sexualised into purity. Sex and titillation is not exactly the stuff of a cool, logical argument, but this is all about the 'how's your father?' - or rather, 'how's your wife?' Oh, and do note how the male child Jezreel becomes female in chapter 2 - not quite a case of intersex, although there's a note for 'her' after using 'him' in some translations. To sow him, of course, has the meaning of seed - male seed, whereas the reference is to fertile ground.

"What we see, disturbingly then, is that Yhwh is not so different from Baal: that innocence is sexuality, that the pure wilderness is barren, that indeed love intermingles with hate. Babies are innocents, but here are polluted and rejected from the start. How dialectical this is! It even lacks a settled place and time, like I suggested. Lacking a beginning, the ending is also obscured.

"But most of all, the reader is being seduced by all the sexual imagery whilst the story is moralistic: like those American television programmes that preach solid American values whilst titillating or shooting guns at each other. Gomer is never virginal; she does not start virginal: the morality tale has the prostitute in your face and its allure. Nakedness is not purity but sexy: just as people once used to buy

Health and Efficiency, to be turned on by attractive women with - eventually - pubic hair.

"That's it, really. The opposites that reassure us are not opposites. They are all intermingled. Does Yhwh even fight and take on Baal? Not really. There is no trial of strength. Indeed, there is recognition of the feast days of Baal. Polytheism is used, even learnt from; it is almost a synthesising into the monotheism that God is wanting to re-establish as superior. They are not opposites: each contains something of the other. Suddenly Gomer is faithful, if faithful to the wrong thing. In fact it turns out that Yhwh's strategy has parallels in the make-up of Baal religion. Religion is, after all, one category defined by shared features. And given Yhwh's changes of strategy and contradictory approaches, and all the double meanings, is Yhwh even One at all?"

"Plus, let's be honest: Gomer pursued her lovers for necessity. She wasn't indulging herself into endless pleasure. It was her way of getting by. Just like a prostitute, of course. And it was her ethic, the ethic of lovers and the polytheism.

"So what do we make of this? Well, here we are with the opening of a church, and here am I a rabbi giving, I understand, its first sermon. This church has a mikveh, drawn from my tradition, where naked people submerge themselves with all orifices clear for ritual purity. It sounds sexy to me. It looks sexy. But people do find it transformative. There is a wet room with showers and a massage facility here. Massages refresh and renew, but in a place like Serninsea they are associated with sex. Churches, synagogues, mosques, gurdwaras and other temples represent the pure and good, but we know they have a history not just of abuse but have always been gathering places for - let's be kind - future marriages. Authorities attempt to regularise and restrict, but people are clever and use religious places for their own purposes.

"This downstairs church building is to be managed by a new bishop who describes herself like she never did before: particularly that she is intersex, of male genes that created a female body with characteristics against reproduction. She no longer hides from the religious that she is a naturist. New rituals or of other faiths can feature. Incarnation, she says, is all about the messy as well as the good, and that is what Hosea 1 to 3 is all about: the messy in the good, the immoral in with the moral - and see if you can spot which is which. While the metaphors stretch, the reality is sharp and immediate. So this sermon as such is a moment to declare this church open with your personnel now in place.

"Thank you for listening to my deresha, or drash if you like.

"Yevarechecha Adonai veyishmerecha (May God bless you and keep you).

"Ya'er Adonai panav eilecha viy'chunecha (May God show you favour and be gracious to you)

"Yisa Adonai panav eilecha veyasem lecha shalom (May God show you kindness and grant you peace).

"Ken Yehi Ratzon (Let it be so)."

I was impressed with his sermon's appropriateness and theology, and thus our transient mikveh nudity was now in context for everyone - if they understood it.

After a hymn *Where is Our Holy Church?* came the Eucharist presided by Bishop Geoff but concelebrated by eight bishops.

When the deacons Peter and Kathleen raised the white cloth covering the elements, there was a glass jug of water and a box of seeds. The cloth was laid

down again, and the Eucharist liturgy was pretty much like the one we had in the parish Anglican church that led to all that trouble. But there were these variant words said by Bishop Geoff:

*"All You we adore, O hidden Splendour, You,
Who in Your Sacrament does deign to be;
We worship You beneath the earthly veil,
And here Your Presence we devoutly hail."*

Then trainee magician Peter and Kathleen removed the cloth to reveal wine in the glass jug and bread where the box of seeds had been. There were one or two gasps, although some people looking seemed to notice nothing.

The Presiding Bishop proclaimed the Open Table. Incense was swung by Winnie (the chapel itself deliberately had no fire alarm for this reason) and Peter and Kathleen rang bells. Allie did nothing. Anyone of any faith or none was welcome to partake. The deacons took their liturgical food and drink, and we bishops followed. Notably only Mrs. Carter from the old congregation came for communion. Adam and Diana came forward; Patricia did not. The Unitarian hymns called *Mother Earth* and *O Brother Son*, lasting for longer than the duration of the eating and drinking the elements, contained clear Pagan references to western water, northern earth, eastern air and southern fire - as heard in the liturgy.

That was it! The CD sourced music gave us a procession out.

After the Ordinations

Time, then, to mingle with the people.

Christine and I met Charley Darley, with Allie trailing behind. Charley Darley knew all the hymns and approved of their use. I said that Peter chose them, and I agreed with him. Christine wasn't so sure! Charley, recovering from a gender-appearance operation, had people to see, locally, but before he left, he chatted to Peter.

Colin Cromer with Gertrude Carter stayed for the buffet food. Said he, "I'm retired now and I'm in town visiting. I thought I'd come along to apologise for my responses to you."

"Thank you very much."

"I was very angry, before. I gave up before I intended to go. They replaced me quickly: so we are all expendable. You've likely found what you wanted here."

"I hope so. Hello again Mrs. Carter. May I introduce Allie, a researcher?"

"You were both a bit revealing; I suppose, if you've got it... Should I call you bishop, now?"

"If you wish."

"And that water flattened some lovely hair, young lady."

"Colin said, "I can tell you that I did not attend the Reverend Rhiannon Fleetwood's service this morning. This time I listened to the substantial rumours. You exposed my ignorance. I haven't spoken to her here; I don't think she even recognised me."

Getrude said, "I have to be honest and say I don't like her."

"This place incorporates your obvious naturism. My criticism, though, and

why I *wouldn't* mix here is that this is all 'cultural revolution' and not revelation with informed tradition."

"And you are in the Lake District, Colin. All the best for your future."

"Thank you."

"I remember the Reverend Alfred Dove."

"Ah yes; and he remains very old school. Alfred's sister is waiting for me, to travel back all the way over there."

"You were good to me Colin. I'm only sorry I was so crass. I've learnt a lot from you."

He nodded and left, saying bye to Mrs. Carter, and she exited too.

Jenny came to me. "I saw Jonathan Eyre, but he must have gone immediately. Allie says Rhiannon Fleetwood scarpered as well. Fancy ignoring her predecessor!"

"Yes, and I'm not happy about their presence."

"Elizabeth has just said to me that she didn't know they'd be here: it's not clear they were together or not. For Liz, the mikveh is a new start without them."

"I'm pleased to hear it."

"But I think, you know, if I had regular times with Jonathan, I wouldn't have this dryness down there."

Jenny immediately went away to talk to Adam, stopping me from replying.

The rabbi approached me. I told him, "That was such a good sermon. Can we put it on our website?"

"Yes. I will send you an electronic copy. Come back to Wytham, some time very soon, and see me there. Stay with me."

"I will, Maurice."

"A couple of my folks are here. I'll return to them."

Diana with Aardse and Patricia with Arthur looked me over in my finery. Patricia said, "Everyone could see your fanny."

"Good," I said. "It's part of me."

"Stupid name you've been given," said Aardse. "Sounds like 'arsehole'. Did you choose that?"

"No I did not."

Allie was leaving for her house. She said, "I shouldn't but I congratulate you, Bishop Linda."

"Thank you, Allie. Linda will always do, the Reverend Deacon Allie."

Eventually Adam and I came together, and we went up and up into our room.

"I didn't see Margaret McEnhill."

"She does evening services, Mother Arsehole."

"Adam! Mar is a word meaning 'Bishop' and, as for the rest, it is something to do with a 'bonnet' or 'kings-hood' or similar."

"So it is not your arsehole but your clitoris!"

I thought he might just be right. This was likely Christine's doing.

"Well, Adam, my kings-hood or bonnet seeks your attention."

Chapter 23 A Researcher's Greater Involvement

Narrator: Linda *Interviewing of Sorts* (Monday 18th November)

Adam and I had a morning to ourselves, as he again made fun about my ecclesiastical name. Perhaps I should have been called 'Mar Devil's Doorbell', he suggested. He asked if I'd come to his new work premises and assist interviewing.

Allie Shrimpton appeared, in all red leather gear and red boots this time. Wow. She said that she would like to interview us. She would not accompany me to join Adam interviewing today as his interviewing was for his business. She might call on Klärchen Sisse and maybe walk in the town.

One employment subsidy scheme to reduce unemployment figures that Adam could use was titled *Tasks with the Unemployed for Labour force Investment Purposes - TULIP*.

"Is that Calvinist?" I asked. "Starts with Total depravity. Welcome to Serninsea."

"Speculative, perhaps," said Adam. "Tulips from Amsterdam!"

Speculative it was, via six near-randomly selected four male and two female candidates. Four were in their twenties, one male was thirty-two and another male was forty five. Peter gave them all computer tasks to do, and then we three interviewed them. The forty-five year old, Roger Humphrey, was rather well qualified and had an MA dissertation on *The Hopeful Theological Ethics of Sperm Donation* from Leeds. He was also economically wasted. His typing speed and spreadsheet results weren't as good as the others.

Adam said to me, before calling Roger in, "I picked him because you might like to talk to him."

This candidate told us he would have done a Ph.D if he had the money. For work, he'd done bits of administration here and there.

Something else he did: "I donate in good hope."

"You do charity work?" I asked.

"I donate sperm. My sperm."

"Oh. Fair enough. Goes to a good cause."

"I am the cause. Children are the hope."

"And any critical theory?" I asked.

"The Frankfurt School gets a mention. Theology uses essence and action from within the divine universe: a spiritual knowledge gathered as stillness and then activity. Honest!"

"And the Frankfurt School?"

"Informing meaning and value with the individual doing work. But I go on that the foundation has been undermined, so that a space opens up again for the divine universe and a normative Christian production of sperm. I also play with words: *Spem in Alium*: Hope in any other. *We plough the field and scatter*."

"Oh."

Bella (Belinda) Jack had something interesting about her. She had been a hairdresser in training and had been in a job, she'd told us, but there were too many hairdressing salons in town and she was victim of a recent closure.

"Your mum: is she Marjorie?" I asked.

"Yes. She might come here."

Only when returning to the waiting area did she tell Peter only that she tries to write spy stories. Peter told Adam when he rejoined us.

So we had to select two. Adam asked me, "Do you want us to select Roger? He was of interest to you."

"He's a professional wanker and Radical orthodox," I said. "He is surely too rarified intellectually. I can suggest him to Christine's pastoral list. Poverty has led him to Serninsea, obviously."

Peter said, "Poverty means he wanks for pocket money. I'd select him because he can analyse in a way the others cannot."

I asked, "Do you feel an affinity with him?"

"Me?" asked Peter. "Why?"

"No. Adam. Wanking."

"What are we talking about?" asked Adam. "His analytical skills or his spunk?"

"Both? I wonder if the clinic uses Goosechat." I said, "You could chat about Annie Fenwick."

Peter said, "An investigations agency needs a thinker and he can think."

Bella Jack!" Adam then pronounced. "She can join us on the scheme. Her spy stories might be useful to my investigations."

"And her mum," I said.

These were ridiculous bases for choosing workfare people, but at least these had something about them.

Adam asked me, "By the way: you're not Belinda as well, are you, Linda?"

"No, you plank: all my siblings and me have L names in my family. You met them - more than 'met' them. I was named as Linda."

Adam added, "Bella looks rather like a model. No, no. Purely on ability."

Peter said, "Her headlights were on."

I said, "Yes, thank you."

So, after such focussed methodology, we three went out to them, and Adam announced that we had selected Roger and Bella. They stayed back and I invited them to come up and see the church, although this would not be their usual work space. So we three walked over, and Allie came out of Klärchen Sisse's house as we passed, waving her goodbye. She didn't say what they had done.

Bella left us after some fifteen minutes looking around the ground floor but Roger decided to stay in the seating area.

"So is every sperm sacred?" I asked him.

"Definitely. But only one has impact in human flourishing."

Bishop Elizabeth and Jenny then announced that they would spend tomorrow in Wytham. Derek Imperial had heard about her new appointment and asked to see Elizabeth, even though she had been a diocesan elsewhere.

"It's respectful to go and see him," Liz said, "and we both can have a day out tomorrow."

Now it was my turn, to interview, but of students already selected for me and their tutor who'd come with them. So my interviewing was just to give a welcome, really and to set some parameters.

I said to the tutor, "We'd eventually like to do a langar type offering, a free meal after a Sunday service, but we're not sure of resources yet. Langar food is

blessed with prayers and is something of a communion, and we have a communion already. Nevertheless, on this basis please supply: the sweet karah parshad, samosas, pooris and rotis, chana masala, rice, dahl - this sort of thing. Also, we must have Jewish food from either geographical-group tradition or both because we have an extension of a shul here. Plus, provide some British staples. Your students might even be called 'sewadars', although I don't want to violate the tradition."

Allie then said, "Try Cromer crab, Brancaster mussels, Stiffkey cockles, samphire, and have mint. Yummy."

"A bit exotic, Allie," I said.

"Norfolk exotic," she said.

"Could do. I was thinking bubble and squeak, cauliflower cheese, fish and chips, and, if you want local, a more herb-based Foss sausage, the Haslet meatloaf, chine of pork and parsley, plum bread..."

The Catering tutor, Nigella Johnsen, whose voice and face reminded me of Mrs. Bridges in *Upstairs Downstairs*, said she would include the Sikh and Jewish based foods and they would prove educative to the college students. They'd try and run it like a mini-business. Yes, she'd add Norfolk and Foss cuisine at times. From this point they'd run our kitchens on a continuous basis - if the church was open, it would be staffed. So I gave this tutor a couple of keys to the building.

Adam came to see me. "Tomorrow. Jenny will be with Elizabeth, yes? Will you go and see Bill Masters? He will be at Yojana Asthana's parents' guest house. One p.m. tomorrow. Jenny must not know. If Bill came here she'd see him on CCTV later."

Deacon and researcher Allie Shrimpton alongside then asked if she could interview Adam. They went off to the Consulting Room.

Narrator: Adam *Allie Interviews Adam* (Monday 18th November)

Allie Shrimpton sat opposite me in the consulting room, alongside the vestry. We had a table in between us.

Her first question was direct. "Why did you build Linda a church? I mean, you've been hulling kewter at 'er."

"What?"

"Sorry. Throwing money at her."

"Because she was the source of making a lot of money. We couldn't protect her anonymity; we realised she'd have to leave. Ann says it means we have a moral responsibility towards Linda. A train of events started with having those independent bishops in her parish church."

"But wasn't that her doing?"

"I think you might trace the order of things. Conversations led to proposals; proposals led to outcomes. So with my purchase of the north end property from Ann and Labhaoise, there was enough room to set up the church - with extensions. It wouldn't cost a great deal to put it all to another use. The mikveh is something but then there is a plunge pool near copy of it in the wet room."

"Louise isn't spelt Louise, someone said."

"Gaelic - Irish version."

"Folkways at university included both Celtic type languages, and I went for the P Scottish. Anyway, you've got Elizabeth Huett here; I bet you weren't expecting her to be here."

"Wrong again. We've got Jenny here. Elizabeth Huett is along for the ride and worth seeing if she makes contact with those we knocked out. I noticed Jonathan Eyre at the ordinations, and, redhead like you, Rhiannon Fleetwood, is reputedly one of that lot. Jenny is showing hypochondriasis tendencies, if not quite Munchausen tendencies. Understand?"

"Yes. One is symptoms she hasn't got, and the other is to produce those symptoms. So you're all a kind of friendship structure and a relationship with Linda?"

"It could have been different. It could have been Jenny. It could have been Diana - ha ha."

"Diana de Groot?"

"The very same."

"How come?"

"How reliable are you?" I asked her.

"Fort Knox."

"I am going to trade you information. I'll tell you mine if you tell me yours."

"My what?" she asked.

"Home, family, partner, friends," I said. "I'm already offering things your way, let's see some in reverse."

"You are an investigator," Allie said.

"I *am*."

"Okay then. I come from near Walsingham. I was born in a farmhouse and my family have lived there for many generations. Down the lane there is another farmhouse, and they are distant relatives but in an interlocking family tree. My aunt and uncle there aren't really my aunt and uncle. What's that worth to pursue?"

"Something good. I had a time with Diana de Groot, after Jenny. Before I went to join the police. Linda was then at her university. Tell me more and I'll give you more."

"I'm a lesbian, and I have had some sexual relationships with women at the university, but home was complicated."

"Okay. I had sex with Diana de Groot. I think we both enjoyed it. Tell me more and I'll tell you more still. Tell me about 'complicated'? This *is* confidential you realise."

"Yes, absolutely. So at home, living in the other farmhouse, is a man now who was born the same year as me: he is my fourth cousin once removed. My uncle there is actually my third cousin three times removed and my aunt is my third cousin twice removed. Our families hoped and probably still hope that he and I would marry."

"That's not being a lesbian."

"But he is more like a brother to me. Released and free, and seeking a partner, I'm a lesbian."

"More and you get more. Sounds incestuous. Rumours of incest?"

"Hardly, given our common ancestors. I love him dearly and we can be very intimate, but it's not going to happen. I think I have told you rather a lot."

"Confidentiality is the nature of my business as well," I told her. "You have it as a researcher, Linda as a pastor, me as an investigator. So, Diana became

pregnant, and went away to have it out of sight."

"Yours?"

"I have told you."

"What happened to the child?"

"It didn't live."

"Oh. I'm sorry about that. And, oh, er, hmm... And you didn't... You must have wanted to care for her - for Diana."

"Her parents sent her away. I went to the police - for a career. Nottingham. I'd gone when she came back. She might blame me but she should blame her parents. They wanted shot of me."

"When was this?" Allie asked.

"It is now... twenty-one years ago."

"Right. Right, well... Er..."

"I think you're a bit gobsmacked."

"I wasn't expecting this."

"Diana could have joined me. I sent word back by letter. She rejected me, but not in any communication."

"Perhaps her parents blocked your mail?"

Then Allie asked me to excuse her, as she opened the door, went out, looked around and returned, closing the door again.

"Possibly," I said, for my delayed answer. "Diana was traumatised. I don't think she actually fancied me. The sex was casual and enjoyed, but with consequences. It creates a bit of an edge to this day."

"Afore you had your dalliance with Linda?"

She went out again, and seemed to look around again. I couldn't quite understand it.

"My 'dalliance' with Linda? Linda was near the end of school. So Linda thinks she introduced things to me but she didn't. Ann did them all - very educative. Ann was a teacher, and, well, she tried out things on me. I'd looked down her blouse when she was sat behind the desk. I had to stay back. I couldn't avoid looking at her legs. She criticised my behaviour but used it. I went to her house. I lost my virginity. But the surprise was seeing Labhaoise, from the other school when it closed, in that they'd got together. Life partners, in the end. This was my first secret to really keep. Linda was somewhat suspicious about Miss Dromeghda's attitude to me but I kept quiet and, anyway, Jenny and her made the mistake of trying to rope in Geoff. He wasn't interested."

"Geoff the bishop in Bristol - just checking."

"Indeed. It seems that as a heterosexual I am in a minority around here. So I have a lingering obligation for Jenny."

"A network of obligations."

"Reciprocal. Jenny seems confused, again, and now imagines things including her symptoms; Linda isn't confused; Diana is in denial. She's in denial about me and in denial about Linda. I've said a lot to you. Play fair: did you fuck your one cousin fourth removed?"

"Fourth cousin once removed. Often - very often. We sleep together, or did."

"Sounds like *you* might have got pregnant."

"No, I was on birth control from my first period. Both sets of parents saw to it."

"You had parental approval? Every night? That's unusual."

"We were bathed together as babies, we knew each other through school and into farming. It was our normal, the family trees wrap around a lot and this was one more likely twist."

"So it did stop or it didn't?"

"I left for the University of Somerset; *that* ended the pressure. Er... Diana doesn't share Linda's religion?"

"Does Linda?" I asked. "What does Linda actually believe?"

"She makes a go of it. She's a bishop!"

"That's the best that can be said," I commented.

"Any other females, Adam? Just that we've come down this road."

"Trade?" he proposed.

"I had a relationship with my female tutor when an undergraduate."

"What's this about you recognising Rhiannon Fleetwood?"

"Trade?" she asked back.

"I am married. I'm married to Mary Ann, and yes Linda does know. She and her adult daughter - not mine - are far away now, in the Thames Valley."

"Oh. Gosh. Rhiannon Fleetwood went to Taunton Theological College. Folk and Ethnic Studies is a bit Pagan, or can be. She was looking to be a nuisance with us and the types I associated with - except she went soft on one called Andrea. She wasn't long in Rochester, it seems, her first posting."

"Don't let Linda hear you say that."

"Say what?"

Saying, 'Types I associated with.' Say, 'Types with whom I associated,' instead."

"Crumbs. I'll tell her it in broad Norfolk. Any living children, Adam?"

"Trade?"

"Okay. I also had a relationship with a Scottish Gaelic speaking female secretary of the department. She improved my rudimentary listening and speaking skills - that's why they employed her, because she was fluent in Gaelic."

"That's a rarity, a Norfolk lass speaking some Gaelic."

"Tha e neo-àbhaisteach. Children?"

"Ann and Labhaoise both have children by me. I play no part in their upbringing. They are both nine years old."

"Wow. I have a lot to keep secret."

"Linda knows some of these, but she does not know that you know."

"Final question," Allie announced. "If you stopped sharing the upper room you have here, does that mean Linda loses the church?"

"Not at all. Don't get me wrong here. We get on very well, and Ann and I will defend Linda against all-comers. We are making a go of this. How's your Serninsea house, Allie?"

"Good. I can do my paintings there."

"And do you ever see this man you grew up with - don't correct me, Linda style - now you are a county away?"

"Can we trade on this, Adam? Anything else to tell me?"

"Okay. Cheryl Mould. I've been with her as well, after she stopped being Cheryl Little."

"Ah. Right. So my answer is no. I don't see him. I'm still a postgraduate at Somerset, of course, but no. He longs for me. I can't see him - it would upset him. He

thinks I am in Somerset now. They all do."

"And, Allie, what did you make of Linda at Margate?"

"Anything to trade?"

"Ask me a question."

"Did you use a turkey baster? For children!"

"It is not funny, Allie. No. We did it the natural way, if you must know. I'd had sexual intercourse with Ann before, obviously. Three goes with Labhaoise, one with Ann was enough. Satisfied? *Don't* tell Linda."

"Adam, I'm not telling Linda anything."

"Margate?"

"A lot happened there. I thought Linda was purposeful and intelligent. He's around at the moment - Jonathan Eyre - isn't he?"

"Yes, and I want to know why. Is he seeing Elizabeth? Is he wanting to try it on with Linda again? Is John Barman in the area, but he won't show his face? I learnt that Eyre is a sexual predator, with well over twenty children from nearly as many women."

"Do you think Linda can resist him? If I see Rhiannon Fleetwood close, I'll have to restrain myself. She's had two kids, both by Eyre - fostered out. Being a single mother clergywoman wouldn't help her get sky pilot jobs, so she hides it."

"Did you have sex with her, Allie?"

"Come on! What do you take me for?"

"I don't *know*."

"What about Linda and Jonathan Eyre?" she asked me.

"She should resist him, but whether she will is another matter."

"Ah. There is just one more thing, Adam."

"*Shoot*, Columbo."

"What do you think of Maurice Neptune and Linda?"

"It is simple. If she really wants to go off with him, I won't stop her. I'll stand aside. She falls for people very easily, but he might just offer something she needs. Perhaps this place will become a synagogue with her as a rabbi. There you go. As for falling for people: she might for you, Allie. I'd be careful if I was you. She could compromise you: have you thought of that?"

"She won't compromise me."

"Are we done?"

"We're done. Thank's for our mardle, Adam. I'll make sure my notes I make stay in the house and I do encrypt them all as well. I'll interview the sky pilot herself now."

"Nothing, absolutely nothing, about Diana going away in the past. Right?"

"Sure."

"This conversation was confidential, and I'll monitor for you leaking *anything*."

"Of course."

"Your name: 'Shrimpton' - not like the model."

"There aren't many. Shrimptons tend to be connected."

"No middle names? Linda doesn't have a middle name."

"I wasn't given a middle name. Neither was Jonnie - my cousin."

Narrator: Linda *Allie Interviews Linda* (Monday 18th November 2019)

In the vestry, with one eye on the consulting room, I was conversing with Roger. He asked me what I thought of Derrida's effect on theology.

"It's the linguistic turn," I said. "It reduces claims, doesn't it?"

"Flattens everything out, and then expands everything."

"I don't think does theology justice, as an art and a mystery."

"Doctrine revives," he suggested

"Nah. Like Baudrillard, symbols become simulcra and collapse in. Religious symbolism can't be separated from advertising."

I asked, "Where do you uphold this? Are you from around here?"

"No, from the Leeds area. I don't go anywhere. Wytham Cathedral, sometimes."

"Someone special in your life, Roger?"

"We share interests, empathy, sympathy, bonding, loving. We tell people we are from large villages outside Leeds, Garforth and Sherburn in Elmet. We decided to come to the coast, and this place had cheap property and we could start afresh."

"There was a problem?"

"Not now."

Allie and Adam came out of the Consulting Room. Adam went for the staircase and Allie came to me.

"Here you be," said Allie.

"Tell you another time - possibly," said Roger.

"Only if you want to tell me," I said.

Roger decided he'd go.

"Interview?" asked Allie.

"Go on. But before you do, are you making friends or a relationship with Klärchen Sisse?"

"Been in her house."

"What I mean is, if you did it would put my mind at rest."

"About what?"

"About whom."

"Me?"

"Her. Are you getting together with her?"

"I apply your statement given to Roger. And I *don't* want to tell you."

"I'd like to know."

"Ask *her*. I'm a researcher here. I can't pass things on."

"As a 'participant' you *can* answer me: how is she with her dog, compared with how she is with you?"

"She doesn't take me for walks - unlike you."

"Yes, I'm sorry about that before."

"I'm not sorry about this now."

"You're obviously not going to tell me."

"Confidentiality: something you know about. Can I interview you?"

"Get on with it."

"Right. You here were the second daughter of a known local naturist family?"

"As a deacon, a priest, I was sort of known by some and a lot went unsaid."

"You're bred and born here, hintut. Would you say that Serninsea is a bit

weird?"

"Because Klärchen is weird? Because I am weird?"

"I'm not implying you're a warmint."

"A what?"

"Very troublesome, odd."

"I see."

"When you had the scandal unfolding, did you know you would become independent?"

"No. I think Ann and Adam saw it, probably via what Christine had done. I was a bit stupid having Geoff and his partner in the parish church, but I was so frustrated. By the way, you strike me as a bit weird yourself, Allie. I wanted you ordained so to use any of your undoubted charisma of weirdness. Ha ha."

"Reverend Cromer at the ordinations told me he'd given up on you, afore."

"Oh did he now? You're happy to blurt about me when it suits you then."

"Your time with him deteriorated. It's background for me."

"I've moved on."

"He said he'd moved on. Roland Mitton and I are interested in small sects, and these independent movements are as small as they get. The fact you've had an actual church built for you and you intended a parish is unusual. You're operating in a friendship structure."

"I am, am I?"

"Hintut?"

"Is it a *structure*? Adam and I rediscovered each other locally - I hope we are more than friends; Geoff I also found but so did Christine. I didn't know Christine before. Jenny, of course. You hope to rely on people."

"Your love life, your emotional life, is involved."

"I suppose you are alluding to the reality that Adam and I don't love each other in the full sense you'd expect."

"I never allude to anything. Adam and you go back a long way."

"Yes, and Ann's. I suppose he's told you about him oggling at the teacher, and me coming on the scene. She used him in a struggle with her own sexuality and it affected him: as it happens she has stayed with Labhaoise a long time."

"Geoff is gay; you're bisexual."

"As you already know: I'm genetically male, female phenotype, female gender, bisexual. Adam is heterosexual; Jenny is probably lesbian but has tried to convince herself otherwise. She might have thought being lesbian was a syndrome. Geoff is very gay. And you?"

"No."

"'No' what? I'd like to know. You dress like that for a pupose. You've probably got the boys - and girls - after you... The Reverend Deacon Allie, your *bishop* wants to know."

"What abaht Diana?"

"Diana? She isn't involved in church things."

"She shows interest, don't she?"

"As a friend. She is a friend."

"Do you think she has relevant secrets or, er, unknown stances per'aps?"

"That Diana has a secret? Has Adam said something?"

"Or a stance. Perhaps not then. Like, er, she dun't show her religion to you?"

"She doesn't have any religion: are you implying she has a secret religious outlook?"

"I'm not implying. I'm asking; she seems complex."

"Do you know something I don't?"

"This report by, yes, Adam. It's all secrets that were slowly uncovered."

"You're starting to irritate me, Allie. And I hope you've been keeping your distance from Jenny."

"Get closer to Klärchen, keep your distance from Jenny. Are you my mawther?"

"I have a pastoral role. And I have not actually suggested that you get closer to Klärchen."

"Jenny can't be a friend?"

"Her drinking is one reason for concern."

"These secrets, Linda, they were slowly..."

"The group under the Confraternity was secretive, and I want to avoid that now. Answer *my* question, Allie. You weren't meaning Diana's secret religious outlook. Don't bullshit me."

"So what your plans be for this place?"

"Allie! Do you know something I... don't? Does Diana have a *secret*?"

"These plans..."

"Have you just let off?"

"I'll open the door."

"Don't. It's private. I'm going to think about Diana and what it could be."

"What this church and your plans be?"

"What these plans *be*, Allie?"

"Don't mock me."

"Oh, what the fuck. I will run the church. So my plan is to be as liberal as my theology without the double-speak I had in the National Church. I want it open and fluid on all counts. I want to develop a parish. If the National Church parish goes evangelical, this one here will not. So, come on..."

"Right. And Elizabeth Huett? I'll look at the dynamics. You're happy she is here?"

"Am I happy *you* are here?"

"Why are you so hostile towards me?"

"Perhaps if you controlled your backside."

"I'm nervous! What do you think about people? Liz?"

"Elizabeth, yeah. She seems to fit in, I think. I can be tolerant, see. Her. You. Christine has different views from me, but her unique roles in life mean she has a place here. She is ecclesiastically authoritarian, but if she can live with me then I can live with her. Elizabeth - hmm - is doing quite well. What about you, Allie?"

"They probably want to revive the conferences and the more intimate services."

"Really? They can be managed on a secular basis."

"But you know that Christine doesn't think on a secular basis. How do you view the prospect of facing up to her on this issue?"

"Do you think I will have to do that?"

"It is hypothetical. I'm not saying."

"Like with Diana? Except that would be a secret in the past."

"I'm just *asking*. How would you do it? If Christine wants to revive what took place under the previous Confraternity?"

"You seem to know more than me about people's intentions and secrets. Well, Allie, I'd veto it. Intimacy is one thing, orgies are another. Have you dropped one again?"

"Your clothes come off a lot. You like this don't you?"

"I *encourage* it," I said. "But I can see the boundaries. But let me ask you: how will we in your research ever stay anonymous?"

"I can say that I will call this place 'Mapleton' after some trees the professor and I noticed. You will all have different names. I'm afraid an investigator like Adam elsewhere would probably find the location. I have to keep everything academic and theory-related."

"Theories?"

"I'm afraid I cannot discuss my work. But I need to stay close to you as the decision taker, and also because decisions are made in informal places. I'm not exactly asking to be abed with you and Adam, but it strikes me you take some decisions informally."

"Yes, we probably do. Even in bed. Sorry about that. But upstairs is private. When I open the door, it'll drift upstairs - holding my nose too."

"I may ask permission to stay with you on nights when decisions might be taken. I'm not embarrassed, as you have seen already."

"I have, yes. You're quite a *tart*, Allie Shrimpton. Your backside might even warm the bed."

"There's no need to be rude; I'm only doing my research. Why you be so rude?"

"You were rude first. Have you finished this interview now?"

"Yes, I think so."

"I need to open the door. You'd better revert to following me around. Keep downwind. I might go and masturbate. Come upstairs for *that*. Do you want to come and see if it leads to me making any decisions?"

"*Would* it?"

"Just do what you have to do."

"I hope that we can at least work together."

"Come on. Heel now. *Walkies*."

"I'll come lolloping along, Mistress. Bishop Mistress. To think I used to... Where we going?"

"I'm going to read a book. Derrida and theology."

"Linda, please, answer me one more question. What have I done to get wrong?"

The problem was I could not answer her beyond the immediate smell. "I'll think about it as I read my book - on my own. Get some fucking fresh air."

"I'll go elsewhere to make some notes. I'll go and mark some territory outside in the gutter. Ask Dieter for some advice on technique."

"Yeah, that might suit," I said as I went away from her.

Visiting Yojana's Guest House (Thursday 21st November)

Nothing had happened on Wednesday; Diana had cancelled our get together and without a reason.

Allie Shrimpton asked if she could come along to Yojana's parents' guest house. Thursday she wore hefty orange boots and a black full-length flowing dress with orange stripes.

As I drove from the tenfoot I said, "Yojana was my husband's lover, in that group."

"I already know that."

"What you know and don't know. Like Rhiannon Fleetwood. What do you know and don't know about her?"

"I told you that she was a pest. That was a lot to declare."

"By the way, I asked Adam last night if he knew what Diana might have as a secret. I told him that I thought you might be holding something back, but I wasn't sure."

"Oh."

"Do you want to know what he said?"

"Do you want to tell me?" she asked in her infuriating manner.

"That if you *were* holding a secret, he wondered where you would have got it from. But he said I shouldn't assume a secret, because Diana is my friend and you were bound to ask about her."

"Plausible."

"No, it is not. It's waffle."

"I had secrets on my mind so it probably got a bit confused."

"Whose secrets?" I asked her.

"The group under the Confraternity - in general. I was thinking what to ask while you were answering me."

"An ethnographer looking to deceive meaning."

She said to me, "The difference between an ethnographer and symbolic interactionist is that the ethnographer looks more at the act and the symbolic interactionist looks more at the actor. But there is a lot of overlap and ethnography has the edge in extent of research methods."

"Allie, you are waffling now."

"But I think I am interested in the actors, and especially you as the main actor. So I want to see and hear as much as I can. Plus, I want to study how you use what Goffman knew was expressive talk in ritual - but is still instrumental in how you define the direction of this church."

(I thought of how the word 'actor' had been used.)

"Very *interesting*, Allie."

She went on: "I am between Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel and that is all I am prepared to say on my methods now."

"Clear as mud."

"Symbolic interactionism and ethnography. I secure the thick text material and when digitised I send encrypted samples to Roland."

"I'm not interested."

Silence followed, maintained all the way.

A new sign was outside the guest house, Maa Skelter Guest House, and the car park had fresh tarmac laid. I could see building work of a large conservatory

being added.

Inside there was the smell of paint, as we went to the reception. Yojana Asthana herself appeared.

"I'm Bishop Linda, Mar Reticulum, here to see Bishop Bill Masters. This is Allie Shrimpton, a Ph.D student, who is doing confidential research on my church and its direction."

"Hello Linda. You don't have to be so formal. If it is any reassurance, I am no longer seeing your husband. This is to help Cheryl Mould."

"I'm separated, thankfully, with an uncontested divorce on its way."

"I'll just ring through." She did. "This Bishop Linda is here. Thanks. You'll be collected. I saw your ordination. Uncle San Bandyopadhyay sends his greetings."

"Does he now. So you left SMS?"

"Yes. I wasn't going to Felixstowe."

"You could have carried on with my husband."

"He's moved on. His partner is very pregnant now. It will be a boy."

"Once again I am the last to know. No one tells me anything. He's still in touch then."

"In a basic sense."

"Hello Linda." Oh hell. It was Jonathan Eyre who had come to collect me. "You catch me a day before I'm going back."

"I've come to see Bill Masters, not you. Is this some sort of set-up, Yojana?"

"I don't know about this!"

"You must have known he was here."

"Yes, I know he's been staying here, but not to see you."

Jonathan Eyre said, "Bill Masters is with me, and he will see you as well. But I want to talk to you, after you've seen him."

"I've nothing to say to you."

"Nevertheless, follow me upstairs. Who is this? I think..."

I said, "This is Allie Shrimpton, an interpretive sociology postgraduate researcher, using the strictest of confidential research strategies."

"I remember you," she said. "I work under Professor Roland Mitton and we are from the University of Somerset."

"I have a good memory for women," said Jonathan. "You wanted to do research in a seaside town."

"This is about church development, and it so happens it is in a seaside town. If the seaside town aspect is relevant, it will emerge."

We arrived at two attached rooms and an ensuite, the most expensive suite in the former bed and breakfast. Inside the 'lounge' with its kitchen facilities was Bishop Bill Masters, who got up and shook my hand.

Bill said, "Jonathan is staying here; I've come here to see you."

I asked Jonathan, "Are you staying or going?"

"I'll go."

Bill said, "Go and get the ladies a soft drink each, first. Linda - hello. Adam wants me to explain something to you. Hello Allie."

He waited while Jonathan gave us our drinks and left.

"What's he doing here?" I asked. "Don't you dare negotiate him into the LAE. I'll not have it."

"He wanted to ask my opinion, on whether he could apologise to you and

you'd hear him out. I want to talk first and we can deal with him later. As for him into the LAE, it won't happen. He has visited clergy in other jurisdictions and been a tourist at Wytham."

"Are some of his women around here?"

"Two have visited. I want to say something different. I'm Jenny's mother's husband's brother. Jenny's mother slept with me. Jenny is mine, but she was raised as his."

I said, "There must be something in the water around here."

"I've been single most of my life - a few ships in the night until recently. Pauline and I are finally getting it together. We long ago invented the idea that I am gay so I would be an uncle only, to Jenny. It kind of went with my ecclesiastical interest, in an odd sort of way. Jenny doted on me as an uncle, and it is why when she became religious she also thought about ministry."

"You also influenced Geoff Virgo."

"Well, yes, because he really is gay, and she tried to 'correct' him. She recommended that at least he could be like her single uncle. She had an intense correspondence with him. She was scared she was gay, after your dallings, which was sinful according to her new religious crowd. But she kept her love for me. She fell in with the wrong people, and as a cleric I tried to warn her. I've always been in Independent Sacramental Ministry. So this is how Geoff knows me, and I have got to know others. Like Jonathan now, who is forced to go independent and sought my advice on this as well."

"Were you ever in this Serninsea Theatrical Ring?"

"No no. Jenny doesn't know about the extent of me and Pauline. We were in different independent Churches. She was in the Orthodox Catholic Ministries. I will have to continue to appear gay. Allie, are you listening?"

"Of course."

"Nothing to Jenny; I understand you have been friendly with her."

"I won't say a word."

"Good. Elizabeth won't talk to Jonathan, he says to me, which saddens him given the number of times they've slept together, including as three with Barman. He thought he might at least try and mend fences with her. Jonathan has stayed here trying to speak to her for several days."

"Good on Elizabeth," I said. "So you wanted me to know that you are Jenny's father."

"Elizabeth loves sex, as does Jenny, but the fact is that Elizabeth is not her girlfriend."

"I wondered. What about Fatima?"

"She was her oppressive boss. Elizabeth was more caring and Jenny attached herself."

"Elizabeth sounds frustrated," I said.

"They are stuck together, but it won't last. Jenny's hypochondria will irritate as will her lapses into mental illness. Jenny is utterly muddled with her sexuality, and she blames you. She is dangerously close to becoming alcoholic as well. Jonathan thinks that if Elizabeth breaks with Jenny, he might make an effort to realign her back. Just saying. Elizabeth continues to sleep with Jenny and above the church; she could take a room at the Blue Diamond Club instead."

"Allie," I said, "this is super-confidential."

"I know."

Bill said, "Neither of you even tell Jenny that you met me. Elizabeth knows you two are here. Derek Imperial is seeing her today, and taking Jenny means I can see you. Elizabeth has always referred to me as Jenny's uncle."

"What can she say to Derek Imperial?"

"I suppose 'sorry' might be a start. I think she will plead her case. It won't make any difference: her time as an Anglican is over. The other thing: Jonathan wants to talk to you. Are you going to hear him out?"

"Is it relevant?"

"Yes."

"Briefly," I said.

Bill went out for some minutes, and Jonathan Eyre came back alone.

I said, as he came in, "You betrayed me. I thought the world of you, and yet you were reporting me back to your bizarre mates."

"I was part of a group under the Confraternity."

"My husband knew what I'd done with you, when I thought he did not."

"He said you demonstrated your suitability for recruitment. You did."

"You're a cunt."

Jonathan said, "Keith treated the religion thing very seriously, as we pursued it. Terry knew he'd made a mistake with him before, rejecting him for ordination."

"So?"

"Terry realised he hadn't done his research, because Keith had both done theology and was all around the girls. And since rejection, he was never been loyal to you. Cheryl became his partner over two years. Yojana had two years with him in SMS. Cheryl is so naive. She is hoping that having this baby will turn him into a loyal family man. Not a chance."

"I give up," I said.

"Let me talk about Jenny, from what I know. She wants your love, Linda, but the trouble is she also hates you. You understand that, don't you? She blames you for everything. She blames you for her lesbian side. She blames you for her fake illnesses. It is irrational, I know, and she is now playing being rational and secular when, frankly, she isn't. It doesn't matter that society is so tolerant today. Do you know the person she really wants? It is not Liz."

I said, "Adam?"

"Yes. She imagines Adam is right for her. And, Linda, you are in the way. So she hates you again. Allie, you do well to keep your distance because you can be a proxy for Linda. Getting you pissed is a success for her."

"I worked that out," Allie said.

"Oh you did," I responded. "Anyway, Adam is asexual beyond us together. He wanks alone."

"Not really. No. Like Keith, he has been around the block, including your friends. You don't light his fire."

I turned to Allie. "Diana?"

"Don't ask me," said Allie.

"Well, let me ask *you*, Jonathan? Has he been with my friend Diana de Groot - she was Diana King - to the extent that there's an ongoing secret?"

"All I know is what I said: that Adam's been around the block, like Keith. Apparently you turned Adam off ordinary relationships with women, but the right

woman might change that."

"Fucking hell. Am I to blame for everyone who can't cope?"

Jonathan said, "You are quite a woman. Adam is forced into a strange relationship with Ann Dromeghda. She guides him even sexually, but no one else does, including you."

"He doesn't have a sexual relationship with her."

"His sex with you is with her approval. If she says stop, he's gone. Close friend, no sex, except when she had his child, as did Labhaoise. Jenny is still more his woman than you."

"You seem to know all about this. What else do you know - about Diana for example?"

"The group knew all of this. George Wickenby did the heavy lifting. We didn't know about Diana de Groot." Margaret McEnhill is the final person we learnt about. We know she has acted like a double agent. We know she contacted Adam Magellan. She won't last in Anglican ministry. You can take her in as well, probably."

"And your lot knew all about me."

"We held you in the highest regard."

"To punish me."

"You were the person we wanted, really wanted. But, more than that, I did admire you. I do: why should I change my mind? I even admire your resistance. If only you would have been on board, the group would have flown. Linda: truly. You were the lynchpin. Barman would have wanted you as a bishop, and me too. Anyway, all that is done now."

"Yes it is."

"I think you are marvellous. I tell you who *does* want you, and exclusively: Rabbi Maurice. He is obsessed with you."

"What about Christine?"

"She is clever, and has done what she needs to do with you, just as she has with San Bandyopadhyay. She has him in her grip, but she leaves you alone. I'd love to see you and her clash."

"Hmm. It might be coming along. That's *your* opinion, isn't it Allie?"

"I ask questions."

"You and Christine are the most powerful women I know," said Jonathan. "Terry put you and her together at the retreat. That was a clever move, but the fireworks didn't happen. She is too clever for that. She's been weighing you up for a long time. When she split with us, she made sure you were on her side."

"By the way, how is that pregnant reverend I saw you with in Margate? Did you see her, Allie?"

Allie gave no reply.

He did. "You mean Julie. Julie Manns. She's had the baby, a lovely girl, and she is bringing her up. It's not easy for her. I stayed with her immediately after the scandal broke, but realised I needed to come up here - to see you."

"The baby is yours?"

"Of course."

"You've enough to fill a Sunday School, they say."

"Yeah. Twenty-seven."

"Adam counted twenty-five."

"I only see a few of them. Julie has indicated she wants to go it alone, so that

was another reason to come up here now. Do you and me have no future?"

"What? Absolutely not!"

"I'm trying to see what is possible, from a point of view of reconciling, from a position of admiration. Linda, that Confraternity collective loyalty is dead and gone, but it allows my personal response to be clearer. I know why Maurice Neptune admires you, because I do as well."

"Hmm."

Now he looked with his stare into my eyes. "You are a beautiful woman. You are tall, slimmer than many, big breasted, incredibly intelligent, strategic, beautiful skin, and you have wonderful hair, even when short, and of course you have declared you are CAIS intersex. I could not work out your vagina when I looked into it. Now I think, what power comes from it."

"My skin was beautiful until Connie Wilson got to work."

"I want to apologise about that. She went far too far."

"Too far? Is this the Elizabeth defence?"

"No. Because she thought we wouldn't do it and was against it. I thought you should be punished, as part of collective authority, even if you submitted. But Connie Wilson confused sadism and punishment."

"So you recommended, say, only a few needles through my skin? Just a trickle of blood rather than a bloody mess for Barman's fucking?"

"No. Some strikes of perhaps a bullwhip, some vibrators. At the mikveh: you were gorgeous. As far as we could see it, you emerged from the mikveh like a goddess, but you should have had long wet hair, Linda. Connie should *never* have cut your hair. That was an act of degradation. She's a psychopath and he's a sociopath. A woman you are and beautiful in every sense. Whatever you think about what I did, you *made* that conference for me. I have never responded to any woman like I did to you."

"Hmm."

"Truly."

"You think that - really?"

"Yes."

"Hmm."

"You are a beauty, and your whole movement as a woman is fabulous. Really. To have you is glorious."

"Hmm."

"You *are*."

"What the fuck. I'm stirring down there. My guts too. It's the experience. I still want you, Jonathan. Allie, yeah, go and wait in the car."

Then Allie stood up, and said, "This goes no further."

"What?" He asked.

"Hey?" I asked. (What happened to her non-intervention?) "Mind your own business, girl!"

Allie then said at Jonathan, "I know your game. You tried it on with me, and I told you then: come any closer and I'll make you unconscious. I am telling you this now. Go near her, now, and I will lay you out."

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Thirty."

"Telling me, over twice your age, what to do?"

"I've told you. In fact, this interview with Linda is over."

I said, "I think we might have moved beyond that. Please go and wait in my car, Allie. No, I'll be longer than that. There's the bus along the coast road into Sutton, actually."

"No. This is over."

"Allie!" I shouted. "Get out! He stays."

Jonathan stood up.

She said, "I'm warning you. You now leave this room, go down that corridor outside to the right, and Linda and I will leave to the left. Got it?"

"I think Linda might have an opinion about this."

"Final warning."

"Allie. What are you doing?" I asked, getting worried, as her physical stance seemed to be altering.

Jonathan said to Allie, "You need a good seeing to, madam."

"Three seconds to leave this room."

"Yes. Yes, I'm going. I'm sorry Linda that you have her as your researcher. Clearly she is altering outcomes here. I am going to do as she says." He was moving into the doorspace, but paused. "And, when she turns on you, you'll do as she says as well. Goodbye, Linda. I did love being with you, more than any other. I wanted to love you. You're free to go."

He left the room and went into the corridor as Allie had instructed.

"Come on," said Allie, "we're going back to the church."

She grabbed my arm and pulled me. I said at her, "How dare you!"

As we went on, I turned and looked at Jonathan. I wondered if I should deny Allie's intervention, but Jonathan shook his head. So we went to the car, still pulled along by Allie, and I did not see Bill.

I said to Allie, released at the car, "You say nothing about this to anyone. You are a fucking cunt, you are. How dare you tell me what I will and will not do. I fuck whom I choose. You don't know the half of it, cunt."

"Get in and drive," she said.

So I did. As we proceeded, she then said, "I'm not heartless you know. I was impressed with your talk at Margate."

"I'll get you for this, Allie Shrimpton. I will, *you'll* see. I wanted him and I'm blaming you. In fact, I'm turning around and going back."

"No you're not."

"And what are you going to do about it?"

"Well, you won't be seeing him. It's as simple as that."

"You fucking cunt Alfia Shrimpton."

"Drive on."

"I am. I am."

Allie Gets into Bed (Friday 22nd November and overnight)

I was annoyed that my interfering researcher had taken away my chance of re-experiencing what Jonathan Eyre had the skill to do to me. I'd just fancied a wrecking session of sex.

I wanted to get my own back on Allie, to embarrass her.

I had a dream that my father was about to be welcomed into my body, when a naked Allie delivered a blow to behind his head, and then lectured me about right and wrong.

I was laid alongside Adam in bed as morning broke. "Consider our researcher," I said to him. "She claims that it is merely co-incidental that her church study is in a seaside town. She says that we make informal decisions in private places like together in bed."

"You're kidding," said Adam.

"It's a new one for participant observation, I admit, but she is right that we *do* decide things in bed. Do you know anything about her? She must have raised your curiosity."

"The professor is fairly well known," he said, "but she isn't. He's on TV a lot talking about historical communities and old religion. Kathryn and Kathleen talked about him doing a series on the economy organised by monasteries before Henry VIII."

I said, "I bet in ten years or so she is all over television. She's a charismatic woman, in the other sense."

"I don't know a lot about her," said Adam. "She says so very little."

"Find out and let me know!"

Once we were up, Jenny went inside the vestry silently and started using the computer, in her rather unpunctual and undisciplined manner. Her left hand seemed to be on her crotch all the time, so she was typing one-handed. She said nothing about her trip to Wytham with Elizabeth, who came down the stairs and simply went out. I hung about in the seating area.

In the afternoon a policeman came into the church, and, coming across the seating area, stood and looked at me. "Are you Bishop Linda Jupitas?"

"I am."

I noticed Allie coming in, hair looking voluminous, with a much younger woman under a peaked cap and dark spectacles on. They stayed by the double doors looking.

"I am Police Constable Mateo Ramírez. The local constabulary have received reports about casual nudity in this place, open to the public and children."

"Not true. We have had closed meetings on that basis, as we are entitled to do."

"There was nudity at an ordination service open to the public."

"It was a religious ritual, and we were shielded."

"Unless you want to be arrested and charged for causing harassment, alarm, and distress, I suggest you place very clear notices at the entrances that these are indeed private premises and adult nudity takes place. You must ban unaccompanied children at the very least, and perhaps it is wise for legal reasons to have a members and guests only policy."

"No, sir. We are open. I will have closed sessions for nudity - the doors will be locked. As for the mikveh, this facilitates religious rituals and the police will not interfere. Come and look at it."

He saw the opportunities for concealing by its walking design - backs to us, one frontal walk that can be shielded by holding up towels.

I said, "People can be shielded, and we can pull across folding doors."

"That will be all," he said. "We shall see what you do, and if complaints continue we will return."

"What are *you* looking at?" Allie asked the constable, as he returned towards the double doors.

The policeman said, approaching more the disguised woman, "Chica adorable. Dejame soñar contigo."

She didn't respond, but Allie then said, "I'm a Ph.D researcher."

Turning to her, he said, "I suppose you're the cynical anti-authority intellectual."

Allie said at him, "No saques conclusiones sobre mi sin saber."

"Tus palabras son claras y directas," he said, and off he went quickly.

I thought, that wasn't Gaelic.

"Es tu reputación," Allie said to her friend.

She replied, "Así están las cosas, una pena."

I realised then I'd met her before and now recognised her.

"I know it's you, Annie," I said, still at a distance. "Would you like to see Adam Magellan? He lives here."

"Here? No no. You didn't tell me that," the young woman said to Allie. "So are you going to come back with me or not?"

"¡Déjame soñar contigo en su lugar! No, I have to research. I don't mind going for a drink, Annie. Look, I'm ten years older than you. Anyway, I am seeking ones my age or older."

"Tu corazón es cruel, amigo; tu palabras son claras y directas. I could have taught you things."

"I might be able to teach *you* things, Annie."

"Like what?"

"Self-defence for one. I was taught by an older woman. And she taught a lot more besides."

"I'll go. You're obviously not interested beyond drinking."

"Thanks for the drink. Thanks for chatting."

I said to Allie, "Fascinating. How do you know her?"

"Found her in the pub. She knows about you in the church. She worked out Adam."

"Spanish?"

"She spent her younger years in Spain. She later did AS and A level Spanish at school, and made out she was learning it for the first time. And they made her Head Girl. She was hiding behind the language."

"And you?"

"We didn't have head girls or boys at Fakenham, and I didn't spend my early years in Spain. So something is happening here soon?"

"Kathleen!" (I was thus distracted.) I asked Kathleen to monitor the doors twenty minutes before the Vestal Virgins' meeting and only let her own group members in.

Allie found something to eat. I retreated into my vestry and accompanied Jenny, who stopped typing with two hands and went back to one hand only.

Having informed the other place, Peter came in and suggested that the police might be over-reaching their legal powers. Harassment, alarm and distress had to be proven.

"Hello Carrie," I said to Carrie Chopin near Allie. Carrie was back in charge of the eternal flame in its burner, which she was holding. "Someone has complained to the rozzers," I said. "We carry on with your meeting as planned. Ladies and gentlemen! In about twenty minutes there may be displays of translucent nudity. Anyone offended should leave; please take out any children." There were no children present. No one moved.

Carrie said to me, "We would be interested if you could join in with our very first meeting here. Presumably you are free to make your own decisions now."

"Thank you for considering me."

Allie said, "This means I should come in."

"I don't think you'd be well-received," said Carrie.

"Then I must decline," I said. "She is my researcher, and where I go she goes."

Allie looked at me and smiled.

"Carrie said, "All right. But we don't want to hold back this time, like when you attended us before."

I asked, "Can't I come in and just observe? I would observe your confidences."

"Linda, you should participate."

"Look, maybe not. I wish your group all the best. We've locked the doors to casual incomers so feel free to do whatever you do. But, would you like to use the mikveh?" I asked. "We use it to mark significant moments for the future. The only thing is, you'd have to remove these discs."

Carrie said, "Thank you for asking. However, for our sessions we must wear these discs. Whilst our bodies and names are different, we are all SVV and the discs are the same size and shape."

So Allie and I watched as they processed over to the chapel area in a line, led by Carrie and her lamp, with Paige carrying an empty lamp, a taper, a flannel and a towel, and Winnie also in line holding two quite large goblets and one of those plastic potties I seem to have seen once or twice in car boot sales. I could only imagine. They closed the folding doors to the chapel, so I asked that the doors be unlocked. Stuff the police.

"What do you do for leisure, Allie? Anything I can join in with you?"

"I can't socialise with you, Linda. I'm afraid you should see me only when I am researching."

"Well, then I have a dilemma for you. Because when I go to bed with Adam tonight, I'm going to ask him his view of Christine and the conferences. Adam now owns the rights to above the casino."

"You can't ask him earlier?"

"No. Because it is not a meeting but a conversation."

"Then I would like to join you, if possible. I can sleep in a chair when you sleep - if you let me go upstairs."

"But we might go off to sleep and then talk in the morning. You might be dozing away."

"You could wake me up."

"We might talk quietly, and not notice anything beyond ourselves."

"Then, with your permissions of course, I could sleep on the edge of the bed."

"The bed takes three, Allie. Big room, big bed."

"Then there is space. But you can't discuss it over a meal, say?"

"No. Sometimes I like a meal for eating, Allie. I'm sorry if it embarrasses you, Allie, or puts you in a tight spot. Not literally. You don't seem to be as comfortable about it as you make out. Do you have *exhaust* issues?"

I had a smile on my face, because I had caught my prey. And bed time could not come quickly enough.

When bedtime came, I gave Allie a time to knock on our door from the outside lounge. First, Adam and I used the shower, the toilet each and brushed our teeth together before we got into bed and soon Allie knocked on the door.

"Come in, Allie."

She entered with a bag. "Thank you for facilitating my research. I will need to use your bathroom. Do I wear a nightie or pyjamas or something?"

"Don't be silly, Allie, we don't wear anything in bed. Come on: what am I?"

So we heard the shower going, and her on the bog and water running.

"Hmm. This could be rather pleasant," said Adam.

"This is according to research protocols," I said back.

And out she came, naked and gorgeous as ever with her long red hair, full breasts, shaven.

"I was thinking, Allie, that if you were not in between us, you might not hear us too well."

Adam looked at me, so I stared at him back and squeezed his testicles.

"In between you two?"

"Yes. Adam won't be intimate with me tonight. If we want sex, you can come over the top of me and go to the side."

"I might then go back to my accommodation."

Adam said, "No, Allie. Don't go out in the dead of night. If it reassures you, I have no interest in you and I won't be excited by you. Are you wearing perfume?"

I said, "Rather heavily, it seems. She tends to fart a lot and heat the place up."

Adam laughed. "There speaks someone who's on the loo like she's on a diet of vindaloos."

Allie said, "That's very revealing and poetic, Adam."

I said, "I'm not two faced - Adam isn't exactly 'fart-free' himself. Come on in, Allie. Climb over me and get warm the traditional way."

She climbed over me - I enjoyed that - and slid in between us. "Hmm," she said. "I don't know where to look."

I said, "Face up, look at the ceiling, and then you'll hear us - in stereo!"

Then she said, "Sorry, Adam, I'll mind where I put my hand next time. Can I squeeze my hand in between us?"

He said, "You are an extra centre of gravity. Nice that you're here. Sorry. lasses, I'm indeed about to fart myself."

Adam made a long reverberating sound.

I said, "Hey, your Annie came in earlier with madam here and they were speaking in Spanish."

Adam then put the screen on and soon we saw Annie, Jördis and Jördis's boyfriend again. (He was clothed.)

"Adam! Put it off. Hmm," I said, enjoying every minute. "Well, my concern is about your business and our religious operation and regarding Christine's activities. You've inherited above the casino - the right to use it."

"Basically correct."

"And I discovered from the Titansea Grand that Christine paid through the nose to compete with John Barman; she won't want to do that again when you have above the casino."

"Her proposed use there is connected with my ownership of access."

"The problem is I want all that stopping. I don't want us going back to square one. She'll have people staying at the hotel, and then coming over to the casino building for the partying and her approach to religion. She will do it from all the ideology in which she believes."

"You agree with her sex ideology."

"But I say you can believe it and be intimate even, but not go back to what was so wrong before."

"What was wrong before was the secrecy," he said. "Presumably, this would not be secretive. And also, she wouldn't be using this place, here, would she, and you wouldn't want anything like that going on downstairs?"

"Definitely not. No. Adam, let me lie here and think about the whole issue. Why I wanted to mention it here, Allie."

"Interesting," she said.

"You're lovely and warm, Allie. Let's hope the perfume wears off."

"What are you thinking?" she asked me. "I mean about what Adam is saying."

"How to separate what Christine does and the association with this place. Trouble is, we are in the same denomination. And this is as much her base as mine. Maybe when I wake up something will come to me."

So Adam said, "Do I have permission to go to sleep then, Linda? I've had a busy day. You won't let me watch Annie."

Allie said, "Don't let my presence put you off."

"You haven't. We get more work and cannot shirk now that George has retired. And I am tired."

"Poetic again," said Allie.

I said, "Yes, we shall sleep. But if I think of something, I might wake you."

"Then wake me please," said Allie. Then she said, "Oops, sorry." She'd farted after all.

"Pork sausages?" I asked.

Adam said, "With herbs." He then let off a long loud one again.

"I'll get you two converted for gas supply."

So we did drift off to sleep, and Adam turned in Allie's and my direction, but when I did wake in the middle of the night, Allie was facing me and her right arm and hand was over my left hip. I needed a pee, so uncoupled myself from her. The result was she opened her eyes.

"I'm going to the loo," Allie said. "Oh. I'll wait."

I went.

Allie went.

"It needs five minutes," Allie said, on returning, getting into the middle again, as delicately as she could. "You may resume your position," I said quietly.

"I have!" She was also very quiet.

"Before, your hand was on my hip."

"Sorry."

"Nothing to be sorry about, Allie. If you're comfortable, put it on my hip again."

She thus faced me and put her hand on my hip. "Thanks," she whispered.

"Let us sleep now."

And then when my eyes opened again, it wasn't long before we would get up.

But first I asked, "What do you think Adam?"

"Morning," said Allie. "I promise not to fart again."

"What about?" he asked me, half awake.

"About Christine and above the casino?"

"What does it matter?"

"It matters."

"The media will have lost interest, because you're independent now, and let her do what she wants. She's worried that her prostitutes' prices have fallen, so let her bring back some external business."

"Meet the new boss, same as the old boss," I said. "Gosh you're warm, Allie. Adam, are you pulling at something?"

"Sorry."

Allie said, "It is very nice here. Let me know next time when you will make a decision in bed, but hopefully not too often. May I use the bathroom first?"

"Sure."

Allie disappeared into the ensuite and I heard her brushing her teeth.

Adam said, "What a beautiful arse she has got."

"I know, I know. Pork sausages with herbs. Something you should know: she's a hell of a poker player. Jonathan Eyre tried to make an advance on me, and she told him she'd make him unconscious and lay him out."

"Really?"

"She took command."

Allie opened the ensuite door and one face, falling hair and one breast appeared. "I think I heard that right. I wasn't playing poker. I meant it." She shut the door.

"Nothing wrong with her ears," said Adam. "I am inclined to believe her as well. As for that arse..."

"Stick to Annie's."

The shower started running, and I so wanted to join her.

"Find out about her," I said to Adam. "I mean, Spanish and Gaelic?"

He said, "She farts in English."

"I bet it's north Norfolk. Coastal food, you know."

"You must be an expert," Adam said, "the frequency you shit."

"Yes, frequency rather than volume," I replied. "But less than it was. You can spunk on to my leg when you're done."

A Service (Sunday 24th November)

We'd taken our time but the first ordinary service at the church was quite mundane, really. My own liturgy was an adapted Anglican one - just through familiarity, actually. I took the creed out and lessened very much the Calvinist stuff on sin. As for the numbers, we had Christine, Elizabeth, Bill, Pauline and me, all co-presiding, and then Kathleen, Winnie and Peter, and seven congregants were Roger Humphrey,

Laura Kingswood, Andrew Walter, Paula Campbell, Marjorie Jack, Bella Jack, and someone called Lisa Callow, grey haired and maybe approaching sixty, who gave me an email address for any contact and signed that we could keep this data. I realised we needed an attendance book for basic contact details but one that met data registration regulations. So Marjorie had come over.

As for my sermon, I decided to speak on reconciliation.

"When people express regret and wish to make amends, on all sides, there is a duty of reconciliation.

"When a wrong is taking place, Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek. It sounds incredibly passive. But what it does do is cause the offender to ask, 'What is happening?' The cheek turned is like a mirror. It is the first act, and quickly, to attempt reconciliation with the punch thrower.

"On reconciliation, the Beatitudes work best in the more material approach in Luke than in spiritualised Matthew - as a physical form of hope with justice that is integral to the Kingdom of God. This is the model laid out, if only we could achieve it.

"One must be aware, and actively resist evil, and, whenever it happens, repent and return to justice and to God. You love your neighbour as yourself. That's reciprocal. Before reciprocity, you simply respect the dignity of every human being.

"In the Hebrew Bible at Genesis 32, instead of Esau (the oldest son) receiving Isaac's blessing, a plot of trickery takes place so that younger son Jacob receives his father's blessing instead. The story in Genesis is about Esau being annoyed and then a process of reconciliation happening, beginning with God and indeed Jacob making amends with Esau after his encounter with angels.

"People often seek God before they make amends, but what is broken with one another is broken with God. So they should make amends first, first with people and then restoration with God.

"Making reconciliation has to be deliberate. See Genesis 32:3-5 for when Jacob had to take the initiative. It isn't enough to say 'time heals wounds' or similar. But if the offender doesn't take the initiative, then the offended can meet the offender one-to-one in private, as in Matthew 18:15, and make the meaning of the wrongdoing unambiguous.

"In Genesis 33 it says Jacob, '...bowed to the ground seven times until he approached his brother.' In other words, he was humble and sincere. You have to admit your own fault in the relevant setting. And Esau? He ran to meet Jacob, hugged him and kissed him and they cried. They indeed embraced, and to embrace is to risk the emotion in the relationship coming back together again. The alternative, however, is isolation, and this will not do. But it calls upon the offended to forgive for the reconciliation to work and to last. After forgiveness comes restitution through some kind of compensation - it is not a free pass. What was damaged is materially restored. Into this exchange God sees the light that is in every one.

"Matthew. 5:23-24 has the same teaching. First reconcile with your brother and then offer the gift at the altar in that communing with God.

"In the Christian New Testament in Luke Chapter 19, Zacchaeus is despised as a tax collector and, being not tall, climbs a tree to see Jesus and his group pass along. Jesus looks up to the despised outcast and calls him by name, to Zacchaeus's surprise. Jesus even goes to the home of this man - of all men - in an act costly to Jesus among the annoyed crowd. Yet the effort bears fruit: sinner Zacchaeus turns around and pledges to give half of his possessions to the poor as

well as give four times compensation to those he defrauded. Reconciliation is demonstrated, brought about by the ministry of someone not offended but saw what was good in this person. Zacchaeus was one of the lost who was sought out and saved, and it is not an easy process. And this man's actions was rather more impressive than those who obey religious rules regularly but do nothing practical to move matters on.

"Here we see that guilt and shame are less effective motivators than the grace of reaching out, a grace that changes hearts and turns people around. When justice follows forgiveness, there is a lasting peace.

"The ministry of reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel. Indeed it is the overall framing of meaning in the crucifixion and resurrection. And we say, God reconciled us to himself through Christ.

"Don't, whatever happens, as the wronged, seek revenge, even if there is punishment. It is hardly the prayerful attitude required. This isn't easy to avoid, but sincerity must come with prayer - or it is not prayer.

"Reconciliation cannot be forced; it needs courage: and the ability to be flexible and graceful lets a new page be turned. Vulnerability opens the possibility of being bathed in love. Amen."

Afterwards, Elizabeth alongside Bill and Pauline thanked me for these words. She said Bill had told her that Allie and I had been dismissive of Jonathan Eyre. She said that Jonathan had not expressed regret, sufficiently, and therefore we were right to walk out on him. Bill said he had tried.

Lisa Callow, it turned out, had no previous religious experience beyond trying a few places out. Andrew and Laura, said that Reverend Rhiannon Fleetwood's new broom was crass and they'd rather connect with Bishop Christine and me. Thinking of the Anglicans made me think of the new New Life fellowship developing, and we ought at least to meet them. The folks around me had no objection to a conversation, so I asked Jenny to send out a request to meet.

Publicity (Sunday 24th November)

Later on Sunday Kathryn and Kathleen talked to Allie and me about publicity and the specialist services they would offer.

Kathryn said, "We will go back into the national press, as when modelling."

I responded, "This time it has to be done through the *Daily Morse*. Contractual, faithful."

"We were thinking we could offer a full range of massages, including nuru."

"What is that?"

"Body on body," said Kathleen. "Christine said businessmen - mainly men - would pay handsomely for us together to do body to body massages using lots of gel."

"Oh great. This is what's happening again."

"The only equipment needed is a greased airbed, but, given the size and dimension of some businessmen these days, the airbed ought to be at least Queen sized."

"Her Majesty? First or Second?"

"Double."

"You didn't mention an airbed before," I said. "There is a padded bench."

"Goody body to body: don't want to slide off the bench."

"Would Winnie do this role?" I asked.

"Like me," said Kathleen (it could only be Kathleen), "she can't have sex with clients either. Vestal Virgins and all that."

I demanded, "Can we can get away from this idea of having sex with clients? Here, massages are intended for body and spirit renewal."

Kathleen said, "Christine would do more."

"I don't doubt it," I responded. "But not here. There is Elizabeth at the Blue Diamond Club. Oh, buy an airbed and try something uplifting."

I went upstairs, trailed by Allie, with permission, and found Jenny, who let us enter her first floor bedroom. She was on her bed. She seemed a little distant. "I'm sweating. It's so hot in here." (It wasn't.) Anyway, she came down with us saying that lazy journalists need precise words. The less work journalists do the more chance publicists have in gaining editorial material.

So Jenny set about making up a press release, shown to Allie and me.

Archaeology twins Kathryn and Kathleen may not be raising dead bodies these days, but they will be reviving tired bodies up in the small, isolated coastal resort of Serninsea in Wytham.

"This will be very much a premium service," says Kathleen.

"We offer it for the most busy, stressed-out, decision-makers who come here for a well-earned rest."

Kathryn says, "It must be all holy and above sin, because the massage service is part of a flexible set-up of pastoral relaxation oversight offered by the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia.

"Our particular pastoral service is unique, as far as we know, but it's such a holistic model it's bound to be taken up elsewhere, a real fresh expression."

Choices are standard massages or the body to body nuru massage carried out on an airbed.

I said, "Jenny, you're rather good at this but I think we'd better ask them if they would say these things before it goes off."

"The paper doesn't do topless, but hints of breasts and bare backs."

So we three waited. Peter came in and headed for the wet room with a contraption on a hose. Then the twins returned with a large flat package and headed for the wet room. We went over and the three were using a rechargeable pump to inflate a queen-size airbed acquired at a store open for six hours.

They approved of Jenny's text.

I had a thought to put to them. "You can't both be a single person in the magic act but twins doing massages with national publicity."

Kathleen said to me, "We look a bit different since I've been pierced. We are not trying to look alike any more. She has her boyfriend and I have my girlfriend."

"It's a crap way of doing magic," said Peter. "Half the locals knew of the twins, and most of them told the other half."

"Jesus was no good around Capernaum," I said. "Too well known."

Jenny proposed more photos with oil dripping from the twins' fingers. Yet no

sooner had she made the suggestion that she ran off, and went upstairs. I thought at first she had gone for a camera, but she did not come back.

Where was Bishop Elizabeth? I wondered, leaving Peter to find a camera and for him to take photographs. Now Elizabeth appeared down the stairs and seemed rather flustered. Allie had vanished as well. Perhaps taking photographs did not matter.

So I asked Liz, "Is Jenny all right?"

"Oh, she gets like this from time to time. Gets very creative, excited, full of ideas and blows out. All the stress of recent times may be releasing itself now that the controversy is over. There's no longer any pretence of being a minister. And she's added being hot to her non-symptoms, claims its origin is in vaginal illness."

Half an hour later I found Allie in the consulting room writing into a notebook. It was the first time I'd seen her writing with a pen. She had a bag too, rather large, out of which she took some hand-held tube thing, and ran it down her hand-written pages. I kept my distance.

A Meeting (Tuesday 26th November)

Christine Vine had something to tell me. Margaret Lindbeck, Mar Akelda, had left the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia already! She had joined the Free Liberal Church, to be their Bishop of Durham.

"Well, *she* didn't last a minute," I said, as I sat with my mid-morning breakfast in the dining area.

Locally, I was supposed to be in charge, but I was losing control. Everything was sliding in one direction: towards sexual services in one sense or another. Perhaps it was the lure of money, or maybe the locality. To me, the body and intimacy, that included sex, was one thing, but sexual services was another. Adam didn't care, and Christine wanted to serve her known customers.

Indeed, Christine had already created an initial client list for Kathleen and Kathryn, to get them started with the massages. These clients seemed to want both twins, they reported, and an option of them wearing white tunics was not popular. Allie, in black leathers, took a look at their preparations, and I decided to stay away.

"How was it?" I asked Allie afterwards.

"Fine. Very attractive women getting used to their moves."

Meanwhile, on the big screen came Bishops Geoff and Luis. Goodness knows what other dining area snackers thought of our religious meeting. Jenny sat to take the minutes. Peter came in and so did Winnie. Kathryn and Kathleen were busy! I was last to the table, as it happened, alongside Bishops Elizabeth, Bill and Pauline. I was in trousers, blouse, sweater and trainers - the days of cassock wearing were long over. Allie sat alongside me.

Jenny took apologies for absence, being Kathleen. Jenny said, "They're sliding their bodies over blokes' bodies."

"Not yet," said Allie.

"Huh," Jenny said at Allie. "Poking your nose, or your tits, into everything."

"I kept my clothes on," Allie replied.

Jenny guided us quickly towards declaring the minutes of the last meeting a

true record, adding, "I might have to leave because I have a vaginal itch."

Christine started. "Bishop Margaret Lindbeck has left us, but not because of any such itch. What do we do?"

Geoff said, booming over the dining area, "These things happen in Independent Sacramental Ministry. She was obviously unhappy with her designated diocese. But the solution is to extend Bishop Liz Huett's, to include all the north and Scotland."

"A long way to travel," she said.

I said, "It's just a name."

"Oh, I don't know," she replied, "Mar Reticulum."

So I added, "No one expects you to hold a service in Wick in the morning and Middlesbrough in the afternoon."

"Do I minute this conversation?" asked Jenny, presumably over her itch.

No, we said, except to note the fantasy geography action of extending Liz's coverage.

Luis said, "We do hope to get interest in Scotland. Wales looks promising: Bishop Niall Ifan, he's just resigned. So has Bishop Afanwen Ffrwyth. Could we attract Bishop Arianwen Bron?"

I said, "We don't want the ex-Suffragan Bishop of Casnewydd nor the ex-diocesan Bishop of Mynyw."

"Niall didn't do anything," said Elizabeth, "beyond his affairs with women. Afanwen might have more of a problem over seeing her niece."

"Anyway," I said, "I propose we send Margaret Lindbeck our good wishes. Reconciliation, as I preached."

Geoff said, "But the Free Liberal Church is not apostolic by confession or consistent practice; she is throwing away her heritage and wasting her ontological status. She's used us to get a correct ordination."

"We don't know that," I responded.

Geoff added, "I fancy with her gone that we strengthen our ecclesiology and change the name of the Church. I would prefer something like *Old Apostolic Ecclesia*."

"I'm against that," I said. "The use of 'Liberal' is important. This is a fully inclusive and broad-minded Church indicated by that definition."

Christine said, "This parish, might be, but the Church as a whole is about proper order, and the 'Old' says something about focus. The Free Liberal Church has other bishops that are elected superintendents. It's high, supposedly sacramental, but it is Protestant."

Peter interrupted: "It is a reinvention of Free Catholicism. It does a lot with symbolism, but loose on everything else."

Christine asked me, "By the way, did you ever consider 'bethel' as a local name?"

I responded: "No. But let me address the main suggestion. Calling the denomination 'Old' gives entirely the wrong impression. 'Old' is obscure, doctrinally remote, strange, unconnected. Liz, do you have a view?"

"There are arguments both ways."

"So?"

"Well, 'Liberal' in this context is Liberal Catholic, as in Theosophy and all that breakaway, which is peculiar, whereas 'Old' can even go back to the Netherlands

Old - 1770s and all that. On the other hand, by using only the word 'Liberal' it gives a more open sense."

"This fence you're sat on isn't too painful for you?" I asked Liz.

"More a kerb than a fence," she replied.

"Are we going to vote on this?" I asked.

Christine said, "No, I don't think so. We clearly don't have a consensus."

Luis said, "It was just a suggestion. We'd thought about it over here."

Peter said, "For what it's worth, I agree with Linda."

"So do I," said Winnie.

"Allie?" I asked.

"I'm on the kerb."

"Nudge up to Liz."

Christine then said, "Though some of you vote, like a Synod, this is an apostolic Church where the bishops decide. Clearly it is a higher level matter and a Confraternity matter of decision and guidance."

I said, "So among the bishops it is one and a half votes to 'Liberal' against three and a half for 'Old'." Christine added, "Abstentions are zero not half split. We're not voting on this. We will talk further."

I gave a face gesture, saying, "I'll order some more kerbstones."

"Any other business?" asked Jenny.

"Yes," I said, "This business of serving business conferences. Can't they be secular?"

Christine said, "Listen. The purpose of the Confraternity, of the whole commitment, of how I do my specific ministry, is to put these under ecclesiastical understanding."

Geoff said, "We approve of this approach."

"I approve of intimacy," I said, "and the body, and sex, and the orgasm of course, but not orgies for business people and clerics under the umbrella of religion."

Geoff then said, "I'm not sure *orgies* are proposed."

I said to Christine, "You'd better clear up the misunderstanding."

"We're working out what we can call a 'gathering'," said Christine. "Adam has already said we can hold our gatherings above the casino. If I hire the hotel, and even Maa Skelter, it costs a fortune. Let them stay at the Titansea Grand, when they come to Serninsea, but we can hold the Body Eucharist above the casino. It won't include an A frames contraption, Linda."

"That comment is unnecessary," I said. "Oh, do what you like - but don't involve me and don't involve this building."

Christine said, "Minute that Jenny; this seems to be the solution we want. Elizabeth: SMS are coming to town for a meeting. Will you use your contacts as well?"

"Yes. Sure. I'll use my job at the BDC."

"Of course," said Christine.

I was grumpy but moved on. "The only other thing to report is we get a reasonable number using the dining area, like now. I began our ordinary services with a tiny congregation: our four deacons make up a core. And we have the Serninsea Vestal Virgins making good use of our space."

Christine said, "I've no objection, but they are not us."

Winnie said, "I hope we stay close."

"So do I," I said, "which is why I said they can come for free. Pity Kathleen is busy. The massages are under way and should generate some income, as do a number of consultancies. A naturist club might pay soon, beyond gymnology. On that point, Jenny, make a note that we had the police here warning us against nudity in public."

"That would be right - care is needed," said Luis, so I thought Christine must have given Bristol a sanitised version of what she was considering.

With this, the meeting was brought to a close; the screens went off and people seemed to vanish. After an hour I got bored in the vestry, along with Allie, unable to concentrate on anything, and she was drawing me.

"Suppose it's good," I said, when she showed me her effort.

She pulled a face at me. She might have stuck her tongue out but didn't.

"Heel!" I said at Allie. "You can come to our private area." I wanted to read some Lossky, who unified liturgy and its worship with East to West theology. *l'Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient* I'd read in English. However, on the stairs up we paused to hear a lovemaking racket between Liz and Jenny in their first floor bedroom. So I said, "Heel!" again to continue upstairs.

Sat down in the study I said to her, "You can draw me some more if you want. I can go naked if you want."

"Moy hart alive! Are ya all reet, mawther?" she asked.

"I'm not your mother; I am your *bishop*."

"Yer talking such slarver. You, you talk spuffle and squit."

"Do you want to draw me or not?"

"No. I'll go down peerking for a cuckoo instead. And ah'll 'ave it and be owff."

"Fucking country bumpkin," I said, with a smile, and I could see her grin even as she went to the stairs.

"You duzzy waarmin, you." she said back. "Read your Lossky."

"Fuck off then," I said under my breath.

Nuru Massage (Wednesday 27th November)

I didn't know but suspected Aardse was behind Diana cancelling our get together again.

I caught Kathryn and Kathleen on a break in a dining area, wearing white tunics. They said how they were making good use of the plunge pool with clients, although some found the water level high. The danger was of the pool water getting mucky easily from grease and gunge on people's bodies. It needed changing and the water was on a meter. So I instructed to change the water and from now on clients went into the plunge pool after showering.

Meanwhile, They showed us the client list for today and tomorrow.

"What's this?" I asked. "Not *your* Wickenby, surely?"

"Yes. Uncle George. He's a client; we're professionals."

"You would be in tunics?"

"No. It's nuru."

"I'm pulling rank here and I insist I'll do it. When he comes, you two take a break. If he wants his money back, fine."

"He's paid for two."

"Then Winnie, or..."

"Me," said Allie."

"You're a researcher."

"I'm a participant observer. If you do it, I'll do it. I know what to do."

I didn't. So as the twins carried on for the time being, I looked it up with Allie.

"Allie, this asks too much."

She indicated it was fine by her.

"Allie, you will be rubbing your bare breasts, your exposed thighs, on men. A man."

"So will you."

"I feel responsible for you. This is not right."

"I make my own decisions. If you do it, I do it."

I recognised George Wickenby when he came in. I was in the office or vestry, but a camera picked him up in the dining/ seating area. So I went out and intercepted him, and told him to come to the kitchen with me to get a drink. Allie followed me.

"Your nieces are just finishing with a client, and then you have me and Allie here."

"I thought..."

"I decided."

"Hello Allie," he said. "And where do you come from?"

"Walsingham."

"A Catholic girl are you?" he asked her.

"I think I started Anglican, but no longer."

George Wickenby then asked about her profession, probably expecting a model or masseur.

"I'm a researcher."

Leaving George Wickenby in the kitchen, we went over to the wet room to see what was going on. There was Kathleen sliding over this fat bloke on the air bed, with Kathryn standing over him. It was Kathryn who said, "Two minutes and then we'll mop up."

"Do we use the same airbed?" I asked.

"We'll clean it and put a layer of gel on it before we go. Is Uncle George here yet?"

"Yes. Get showered and covered up before you come out."

"Our man here wants to drop into the plunge pool and we go in with him."

Then Kathryn said, "Do you like it?"

"Do I like what?" I asked her.

"No. I'm asking Mr. Grant."

I decided to leave Mr. Grant in their capable hands, as Kathleen slid from long ways to side ways over Mr. Grant.

Allie said to me, "You're strong on anti-incest. Is there a reason?"

"Not particularly."

"So what do you think about Marie Enfield, then?"

"I don't know her."

"Oh. I assumed you did. Forget it."

"No, I won't forget it. Is this unknown person into incest?"

"You'll find out so I may as well tell you. She's the partner of Roger Humphrey,

the new chap, and she is his half-sister."

"Ah, I see. And I thought he was into theological ethics regarding sperm donation."

"Same father."

"You know everything before I do."

"It's my job. And your view on incest - do you condemn it?"

"Obviously the taboos were not there between Roger and this Marie. George!"

George Wickenby was sat reading one of the paperbacks I left lying around - a small one called *The English Patient* (which he was about to become). He started talking about his retirement - walks and car trips, doing some unpaid work with the tramlines.

After just over ten minutes Mr. Grant came out from the cloaks and left the building. Five minutes after that, Kathryn and Kathleen came across, fully dressed.

"Hi uncle," said Kathryn. "We are not doing you. Sorry about that. You've got the boss instead."

"And me," said Allie. "Getting into the meaning of the situation."

George said. "Never mind. Another time perhaps, you two. Proper professionals they are," he added, for my benefit.

"What we do, now, Mr. Wickenby," I said, "is go over into the cloaks area. We'll three undress and shower to start with. It's nice and warm and moist in there, so you won't get cold. After the shower, you can get on the bench to begin."

The three of us undressed and then proceeded to the wall showers in the wet room.

"You've had these massages before," I said.

"Elsewhere, and you get long-haired lasses letting their hair drop over your face, use their hair like curtains."

"I can do that," said Allie.

I said, "Get on the bench to start, on your front, and I'll work your muscles."

He did this, with his hairy back and arse adding to the friction. Allie seemed to know exactly what to do with his legs, one by one. I said to her, "Spanish from nowhere and now massaging. You're a dark horse."

"No soy un caballo y tampoco un perro."

"She's very good," he said, "being not a horse or a dog," so I applied extra pressure below his shoulders.

Eventually he turned over on to his back. We swapped around, so that the long-haired red-head did as she promised, letting her wet hair fall over his face. He developed a short but solid erection. I worked around this, but did touch it from moment to moment. Allie was going at his chest, waving her hair from side to side.

When she gave him a breast to his mouth, I said, "What are you doing?"

"It is a nuru massage," she said. "So it is consistent."

"And very pleasant," stated George in a muffled sort of way.

As a result of her action, and my annoyance, I gave his penis some tugs. So I said, "Mr. Wickenby, get off the bench carefully and go and lie down on the airbed. Watch the bed: it is greasy. Allie, get me that bottle of goo."

"The gel?"

"Yes." She gave it to me. I opened it and tipped a lot over her shoulders, and then as it ran down her breasts I rubbed it on both of us not by my hands but torso to torso.

She said, "Turn around, Linda," so I did and she goosed up my back, and therefore I did hers. I think I had different goo coming from my prostate gland as well.

Thus it was that Mr. Wickenby, having observed our greasing each other, had two bodies gliding over him at both ends. She was over his head and chest, and didn't keep falling off him like I did.

Once getting back on to his legs, I said, "You utter tart, Allie Shrimpton."

"You're not exactly Mother Theresa yourself," was her reply.

He said, "Hope you two are friends."

Allie said, "We often have a barney, Mr. Wickenby."

Mr Wickenby said, "You have a funny religious name according to your website. Mar Rectum or something."

"Her not me," said Allie.

"I meant her," he said.

I told Allie to change ends. This allowed me to plonk my rectum on his head.

"It is 'Reticulum', Mr. Wickenby, meaning kings-hood or bonnet."

He sort of said, "I can't quite hear you."

Then Allie went into giggles. "What's so funny?"

"He's licking your fanny."

Allie then turned around, showed me her arse and everything, and it was gorgeous. So as she turned again I disengaged from George and showed her my arse in similar fashion.

"Oh Mar Reticulum," she said, "how *delightful!* Such jollificearshuns."

"I will pay for extras," said George.

"Oh really? I bet you wouldn't have with your nieces."

"Well, I'd better say no."

"Allie!" I shouted, as she slipped him in.

"He said he is paying for extras."

"Condom, Allie! What the hell am I saying? Get off him!"

"I'm okay, I think. Or maybe not."

I went over and shoved her off, she then sliding off in a heap, and slipped him into me instead. "If you want to be useful, go and sit on his face."

She was instead stood above him, legs apart as I worked him.

Then I said, "What on earth...?"

"I need to go anyway," she said.

"You filthy... Allie! *Allie!*"

"I can't stop now."

"Mr Wickenby, I said, watching her spray over and off his head, "I expect a considerable extra payment for church funds."

Then I paused. Jenny was stood looking.

"You always were a whore, Linda Bode," said Jenny.

"That's not me: that's her!"

"You must have told her to do it."

"I did not!"

"Keeping your cunt lubricated, Allie Shrimpton?" Jenny pushed down her trousers, stuck her arse out at us, raised her trousers back, and left. Allie now dropped down to George's busy tongue.

Jenny hadn't noticed he was erect and inside me.

After he ejaculated and it ran out, we resumed gliding all over him, until we declared him done and time was nearly up. I got up and we helped him up, and we three went to the shower first, and then took him over to the plunge pool. Allie went in first, then George, and then me, and like whores we ended up rubbing our bodies on him in the water. After this, we all went to the cloaks area, dried each other and got dressed.

He went and sat with the twins, I said to him, "Those extras were worth a ton." Thus he handed me a hundred, there and then, in notes, to add to the basic low fee of fifty pounds.

"Did you like that, Allie?" I asked her, while handing the cash to Kathryn to decide what extra to give to the church.

"I enjoyed it as much as you did."

Soon, Jenny was snorting at me in the vestry.

"Can I do some of them?" Jenny asked. "Get me more balanced down there, if I did."

"What?"

"Massages."

"If either of the Kath's aren't available. Why not give Elizabeth a massage?"

"Ah yeah, she'd like that. But you're not letting me do things?"

"I'm not stopping you. Just saying it's the twins' operation."

"You've got me where you want me, haven't you," said Jenny, her face looking strained. "Well, you can do these computer accounts yourself. 'Do this document, do that money.' Do it all yourself and leave me alone. I have things wrong with me, down there, and you just don't believe it. If you did, Elizabeth would."

And she went out in a huff. So she was working erratically and getting a wage we could hardly afford.

I asked Allie. "Did you really need to piss?"

"I needed to go, so I made something of it."

"You are disgusting. You're an embarrassment to females, Miss Shrimpton."

"You did plenty."

"Well, I mind you to keep your opinions to yourself."

"With pleasure," said Allie.

Later, in the evening, I saw Jenny go ahead of Liz to the cloaks and wet room, only to see her later storm out completely wet and naked, and race up the stairs. Fortunately just two strangers were in the building looking the other way. When a clothed Liz emerged from there, holding Jenny's clothes, she looked over to Allie and me with a sigh.

Much later (and Allie had gone), I went up to bed with Adam. Their room was quiet, but there was plenty of noise coming from Kathleen with Winnie in their bedroom. I said to Adam, "They're not being very vestal virginal."

He said, "No." As for us, on arrival in our bed, he simply turned over to go to sleep. Great, I thought. No sex tonight, then. He mumbled, "Wickenby was happy earlier on."

I was awake and dreaming of Allie's areshole view and her actions over George. She seemed to take everything in her stride with such confidence.

Jenny on the Slide (Friday 29th November)

I was talking with two married (heterosexual) clients seeking a way forward in their difficult relationship, (without Allie present - she said she was getting her hair done) when Elizabeth put her head into the door space and said Jenny was being particularly difficult today and I should avoid contact with her. Then she apologised for assuming I was available.

An hour later Bishops Liz and Christine approached me (now alone), followed by Allie with full-bodied red hair. Liz spoke. "This is about above the casino. Systematic Measuring Services may have left town, but they have just confirmed that they still want to come here for some conferences. We ought to facilitate this."

Christine said, "Listen. It means a lot. They spend loads. And now this is real. The economics of the town cannot ignore it. We have all the contact names."

"I've already said. You do it if you want: don't involve here or me," I stated.

"Adam has cleared it," said Christine.

"So what?"

Christine continued, "He says he cannot do it because his company is a holding company and then he has his investigating company. It has to come through the church. The local one."

"The church can provide a legend," said Bishop Liz.

"A what?"

"A story to justify what it does. Or redescribe what it does."

So I asked her, "Is that what you used to do? All those lies about being theatrical?"

"All that about the theatre wasn't a justification but a disguise. It can be more open now, made more pastoral."

I said, "An orgy is an orgy is an orgy."

Christine said, "Relaxation, friends, knowing one another, making acquaintances again, bonding."

"I'll say," I said.

Christine said, "We can make it more purposeful. And it will mean income."

"Oh, get on with it," I said.

Christine said, "It will make a difference: income into here, and into the towns. We'll confirm it at the next meeting."

"Do that then."

"Can I have a word?" asked Liz. "Just you and me. It is pastoral, Allie, not even for a deacon. Sorry."

I said, "Allie, go off and do Sunday's sermon. Any topic. Shut the door behind you."

"Jenny. She *is* getting strange. Jenny wants to sleep in between you two and not with me. She knows Allie spent a night with you two."

"She was researching."

"Come on, Linda!"

"No, she *was*; there was no emotional involvement. Adam and I were discussing the very thing you have just raised. It's how I know his attitude."

"If you say so. Anyway, Jenny got drunk on Theddles again, and I thought she'd forgotten what she said, but she hasn't. She might knock on your door. Something has slipped in her head; she is starting to imagine things beyond health

worries. I mean serious imagining."

So much later in bed I said to Adam, "Jenny wants to get in between us."

"I've no objection," he said. "Have you? You obviously didn't have with Allie."

"Jenny is supposed to be Liz's partner."

"Ah," said Adam. "And, I might ask, are you mine?"

"Adam! I have moved in with you. When I was a curate I wanted you in my bed night after night. Believe me, I want you here."

"It's your behaviour. You fucked Wickenby. What really happened with Jonathan Eyre at Yojana's?"

"Nothing. He made an advance and Allie threatened to make him unconscious. I told you."

"But would you have stopped him yourself?"

"He was repulsive, Adam. You're not being fair."

"I am being fair. Reports persist that Maurice Neptune wants to marry you. You stayed a night with him."

"I haven't been back."

"What if *he* goes above the casino? Will you go?"

"Definitely not. Listen, Adam, as Christine would say. Can you hear them now?"

Elizabeth and Jenny were rowing. They'd argued before, but not as loud. Now it turned to screaming - Jenny - so I'd had enough.

Naked, I went to their door and knocked on it. Liz in a nightie opened the door and said, "Look at her!"

Jenny looked wild in her eyes with unbrushed hair, naked and actually sweating, a nightie on the floor.

I went to her and grabbed her hand. "Come with me."

I swung her into our room and Adam held up the duvet. She got in behind him and I got in behind her.

I said, "Calm down." She shook herself side to side, and then grabbed Adam from behind him. Soon she was rubbing her crotch on his backside. "Jenny, stop it."

Adam said, "Leave her. It doesn't matter." He turned to face her. Adam was soon stroking her bottom. I felt lousy but she was becoming less agitated.

As she became more coherent, she asked him, "Why have you been ignoring me?"

"We haven't been ignoring you," I said.

"I didn't ask you; I asked Adam."

Adam said, "You came with your lover. You sleep with your lover. I've missed you."

Jenny asked, "What's she doing here?"

"Who?" Adam asked. "Liz or Linda?"

"Linda."

I said, "Adam is my partner, in every sense. We've had all this building done."

"I wasn't asking you. Liz, I meant," Jenny said.

"What about Liz?" Adam asked.

"What is she doing here?"

"Jenny? What are you on about?" I asked.

"She'll do you in."

"Jenny," I said, "she hasn't put a foot wrong. She does everything right."

Adam added, "I've been surprised. Jenny; she hasn't done anything to offend."

"Fuck me then," Jenny told Adam.

"Oh Jenny," I said.

Jenny said, "You shouldn't be in this bed. This is for Adam and me."

Adam then said, "It is for Linda and me."

"I'll *scream*."

I made a decision. "Look, Adam, I'll go downstairs. I'll ask if I can sleep alongside Liz and we can discuss the situation tomorrow."

So I knocked on Liz's door.

"Come in."

"Liz, I need a bed. She is very strange and the best thing is if we tackle this tomorrow."

Her bed was not as large as ours, so I found myself rather snug to Liz, as she wore a nightie but I didn't.

"I'm sorry, Linda. I can't cope with her. She's been declining a while, and now something has gone awry."

Still, we slept and I woke. I said to Liz, "I actually know so little about you. You can't be just a lesbian, because you had an affair with John Barman."

"Bicurious enough. I loved him, but he gets into things for himself - including me. I told myself I have an obligation to Jenny, but it is coming to an end."

"Christine says he seeks pleasure, or he did."

"He has a very inflated sense of self-importance. He might have gone into politics. I didn't know at the time; his mate Jonathan charms the women, as prizes - not for his self-importance. Terry, perhaps John, hmm, wanted to be at the top - the diocesan and then off to Kent. He saw the inefficiency report as his opportunity; he began to realise that it would all blow up in his face. So you needed to be contained, to be shown who was boss. Jonathan agreed and wanted you broken and accessible. I told Allie to watch for him, and to get you away from him if he started making a move for you at Mama's Shelter."

"It's Maa Skelter, not Mama's Shelter. But thank you. I felt protected by her, I must say. I was weak at the time."

Noises were coming from the upper bedroom. I heard Adam shout out. Someone came down the stairs rather loudly. It turned out Jenny had gone down and gone out. So I went up the stairs.

Adam was in the ensuite bathroom, "She actually bit me."

I took a look and there were bite marks on his upper thigh. "She didn't...?"

"No, fortunately. She just turned from nuzzling almost like a pet dog to biting me. Twice. I got out fast. I was getting erect from what she had been doing."

We decided to get up, a little earlier than usual.

Kathleen downstairs, with Winnie following, said to us, "I think Jenny is getting stranger. By the way, Uncle George wants another massage. I take it we can't do it."

"He's banned," I said with little thought. "Tell him to find another establishment."

"Bella said she'd do it."

I said, "Bella works with Adam. We're not having this!"

"Winnie could do hand relief," she said, "if he wants it. With Bella."

"No means no."

"Bella's an adult," said Adam. "It's up to her."

"And this is my church and it is not happening here. Massaging's for you and your sister, Kathleen, for body and spirit uplift, and a client base that excludes your uncle. That's it," I said. "I regret that Allie and I did what we did. It sent out the wrong signals."

Later Allie with incredible hair drifted inside in leathers and was updated by Kathleen.

Allie said nothing beyond a nod.

Allie Preaches (Sunday 1st December)

It was Allie's first sermon, as a deacon, and I hoped to learn something about her. She had a collar on, and grey blouse top, and light blue skirt, and thick red as could be hair.

Elizabeth was missing because Elizabeth had taken Jenny to a Wytham cinema show to try and fill her head with something different. Otherwise the attendance was similar as before, less Andrew and Laura, but with both Bella and Madge Jack present, plus Paula Campbell, Roger Humphrey, Lisa Callow and someone called Rob Dyke attending. James Thorne and Mo McArden came over speculatively from the Anglicans and sat alongside Madge.

With minimal notes, Allie said, "I've been asked to preach on anything. So I'll tell you about my home area and a story to mainly interest Christine."

Oh good, I thought to myself. Insight.

"One for Kathleen and her sister, first. The earliest known British settlement is at Happisburgh, Norfolk, if then called something else. A man with his dog - the man was alive 1740 to 1807 - said that a particular stone isn't natural, it's a hand axe and only a few believed him. He got it to Norwich Castle Museum. It was made 700,000 years ago.

"Now, most of my larger family come from around Walsingham. My favourite relative - I didn't know her because she was born in 1865 and lived until she was a hundred and one - is Alice Shrimpton, because although she was married she had a very long lesbian relationship until two years before she died. She, like Elizabeth Ford, were both born in Stiffkey, and both died in the same nursing home in Wells-next-the-Sea.

"I'm going to tell you all something else I learnt. You see, Alice died 17th May, 1966, and so did her brother Morris's own son, James Patrick Shrimpton. His son Patrick died - just check - 19th May 1967. So I followed the family tree there and received information that down that line is the father of Fatima Tamuuz's daughter, Philip Shrimpton. Five year old Akemi Tamuuz - she has her mother's surname, deliberately - is my sixth cousin. So all you who are connected with Hartlepool and goings on there: so am I. This has been made public now that the scandal has taken place. It means that my fourth cousin once removed - the boy I grew up with, who's from the next farmhouse down the road, is Akemi's first cousin twice removed, and yet they don't know each other at all."

She's the cousin of that horrible woman's daughter?

"Now Stiffkey was the base for the parish priest who proudly called himself the

'Prostitutes' Padre'. Interested Christine? Like you, Harold Davidson did a lot of his work in London, once he'd been a naval chaplain in the First World War. His parishioners didn't much care for his absences, plus the fact he brought many prostitutes to work at the Rectory and kept ending up in embarrassing situations. When he was in court to be deposed, the prosecution produced a photograph with him next to a woman with her backside naked, like the rest of her, but covered at the front where he was. It is funny.

"He had a strict upbringing and went to a school set up originally for naval family kids. He did acting at school, and charity work outside, and neglected his studies. Because he didn't get a scholarship to go to Oxford he decided alone to become a comedian.

"Family friend the Reverend Basil Wilberforce got him the scholarship to Oxford, where he messed about and failed exams, acted on stage and put up autographed pics of actresses in his room. He had to leave Exeter College, did some cramming and two years on in 1903 went into Holy Orders. He loved a woman called Molly he'd met at a theatre. Via Windsor, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and Stiffkey, he married her, but ended up as a naval chaplain starting with HMS Gibraltar, a depot ship up in the Shetland Islands. Erratic, he was, and he moved to HMS Fox, and was arrested by the naval police during a raid on a Cairo brothel, where he was apparently looking for a diseased prostitute who had been infecting the men.

"When he got home from HMS Leviathan, Molly was pregnant, and it wasn't from him but an old school friend staying at the rectory, a Canadian colonel. Unable to escape to India, the Reverend Harold Davidson ran back to his activities in London. Rose Ellis was a prostitute that became a friend, and he took her to Paris and to the Stiffkey Rectory.

He might have engaged with up to a thousand of prostitutes also working as waitresses over a twelve year period. He met them night and day, and teashops banned him while landladies were wary of him. Good job you own so many houses, Christine.

"Davidson said, 'I believe with all my soul that if [Christ] were born again in London in the present day he would be found constantly walking in Piccadilly.' There you go, Bishop Christine."

Christine said in response, "I don't work from Piccadilly. I work in my own Urania House in Hammersmith and at times from Ebbsfleet."

I thought, there *is* a difference between Christine and Harold. This chap obviously denied his amoral activities, whereas Christine was openly charging men and women of wealth a fortune - especially from Urania House.

Allie continued: "A minister of religion complained about Davidson's neglect of his home area, and the Bishop of Norwich, the Right Reverend Bertram Pollock, under advice, did hire a private investigator to follow Davidson in London. Rose Ellis was found and the most intimate thing she claimed was lancing a boil on Davidson's bottom. Linda?"

"Ha ha," I said.

"So the legal man was after him, the press were after him, and some seventeen year old Barbara Harris had her own gossip to give. And then we had the photo with Estelle Douglas, taken on 28th March, 1932. Here is another parallel with here: Davidson paid for experienced lawyers to defend him partly through the sale of newspaper stories. Adam's not here."

I just thought: this woman, my researcher, is taking the piss. I remembered that a woman called Barbara Harris was the first female consecrated a bishop in the Anglican Communion.

"In court in Westminster, Barbara Harris said she met him when she was sixteen, and he made many advances on her for sexual intercourse, which she resisted, and he relieved himself sexually when she resisted him. Some do. She went to Stiffkey: she was an unpaid kitchenmaid with a chair instead of a bed; he often promised he'd divorce his wife and marry her, and she and a lass in a nightie danced in front of him. And the photographed naked woman Estelle Douglas was the fifteen year-old daughter of one of Davidson's oldest friends. Davidson said it was a set-up, that he thought it was a publicity photo to get her work as an actress. He didn't know her back view was naked. In evidence he was unsure where to find a buttock, where his boil had been.

"All right. So, also following on from a fight in his church with a replacement priest, both grabbing the Bible, he was found guilty and defrocked. He ended up performing, like in Blackpool, and once stood on a lion's tail and was mauled, and died from his injuries. The master of ceremonies further made money by asking the public to pay to see the lion that had killed the defrocked priest. But even before his tragic end, in November 1936 he was arrested and fined for pestering two sixteen year-old girls at Victoria station when apparently offering them auditions for a leading part in a West End production.

"The moral of this story is if you're going to engage with dodgy and sexually charged folk, go independent. That's what he should have done. He could have joined the Liberal Catholics."

This seemed to me to be bordering on the offensive. I learnt so little about her and she was simply taking the piss at us. But she grinned at me, and so disarmed me.

When I looked it up about Davidson I had to smile.

James Thorne and Mo McArden decided that the sermon had been entertaining but irrelevant. I replied that it was a lost opportunity.

I said to Allie, later: "That priest: Stiffkey by place and Stiffkey by nature."

"Probably not," she said. "He just liked the girls. Like you being a photographic model and all those men."

"You know, Allie, I'm not going to rise to your bait. But you know all about me, and I know next to nothing about you. Except you told us that you are related to Fatima."

"Not to her. Philip Shrimpton wanted no relationship with Fatima beyond that Hereteu group. Elizabeth Huett told me the connection, with Fatima's permission, after I'd mentioned the Shrimpton family up at Hartlepool."

"It still tells me nothing about you. It is not fair, and you mock me. You mocked us. You should be *ashamed*. You could end up being defrocked yourself."

"I'd *love* to be defrocked by you, Linda."

"Watch it. I'll set up a court. Defrock you in public."

"It's the parallels. I knew about Davidson and I just couldn't resist. I'm going home now. I've made my participation today."

"You're not related to *him*, then?"

"No, sadly. Bye!"

It was on this day of learning about a family tree or two that news came

through that my maternal grandfather had died. John Lavender was born in 1930 in the village of Darlton in Nottinghamshire. He was the son of Kelvin Lavender, born 20th April 1905 and died 21st April 1997, and Amy Bode - and yes she was related, who was born 2nd May 1911 and died 8th June 1998. So he didn't last much longer once she'd gone. She was the half sister of Robert Bode, my direct paternal grandfather, and he was born in 1902 in Saxfosdyke and died in 1981. So Amy Bode was my great grandmother and half great aunt and Kelvin Lavender was my great grandfather.

Allie Shrimpton wasn't the only one with a complex family tree, so there.

Christian Pastors Visiting (Tuesday 3rd December)

Into the church for an informal visit came a clerical visitor, the New Life Pentecostals' Pastor Benny Chapman along with Claudette Guy, their Secretary. With me was Winnie and Allie, of course. We shook hands and introduced one another and sat in a pentagram or circle.

I said that I just wanted to make contact, one new church to another.

Benny Chapman supposed that we were very different churches, and they had noticed the plaque showing this place as an extension to the Jewish temple in Wytham.

"I hope to learn from the Sikh community too," I said.

He stated that they created a programme that emphasised vivid worship, righteous living, true teaching using the Bible, active prayer, developed fellowship and active evangelism. A man called Martin Burton had led to the expansion of their particular movement once inspired in September 1974: the Vine Network of churches. "What is your equivalent?"

"That's a good question. Thoughtful and engaged worship, social provision - currently food provision and a concern for sex workers, investigating religious ideas using several resources, personal religious engagement, and friendship."

He thought these were passive. I said they were subtle but effective.

Winnie referred to the Serninsea Vestal Virgins, less secretive than they were, and the Secretary Claudette Guy said she'd heard of them and thought they were Pagan.

Winnie said, "Neo-Pagan, like you are said to be Neo-Pentecostalist."

Both guests mumbled in reflective reaction. Benny referred to prayer about asking God in to our lives - did we? - and truly supportive fellowship.

I said that spiritual practice was up to the individual, and I wanted to see a high standard of friendliness beginning with behavioural expectations.

Claudette asked, "Are you still Anglican by ethos?"

"As an echo only. I have cut the rope. Cutting the rope does liberate one."

She said, "For Pentecostals, God is the Eternal, whole 'I am', One being in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Are you trinitarian?"

I said, "I am, just about, but it is not a strict requirement here."

Benny asked, "Just about?"

"In that I sort of fit them together. I suppose it's very qualified. Maybe I am a Reformation-style Arian."

He said, "I reject the tendency among some evangelicals to be Arian - that's what some unequals in the Godhead imply. So I don't suppose you believe the Virgin Birth, Jesus's sinless life, his miraculous ministry, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection, and his coming return."

"No. The biblical witness to his life offers guidance."

"Much else would not make sense to you then," he said, "like original sin, salvation through faith, believers breaking bread, new life in the Spirit initiated in Christ, the Spirit guiding the baptised, miraculous healing, the resurrection of all the faithful but hell for the unchosen."

"Not as simple as that. We break bread on a religious anthropological basis; salvation may be through holiness practice; we do consider the Spirit as in our reference to geese."

"Geese?"

"A local metaphor, and being surprised and inspired about the way forward. I suppose I'd tend towards universalism."

"The basis of life abundant is only through a personal relationship with Jesus. No one gets to the Father..."

"He is two natures, on that, so it is the divine Father via the Word. The word I'd object to is 'only'."

Pastor Benny Chapman then said, "There really is no basis of any sharing of ministry between us. We heard of Christine Vine being around here, and elsewhere, but we regret we cannot work with her either."

I replied, "I didn't think there was a basis to co-operate. I simply wanted us to meet, to put faces to names. The Church we are in is strong on Catholic order, important to Christine indeed, as one of our bishops. It has formal corporate positions but also individual variation and personal space."

Claudette Guy said, "We expect to grow. It is not easy, in this locality, but we are making progress and we did start without a minister. Are you growing?"

"Yes, from nothing of course. We have people coming over from the parish church."

"We think we can have arrangements with the Reverend Rhiannon Fleetwood," she said.

Allie then said, "Well, she does have a reputation for disturbance - against anyone competitive, anyone critical, anyone different really. You see, we here are not going to compete with you at all, whereas Rhiannon Fleetwood will. She'll make agreements that she will use to favour her church and herself."

I said, "We don't seek them. We provide space for them to come and adjust."

"Adjust to what?"

"They are free to how they view their faith."

"Well, thanks for the warning but we will make contact nevertheless."

Allie said, "Yeah. Warning by those who know her."

Benny stood with Claudette to go, and said, finally, "We cannot wish you the best, but we thank you for the invitation. We hope you develop into a spirit-filled orthodox direction. Now we'll contact Miss Rhiannon."

"It's not a given in Pentecostalism is it - keeping it doctrinally pure?" Allie asked.

He sat down again! "There is a lot about 'pneumatological surprise' - linked to grace. We know the danger of drift, away from our beginnings, and of culture-using."

We reject what has happened with Robert Beckford - 'Progressive Pentecostalism' - just as many evangelicals reject Steve Chalke's moves."

"I'm aware of this," I said.

"Wolfgang Vondey has argued that doctrine itself can be improvised, 'riffing-off' scripture and the Creed. It's not for us."

Claudette had not sat again, so he stood up, and they nodded and left us.

"It's all right, that," I said to the two beside me.

Kathleen came from the activity of massages to speak with Winnie. I told Allie I was going for a lie down. Allie asked if she could come too, but I said she should do her notes or whatever she needed to do. I might see her later. She said she'd go to her house and do some artwork.

"Fine by me," I responded.

About an hour and a half later I received a call on my mobile phone from Kathleen. Rhiannon Fleetwood had arrived in our church so she could talk to someone. So I went down the two flights of steps to appear to her, one to one. She was having one of our cups of coffee.

"Where's your little helper?" she asked me.

"Allie? She's gone off to do some artwork."

"Talk to you then. I can deal with her another time."

"I suppose I ought to contact her as she is my researcher, unless it is pastorally sensitive."

"She can catch up. It's not pastorally sensitive. They say you're a bit theological, these new Pentecostals. They and me can relate to each other, whereas you cannot co-operate with any of us."

"I realise that. But I get on with other faith groups."

"I've come to tell you that we are developing our own Spirit-filled evangelical based church here. Not unlike Holy Trinity Mayfair."

"Ambitious, then."

"A bit less of the fuddy-duddy town parish role. Also, I'm setting up a local branch of Global Anglican Reform Fellowship of Orthodox Belief - GARFOB."

"We can welcome your rejected fuddy-duddy folks."

"No you won't. You shouldn't be doing any of it."

"As I understand it, GARFOB is not gaining any further support in this country and can hardly pay for an administrator. It's a consequence of insisting on a hard-line statement of evangelical belief. And the marketing by Holy Trinity Mayfair may just be over reaching itself - becoming too 'religious capitalist'. No?"

"GARFOB's growing. It will have a new presence here. A majority of bishops are evangelical. You know that Wytham is exceptional now and crippled by the scandal. Liberalism is being snuffed out. And HTM can provide many resources."

"A majority of bishops are evangelical in that they have an evangelical background. That doesn't mean they are all of a kind."

"They come under the umbrella. Do you know about the span of evangelical theology, seeing as I know you like to do theology?"

"Go on - you seem to be conceding my point."

"You won't understand evangelical theology as I do, so I'll instruct you about it. The most recent background is the 1940s onwards with connecting or not with old fashioned fundamentalists, and then twenty years on a charismatic movement emerged - beyond Pentecostals - and then various forms of postconservatives and

postliberals."

"I've always said that if you are postliberal you ought to have been liberal in the first place. Yale postliberals, anti-experience, are not. So I do know something about it. They're alternatively post-conservative, only 'post' in being non-foundationalist."

"But we have those evangelicals who meet up with Catholics and recognise the catholicism within themselves."

"Traditionalism is a mindset."

"It's more up to date than that. More a relaxation of strict Evangelicalism. So you *don't* know. Evangelical Catholics may find that they interact far more with Roman Catholics or Postliberals than they do with old style conservatives."

I said, "Postliberals being non-realist are themselves still conservative by fixing definitions and identities, performing according to pre-set definitions."

"If they become revisionists they soon lose their sense of home and flip identity. I think you're doing that, from what I've heard, even from an apparent mainline liberal Christianity to something else. Don't make an enemy of me; there are apostates and then there are apostates. Some go Roman Catholic. Reinhard Hütter went from Pentecostal Evangelicalism to Presbyterian Postliberalism and then Roman Catholicism. Heard of him? No you haven't."

"He's gone back to Aquinas," I said. (This was a guess: she was right - I'd not heard of him - but she was playing a game of oneupship.)

"He had faith and reason, nature and grace, divine and human freedom, theology and metaphysics. The evangelical starting point is looking back further than the Reformation; some evangelicals that look back don't even look back to the Reformation but to Packer and Billy Graham and sorts. You'll have heard of Karl Barth. He's counted as a revisionist by many of us. Have you heard of Jean-Jacques Suurmond? Tell me about him."

"I don't know him."

"He's also a psychotherapist. He did about Florence Nightingale. I knew Maurice Neptune before the break up of the Confraternity - the real Confraternity. He's not the only theologian around full of detail. So our encounter - this one with me - is an education for you. "

Peter Marshall had come in - stayed afar and was unseen by me until he spoke. "Florence Nightingale had Unitarian parents, was Anglican, thought seriously about Roman Catholicism. She wasn't Evangelical but shared aspects of the mindset in those days."

Rhiannon Fleetwood said, "We're not talking about her but Jean-Jacques Suurmond. He's a revisionist too but Pentecostal-like. But I'm not a revisionist. I like the Scottish stuff - realism, knowledge, systematic evangelical theology. I'm the parish priest of this parish and you treat me seriously."

"Foundationalism," I said.

Peter said, "Apologetics. The trouble is it's detached. It shares common sense realism with the rest of us but it doesn't follow the dominant scientific and social scientific conclusions. It's sectarian. These people when they change don't just revise, they lose it. They flip from one form of realism to the bigger common version."

Rhiannon asked, "Who's 'these people', eh?"

I said, to follow Peter, "They - you, Rhiannon - don't acknowledge the basic problem, the reason for being beyond even the Age of Doubt, and so when it hits

they lose it."

"Some can go towards idealism," she said. "I won't."

"Or," Peter said, "into the past: a Puritan world of its own, like some Chassidic Jews regard the Middle Ages as a holy time to reinhabit."

"Well, Rhiannon," I said, "tell me more about the postconservatives."

"They are not liberals. Some start with Barth. They're not foundationalist. Do you understand that? Scripture provides its own model for interpretation. Biblical hermeneutics, it's about. Why don't you consider this for yourself?"

"Because the supposed Bible supplying the Bible's method is actually just another form of external culture, using another form of philosophy. It's continental philosophy and that's the basis of a lot of it. Some of it is phenomenology - the basics of being human and doing their liturgies as actions. I have a lot of sympathy with that, but I'm still a general realist," I said. And so I'm not anti-culture. In fact, I'm thinking that we need to develop religion that is fully compatible with scientific and social scientific narratives.

"You've given up," she said.

Peter then said, "Does Christianity then depend on past modes of thought only, or some retreat into a postmodern space for its premodernity?"

I said, John Spong has called Rowan Williams a Mediaevalist."

"You really are a bunch of heretics here. There's a word for you lot, uttered already: Unitarian."

"We're too high for them," I said. "Our practices are more liturgical, more focussed."

Peter then said, "Linda: go back to Martineau and a development from him - the Free Catholics."

"I'll look them up," I said. "Are there any now?"

"Not among the Unitarians, no."

Rhiannon said, "They're all agnostics and atheists. You've more in common with them. Barth, and why we have trouble with him: it's all Christology which means a lack of wider support - and then scripture is a witness to revelation rather than revelation itself - and that won't do. The danger also is universal salvation, and being a Barthian dialectical is a bouncing ball trap. Anyway, I've given you a lot to think about and I have to go. I've given you a survey of evangelical thinking and life. So treat me seriously because I'm here to make a difference around here, and I will. That Connectivity business conference on the 9th: the parish is still doing it, and I will be the key person there making the connections, especially now we don't have a suffragan bishop any more."

"I do treat you seriously. But that end of the year conference connects business and all local people looking to the start of next year - our connections."

"Well, there is a lot of misplaced sneering towards me. That Confraternity might have broken up and we've lost the suffragan but it's all the more important that I'm here!"

"You have your own important existence here," I said, to massage her ego.

"Quite. Pity your little helper isn't here. Contrast her and me. I knew her in Taunton. She was wayward then, mixing with a bunch of Pagans and thinking she was the bees knees. We cut her down to size, and now I find she's up here. I'd watch her because she's a schemer. She will, yeah, 'go along with people' and have this happy-go-lucky attitude, and keep her own counsel, but all the time she is working

out her strategy. Ask her about her Gaelic speaking secretary, or that Folkways tutor. Yeah, Andrea: she was a bit dodgy, and your supposed researcher more than sniffed around her, except we could all sniff your farting into those leathers because she knows lesbians want to take them off..."

"Rhiannon," I said, "you've said enough."

"Now I'm here she's met her nadir. She might fool you but she doesn't fool me. Plenty more to point out."

"You've said enough. Allie is intelligent, my researcher and welcomed here."

"I'm going. You don't want to hear the truth. Get rid of her. She is a sexual predator, and you're best off starting to keeping a healthy distance."

"Our discussion was enlightening until now."

"And remember, while this redone building fails we'll be going from strength to strength."

Once she went Peter said, "It's not what I've been hearing. I think she is a narcissist. She didn't even use Allie's name"

"Hmm. Do you wonder about Allie? She keeps herself to herself but she is incredibly confident. She does let off sometimes. Is she a threat?"

"She's not confident, though," Peter said. "She binge drinks a lot, quietly, and tries to hide it, and that's when she farts a lot."

"If I could bring her out somehow."

Once Peter had gone his own way I messaged Diana and at last we were going to meet again. In the night I repeated my request to Adam to find out about Allie.

He said he was already on to it. He would do some work on her very soon.

Adam's Pleasure and Proposed (Wednesday 4th December)

By Wednesday, it was as if everything was fine again regarding Jenny. She made a good job of rearranging and cropping the ordination photos to the local website, so to remove Margaret Lindbeck, in that it was clear she had left the LAE. In Independent Sacramental Ministry, there is often nothing more important than uploading and displaying ordination photos on the websites. Indeed, the demand to rearrange had come from Bristol via email. The main LAE website reused Jenny's work.

I asked Elizabeth how she herself was feeling; she said she'd give Jenny one more chance, in that she couldn't take much more.

Allie was making her notes. What people wear is uninteresting to me, yet she wasn't uninteresting in her choices. Our comic preacher's stretch top in black showed every curve and penetration; her jeans looked as if they had been pressed to every curve of her legs and the rest. She was in sandals. I said at her, "Your wardrobe must be enormous."

"Hard to know what to put on, sometimes. Don't want to make an impression."

I stood and stared at her, like, 'Who's she trying to kid?' This puzzled me afterwards. Perhaps she was compensating for her almost anonymity in her operation. After all, that sermon of hers had said nothing about her theology, nothing about her own experiences. All I knew was she liked some ancestor of the same surname, presumably up her father's line, because she was in a lesbian partnership

while married to a man.

Bella came in to do some administration by order from Adam. She looked at the website Jenny had done so far; Jenny joined her and didn't resent the overview.

I left Bella and Jenny to do more. I'd (at last) have an afternoon with Diana. Allie wanted to come along. I agreed. She heard me tell Diana about recent events and Jenny becoming weird.

Then there was the revived issue of taking a ministry to naturists at Bever Wood.

"We have only a few interested in Serminsea," I said. "One of my objectives is to give a pastoral ministry to naturists and we can shape a spirituality in Bever Wood."

"Preaching to them," Diana said.

"Probably, but not how you mean. This is a different approach now. Would you like to come to the club with us?"

"No."

"You came to the Gymnology meeting - thank you. You'd go if it was just a holiday."

"Who's going?"

"I don't know."

Allie said, "If Bishop Linda goes, I go."

"You follow her around always?" asked Diana.

"I do other things. I'm hoping to contribute a paper on the research ethics of involvement."

I said, "She'll tell you that but she won't tell me."

I also said about clashes coming over above the casino. I could see Liz leaving soon, affecting Jenny. I told Allie not to repeat this speculation.

With time up and dressed, Allie and I went to Adam's workplace in my SUV, just to see what he might say, but Peter inside said he was upstairs in the spare bedroom. So we trooped upstairs.

He was lying on the bed, trousers down, masturbating, watching sexual happenings on a screen opposite.

"Adam! What are you watching that porn for? Allie is here."

"Nothing she hasn't seen before."

"What is this called? They're in a concert now."

"*Nine Songs*, and it is not pornography."

Allie said, "It's about a relationship, including concert going, before she goes home. They do some unstimulated sex."

"*You* seem to know all about it," I said to her. "Adam, at least try to cover yourself and stop *wanking*."

Allie said, "It did the rounds at University in the film club. They gave it a general 18 licence. If you ask me, it's boring."

"I'm resting," said Adam.

"At least *cover* yourself..."

"You're becoming like a nanny," said Adam. "Months ago, you couldn't have cared less. Anyway, I'm half way there, so I'm waiting until she grabs his knob."

I asked Allie to leave, and she went to see Peter as I took hold of Adam's said appendage and finished him off, looking at the female lead finishing off the male lead

- then, anyway.

I lay alongside Adam as the film went to its fucking highlight. I agreed with Allie about the film's entertainment value, or lack of it.

After we'd dozed off, we were woken by Diana and Patricia standing in the room along with Allie.

"What are you doing here?" I asked, laying my hand and arm over his continued exposure.

Patricia said, "Getting my car from the garage just near here. Diana joined me. Thought we'd just look at these premises and Peter Marshall said you two were up here."

"We were watching a film," I said.

"Did you like *Nine Songs*?" Allie asked.

"I wasn't engaged," I replied.

"Talking of films," said Patricia, "I'm driving with Diana to Wytham on Monday. We might well see a film in a cinema for a change! We should go shopping, and we will have a meal. It'll be about five hours there. It'll give Diana some fun for a change. Wanna come?"

"Yes. Do you want to come, Allie?"

"Will it involve church matters?"

Patricia said, "Definitely not."

"Then I won't."

Adam said, "Go and call on Maurice Neptune, Linda, and say hello. I know you want to see him."

"Why would you say that of me, Adam?"

Allie then asked, "Adam, do *you* think Elizabeth is going to leave soon, and then what about Jenny?"

"What did I say about my speculation?" I asked Allie.

Adam said, "Allie, for a non-interventionist researcher, you do tend to intervene."

"Sorry, both of you, I was out of place."

So I asked, "Well, *is* she going to leave soon, Allie?"

"You want me to answer?"

"It's the reason for asking."

Adam smirked.

"I'm not saying any more than you already know."

"Allie, do you *know* if Elizabeth is leaving?"

"Genuinely I don't. I am sorry for interfering. I'll go home before I cause any more trouble."

I said, "Allie. Are you upset?"

"A bit. It's all right. I'll go..."

"Stay there, Allie. Just stay! *Adam*, I do not wish to call upon Rabbi Maurice Neptune. I will go shopping and see a film and have a meal with my friends. Allie can have a needed break."

He replied, "Fine. Fine by me. Anyway, much as I'd love to chat, I have an online date of sorts with a lass on Goosechat whose birthday is today. She's twenty today."

I said, "He's being vague. You know Annie."

"Pub."

Patricia and Diana went off to the repairs garage, and so we two returned to my SUV, and went the short journey back to the church.

Jenny and Elizabeth were both calm. Nothing seemed untoward.

"I'm sorry," said Allie, before she went. "I'll reset my position back to what it was."

"No," I said to her. "Please don't. I might value your input."

"But my research prevents me from having a diective input. I'm going home. Actually, I'll go home via the pub."

"Oh, can I come?"

"To the pub?"

"Yes."

"Definitely not. No, you can't do that. Sorry. No. Bye. I shouldn't have said."

Narrator: Adam *Investigating Allie* (Thursday 5th December)

I arrived at my work place to find Peter already at the reception room with Kathryn about to leave for the bethel (as some called it) to join her sister in massaging clients.

"Morning All. Peter," I said, ignoring Kathryn for the moment, "I think we'll do a little training exercise regarding our church researcher. I'll be in the next room, and you can send Roger and Bella through to give me reports. See what can they find out about her. Let them do as much of it as possible. Here they are! Good *morning*, you two, and Kathryn."

Kathryn said, "Linda and Allie are off to Maurice Neptune's today so Winnie will be dealing with enquiries. Christine is elsewhere."

"Linda told me she was going shopping, and Allie was doing her artwork."

"Oh dear. Allie Shrimpton said she was 'likely' to go to Wytham if Linda sees the rabbi."

"Let the dog see the rabbi, then."

Kathryn left. Peter then said, "I landed on my feet with her."

"She puts her own feet in her mouth. Roger and Bella: your task this morning is to answer the obviously relevant question, 'Is Alfia Shrimpton the woman she says she is?' So you will come and report to me throughout the morning. How would you go about this?"

Roger said, "Just to say I have an appointment at the weekly clinic this afternoon."

"Oh, are you ill?"

"Donating sperm."

"Ugh," said Bella. "Are you and your sister going on this Christmas mission? I'm going. Linda welcomes us along."

"I think it might be a bit of a shock to some if she went with me."

I said, "You two have my blessing to go - not literally a blessing like Linda would do. Go there and notice stuff and then report back anything interesting. Now, if we can concentrate on Alfia, what do we need to know? Let me tell you one thing. Allie is a friend of an online sex worker, 'Headgirl' Annie Fenwick. Allie met her in a pub and they often now meet up. Anything from that?"

Bella said, "Imaginatively, she could work for the newspapers."

"Bella, there is no harm in applying imagination so long as it comes back to facts. So we've had Roland Mitton visit, and that gives us cause to say that she is a student. But we can check her out by checking him out. Info, please. But what about her home life? What's in Walsingham, her stated home village?"

"And," said Peter, "at the service she mentioned her ancestor, Alice Shrimpton, born 1865, so we could do some genealogy via the usual methods. Find her home address, parents and relatives and examine the name itself for anything."

"But remember that I want Roger and Bella to run this effort."

I went to my office and did some different client-based online investigating.

After an hour, Roger and Bella came through.

Roger said, "There is no mileage via Annie Fenwick. Using her performance name, 'Headgirl' usually works with Jördis on Goosechat. We don't know and cannot find out if Allie and Annie sleep together, for example."

"Perform together might be more relevant," I suggested. "Many female students go into the sex industry for ready money. Goosechat isn't a big earner because it has free viewing, and I've heard that Christine is thinking of introducing 'Supporters All' as a paywall."

"Bella said, "On her name, 'Shrimpton', it has origins in Buckinghamshire and Gloucestershire, possibly, and mediaeval, or Saxon, relating to the name Shervinton."

"How relevant is that to us?" I asked.

"Meanwhile, her name checks out personally at Glastonbury, University of Somerset. She is definitely a Ph.D student."

Roger added, "But we discovered that both Roland Mitton and her one-time tutor Abigail Randall are in a coven together. It's supposed to be secret. Took some finding, that."

"You mean Peter discovered it. This is an exercise primarily for you and Bella."

Roger said, "No evidence of Allie's involvement. And Abigail Randall has a personal website, some of which is written in Spanish."

"That is no more than background!" I reacted. "Allie got on *very* well with her professor, here, and there is something not quite right between her and the Serninsea Vestal Virgins."

Bella went on, "Yes, because we also discovered that there is a group called Taunton Tantria, a group like the Serninsea Vestal Virgins. But these groups don't advertise themselves and don't have their own websites. Others refer to them. Like about some covens."

"Good, but is Allie a member of this Taunton outfit or not?" I asked.

"We can't say any more for sure," Bella added. "We have a local priest here, Rhiannon Fleetwood, attacking Taunton Tantria in some old online material. She also refers to unknown covens in Somerset. Peter said to us that speculating creates questions that demand other answers. It's good stuff for stories."

I said, "Peter's right. We need, therefore, firm connections. If you can't establish firm connections to this Rhiannon Fleetwood, then move towards checking out Allie's home life."

Off they went, and I went for a coffee. An hour later I could hear a lot of chat going on, but decided to wait for them to come through.

Half an hour after that, the two came through. This time Bella spoke first. "There are no Shrimptons in Walsingham, and there never were."

"Really?"

Roger said, "Peter asked us about Stiffkey mentioned in her sermon. Nothing checks out now that equates to Allie. She is definitely who she says she is in Somerset."

"Is she from Norfolk at all?" I asked. "Just asking, like you should. Think of Somerset and Norfolk accents."

Bella said, "Well, not in the name origins..."

"Name origins tell us nothing. What about her grappling with British Isles languages? I mean, Scottish Gaelic?"

Roger said, "They do local dialects and languages in Glastonbury, part of Randall's course Folkways, although her tutor resigned recently."

I had a suggestion. "You see, she *could* have learnt the Norfolk accent and the odd words she throws around. Where does Alice Shrimpton's family tree go?"

"Alice Shrimpton was married to Brian Rogers," said Roger, "and they had one surviving child, Alfred, and then we get James, Yvette and Brian. They're all Rogers after all that. The Shrimptons in Stiffkey are not direct ancestors of Allie, as far as we know so far. They might possibly be related around the houses."

"You'd better look around the houses. More names, more family routes."

Off they went again, and lunchtime came along. I told them I would extend the project into the afternoon.

Roger was joined by his sister Marie before going out to lunch and the clinic. Rarely do brothers and sisters put their arms around each other with the sister raising her leg. Yes, I could see why she might not go on the naturist mission. Peter seemed to be continuing regardless.

I said to him, "This is meant to be their project. Go and eat and see Kathryn. Come back after he's spread his seed at the clinic. The dole will have a sliding scale for any money he gets."

"Right," Peter said. "I was looking for directions for them to take. Alice Shrimpton married into the family line. Elizabeth Ford was not in the family line. They both died in Wells-next-to-Sea - just as Allie said."

So the mystery went into the afternoon. After lunch, the clinic and a further hour, I pulled in the trainees.

"This is not going very well, is it? So I expect full confidentiality. I will tell you now that Allie definitely comes from Walsingham, so go with that. She has lived in a farmhouse and there is a farmhouse nearby with distant relatives including a man of the same age. It's an interlocking family tree. She escaped this close atmosphere and ran off to the University of Somerset. She was very familiar with this nearby chap to the point of sexual intimacy. She is an artist and sells paintings in Walsingham to pilgrims and tourists. What does this information exclude?"

Bella said, "She's not born in the village itself?"

Roger then said, "There are two villages - Great and Little."

Bella next, "That the farmhouse isn't isolated? Her name might be on the paintings she sells?"

"Good one. Ring a tourist shop. You won't get records from the University of Somerset on their students. Data Protection and all that," I said. "Go to it."

After an hour, Peter joined the two with their findings.

Roger went first. "There are two shops who sell her paintings. She puts 'A R' on them only. One shop owner thought she is or was called Alice."

"Looking just for Alices was impossible," said Bella, "But we tried to narrow it down to surnames beginning with 'R'. Rogers had the most potential. Peter thinks we may have it."

Peter said, "There is an Alice Rogers, who is thirty years old, born in a farmhouse, and we found it is near another farmhouse. We got the address of that one, or they did, and then found out there was a thirty year old there as well. Jenner is the surname there. Therefore we think she is called Alice Rogers, and at some point in transition to Somerset or at Somerset she changed her name. And everyone calls her 'Allie', which can stand for Alice as well as her odd name, 'Alfia'.

Roger said, "On the family tree, the key thing is that Alice Shrimpton married a Rogers. But the family tree we just cannot work out, because it seems to criss-cross. There's a Fitzgerald, and a Berry, and once we found a Jenner we found a number of them. This thirty year-old chap nearby is called Jonathan Jenner. The two farmhouses are therefore connected."

"I happen to know," I said, "that this person is her fourth cousin once removed."

Peter said, "His father is in his seventies. He could well be one generation higher, but the family tree must be very complicated."

"And she knows her family tree. This concludes our investigation. I think we have it. Now, everyone, this is top secret. You tell no one you know what you know, or that you even looked. This includes your sister, Roger.

"Er..." he said.

"Well, don't tell her anything more and tell her to keep her trap shut. A large part of investigating is to say nothing, and we say nothing so that we can find out more."

"Did you know all this to begin with?" Peter asked me.

"I knew what I told you, but I didn't know her real or previous name. By the way, if you'd bothered to read her sermon of the 1st of December put online you'd have had a shortcut to information! Peter?"

"Er... They both read it. She made it sound like Shrimpton was the family name."

"Read afterwards and read *carefully*. She didn't. I also had the benefit of being interviewed by her last month, and no one interviews me without me interviewing them. I didn't know the family name was Rogers. So you have done the two things necessary. You have given me a result, and given me an explanation for the result. This is as much as any investigator can expect. What you said met my parameters and they were good parameters: and therefore this same aged man in a nearby farmhouse is a Jenner. Anyway, you two can go home early, and, as far as the dole are concerned, Roger and Bella, you work for me over at the Bever Wood Naturist Centre. As for today, I've finished with you. So go home, or wherever you want to go."

Chapter 24 Wants and Wishes

Narrator: Linda *Talking Research* (Thursday 5th December)

"Morning twins!" I said as Kathryn came through the double doors and Kathleen passed me the other way, having emerged from the kitchen eating. They both went into the cloaks and wet room area ready to receive their first client. It was a woman, too.

After a vestry telephone call to a certain rabbi, I had changed my plan for the day.

"I'm surprised you're here this morning," I said to Allie, drifting in and looking unfocussed in her leathers, "given that I'm going early to Wytham and nearby."

"I said I would see how things were, and then go home. You're going to see a film?"

"No *I'm* not. You do look a bit washed out: you'd best go home, Allie."

"What are you doing?"

"Do you have to know? Go home."

"Only if it is relevant."

"They are dropping me off, just outside Wytham. They'll go shopping, I won't. If you fancy some shopping..."

"You're seeing someone else?"

"Personal."

"May I ask *whom*?"

"You're not descending into your Norfolk dialect now, I notice."

"Who yar goin' be mardling with?"

"He is a rabbi friend."

"Ah, can yoi hitch up some room fur moi in 'eer car?"

"No. Go home."

"Will you be discussing the future of the church? *He* did the ordinations sermon - I assume it is him. Perhaps it's for Nonicking."

"What?"

"Whatever."

"Right. *Come* then. I'm sure you would rather go clothes shopping. So we have a stretchy black top and pink trousers today, do we, madam?"

"I am staying with you."

"Patricia's here in five minutes. Get your writing stuff, then. We'll hitch up some room for you in her car."

With Patricia driving, Diana in the front, and Allie and me in the back, we went towards Wytham, where those two would go shopping and we would be dropped off east of the city.

Meanwhile, efforts to ask Allie about her life were met with her not really wanting to talk about herself. She said, "I told you I needed to reset things back to as they were."

Patricia and Diana gave up. Allie looked to me as if she wasn't very well. More worrying still were hints of Diana having difficulty with Aardse. He was suspicious now of her Internet activity, but she did not say what this involved, only that he was

not giving her personal space.

Patricia dropped Allie and me off down a rural road that reached Wytham.

"Who are you meeting?" asked Diana.

"It's a person with whom I want to talk theology, possibly ecclesiology, and the future."

"Is it a he or a she?" asked Diana.

"It happens to be a he, but this is irrelevant," I said.

Diana replied. "I believe you, but many wouldn't."

"I don't," said Patricia. "And why in the middle of nowhere? And we pick you up here in five hours?"

"Unless you hear otherwise, yes. Come on Allie. Heel!"

As they drove off Allie said she was sick of me telling her to heel. "Just think. I could have spent some time with Salome Lichtblau and her labrador Hendrik along with Klärchen Sisse and her alsatian Dieter. It's not something they offer to anybody."

"Ugh," I said back. "Well, go on then, what do they do?"

"Thought you might be curious."

It would take us just under half an hour to walk to Rabbi Maurice's house.

Walking along this narrow road, with a fair amount of traffic to dodge, I said, "I'm sick of your silence. For fuck's sake tell me something *about* you."

"The fresh air is doing me some good."

"No, about you."

"I'll tell you about Harold Garfinkel versus Erving Goffmann."

"Oh what's the point? You've already wittered on about symbolic interactionism versus ethnomethodology. So, okay, tell me: how does doing this ethnomethodology become sociology at all?"

"Ah yes, well. I am not a Garfinkel and since fan anyway. Nevertheless, trends are trends, and useful, and so what I do is diary based - write it up afterwards - thick research. What my options are I'd rather not discuss."

"I know about thick research. Bronislaw Malinowski was called incompetent by some as a social theorist. With all the data, where is the sociology?"

"I see. Yes, you did mix some of this with your theology study."

"Yeah, *my* past. Cunt."

"Well, it's about patterns, formulations and constraints. So the emphasis, as you know, is on the act and action, including - especially - talk. However, what Harold Garfinkel then looks at is patterns and also at constraints. So the issue is how people express themselves. The patterning they give is the understanding. This, and the constraints, are where description plugs into sociology as a whole. Constraints allow shape allow analysis."

"I think he is skating on thin ice," I said. "Where do the constraints come from?"

"The patterns come from the people. But people are not 'cultural dopes' as implied in top-down sociology. All we know is social reality must be based on interpretation, and that comes from the expression we see in itself - it becomes its own interpretation, as much as possible."

"You are better back with the actors having instrumental strategies."

"I quite agree. That's why it is always wrong to constrain - ha ha - the analysis," said Allie. "Known as the documentary method."

"Documentary method' is jargon," I claimed.

"It is really the reproduction of social order via understanding and expression, but the expression sets out the social order. However, patterns are perceived where they may not actually exist, where people indeed contradict themselves. But people insist on the patterns. Here is some jargon: 'indexicality'."

"And what does that mean?"

"It means that, in the context of reproducing patterns, people put expressions as if into indexes of meaning. So a research method could be to upset the indexes and demonstrate their fragility. Ask in your bank for a personal higher rate of interest; ask in a supermarket with its barcodes for discount. But this is not what happens. Hang on - when people don't index an expression as expected, they don't change the understanding but they say, 'You are not a member,' and reinforce the index."

"I think my church challenges common indexicality regarding church life."

"That is for you to say."

"Rhiannon Fleetwood and those Pentecostals certainly think so."

"You spoke to Rhiannon?"

"Yeah. You missed that."

"Why didn't you call me?"

"You were busy. Probably in the pub. Anyway, she was quite offensive. I defended you. And I don't need her to tell me that we challenge the common indexicality of church life. Naked submersion, massages, you know, are not what you'd expect. I have upset the apple cart a bit."

"If you think so. Then they say 'You are not a church,' and reinforce what is a church. Garfinkel says that we should ask *not* what makes a group a church, but what makes a church a church."

"Something for me to consider."

"There is a parallel in art. John Dewey and later Nelson Goodman asks, 'When is art?' rather than 'What is art?' you see."

"So *when* is art?"

"It's about the self perceiving of rhythm in all its variations and well as regularity, rhythm in the impulsions that come from the relationship between the art object itself and the subject's experience. That produces the aesthetic."

"Clear as mud."

"So a nude is the object but any sexuality expressed is the subject's experience, and that has a rhythm in the mind in the self that can be quite complex."

"I think I see."

"I should not feed you these intellectual tools," Allie said. "So Rhiannon had a lot off did she?"

I ignored that because I was pleased that I was upsetting Allie's 'indexicality'. "And what of the constraint with your participant observation?"

"As I've said before, I want to write a paper to say that the researcher must get involved far deeper than we think is normally and supposedly ethical. You don't just study jury meetings, but jurists down the pub, in the home, talking to friends, with their lovers. Informal decisions - reproducing patterns - get made long before they get into the jury room. It is the same with religious groups. So studying your new church and how it grows, I want to observe as many informal decisions as I can. I observe and then record afterwards, the main person or people, others as appropriate, and I engage with key informants - I choose them, but they don't need to

know they're key informants. But sometimes you tell them in an exchange - they say more because they think they are important."

"Adam, Christine?"

"Even that time in your bed with Adam."

"Why would sperm donation involve reference in Roger's dissertation to the Frankfurt School?"

"There is something initially about the remoteness of sperm donation involving alienation - drawing on the younger Marx - but as an activity involving hope. Therefore, on the contrary, it is a form of production that involves a positive individual aesthetic, contributing to enhancing the self and communal quality of life. Something the later Marx neglected and subjugated..."

"Oh shut up, Allie. See that house there? That is the pile the rabbi lives in. And I warn you. He has the hots for me, and I want to keep him that way."

"Then perhaps explain to him that I want to be within earshot of whatever it is you end up doing."

"Perv."

"I am not a 'perv'; I am asking to be there whenever you mention the future of your church, your ministry and your relevant contact with him."

"You're still a perv."

Maurice with Linda & Allie

Expecting me, Maurice opened his front door even before I'd knocked. He offered and I took his kiss of greeting on my mouth and I introduced Allie Shrimpton with kisses from him to her cheeks.

"Let me say: your support for me made all the difference. The local President, the Vice President, the Board, accepted the findings and recommended no action."

"Good," I said.

"And we've moved on, with some renewal via what they call a *Values and Services Document* based on the values of kehillah (community), tefillah (prayer), limmud (learning) and tikkun olam (repair of the world)."

"I like that. Perhaps, Allie, with your Reverend Deacon hat on, you might think that's a good idea for us."

"I'm researching." Turning away from him I showed her a furious face. "But... yes."

"Excuse me Maurice if Allie and I go over there. Now listen, lady, start pulling your weight. Don't embarrass me with all this 'don't ask me' talk. We are here at this kind gentleman's home and you will behave accordingly as a representative of our local church and as my support. Right? *Right?*"

"Yes, all right."

"Sorry, Maurice."

He had some wine for us, and to his question I said my friends would be as long as four hours unless he gave us a lift up the road.

"Allie," he said, "tell me about yourself."

Allie then said, "I'm here as a researcher and a representative - observer and participant. My research interest is in the depth of conversation and activity by which

Linda makes decisions with others about the building up of her church, her ministry, her future. Please do not change any of your behaviour because of my presence. If it helps, I'll join in, otherwise I will sit out and observe."

"She is going to do a paper on the extent of her peeking into nooks and crannies," I told him.

"What is the research problem?" he asked. "What is the core argument?"

"Hmm. I'm cheating, as many do. We collect data first and see what problem arises, as also identified by gaps in the literature. That becomes the research issue and the final part is the introduction and abstract."

"But on participant observation itself must be a side issue."

"In a separate paper on the ethics of extent of involvement I will argue that for successful qualitative research on the informal nature of decision making the researcher ought to be present as deeply as possible including private moments. This will feature in the methodology section."

"If Linda is fine about it, so am I," Maurice said.

Allie said, "And now: please ignore me regarding any decisions."

"No, Allie, some decisions are relevant to you as a deacon."

We all went into his garden conservatory, passing Mrs. Roberta Garfield as we went. The garden was expansive with its decking, grass, trees, pond, many borders, and a curving path touching raised beds, and, near the end, large trees and a gazebo to sit in. I was almost tempted to undress in the conservatory, but I didn't.

Soon, Joseph Meiman took us in the car to see Maurice's Reformist synagogue, shul, 'school',

or beit k'neset, 'house of assembly', or temple, and he said on arrival that terminology indicates that the synagogue in general probably did not start as a place to pray or study but to carry out more civic business for the benefit of the Jewish community; it became much more religious after the destruction of the second Temple.

I indicated that 'my' Jesus did religious things in the synagogue; he'd also have used the Temple and participated in ritual animal sacrifice.

"But it certainly became the beit t'filah, a 'house of worship', and additionally a beit midrash, a 'house of study', as well."

Maurice's synagogue was set out like any other, except the women mixed with the men.

I told him, "Criticism of our sermon could be that you ignored feminism."

"I suppose I must plead guilty," he said. "Judaism has various attitudes. The Orthodox say that the Law sets out the purposes and roles of male and female, and that's it. Not that they all *do* it. The Reformist side in general say we have to scrap some laws and rules, while understanding where they come from and what they were trying to do. Conservatives think the midrash have minority views we can draw on for reforming purposes. These groups are not mutually exclusive: the boundaries do blur."

"Modernity is increasingly important to me," I said to him. "Our operation is small, but we need to be responsive to the way things are. Only bit by bit can we influence back. Allie here calls it indexicality."

"Ignore me," she said, so I did this time.

He said, "Remember that, before the disaster, German Judaism was often progressive and liberal. Leo Baeck died in 1956. He said Judaism is ethically

optimistic and committed to freedom: he contrasted this with Pauline Christian emphasis on faith whereas a Jewish response to divine mystery should be directed ethical action."

We soon left the synagogue. Joseph Meiman said he would secure the building. Leaving the car, we three walked up one street, and then another, and a few more, and I recognised the street, for we came upon the Unitarian chapel there. It was locked and unoccupied, however.

"Kantian religion," said Maurice.

"Yes, I suppose you can say that."

"Reminds me of Hermann Cohen, who died in 1918. God stands ahead of causality in an eternal and renewing universe. Here we are, in that. Why aren't you wearing a clerical collar, if you are a bishop?"

"You know what? One time, when a curate, I was often in a cassock and collar - often nothing underneath. Now the clerical collar is on during worship only. Yet, I am in a high Church, full of emphasis on apostolic succession."

"You don't believe it, do you?"

"Not really."

"Is it, what, too magical?"

"Laying on of hands and all that. What is it exactly? Don't get me wrong. Symbolism is important. But it is about meaning and communication, not magical or supernatural transmissions."

"Be my wife," he said, "and become a Reformist Jew."

"Adam has given me a church," I said.

"Make it a full temple. You have a mikveh!"

"Even if I did, what about the others?" I asked.

"Life changes, things move on."

"I'm also quite theological, but that doesn't prevent new learning. I do refer to the Jesus chap, I suppose. You don't."

"Supplements to the mishnah mention him: the Baraita and the Tosefta. They say: Yeshu was hanged because he practised sorcery and led Israel astray; Yeshu had five disciples; a man bitten by a serpent was not allowed by a rabbi to approach Yeshu, and died before bringing proof that Yeshu could heal; a follower of Yeshu the Nazarene, Jacob, told a chap in Sephorris a saying of Yeshu's: that for the price of a harlot the high priests were gathered, and for that price they'll return, and so they came from filth and will return to filth."

"Sephorris isn't mentioned in the New Testament. Jesus and his dad may have been builders there."

"The chronology given supports the Gospel of John; and also he gets called 'Yeshu son of Pantera' - or Panthera - and this suggests a Roman soldier as a father. The tale comes from 150 Common Era and is a possibly a corruption of 'parthenos', Greek for virgin, although Panthera was a real archer buried in Germany and living at the right time."

"Evidence of Jesus's existence, then. Jesus's female ancestors in Matthew were all dodgy: a temple prostitute, a brothel madam, one who was sexually exploitative and an adulterer of King David. You could do another sermon on this."

"Or you could, Allie," he said, as we walked on, "and you do look lovely, by the way. Tell me about Malinowski, Bronislaw."

"What about him?" she asked, while I wondered why Maurice had said Allie

looked lovely. His Board might have something to say about such an observation.

He said, "I take it he's your man, Allie. Was he any good?"

"He proposed that training should involve at least one intensive study."

"And this is yours?"

"Could be. As to whether he was any good, he was in the Trobriand Islands while others fought the First World War. He used their language. When the professor suggested I come here, I brushed up on key theologies with some advice about church life with and without theology. But I did not add Jewish Reformist theology. As for him, there is little sociology in his incomplete description of the kula ring. There is commentary, but that is not the same thing. But, it's a challenge to turn commentary into sociology. He was a functionalist - everything fitted in to a smooth purpose - but, well, was that so with the magic described? There was no comparison with no magic and therefore on the dependency of functions. On the other hand, he did bash away at sociological assumptions, e.g. the dominance of the group when it wasn't dominant. He admits that there is tautology and platitude. So: he sees something, thinks it has a function, but does it really have one?"

I said, "She does go on."

Maurice asked, "Does your professor help you?"

"Lots. Brilliant man. Paganism is his thing."

"Will he steal your work for his publishing?"

"No, I don't think so. If it comes from me, he says so. He is ethical."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty. Old for a Ph.D but I've had a run-up to this research with my own interests."

"Which are?" I asked.

"Good try," she said to me. "I knew I would do a Ph.D."

Maurice asked, "What are your weaknesses, Allie?"

"Philosophy. I can't make head or tail of some of it. Kant, I do get - somewhat."

"Philosophy," the rabbi said. "Hermann Cohen said Judaism's handle on Kantian theist ethics was better than philosophy. Humanity correlates its ethics to the ethics of God."

"Yup," I said, but unsure. "Our deacon is quite an intellectual."

Our walking on came to shops and the like, and it was an opportunity to stare in some windows.

Then I was staring at two grinning women, Diana and Patricia. I said, "Maurice, these are my friends Diana and Patricia. Diana is also a naturist, like me. Friends, this is my co-religionist Rabbi Maurice Neptune."

They shook hands. Diana said, "I suppose she is not asking you to go on this Christmas mission to her naturist club."

I said, "I haven't mentioned it."

Diana asked, "May I just have a quick word with Linda?"

Off to one side, she said very quietly, "Your secret is safe with us."

I replied, "There is no secret. We are discussing Liberal and Reformist Jewish theology and even Allie's research methods and I am applying his theology to my own ideas. I'll see you later as planned."

Parted from my friends, Maurice, Allie and I continued on. I said, after a silence, "We are getting further and further from your car."

"I will contact Joseph Meiman to pick us up, before we get to the pedestrian area. Franz Rosenzweig, who died in 1929 I think, said that both Christianity and Judaism were authentic communities of love and this is how God manifests his love into the world. Judaism is the eternal life, and Christianity the eternal way. How's that for interfaith? And he thought that theology supports philosophy. So we don't do your seasonal mission to naturists or anyone else: we just have to be."

Then we sat on a bench at the end of this pedestrianised street, which became steps ahead on a slope upwards. "Come back to my house?"

"Yes."

Maurice took out a phone. "Joseph, we are at High Street Hill, just about where it starts. Come and get us please. By the way, Linda, Joseph is not a follower of Yeshu."

Maurice's car soon arrived, and Allie got into the front and he and I actually got into the back. Joseph drove us to a fish and chip shop - where, inside, we had haddock and chips each. When we had finished, the car was back, and the chauffeur took us into the near countryside with well spaced large houses along this fairly narrow road and therefore on to Maurice's house, swerving into his drive.

We were back into the heated conservatory, despite the enveloping gloom of the hour outside. He kissed me, and I kissed him back.

He said, "Sorry Allie. You did say. I could love you," he added, to me.

This was followed by silence. "I can see it," I said.

"Into the future?"

"Yeah."

"There *is* Adam," he pointed out.

"I don't think he loves me. I don't love him. He is special now; but I am more attached than in love. I had an interesting encounter with a bishop saying I should leave Adam. Adam could love another woman better, but she has issues. There is history there."

"Is this relevant to you, Allie?" he asked.

"I'm not here," she replied.

"But you are here."

"Maurice, please carry on as if I was not. Do not restrain yourself either, on my part."

"What about Elizabeth Huett?" he asked me.

"Well, I don't know. She's not right with Jenny either. Elizabeth feels obliged but it is wearing thin. Jenny should switch to Adam. I do realise this. I'm assuming she'll move aside and that he will take her space. I'd even suggest it."

Considering Maurice (Thursday to Friday 6th December)

"Stay with me tonight," said Maurice.

"We're due to be picked up."

Moving to one of his lounges, the rabbi said to me, "I want to experience you overnight. You are my most intelligent hope: a rabbi needs a wife. They can pick up Allie. She can show Joseph the pick-up point."

"If Linda stays, I would like to stay," Allie said. "I would get out of your way."

I responded to him. "I'll stay with you, but the wife thing... I mean, I've only just become used to my separation, thanks to Adam. But I am, well, thinking..."

"Stay with me and I'll convince you."

"All right," I said. "I'll text Adam. We'll drink more wine? So, here we go."

Adam. I am slowly getting drunk and staying overnight in Wytham. I know I don't drink much at all, but this friend does - not Allie this time so much - and I would rather not travel. I fancy an extra day here anyway. Might see if I can meet the Unitarian minister tomorrow. Allie is staying as well, so we are discussing and behaving. See you later tomorrow.

"What a gentle liar you are," said Maurice. "So now I have to offer you more wine, indoors."

"Yes. 'Fraid so. Allie, I am sensitive to your presence. Yes, you can look at the message."

"I've a few issues with that," said Allie. "But nothing major."

"He does know you can have a skinful," I suggested, to no reply.

Maurice said to me, "I'd love to share time with you in my jacuzzi bath in the bathroom."

"I'd love it," I said. "What about Allie?"

"Well, there is room for three but it's with you I want to bathe."

Allie said, "I will undress, put on a dressing gown, if you have one, and sit to one side of the bathroom. You two can then carry on."

We two decided to drink red wine in his jacuzzi bath situated in the centre of his large bathroom. Lights shining on to us, Allie was sat in comparative gloom. So he was at one end of the agitated water, and I was at the other, being gently stimulated by the technology and each other.

I was seriously considering what sort of future I would have. It was as if Adam had provided a bridgehead for me, and yet he was slipping away. I *could* be a rabbi's wife, a rebbetzin Maurice had called it, even a rabbi myself. I made my legs wide, arms out of the water.

"What is your view of tradition?" he asked.

"What?" I mean, I was exposed to him and he was asking *theology*?

"Tradition." (He didn't sing it.)

"Oh, I don't know. It's useful. Keeps us balanced! Do you understand that quip, Allie?"

"Fiddler on the Roof."

"Nothing gets past you."

"Let me tell you about Jacob Petuchowski."

"You are a mine of facts about this individual and that. I can hardly think of any."

"The pharisees, you see, were appliers and adapters of tradition to the situation, according to Petuchowski."

"Oh yeah."

"Are you interested?"

"Please, go on."

"Reformist Jews like us should focus on tradition: that's what he was saying. You see, many think we Reformists minimise what we should follow. Learn the

tradition, and then reject it or apply it as relevant to the circumstances of life."

"Like when in a bath."

"It involves your own conscience, but also what the community under the covenant needs. Oh, the millennial teachings as well. These are contexts for your personal code."

We could hear ringing. "Yeah. Let me just lean out here to my bag. I can't reach."

Allie in an open dressing gown, naked within it, appeared into the light, went into my bag and handed me my phone. She retreated back into the gloom.

"Diana. Hello. You and Patricia drive home without us. Allie is staying, so don't get silly ideas. You've had a meal? Good. We had fish and chips. Yes I am. So is Allie. He is 'sweet talking me', as you put it, all about someone called Jacob Petuchowski. He was into reform. I'll see you soon, when we take our clothes off again. What? Mind your own business. Allie is with me. Diana's laughing, Maurice. I *am* drinking wine but I am also talking shop. I am getting light headed and I'd rather not travel. I *know* I am not driving. I might look for Charley Darley the Unitarian minister tomorrow. Adam knows; I sent a text. Bye-ee."

"I haven't got any pork pies," he said, as I switched it off and put my hand out holding the phone.

"Thank you, Allie. In my bag, please. What are you on about, Maurice?"

"Lies," he said.

"They're not lies. Okay, they are. I am relaxed not because of the food, or the wine, but being in this fuzzy water thing with my legs open, my arms wide and my head - once again - going back."

"Good," he said, "and this bath stays warm for as long as you want."

"I do want. But I will get out before my skin starts to wrinkle. Tradition? I'm light on tradition myself; Liberal Catholicism seems to have it both ways."

Half an hour later Maurice offered me a large towel and, more than this, we got out and he started to dry me with it, assisted by jets of warm air coming from the ceiling and the wall.

"Fancy a bath, Allie?" he asked. "The water refreshes itself."

"Maybe, before sleep," she said.

"I think Linda and I might just be going early to the same bed."

"Can I sleep on a chair perhaps, in the same room as you two?"

So I said to her, "I might find you a basket, a rug and a bowl of water."

"Now then Linda," said Maurice, "She is a very dedicated researcher. Allie. Ah, Allie! There is a sofa in the bedroom that goes from one wall to the other. It is big enough even for two. You can use that. The heating will stay on. Just cover yourself with a duvet from the cupboard. Do you want a bath?"

"I'd rather hear what you have to say."

So Maurice pressed a button by which the jacuzzi bath emptied and then cleaned itself.

Bedtime was thus very early, and Mrs. Roberta Garfield had already provided fresh bedsheets and a duvet. Allie went out and came in (from meeting Mrs. Garfield) carrying a duvet over her gorgeous naked body. She got on to this huge curved leather sofa, and lay her head on its end arm-rest. In our bed Maurice said to me, "You were saying about symbolism before. I'm thinking of Solomon Formstecher, who, if my memory serves me, died in 1889."

I said, "Your memory serves you very well. I bet you go down well in Jewish theology pub quizzes."

"Influenced by Von Schelling. Cosmic unity, a Divine World Soul, seen in spirit and nature. How we know it, you see: but always our knowing is at the point of symbols, and we should not confuse the two. The spirit from the Divine Soul is important so that we do not confuse religion with nature, which is Paganism. That's the suggestion."

I could hear Allie groan. I called out, "What?"

"Hey?"

"You."

"Nothing. Ignore me. Sorry."

"It's all right," I said.

"No, I've just farted." Allie had a little giggle.

Now I turned close to Maurice. He said, "I have a rather adapted part of the *Hymn of Glory* from the Ashkenazi liturgy:

*"Sweet hymns and songs I will recite
To sing to you by day and night
Of you who art my soul's delight.*

*"My intercourse this day and night
May it be present in your sight
For you are my soul's delight."*

"Allie! This is a large room and she's stinking the place out."

"No problem," said the rabbi. It proves she is alive. At which point he came above me and his penis penetrated me directly, and his hand ran across my breasts, and I arched and pulled back my legs to help him in as far as I could take him.

He said, "My Jacob's ladder ascends into your mystical delight. I arise up the ladder of emanations to unite with your divine self."

"Steady on," I muttered. "Just do it well."

Then I remembered how the National Church Confraternity people theologised the sexual act. After all, he was in the group.

Yet his action was sweet, and *sure* I responded to its simplicity, and, without doubt, love; he lay there playing with my small nipples.

Allie came over, and I feared she would stop us as she did with the bishop at Maa Skelter.

"This bath, does it operate easily?" she asked Maurice. "If you are just lovemaking, I could have a bath after all."

"I will show you. It is virtually automatic from the taps. I will show you how to change the presets."

I lay there alone! She had stopped us! And he, naked, was now with another naked woman! After ten minutes I wanted to go and find out what they were doing.

After twenty minutes he returned. "She'll enjoy that. She started blowing bubbles."

"What, with bubble bath?"

He got in.

"From her arse. She said that if we fall asleep she will be very quiet. I

suggested her own bedroom but she wants to wake when we wake. She is going to write her notes in the bath and perhaps get all her gas out. I spelt out a few theologians' names for her. She has a lot to remember, she told me, after she got in the bath with a new notebook and a pen. Yes, she will relax I am sure."

"You're so kind," I responded. "Get close to me, let me feel your whole body."

He penetrated me again and made a solid effort. This bed really was super-comfortable. Ours at the church was large and good, but this was in another league. I often rolled into Adam, but here the space you made was where you stayed.

In the morning, when it finally arrived, I got on top of his face, so he could lick me and I could suck his circumcised penis down my throat. I looked at Allie looking at me with his balls hanging out of my mouth. So I soon turned away to face him for more body language events.

"You are my Kabbalah," he said, as I rose and sank. "You come to me in supra-intellectual ecstasy."

I quickened my pace.

With his sperm running down my left leg, we went to his large bathroom again, and we stood in that jacuzzi bath, where a spray of water came down from the ceiling, and he rubbed a soapy sponge around my body: front, then back, then front again.

"Come on in, Allie," said Maurice. "Have a morning wash."

So she got a sponging from him on her front, and I took it off him and I did her curvy back and bottom, down her legs too. Then I did his front. I said, "You do his back, Allie."

"Thanks," she said, and she took the sponge. "I had a good shit earlier so I won't be letting off."

"Lovely girl," I said.

"Maurice said, "No, she is a lovely girl."

The spray took over from above and sides lower down. With the towel and air combination again, he dried me, and me him, and then I did her. This was the first time Allie looked at me with wide eyes since Margate, and seemed to draw me in with them.

Allie and I went naked ahead of him into the kitchen, and he caught us up holding three of his shirts. we all slipped them on to fasten buttons in two places each.

This was because, while eating our ready cereals, milk and breadrolls, Mrs. Garfield came in with her bucket and cleaning equipment to do lots of housework.

"Make me a husband," he said. "I want you as my wife."

"Oh Maurice," I said, "I would - but there is so much to arrange, so much to sort out."

"Come with me," he said. "Have you this morning free?"

"Yes."

He took us to an art room in this house. An easel was already up, and paints available, and a chair.

"Oh wow!" said Allie.

I remembered San Bandyopadhyay at the hotel, where I was literally painted over. Here, spotlights came on, and he adjusted the relative brightness. Then a lightbox added more directional but minimal shadow light. Finally a light came on behind me, to make a kind of halo around my growing hair.

I went nude, but it wasn't just Maurice who started to draw me for a painting. Allie asked if she could join him, and so he pointed to a large cupboard containing canvases. Allie put one on her knee, and sat to draw, sharing his very many coloured pens.

I did agree to have my photograph taken so he had reference for his painting, despite being reminded of Ken Osis. So Allie took one photo with her own rarely seen mobile phone. Her number was not on my phone! My pose was a slightly arched back, a direct look with a three-quarters face, and my legs and feet were pushed down and open somewhat.

We paused for a break, and I slipped the blouse back on. We found Mrs. Garfield making us all a coffee.

She said she had been working for Rabbi Neptune for five years now, and she kept all his secrets. So on that basis, I asked if I could borrow her kneeling pad, and thus back at the art room I first knelt to bring his circumcised organ to another climax, swallowing. Allie did not draw this! I resumed my pose for another two hours. Allie was on to her second canvas.

The rest of the painting he would do alone. Allie would complete hers later. He would email me the result, if I wanted. And then it would be a physical gift at our next meeting together.

When we had finished, we found our clothes made into neat piles in the kitchen by Mrs. Garfield. Mrs. Garfield herself came in with a wet flannel and wiped my, his, and Allie's feet clean.

She said to me, "I hope I'll be seeing you much more often. Good to meet you as well, Ms..."

"Shrimpton."

"Quite possibly," I said. "Marriage you mean?"

"Well."

Then I looked at Allie, who was looking at me directly.

After this Maurice's chauffeur drove the three of us into Wytham, where we had a seafood and salad lunch in a small restaurant, not the Jewish one.

And then he stood with us at this bus bay. He kissed me on the mouth, and Allie on both cheeks, rather as when we had arrived. Me with my bag, and Allie with her bag and two canvases, got on the bus to take us over to Serninsea.

The journey started with mutual silence, but when I looked at her she gave me that open-eyed stare again.

"What?" I asked.

"You."

"Me what?"

"Just. Oh forget it. No, I mean, can I come in your bed tonight?"

"Well, I'd have to explain to Adam."

"Yes, about decisions, tensions and difficulties."

"What decisions? What tensions and difficulties?"

"In the church."

"There aren't any decisions to take..."

"There are implications. I want to be there."

"What implications?"

"Just want to be... Forget it. Just forget it, right? We were better not speaking."

"Right. You're so strange. What do you want from me, Allie?"

"I don't want anything. I've come here from Somerset, from my home in Walsingham, and from you I want nothing. Absolutely nothing."

"Yes. I gather this. Other than research: nothing."

"Yes. This is what I am here for."

Arguing with Adam (Friday 6th December)

I could tell something was wrong when we got back into the church. So I went upstairs, leaving Allie to take her revealing canvases to her home.

Adam's left shoulder had a bandage on it. Kathleen and Winnie had attended to an injury last night. Adam explained to me, "She stabbed me and said it was really for you."

"I didn't look at my phone. I've been really tired, even on the bus."

"She caught my arm, and Liz grabbed her, pulled her away and screamed at her to stop, just missing being injured herself. All on the first floor as I came up. I've been waiting for you."

"Yes. Good. I mean, not good - but better than it might have been."

"Where have you been?"

"I've been in Wytham Temple and learning about Jewish theology."

"Really?"

"Yes. Hermann Cohen, er: Leo Baeck, Franz Rosenzweig..."

"Can't you do that on the Internet?"

"I like old fashioned study. Rabbi Maurice Neptune was giving a lecture on Reformist Jewish theology and its application to ethical behaviour."

"You didn't tell me you were even going," Adam responded. "I thought you were seeing a film and going shopping."

"I only discovered this at the very last minute. Patricia and Diana went shopping, and fortunately they were shopping for the same amount of time as his lecture and application through personal study."

"But you stayed over."

"Because I wanted to absorb more. It's one thing knowing Christian theology, but these are unusual names to me. Where is Liz?"

"Hold on. Where's Allie?"

"Probably taken her canvases to her house."

"What canvases?"

"I posed. Maurice paints. Allie painted too."

"Not quite all theology then. You went nude, of course. Elizabeth is downstairs somewhere. She's still shocked. It could have been her."

I went downstairs to discover Allie with her in the vestry, the canvases leaning against the wall. Allie had obviously turned back.

"What happened?" I asked Liz Huett.

"She's been carted off to some secure hospital."

"She attacked Adam," I said.

"She was attacking everyone. She said he was you."

"Liz, does this mean you are likely to leave now? I'd prefer it if you didn't."

"Your group incardinated me. It's appreciated."

"That is a weak reply, Liz. You've been really good here. I want you to know that."

"Lucky lucky, he was," said Liz. "Adam ran backwards from the stairs and I got her. It was an unprovoked attack. The ambulance came, Jenny was in distress, the police came as well and she has been sectioned."

"Mental issues come to a head," I said.

"As I've understood it, she had schizophrenia after you went to university. She stabilised with her religious belief: very charismatic, that sort of thing. Her uncle - so called - was a model for her, but she lost all her beliefs and recent times have been stressful. Perhaps her apparent rationality has left her defenceless mentally. I don't know."

"So what happens now?" I asked

"We'll be told when we can visit."

Allie this time followed me back upstairs to Adam and we three went into our bedroom. "Look," I said, "perhaps we haven't realised all the trauma, really, of the scandal and its controversy, and from changing accommodation, and even all of us leaving the National Church. I fear my own outbreak of PTSD."

Adam added, "She was bonkers when she went all evangelical."

"Liz seems to think differently. Liz thinks she lacks a kind of defence, now."

"Liz didn't know her back then. Yes, her beliefs were a kind of cover."

I said, "After theological college some ministry students who are strong evangelicals are at sea from the critical stuff. They hide it or bury it. This might be the origin of it."

"No it's not; it's her internal mindset. Yours I worry about too."

"I'm not going to go nuts. I've had a remarkably smooth transition."

"It's your attitude. I contacted you, I even got Christine to contact Allie."

"Allie. Did you check your phone. Did you know?"

"Yes."

"That's it, Allie. That is it with you. Your research here is *over*."

"Christine told me we should not return. Look at the message! Look!"

Adam cannot get Linda to respond. Jenny has attacked Adam's left shoulder with a knife. He says she is contained in her bedroom. If you get this, do not return back until Jenny has gone. This could be any time tonight or even into the morning. Christine.

Allie said, "I asked to go and have a bath. After Maurice left me I read the message. I didn't want to disturb you two."

Adam said, "Ah, so you *were* having sex with him. And don't blame Allie. Christine was right. My message was in reaction; Christine considered the situation, even from afar, and at least she'd replied. I'll tell you. We had to shut Jenny in the bedroom on her own, hoping that she wouldn't smash a window and try and get out. The ambulance people coming for me found her distressed; they called the police and she was removed."

"You could have told me, Allie. Like in the bus?"

"You wanted quiet. I didn't know what to say."

"Anyway," said Adam, "she'd have killed you, Linda. She hates you with venom."

"Please show me your arm and I'll put another plaster on."

"Don't come all sympathetic for me. The bandage is good. So you had a good dose of his circumcised penis? Did she Allie?" (Allie didn't answer.) "Which leg did his sperm choose to run down?"

I said, "Adam! I think we should go to hospital. For you."

"I already have an appointment later today, thanks to the guidance of the paramedics. The clinic will inspect the wound and probably change the bandaging. So are you converting to Judaism now? You can't circumcise a clitoris, can you?"

"I'm trying to find a different footing, new ways of proceeding."

Allie asked, "Do you want me to end my research?"

"No. But take it as a warning. Start to do what is expected, and be more positive."

I drove him (and Allie) to the surgery for his given appointment. The nurse-practitioner chose further drugs to assist the healing.

When back, Allie had a peculiar request, given all that had happened. "Should I stay with you, like before? I mean, in between you two, in bed? You might say something."

"Adam?" I asked him. "We're not going to talk church exactly are we?"

"No, I won't."

"Allie, you'd better go to your house."

So after she looked at him and looked at me she turned and went out of the building.

When it was bedtime, and both were undressed, and we had been in the bathroom, I said to Adam, "We need to bond better. Perhaps we need a less-loose relationship."

He got into bed first. "Too late for that, Gomer. You do know that Fatima was spotted in Serninsea," he added.

"No?" I responded. I got under the duvet too.

"Fatima's probably seeking out Rhiannon Fleetwood. This Rhiannon is a bit of a loose cannon. You're too full of yourself, too full of the rabbi. Literally. Gomer indeed. Well, I think Liz went to see her but she has said nothing."

"Jenny?"

"Not Jenny. Fatima! Something is going on. It could be that Jenny knew, and exploded."

"I want a fuck, Adam," I said.

"Ask around," he responded. "Someone in Serninsea or in Wytham will give you one. Hey, I know: why not go and have a roll in the hay with Allie?"

"From you, Adam. You could call me Tamar or Rahab, a prostitute and a madam, if you think that of me."

"Gomer seems sufficient, from his sermon."

"Goodnight Adam. Mind how you lie on that shoulder."

"Thank you. I do know. Seriously, why don't you go to Allie's house and sleep with her? Have you not ticked her off your list yet?"

"Adam! I don't know where she lives. Do you?"

"No."

Introducing Connectivity (Monday 9th December)

Matters over the weekend calmed but were not good. Allie was very quiet too, disappearing on Saturday to reappear with her hair looking fantastic, this at the same time as starting her period. Otherwise she just followed her duties and then kept her distance all weekend. I did recommend she read, as I was doing, Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, one post-Christian and one radical Jewish, both feminist.

Now we had a short year-ending conference happening at the Titansea Grand.

The Bishop of Bolingbroke was due to be present at this conference, but there wasn't such a bishop. I was due to be there as a National Church local priest, but I went instead as an independent bishop with a local congregation. Councillors were there, and the recently re-elected Tory Member of Parliament (an increased majority: I'd voted Liberal Democrat). Colin Cromer would have been present, but was gone for good, and so the Reverend Rhiannon Fleetwood had taken his place already.

Allie alongside me in her leathers said, "Oh no, she's here."

"Tell me, how do you know her? Don't conceal things from me."

"She trained at Taunton Theological College, in the Somerset diocese. No one would touch her. Rochester took her as a hardline evangelical, if that's what she was."

I then said, "We saw she's full of herself, talks about herself."

"Who's we?"

"Peter and I had the benefit of her presence. You weren't present."

"I seem to be missing important encounters. I'm not even getting my research right. She's horrible. I'd better not say any more."

"You realise my relationship with Adam is effectively over. But, er, about you. Taunton is a big place, Somerset is bigger, and you were a student but not at that theological college. So why would you know her? Speak up!"

"Her reputation, including among tutors. She was insignificant but we all knew of her."

"You are still saying nothing about yourself."

A businessman stood up to speak first.

"Here we go," Allie said.

"I get more blood out of a stone."

"We are partnering up with the local town just as a start to our great ambitions. This could well be a leading smart town and will generate livability, workability and sustainability. Let's make this a programmable town to create a central platform to drive the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and those all-important algorithms for decision strands. You know, SMS, of that measured old technology, has gone, and let's replace it with the new to drive a partnership with the local authority. Councillor George Hale, please."

"Thank you Furqan Ahmed, of ConnectSernin, a new, small firm in Titansea - and just what we want. Through this drive for change we can develop deep-penetrating services from health and social care to where to park your car. You will be able to make effective transport decisions. Enhanced data sharing means better decision taking. We are supporting this investment: we could become a very smart town and the new year could unlock great opportunities."

After some forgettable contributions, and then comments, someone in the

audience, a lady called Janice Peel, made the obvious point: "How can we make good decisions about transport if there is so little choice. The old technologies in transport need to be present for the new to make sense."

Rhiannon Fleetwood stood up and maybe assumed too much about her role. "Thank you everyone for making these presentations to this our town for its future. The National Church Diocese of Wytham wants to encourage all it can as consistent with its new national document, *Faith in the Seaside*. ConnectSernin that opened out proceedings is exactly the kind of business we need here, and I am pleased to say that Furqan is a member of the local Charismatic Church. Obviously it is not ours, but it is a good Christian body and I have begun to make connections there. I want this expanded parish - spreading the length of the tramline south - and Serninsea Marshes parish to become 'smart' in themselves, so that we have our own intelligent dashboard just as the local council would like for its services. I'm sure Foss as a county will want to follow on where Serninsea gets ahead - and our parish leads the way under my guidance."

No longer in the National Church, I had no place in the running order to say anything. So we just listened to contributions, talking optimistically and all of them skirting round the fact that SMS had gone and the dock was effectively finished.

Some time after some milling about with pleasantries and drinks, Rhiannon Fleetwood approached Allie and me. This was another a long-haired redhead - probably fake - approaching a shortened haired blonde with another long-haired redhead, definitely natural and incredible.

Ah, you're Allie's and up here too," I thought I heard her say.

I replied, "I'm not Allie's, but it's an interesting switch-around."

"What?" asked Rhiannon.

"Allie Shrimpton," my accompaniment stated. "This is Bishop Linda Jupitas. I am her researcher."

"I know who you are," said Rhiannon, looking at Allie.

"Bishop Linda, meet Rhiannon Margaret Fleetwood."

Rhiannon looked at me directly. She asked, "So what's your weirdo religious lot called, Bishop of them?"

"Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia. As you know, we're building a local congregation."

"Huh. Allie, my *friend*, come up and see me some time alone. I'm in the vicarage, don't you know. And, Linda Jupitas: there were days when in the National Church you went even to Margate. I know all about that and now *Faith in the Seaside*."

"Indeed I gave a paper at Margate, and Allie was there as well, as it happens."

"But you've walked off, Mrs. Jupitas. No one will listen to you now."

"Unlike you, I was born here, and I know this place, and here is where I intend to stay. And don't hide the fact that the Confraternity Vanguard regarded you as one of theirs."

"Well, they might have, but that was a mistake of theirs. I'm my own woman, always my own woman."

"You *might* have gone to South Wales," I said.

"Be careful what you say, Linda Jupitas. You might have made some money one way, but you could have hefty legal bills the other. And now you're free to practice a bizarre form of heresy. Brought in by the diocesan, I am being recognised."

We're making changes. I'm setting up a local branch of GARFOB."

"What's that?" asked Allie.

I said, "*Global Anglican Reform Fellowship of Orthodox Belief. Fundamentalism.*"

"That's your opinion," said the priest-in-charge.

"Interesting," said Allie.

The Reverend Rhiannon then said, "I'm inviting *you*, Allie. Do you keep your mouth shut, as a researcher?"

"As a researcher I do," she answered.

"She does," I said.

When we departed, and walked a while back to the church, I said to Allie, "Well, come on, this woman was one of that group's hired vaginas. No doubt about it. If you know her, I want to know why. Are you a hired vagina as well, Allie Shrimpton? And what's this about me being *yours*? Why would I be *yours*? Could I have been a client of yours? You two wouldn't be working together, would you? Come on. Say something."

"Linda. She is a trouble-causer. She was in Taunton, like I've said. She went to Rochester for long enough to become pregnant twice. I told her to get lost, and she regarded *me* as lost even studying Folkways. I can assure you, honestly, telling you as much as I can, that I have no connection with her other than knowing her as an irritant. Whatever *she* is, I am not a hired vagina - as you put it."

Linda said, "There was a man here who's gone. He was the Reverend Jim Wilson. He was a religious sadist."

"I read your piece."

"Is *she* a religious sadist?"

"I don't think it matters if I say she knew a priest called Doctor Andrea Lindsey in the area, perhaps Andrea Plimpton now because she married the Suffragan Bishop of Sumorsæte. See how *that* goes. Andrea is no fundamentalist. Rhiannon's fundamentalism must be suspect. Rhiannon was friendly with her to improve her reputation by association."

"Has she got children in the vicarage?"

"I heard they were adopted as soon as she gave birth, each time."

"I'm suspicious of you, Allie."

"Then you'd be wrong on this matter."

Elizabeth Huett was in the vestry. "Ah, Elizabeth. Rhiannon Margaret Fleetwood has invited Allie only to the vicarage. Not me, but Allie."

"That's why I wasn't at the introductory Connectivity Meeting. I don't want to meet her at all."

"Why not?"

"Because, of all of them, she was and is full of arrogance and self-importance."

"Does she share the same rejection of Augustinian theology as you do - and me, for that matter? I mean, GARFOB is all about original sin, and every form of sin."

"Exactly," said Elizabeth. "It's cover. She is all talk. Jim Wilson walked the talk like a sociopath will. That's the difference. She is a duplicitous narcissist."

"You thought he wouldn't do anything to me."

"I thought Terry Barman had enough control over him that he wouldn't. Terry lied to me."

"Allie here says Rhiannon formed a kind of picket line with Andrea Lindsey."

"I didn't say that. Andrea wasn't involved in picketing anything - that's typical of how Rhiannon sucks people in by association."

Elizabeth said, "Rhiannon knew Andrea down in Somerset. I know that they are very different."

Allie said, "Andrea Lindsey is a priest but, hmm, perhaps a neo-Pagan in flavour."

She married Lynton Plimpton and might regret it," said Liz.

Allie added, "Rhiannon stayed single to be available, I think, to whatever pleasures came her way but ended up pregnant - twice."

Liz said, "Jonathan Eyre was both her kids' father."

Allie said, "In Chester, before Somerset, Rhiannon had her birth name of Briana Margaret Stewart. Look, I'm starting to influence things here."

"Keep away, Allie," said Elizabeth. "She is of Scottish lineage, and she is thirty-five. How she ended up in Somerset I'm not sure."

Allie said, "Same as me. She went to the University. She did Computer Science: theories, methods, practices and strategy, programming languages, computing architecture, construction, engineering, software, packages and design, right, and all these towards a wide range of computer-based systems. I wouldn't be surprised if she doesn't moonlight at ConnectSern."

I corrected her. "It's ConnectSernin. ConSern is a pub, as you no doubt know only too well."

Elizabeth returned to the topic. "Being the new Vicar of Serninsea won't be enough for her needs for excitement."

"A priest-in-charge," I said. "Not quite the same thing." I looked at Allie, but kept quiet myself, noting that she seemed to be well-informed about the computer course. "Tell me your connection, Allie, with this woman."

"Please believe me," Allie said. "I have no interest in her. The Fenians are coming with her. Andrea was a good 'un but I despise Rhiannon. In any comparison: I love *you*, Linda."

Liz raised her eyebrows, smiled and went out of the vestry and in an arc towards the kitchen, probably to conceal her face.

Allie immediately turned, walked rapidly from the vestry and ran out of the building.

I thought, 'She *loves* me?' I was going over that in my mind, in the sense of when did this thought come about?

Aftermath (Tuesday 10th December)

I had something of a lie-in. Had Allie said she loved me? What was that all about? It wasn't as if we'd said loving words or indeed gestures. In fact our relationship was pretty poor.

I got up to have breakfast from the main kitchen. I found Allie sat in the seating and dining area eating only toast and butter.

"You're later up than usual," she said.

"What are you wearing?" I asked Allie Shrimpton

"A rubber suit."
"It's like you're going diving."
"I like the blue across the top, and the shapely fit. Your post has just arrived."
I opened and put to the side three letters and held one for reading again.
"Now then, our Reverend Deacon, we've received recognition to do all marriages."
"I need the toilet again."
I thought she must have gone home.
Some hours later she was back in the building, looking white faced.
I needed something to say. "Have you been into the Blue Diamond Club recently?"
"I shouldn't answer but the answer is no."
"Are you planning to go at all?"
"I plan to cover as much as I can."
"Have you been shadowing Christine much?"
"She took me visiting street prostitutes; I've seen some webcam people at work. I did interview her about ecclesiology. I'm telling you this when perhaps I shouldn't."
"Right. You see, back at Margate, we got on so well, and now we don't. Clearly, there is a relationship, but it's not working."
"It hasn't from the beginning."
"You *love* me?"
"I was comparing you with Andrea Lindsey and Rhiannon Fleetwood."
"I don't know what that means."
"Andrea I fancied a lot, and Rhiannon I despised."
"See, I didn't want to love you, I wanted to hit you. That's my raw emotion."
"Hit me then."
"You're kidding. I'm sort of saying..."
"Go on."
So I half-heartedly directed a punch to her face, which she stopped with her hand, causing a small deflection. Her face and eye movements suggested that I have another go, so I put a more direct effort into it.
Once again I was deflected.
She said, "You can't win. Just start treating me properly. That would be a start."
"You're quite right," I said.
"I'm going to paint," and Allie left the building.
Later on, coming out of the vestry, she was back again. I approached her and said, "Get your feet off the seat."
She did take her feet off the seat and sat up straight.
I said, "At least I thank you for that. I've nothing for you to observe."
"I'm going back home," she said. I assumed she meant to her house and perhaps to do some more painting. Of course she had been painting me, producing two nudes.
"Okay, as you wish."
In fact I wasn't quite sincere. Peter had messaged me that Bristol had used 'Old Catholic' on the national website in terms of our identity. My message sent to them was to get the Old Catholic reference off the national website or we'd have a statement of our own locally contradicting it. I pointed out that this was without

consultation and either we were a collective Church or we were not.

Later in the evening I was surprised that it had gone.

In the night I was in bed on my own. I assumed Adam was staying in the spare room above his business.

Narrator: *Allie Walsingham* (Wednesday 11th December)

Linda had become suffocating in Serninsea, not helped by having my period in full flow. I hated watching Linda make love with Rabbi Maurice, though I doubted she would end up marrying him. He was as much interested in my body as hers - the bath he prepared.

The 'love' I declared was more in frustration than actuality, but it was more than Adam's for Linda. He'd had enough of her. Christine had messaged me that she'd given Adam a room in the next house to me. He shared it with sex workers - when I had a house to myself! Linda would assume he was above the detective agency in his spare room, but he didn't want Linda to find him.

I wasn't successful with women. Annie Fenwick was nothing more than a performer. Klärchen Sisse and Salome Lichtblau were too interested in their dogs: they did do fantastic hair washes and treatments for humans and dogs.

I decided to take a break (at least) by going home. I did intend to give explanations to my family. I didn't want them to know I was in Serninsea until I was established because I didn't want Jonathan coming to find me. I would now see him and explain.

There was an early morning bus to Wulfstan, and, my bag packed, I was on it. The bus went through the coastal resort of Trichead, known by locals and holidaymakers as 'Triccy', and it terminated at Wulfstan, a drain's journey from the coast. I connected with a bus that went to Norwich via the northern route, thus stopping principally at Kings Lynn and then Fakenham, where I got off. Then it was the case of getting a local bus north, and finally walking. The walk was from Great Walsingham along a rural road and then another and then on to a footpath (parallel to the road) that crossed fields and went behind my parents' farmhouse. On that road Columns Farm is on the left and Selions Farm is further down on the right. Both names were connected, meaning field strips as in the old system of farming.

This footpath cut across our property. Further beyond the footpath forked and the right fork went to the road outside Selions Farm.

They had no idea I was coming. Very often the Rogers in my house and the Jenners in theirs worked and sometimes lived together. After all, Jonnie and I had done so through childhood and our teenage years together. We were all related in a criss-crossing family tree down the ages.

I could see my mother in the kitchen at the rear, who was clearly very surprised to see me. She came out and we hugged, like I was the Prodigal Daughter, and she said, "Alice, I'll get you a drink and have something to eat; have you come all the way from Somerset?"

"No. I have a lot to tell you."

"Let me put the kettle back on. Everyone is working at the Jenners, Jonathan too. Have you told him you were coming?"

"No mum. I wanted to get away at Somerset. You know that. And then I started my actual research, so I've been living in Serninsea in Foss."

"Serninsea? Tha's a rummun."

"I'm researching a coastal independent church. It's ethnography, part of what Glastonbury does."

"Never mind 'ethnography'. How long have you been *there*?"

"Not long. Only one and a half months. I first met them on 29th October. Enough to get established and then to come here to sort things out."

"I must ring your dad, your Aunt Sally and Uncle Paul. Jonathan felt so abandoned."

(My aunt Sally wasn't. Originally Sally Fraser, she was my third cousin twice removed. My uncle Paul wasn't. He was my third cousin three times removed. Not only was my Uncle Paul the spouse of Aunt Sally, but he was also her third cousin once removed.)

"I did write to Jonnie, mum, afore."

"We saw the letter. We were all sad and we had to help him. It was a shock. Jonathan wondered what he had done wrong. You 'came out' by letter, though we knew the tensions before you went."

"He hadn't done anything wrong at all."

The kettle boiled and water was poured into the teapot.

Mum asked, "How did you get here?"

"Buses. If you're patient, they do connect."

Mum rang through, and the one person who could be spared straight away was Jonathan himself. When he arrived he paused before we hugged and kissed by mouths. My letter had said.

I will always love you dearly, Jonathan. I regret nothing. But I would lie to myself if we married and it is not good enough just to do this for our families. I love you, but only you among males because I've grown up with you and I am used to you so intimately. I seek women for my fulfilment and could only love a woman. This is why I've had to go, and go far away, and we have to break physical contact. Already I desire my new tutor, and if she ever made an advance to me I couldn't resist her. I'm sorry, but to be myself I have to be somewhere completely new. I will come back but from a new situation.

"You broke moi 'eart," he said to me only a few greeting sentences in, still hugging.

"It broke my heart too, Jonnie, but I was tearing apart inside. We'll need to talk."

"You ran away. How you kept your application a secret for so long I still don't know."

"It wasn't easy. Somerset accepted it and I had to go. You know that my parents and yours supported me going, after the fact. And I have had a new and exciting time over there."

"Things were good here."

"You like this life, but it narrowed me. I told you that much. I love studying and learning."

"You didn't come back after being a student."

"I'm still a student. I'm so different now - I even dress differently. I talk differently - our quest together to lose our dialect has gone much further."

The others came in. "Hello stranger," said dad. "So you've come back in the finish."

I gave him, Aunt Sally and Uncle Paul hugs.

Soon at the evening meal they asked why Serninsea of all places. "I met a woman curate in a conference on coastal communities in Margate. I did some art of her - she even posed naked. I wanted to research some sort of community folk gathering institution, and when my professor had heard she'd gone independent and was setting up her own place I needed to go there."

"So have you got together with this woman?" dad asked.

"Because of the research, I can't. There is a kind of relationship, but a personal one is frustrated. And I've been fumble fisted."

Uncle Paul said, "So it hasn't worked out then."

"The research is interesting. Did you hear about the scandal in Foss?"

Sally asked, "Is that the same woman?"

"Yes. That's why she went independent. As I understand it she didn't do anything wrong, but the storm was too great with people leaving left, right and centre."

Sally said, "She was involved in sex parties."

"No she wasn't. She exposed them. She investigated the group and only got involved that way. Her new partner made a lot of money from the media from his investigating and controlling the investigating. He gifted her a church, although he has ultimate control over the property."

"Sounds a canny bloke," dad said. "So she fancies men."

"And women. He don't miss a trick."

A little later on I was asked the inevitable connected question. "How long are you staying for and where are you sleeping?"

I looked at Jonnie next to me on my left. He nodded. "As was usual."

"But," said dad, "he'll square you up."

"Well, we must talk."

Jonnie said, "It allows us to talk one to one and know where we are. We could have done this a long time back."

"After only one and a half months in Serninsea? I was in relationships in Somerset and finding my feet."

Mum asked, "Have you had relationships, then, with women I suppose?"

"Two awkward ones. A tutor and a secretary."

"With your tutor?" mum asked further.

"Yes. She made a big difference to me. The other one was an older woman still."

"This priest, then," Aunt Sally picked up, "sounds like another authority figure."

"She thinks she is the authority figure, auntie, but it wasn't my intention."

Later on it was bedtime, of course. Jonnie could sleep in either house, so we decided to have what was now his room in my parents' house.

"Let me look at you," Jonnie said, as we stood naked together facing one another. "You look fighting fit."

"I became lethal, more like. Let's sit on the bed. Let me tell you about my lover."

"This is painful for me."

"I know, I know. She was called Abigail and she trained me over a number of years. Jonnie, I was infatuated with her and why I never contacted anyone here. She was everything to me: dangerous for a tutor to have sexual passions with a student."

"Alice, please."

"Won't take long to tell you. One day she just got a new job and told me to find my own way in life. I don't think she ever desired me like I desired her. She may have had other lovers. When she vacated the scene, a woman who gave me more Gaelic lessons..."

"Gaelic?"

"...became aggressive towards me and I was weak and accepted her approaches. She was slummocking great. I got religion from Abigail as well, a women's group it was too, a sort of post-Buddhist semi-Pagan thing."

"Means nothing."

"She's a proper Pagan in a coven, as well as now in the Bristol women's group. Some of our fighting was within that group: training in self-defence and controlling aggression. She was in the same coven as my professor - a man, by the way and a good 'un too. Roland Mitton - heard of him?"

"You could have married me and had lovers."

"Would you really have been unpossessive? I didn't think so. I broke from the secretary by going to Serninsea. I didn't love her and she didn't love me but I was in her bed most nights."

Jonnie and I went to the bathroom together, and both of us called out goodnight to my mum and dad.

We got into bed. I said to him, "I dreamt about you in me - often, but it's better we don't kiss." I felt him and he was hard. "I'm on my period but the answer is still yes."

"Why can't I kiss you?"

"Because, though I love you, we're not in love. I don't want you to get the wrong idea now that I have returned."

"We kissed when I came in."

"But not for lovemaking, Jonnie. 'Lovemaking' in that I love having you in me and I'm not going to deny you."

"I've no condoms but if you're shedding..."

"Have you been with anyone?" I asked.

"Absolutely not."

"Anyway, I want to feel you in me of course."

I put a towel down for the blood. I'd never seen such a sight before. He had running tears while he was fucking me. So I held him close while he penetrated me and he came inside me. I was actually on birth control because of the possibility of a sex cult quietly continuing in Serninsea and presenting itself to me at any time. There was always the possibility of Jonnie fucking me again.

Of course he had blood on his penis. It wasn't the first time; he'd rather liked it in the past. The familiarity of Jonnie was comforting.

Narrator: Linda *Informing Diana* (Wednesday 11th December)

"She said she loves me," I told naked Diana at our resumed get together, "but she hasn't appeared today at all."

"It seems rather sudden," Diana commented.

"I'm ten years older than her. She wouldn't conform. She is her own worst enemy."

"You wouldn't have that attitude with me."

"We are the same age. So what does that mean, Diana?"

"It means no more than it says. What else has happened?"

"I stayed over with Rabbi Maurice Neptune. Allie was there so nothing happened."

"Is that her motive, then?"

"I do quite like him. And Adam is sleeping alone, away from the church."

"I heard about Jenny. That must have disturbed him."

"Yes, unfortunately I was at Maurice's at the time it all kicked off."

"I don't know why anyone would want to consider you. You mess things up and still have all these choices and can't choose between them."

I asked her to change the subject, like on to what she had been doing.

"All right. What about Derek Imperial resigning as soon as the diocese has a replacement?"

"You weren't involved in that."

"You obviously haven't heard the news."

"I don't move in those circles now."

"I'll bring up this text. Here:"

A committee is being set up at double quick speed, said the Dean of Wytham Cathedral, the Most Reverend Alistair Jackman. He stated that there will be two archdeacons, all the representatives at the General Synod, the Chair and two of the House of Clergy, the Chair and two of the House of Laity. As there are no bishops available from the diocese, the external Bishop's Council has appointed neighbouring diocesan bishops.

'Its task of drawing up a Statement of Needs should be obvious and speedy,' said the Dean. This goes to a constructed Appointments Commission to produce two names, one favoured by the Commission, then passed to the Prime Minister. The chosen name is sent with a Congé d'élire to the Dean and Canons and the bishop will be appointed.'

"Yes, Diana, it is an arcane procedure. But what have you been doing?"

She said she'd been getting into all kinds of online activity with a community formed around her favourite novel series, *The Jacobite Gap Years*, by Gabrijela Daffron. They also talked online about the television series. Much of it was fandom giving endless uncritical praise, but Diana was pleased that the author did engage from time to time with intelligent comments, and was excited when she responded to Diana's own postings.

Diana went on a bit about the plot and locations in the television version, to an extent that became slightly boring.

"I - and others - have real admiration and love for what Gabrijela Daffron has achieved. That's real love, that is, into the past when men were men and women were women."

"What?" I asked, with some incredulity of expression.

"Lots of strong, passionate discussions, one to one, online. Love for the author, love for the books, love within the romance back in those times."

"More than Aardse?"

"You lack empathy for something different."

"I didn't think that was a criticism made of me."

When we parted there was with a little strain between us. She seemed a little strange, to me.

Asking about Allie & Visiting Jenny (Friday 13th December)

She'd been missing for days so I was asking if anyone had seen Allie. No one had. "She isn't drunk or anything is she?"

Kathryn and Kathleen were unable to answer. Then Kathryn said that Adam had not used his bedroom above his business premises.

"Are they together?"

"Adam and Allie? Really?" asked Kathleen.

"She does put it about it bit," I said of her, receiving shakes of heads.

I had a text exchange with Christine, who said she'd ask around. She came back to me with a message that Adam was in Serninsea at work having visited Jenny. Allie had not been seen by immediate neighbours.

I went to visit Jenny myself, with a nurse alongside me in case there was a hostile reaction still.

Jenny was sat in a chair in a nightie and dressing gown, and seemed dull if receptive.

"Jenny," I said, "we all hope you're all right. Has Allie been in to see you?"

"Are you two lovers?" Jenny asked.

"Er, well, er, no."

"She must be then," said Jenny, showing that there was some spark within the dullness.

So I said, "She tells me next to nothing about herself. So she's not been in?"

"No. I went to the pub with her a number of times but she doesn't like me." Jenny added. "I said sorry to Adam and to pass this on to Elizabeth. Linda, I attacked him while blaming you for everything. I'm sorry for the confusion."

(Did this mean she would have been happier if she had attacked me?)

"I have some news, Jenny," I said. "Elizabeth no longer occupies the room; she *is* still in Serninsea."

"I asked Adam about Yojana. He only said she is well."

"Yojana Asthana?" (First I'd heard of this.)

"Yes. That was the spark that blew me up; I suppose I connected much together. My Uncle Bill has been involved somehow. Don't know."

I was wondering why no one, absolutely no one, had mentioned anything about Yojana and him to me.

After much coincidental chat, Jenny ended with, "Give my love to Yojana and when you see Uncle Bill."

Therefore I went to Adam's and found him upstairs wanking again.

"The film is called *Love* and is from 2015."

"I can do that for you - just as a friend."

"No thanks."

I asked why Jenny would refer to Yojana: did he have anything to do with her?

"Would it matter to you if I did? After all, you spread it about a bit."

"Given her association with my husband, yes."

"It relates to her and SMS, in the sense of my ownership of the lease of the casino building upstairs. She is a client and it is confidential."

"So Yojana was why Jenny let rip."

"What she said made no sense. Her head was all over the place. It wasn't relevant. Jenny must think Yojana upset your marriage. Keith and Yojana were at those orgies - you know, the ones Elizabeth Huett and Christine plan to bring back?"

"Why would Yojana be an issue now for her?"

"Perhaps because Roger and Bella do admin at my place, she does admin, and while you were at it in Wytham with the rabbi, they came to yours and they spoke to Jenny about Yojana as a client. I've since stressed to them about the confidentiality of client."

"Oh. You're not coming on our Christmas mission to Bever Wood?"

"Definitely not. And if Christine, Elizabeth, and it seems this Yojana arrange one of these so-called 'orgies', are you going to that?"

"No: I rule it out. So what is it: Yojana has the contacts?"

"Exactly. Christine gathers the supply side, as in the extended Werburgh Geese, and Yojana has the demand side, getting the people up here."

"Is there something involving Bill Masters?" I asked. "He's been in and out - seeing Jenny I suppose."

"Oh dear. Your eye really isn't on the ball. Allie knew all about this. I saw him because another religious group like his somehow obtained documents by which to claim he is not properly apostolically ordained, and he wants to know how they found out. Apparently, his consecrators were themselves not properly ordained."

"Not the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia?"

"No, before that; but these independents have a chain of gossip. Your LAE could lose its reputation. Pauline was ordained bishop separately. Bill Masters is considering how he will get ordained properly. He might do it through others, but then he would not be incardinated, he tells me, because he was incardinated into the LAE as a bishop when these documents claim his ordination was false. Does this answer your interference in my business?"

"Yes it does. I won't talk about it with you again," I said. "Do you know where Allie has gone? No one has seen her."

"No, I don't. And, by the way, now you have the bed to yourself you can invite Allie in every night if you want."

"I don't know where she is; that's not to say I'd invite her over if I did. Right. I'll see you when I do."

And so I spent another night in bed on my own. I did some calculating and

wondered if Allie would return only when her period was over. I'd no direct experience to draw on about its effects.

In Search of Allie (Monday 16th December)

Having not seen Allie and no one knowing where she was, I went to Adam's business premises at 9 am Monday morning. I went past Peter, Roger and Bella to ask Adam a direct set of questions.

"You're bright and early," Adam said.

"We have a mission starting Thursday and Allie is still missing. No one knows where she is and surely someone would if she was local. I have my SUV outside and I'm likely going for a long drive. I'm either going to Somerset or to Norfolk to find out if she is at one place or the other."

"Better pick the right one," he said.

"Well, which one would you pick?"

"If she's given up the research, or asking advice over how she gets on with you, she'll be with her professor finding out what to do."

"Glastonbury then."

"I wouldn't."

"So where would you go? I suppose you'd say wait for her to come back."

"Perhaps she'll come back in time for your mission."

"I need to sort things out with her. What do you know about her?"

"What I know about her would take me to her home in Norfolk."

"Why?"

"Because at home she is called Alice Rogers. They are not called Shrimpton at all."

"What?"

"I can repeat it."

"Come on Adam, something is going on here. What do you know?"

"Oh, her aunt and uncle living nearby aren't really her aunt and uncle."

"Has she been feeding us a tissue of lies?"

"But her name at university has been Alfia Shrimpton." Adam smiled at me.

"Come on, this is serious. Where do I go? Where is her home?"

"Collumns Farm, Walsingham. It's beyond Great Walsingham to the east. There's a nearby farmhouse as well. I forget its name. Peter!"

He came in. He said, "Living at Selions Farm is a man Allie's age, her fourth cousin I think once removed. He's called Jonathan. On that basis her uncle is her third cousin three removed and her aunt is the same cousin but one less removed. The Rogers and Jenners intermingle as families. Sounds like Alice was due to marry Jonathan. They had sex with each other. "

"She's not even a *lesbian*?"

Adam replied, "Apparently she is. She ran away - probably what she is doing now. He is like a brother to her."

"In her sermon she said next to nothing - I can see why now. She mentioned some Alice Shrimpton. So who was she then?"

Peter said, "We eventually discovered - Bella and Roger and me - that Alice

Rogers is in fact the four times great granddaughter of Alice Shrimpton. That's why, given an amazing family tree, Akemi Tamuuz is related to Allie. Her father was a Shrimpton. I forget him because there was a Philip, a Patrick and a Peter or maybe more than one."

"It seems that everyone knows about Allie except me! Collumns Farm then. Well, if she isn't there I can alert her parents. I'm going to pay them a visit."

"And it is nearer," Adam said.

"And has Ann commented on you leaving me on my own?"

Peter said he'd return away to the reception desk.

"She says I must do as I prefer but to leave you running the church as we'd arranged. So I enjoyed our time together, but you were only ever a good mate, a 'fuck buddy' they say, and you clearly never loved me in the way you might have - nor me you. Elizabeth has also left her accommodation, so there is a spare room next to Kathleen and Winnie."

"What about Jenny, if she comes back?"

"If she comes back, well she could come in with me - here or there, perhaps"

"She attacked you."

"But her mind had slipped. It was you she didn't like and was confused about Yojana and also her uncle - another one who isn't an uncle."

"He's her father. That's rather different."

"Calling distant cousins of a higher generation 'aunt' and 'uncle' isn't exactly a crime. She'll have called them that as a kid, just as she was put to bed with Jonathan as a kid."

"Are they a bit odd in that family?"

"That's your department. They started as babies."

"She's told you this? She told you but never told me? I'm going there."

"I think you might be making it worse if you go with that attitude."

"Hmm. You're probably right about that. But I'm going there."

So I left him and said bye to the others, to get in the SUV and go south. I took the main road through Caffenmere to get on to the Wulfstan road, and then headed further south to the Norwich road, but in bypassing Kings Lynn I headed for the Fakenham bypass and then took the road to Little Walsingham and Great Walsingham to go east.

I stopped with Collumns Farm ahead on the left and could see Selions Farm further down the road to the right. Each farmhouse faced the road and seemed to have many outbuildings behind them. My first strategy was to simply watch.

Narrator: Allie *A Surprise* (Monday 16th December)

On Sunday evening we all went to the pub. Jonnie and I stayed on. I got hammered and had Jonnie's arm around my shoulder while I threw up into the toilet. He stayed at our house with me and I had a massive headache in the morning.

He fucked me with my period ending but was he frustrated! We were working together on fence repairing in Selions Farm, when he said, "I'm feeling horny. There's no one around."

"We are busy."

When we walked back towards the Jenners' farmyard he asked, "Can we do something here?"

"Before we do," I said, "I need a piss." So I did a squat in the open and then he whipped out his tool for the same reason.

"Go in then?" he asked, with it still hanging out.

"Can't you hold you hard 'til tonight? Anyway, I've got to contact Professor Mitton and ask for advice on what to do. Either I'll have to find a comparative church or I'll have to go back."

"Suck me off then and make it quick."

"Jonnie. As Beathag used to tell me, 'You're insufferable!' It's fucking freezing."

"Who's Beathag?"

"Beathag NicAmhlaigh, the Gaelic speaking secretary. Look, let's go in and after washing hands we'll go in the front room."

In the front room we went, when I instructed him to drop his trousers.

"What are you like?" I asked as I did my mouth duty towards my cousin.

He said, "Still no kissing?"

Releasing him for a second I said, "No. You've got to get yourself a girlfriend." I put him back in.

"Where does a farmworker find a girlfriend?"

I had no answer and sucked deeper.

"What does it taste of?" he asked as he started filling up my mouth.

"Shalty a bid," I replied.

"Lunch is from your mum today, although you've just had yours."

"Thad wad the condimen'."

"Swallow it. We're late as it is."

So my mouth still tasting him, he was restored with his trousers up and we went arm in arm out of the house and up the road towards Collumns Farm.

He said, "That up there is a Škoda Kodiak SUV, Alice. It's a seven seater."

"Linda has got one of... Oh no. Oh heck. That's her number plate. You'd better come with me. No one is in it; have they let her in?"

Jonnie said, "I thought I saw a figure in there, but I might have been mistaken."

The option of dodging around the back of the farmyard using the public footpath made no sense if she had gone in, and if she was in the car it meant she'd seen us and was hiding. Nevertheless it was an opportunity to confront the subject of my research about the future even if before ringing the professor.

We unlinked our arms in approaching the vehicle beyond the farmhouse. I came alongside the front passenger window and there below she looked up at me. Linda thus sat up and the electronics lowered the window.

I spoke. "You obviously found the address."

"Who's your friend?"

"He's my cousin, Jonathan."

"Ah yeah. I've, em, come to claim you back. I want to apologise. Have you said to others what happened?"

"Nope."

"What happened?" asked Jonnie.

"Never you mind," I said to him.

"Have you left us?" Linda asked me.

"Not yet. I was going to ring the professor today. Look, come in. This is my house, though we tend to go between this one and that one."

"You've got some stuff on your face."

"Jonnie, give me a hanky. Thank you. Come and meet our mothers."

"She's not called Shrimpton, is she."

"But I am. I changed my name - first name as well - after nearly a year at Somerset University. But mum still calls me Alice."

Cousin Jonnie said, "So do I."

"They all do. Are you coming in then?"

"Yes. I'd like that."

"Tell you what - drive that into the farmyard because the road is a bit narrow."

"I thought vehicles could get by but will you go around the back then?"

"Yeah, we will."

So our mothers greeted Linda at the back door.

"Mum, auntie, this here is Linda Jupitas, who runs the church I am researching at Serninsea. She's come over here to find out where I'd gone."

"You make a habit of not telling people where you are, Alice. Welcome Linda, and in you come."

"Linda, my mum is called Alicia and Jonnie's mum is Sally. For your information, my mum was Alicia Fitzgerald and my auntie was Sally Fraser."

"Not Shrimpton, then," Linda said quietly.

Linda was offered a (simple) coffee and we three sat at the table in the kitchen.

Mum said, her back to us, "Tell us about yourself, Linda."

Linda said, "I was brought up in Serninsea. My family is from east Nottinghamshire. I went away to East Midlands University and also to Bishop Querceto Theological College but returned to the coast. I got married but it's ended. I'm a minister of religion, and I was an Anglican curate but you might have heard about a scandal in my area so I left and started my own place and this is what your daughter, your cousin, is researching."

"She is actually bishop," I said.

"Allie, I call her, is a participant as well as an observer..."

"They go together," I added.

"...and so I made her a deacon of the church."

"You didn't tell us that," Sally responded. "You have responsibilities?"

Linda said, "She does. You did on Sunday but you weren't there."

"Alice does tend to vanish at times," mum said.

"Allie did say your family tree goes back."

My mother answered, "Yes, Linda. We are in and out of each others' houses. We co-operate a lot, and we are a very intertwined family."

Sally said, "Today Alice and Jonathan were doing some fencing repair."

"We were always doing that," Linda said. "We were mainly arable. My parents and sisters have now gone to a completely different farm in the hills of mid-Wales."

"Very different," said Auntie Sally. "It's not fenland where you are?"

"No, but quite flat and marshy in many places."

"And your church: it's just yours then and not part of anything?"

"I think it's good to identify with a movement, and we do with something called

Liberal Catholicism. It's a tiny tradition, Liberal Catholicism, beyond Old catholicism, once connected with Theosophy and had a dalliance a bit with Buddhism and Hinduism, possibly Unitarianism, and not a little magick."

Sally said, "You've lost me there."

"Never heard of them," mum said.

"I hadn't, Alicia, until I encountered them via a distant friend."

"So you identify with that, and does Allie then?" mum asked.

"Only as a vehicle," Linda replied. "I think Allie has had a different religious background."

"She and Jonnie were C of E."

"I mean at university. Come on Allie, tell me something at least."

"I was in a post-Buddhist women's neo-Pagan group. My tutor, who became my girlfriend, was also an ordained witch."

"Really?" Linda asked.

"That brings me to a question," my mother added, turning around. "When she runs away, she runs away from someone. I'm really pleased she is back with Jonnie. What is her relationship with you, precisely?"

Sally immediately said, "I'm pleased she is back with Jonnie too but we shouldn't be carried away, Al."

"Well, Allie doesn't tell me much because she thinks me knowing too much about her would affect the direction of events in the church. She wants to be neutral and invisible. But when I look up the role of a participant observer, I think she is misunderstanding this. She *can* tell us about herself."

"I do tell others, to get along," I said.

Linda asked, "Do you not realise how frustrating this is? Beyond any personal, er, friendship, feeling, I have pastoral responsibilities. As a minister of religion, I have concerns for you. It is supposed to be a community of support. We, and I, worry about you."

"I'm quite capable of looking after myself."

"Is there more?" my mother asked Linda. "Are you here only as a shepherd finding a lost sheep?"

Linda said, "I see her now with Jonnie; I don't want to invade the space."

"I'm a lesbian," I said to Linda. "Jonnie is my cousin."

Sally said, "I'd think it would be rather difficult being this minister and having a personal relationship."

Linda replied, "Yes it would be. Starting a relationship with a member of your congregation is unwise. It can be seen as privileging one person. It has to be avoided or done with rapid clarity. It's more true that we keep away from each other."

"I told you I love you," I said.

"Oh," said Sally.

"Oh," said mum.

Linda reacted: "But... Look, is this the place to speak about this?"

"Definitely," mum said. "Jonnie wants clarity, for one. Lunch is nearly ready - we grew most of this ourselves."

Sally suggested we go into the dining room, and so we did, with spaces for the men.

Linda said, "Allie and I first met at a conference in Margate and I thought your daughter, your cousin, was a fabulously resourceful and fascinating woman. She

drew me in."

"You're lesbian then," Jonnie said.

"I'm bisexual. In any case, gender is complicated. I should know."

"You're not a trans?" Sally said. "You're tall and your hips are narrow, I noticed."

"With *my* breasts?"

"Some trans breasts hang very nicely," said Sally.

"No, I am a type of intersex. I was born and grew female but I have male genes. I am a woman, and feel like a woman too in my mind, but I can't have children. With a female partner, the other one must do all the having children."

"Oh my," my mother said. "You'd be the father?"

"No, I *am* female. My internal testes don't work that way and I don't have ovaries. My testes produce oestrogen."

"Gosh."

I then said, "I also connected with Linda at Margate, and when the opportunity arose to be with her again I jumped at it."

"There we are," Linda said.

"But we cannot get it together, it seems."

"Well, we should and *could*. My latest partner has left me."

"I mean, you being a minister of religion and me a researcher."

"Trouble is, your confidences seem to be about more than research. Odd saying this in front of everyone. You and me have much to work out."

"We can work it out," I said back.

Linda responded, lyrically, "*Try to see it my way, Do I have to keep on talking till I can't go on?*"

The men joined us, said hello, but, although they realised Linda had come back for me, they seemed full of what they were doing and continued to do after they had gone.

When the men came in later we all had one evening meal.

Uncle Paul was the families' expert on genealogy, and he asked Linda for her birth details.

"Second of April 1979, Serninsea Cottage Hospital, as it was known then, daughter of Leonard Bode, born 5th April 1955 in Dunham-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire, and Elizabeth Lavender, born 12th February 1957 at Fledborough, which is just to the west of the River Trent."

"Just writing these down. And what about your paternal grandparents?"

"Elderly Robert Leslie Bode, born 1st January 1902, Saxfosdyke, died - I forget the day - in 1981, and Felicity Don, much younger, born 14th July 1926, in Dunham and both died in Dunham, and she outlived him by just under a year, 1982. Robert Bode was supposedly the son of Jane Waters like his siblings, but his actual mother was Janet Anson who was born in West Stockwith up the River Trent and died in Gainasburgh (that itself lies east of the River Trent) in 1950 aged seventy-five. I'll just consult a document via my phone. Yes, Janet was brought up by her mother Rebecca Anson née Donner with her partner Mabel Wood née Walland born in 1846. However, they each married gay partners who were ex-miners from the north east and each woman had one child each from their respective men. There were three children, however, because Mabel first had a child from, er, close family relations. I'll write it down unless you have a printer that will take this document."

"We don't need that," Paul said.

"Mabel's brother scarpered, and the two honourable men became bargemen going up and down the Chesterfield Canal, the Trent and the Humber - the result of which was indeed meeting Rebecca at a West Stockwith pub."

I said, "Clearly the bargemen had made contact enough with Rebecca and subsequently Mabel to reveal themselves as gay."

Linda said, "The story might have been embellished. I think Becca's gaydar worked and thus introduced Mabel. By the way, there was 'the barren woman', the sister of Harold Anson, who stayed in the north east. She might have been like me."

"And the maternal ones?"

Linda didn't need a document to say, "John Lavender, born in 1930 in Darlton and has just died on the first of this month. Emily Waters is thus now his widow, born 1937 in Ragnall, eighty three. Amy with the maiden name Bode, born 1911, was John Lavender's mother. Amy Bode is the grandmother by marriage of Leonard Bode *and* his aunt. It's a feature of village life, as your families testify, that family trees criss-cross."

"Okay, kid, I'll do some research," said my 'uncle'.

"Uncle Paul," I said, "I have a relative that visits Serninsea from Hartlepool. She is my sixth cousin, a five year old girl called Akemi Tamuuz, taking her mother's surname. Her father was a Shrimpton. I can give you the details."

"Later, lass."

I could see what he was going to try to do: link Linda in with our family tree, if he could. Linda had spoken of people from the north east, but I was talking of the line that went to the north east. The north east is a large place and the branches didn't have to meet and match!

Narrator: Linda *Meet the Rogers and Jenners* (Monday 16th December)

Trying to hide inside the SUV was a bit silly, with Allie looking through the passenger window. I'd have taken a flannel to her, as my mother did to me, although my mother never wiped smelly semen off my face.

Allie's family proved receptive, first her mother, Alicia Rogers, then her aunt who was a cousin, Sally Jenner, and then the two men, Alfred and Paul. Paul looked elderly, as old as I'd expect Jonathan's grandfather.

I was a new project for 'Uncle' Paul the genealogist. My grandfather Robert Leslie Bode (1902-1981) was, we took it, the son of Jane Waters, but there was no resemblance. He was fifty-two when my father was born in 1955, and died after he'd held me but before I could know him. Robert was one of unmarried Janet Anson's children from different married fathers. I knew of our family tree but never really gave it too much attention, but 'black sheep' and 'dark horses' always interested me. She was both, Janet Anson (1875-1950), the daughter of coal miner Harold Anson (1850-1902). Harold's actual partner was gay coal miner Arthur Paul Wood (1850-1923). Both moved from Thornley to Shireoaks to escape their reputation, but it did not work and so both then worked along the Chesterfield Canal, the River Trent and River Humber for more personal freedom. They were then based at West Stockwith. Harold married Rebecca Donner (1840-1921) from Church Laneham in our location

by the Trent and she was the mother of Janet Anson. Rebecca's actual partner, Mabel Eliza Walland (1846-1926), born in West Stockwith by the Trent too, first had Jack Wood (1871-1957) as the product of incestuous rape by brother Colin Walland (1844-1916) from nearby Misterton. Mabel soon gave birth to James Wood (1877-1946) in Misterton in 1846, marrying Arthur Wood (1850-1923) beforehand. Jack, Janet, and James were raised together by Rebecca and Mabel despite the variation in surnames. Harold Anson was the son of a single mother Margaret (1831-1886), who herself 'escaped' from Easington on the coast to Thornley to act as a widow.

I wrote this down for Paul Jenner. So I could match Allie's strange family tree.

They called her Alice all the time, including Jonathan. Despite thinking I'd take her back, I stayed over, and that raised the question of where to sleep.

Allie said to me, as I came out of the loo in the evening, "We'll stay here and you are in my bed. It'll be a bit of a squeeze."

"Oh Allie, find me another room if Jonnie is sharing your bed."

"No, he has to get used to me being with someone else."

"I don't have any nightwear."

"We don't. Look, I've got back with him here on the basis that he knows I need a fulfilling relationship. Just go along with it."

When we'd had supper, and clearly her parents knew what was going on, we went to her room.

"It's become my room now," said Jonathan to me with Allie away in the bathroom. "I sometimes stay here, with Alice away. I'll go and brush my teeth."

He entered the bathroom and she was naked sat on the toilet, and didn't bat an eyelid.

I went and sat on the bed and was puzzled. Oh well, I took everything off.

"I'd give it ten minutes," Allie joked, as she came in carrying her clothes.

"This is a bit unusual," I said. "And you've left Jonathan in there, poor boy."

"If he's not used to my shit by now there's something wrong," she said. "We started off by having our arses wiped together by my mum and Auntie Sally. Thirty years of shared shit, Linda."

"With a gap while you've been at university."

"Well, he's pleased now I've been able to come back."

"The stink you make," Jonnie said, as he came in. "Ah, Linda: Alice said you're a naturist."

Allie then said, "I'll sleep in the middle. Then if either of you touch me, you won't have to touch each other. I'll sleep on my side to take less space and I'll face Linda, Jonnie. I'm not being rude. Linda and I have some relating to do."

That was interesting in itself. In bed Allie said, "Well, kiss me then."

"Yes, of course." So I began something that became continuous.

A little into this Allie broke off and said to Jonathan behind her, "What are you doing?"

"Kissing you. I want to go in you."

"Oh, go on then. Don't stop, Linda, I'm connecting."

It seemed to me she had multiple points of connection. She pulled me to her breasts as the man behind her was developing his own connected in-out rhythm.

Releasing me, Allie said, "I am being rude. Would you like to deal with this beast behind me?"

"No!"

"Well, thing is, if he is going to be back in my life, travelling to Serninsea from time to time, you'd better get used to him yourself. I'll move out of the way," she said. "Start experiencing what I experience."

"Allie, you are insufferable, incorrigible."

She smiled, and climbed over me, forcing me to move in to the centre of the bed.

"You're not happy with this are you, Jonathan?"

"She has told me I have to understand things have changed."

"Right. I've done worse." I grabbed his penis and wanked her cousin. "Are you all right about this?" I asked Allie.

"Gives me some relief from not having to relieve him, if you get my meaning."

"How many women have you fucked, Jonathan?"

"Well, no, I lack..."

"Make it two. In you go."

He said, obeying my instruction, looking up, "You're tight."

"Tighter than her, obviously."

"He's too used to me," Allie said, observing. She put her hand on the right side of my waist.

"You're not going to get pregnant?" he asked me.

"Not possible. You can come inside me, but I'll have to hold it in and go to the bathroom."

"I'll have it," Allie said.

"Dirty cunt," I said to her. "You're both dirty cunts."

"You're really crude for, what is it, a bishop?" Jonathan said, as he breathed more heavily. "So are you on the pill?"

"I'm CAIS intersex. I said I'm not trans."

"What's the case of your intersex?"

"C - A - I - S. It means my male genes were not recognised and I ended up female."

"You look pretty female to me," Jonathan managed to say.

"If you're not careful my cunt will squeeze you so hard you'll no longer function."

Allie let out an instant laugh.

"Here we go," he said, and exploded up into me.

"Here Linda, thighs above my head!"

So I shifted off him and on to her head, where she opened her mouth and stuck out her tongue, and took his output as if I was now serving her extra supper.

"You're just like at the car," I said to her. I then cleaned him up using mouth suction.

With that, we flopped down, and Allie saw no reason to cross back into the middle.

When I woke and needed the bathroom, I had to carefully remove first Jonathan's arm from one direction, and then Allie's arm from the other direction. It was then I took the opportunity to splash some water between my legs.

Homeward Bound (Tuesday 17th December)

Waking up to the motions of a man humping Allie alongside me, I could not quite get my head around how she could be a dedicated lesbian.

When he finally concluded he said, "I'm going to lose you again."

"No you're not. You'll find the church in Upper Road and people live above it. I think I'm moving in."

"Yes you are," I said, staring at the ceiling. "But next week we have our mission at Bever Wood."

"Could Jonnie come to that?"

"I don't see why not."

"A mission?" he said. "I'm not religious. I do like her paintings. Also, my dad is seventy-four and fit as he is he can't keep going like he does forever. Who's going to inherit the farm? You and I were, together. Now what will happen?"

"I came to the conclusion in Glastonbury and Taunton that I'm not really a farm worker," Allie said. "This was a constraining life."

I said, "In the scandal I considered going back to the farm, but this time in Wales. It wouldn't work."

Allie said, "I'll have to make some transition from the university, unless I become an academic. I could paint but it hardly makes a living."

"Ah, 'A R', the local painter."

"There's a possibility, isn't there, in that church, of making a hub for a community."

"Exactly right," I said. "It might work."

"That's the point of the research: to see if something begins. And so I have to go back, Jonnie."

Thus it was that we got up, showered (the three of us in and out) and then had breakfast with everyone.

Thus I'd met the folks and now it was time to return back.

Allie loaded her bag into the SUV with all four parental adults and Jonnie by the vehicle in the farmyard. Allie kissed them all, the longest (as a goodbye) for Jonnie. My kisses on cheeks were the same for everyone, despite the fact that Jonathan and I also had sexual intercourse.

Everyone said bye to me by name, except Paul who called me 'kid' and Allie 'lass'.

Once we drove off on this dry, cold day, I said to her, "You're so strange."

"Carly Simon?"

"That's *You're So Vain*."

"A bit like the mistake I made changing my name to 'Alfia'."

"Oh?"

"I didn't want to repeat Alice Shrimpton. She was my ideal. So I thought of *The Grateful Dead* and 'Alfia'. Alfia Shrimpton."

"It's 'Althea', Allie."

"Abigail didn't know; Beathag laughed. I'd misheard it for years."

"They were your lovers, then. *And all the girls dreamed that they'd be your partner*. Am I to be your lover now?"

"I suppose so but *we've only just begun*."

"*So many roads to choose* - actually, not."

"You touch the B1105 and then A148."

"I know. I came this way."

"Next time skirt Holkham Hall. Further but interesting."

"Yes, we can go and visit places, next time. I do know the route to the church."

"There's a *room to grow* in that place. I've had to hold back feelings for you. I did in Margate."

"And mine have gone down the wrong - if you forgive the pun - alleyways."

"I still don't know what we can and cannot do with me as a researcher. I haven't rung the professor for advice."

"Well, surely you can tell me about yourself, but not about the information of your findings. I think you've made a mistake about this."

"You're being domineering again."

"Don't be so sensitive."

"I feared we would get together and I could not be neutral. But what if we do release the hounds? You know what I mean? The security of my research as research could be badly affected. But after all that Jonnie, I'm craving."

"The role of religion is to tackle your craving."

Somewhat later on, in fact as we entered the county of Foss, Allie was looking at her mobile phone.

I said, "You can look at mine to see if I have any messages. I didn't check mine. It's in my bag."

"Oh," she said, before she looked.

"What?"

"Christine sent it to me. Rhiannon Fleetwood is going to let Colin Titan preach again at the parish church."

"That's being incendiary. Colin Cromer banned him; all the authorities endorsed it."

"Rhiannon will explain why in her midweek communion service."

"Has Christine told me?"

"I'll find out."

Allie fished out the phone from my bag and was looking at my messages. That was me trusting her!

"No message from Christine, but first there is this chap Ralph Thickett and the title is 'Midweek Sermon'."

"What does he say?"

"*Our priest-in-charge says she is preaching on intersex issues in the midweek morning service. I thought you should know.*"

"That's good of him."

"Secondly, Mohammad McArden has sent one titled 'Colin Titan' to you."

"Open that one then."

"It says what Christine has said including why she's allowing it on the 18th. Tomorrow. She is leaving Sunday to advent matters."

"I might ask Peter to attend and listen."

"Can I go?"

"If it goes in your research."

"She invited me over, do you remember?"

"Yes. You rather than me."

"Because I knew her when she was a troublemaker in Taunton and

Glastonbury too - going after the Pagans."

"Let me know what happens - if it is not part of your research."

"It is part of my research."

"Even if she slags us off, turn the other cheek."

Comments that the roads in Foss are rubbish seem to be made on any journey that happens through much of our rural county. They put a new road dead straight on a railway bed whereas they should have restored the railway or built a guided busway. As a single carriageway it was restricted to sixty miles an hour. They made it a dangerous road, and one of many, even if it avoids some of the undulations of Roman roads that make them really dangerous.

Back we were at the church, and Allie said she'd go to her house to bring some clothing items across to keep in our accommodation.

"I can take you there, you know, and bring the stuff you want in this car."

"Thanks but I still would rather you didn't know the address. It has research and artistic materials there."

"Oh, all right; it's up to you."

So I put the SUV tight around the back, and then went in via the back door, to go to the kitchen and view what the students were making for food. Shepherds pie and surrounding vegetables seemed attractive.

I'd finished this and an apple crumble and a coffee (with honey and spray cream) before Allie came in, lugging a suitcase.

"Have you walked?"

"There was a tram part of the way."

She then had food more like the Sikhs would have had, available as part of the varied offering and in recognition of their inspiration.

When done we moved to one of two settees. I put the screens on to show television. Choices were *Brexit Storm* on BBC 2, ugh. Channel 4 was stuck in its creative rut rubbish as per usual. *Charles I: Killing a King* was on offer on BBC Four. *Gideon's Way* was on Talking Pictures TV for 9 pm. Too many adverts on PBS America for watching anything. No to *Quantum Leap* on Forces TV! I switched it off.

I put on instead a DVD obtained recently, the British 4:3 version of Stanley Kubrick's final film *Eyes Wide Shut* that was so slow I shut my eyes. I dozed off and apparently Allie put the DVD away. It was from a charity shop for a quid so it didn't matter.

Allie tapped me to rouse me and said, "Wouldn't you prefer to sleep in bed? I'm up early tomorrow."

"Why?"

"To listen to Rhiannon Fleetwood slag us off, or something like that."

"Slag me off, probably."

"Perhaps you should go and see if she is obnoxious to your face."

"I'm not going there. Peter could go and tell me things directly."

So we went to bed, where Allie unpacked this suitcase and stored her clothing along with mine (Adam had removed his). A combination of the travelling and sex the night before meant that, whilst it was wonderful to have Allie in bed with me only, we only kissed goodnight.

Narrator: Allie *A Visit to the Parish Church* (Wednesday 18th December)

"Adam released me," he told me as we went to the Reverend Rhiannon Fleetwood's midweek communion service.

We sat near the exit. We would not be presenting ourselves at the altar rail. She wore a simple white gown and waist rope rather than full vestments. I was in black leathers with an orange streak and orange boots, with my black shiny shoulder bag. Peter was as if at work, not quite a suit.

She arrived at the sermon standing at the reading desk. She was using two sheets of A4 paper.

"Through the written word, and the spoken word, may we know your Living Word, Jesus Christ our Saviour. In the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Amen.

"One of the most fundamental parts of being human is to be male or female. But some people are not. What should be the Christian attitude and approach?

"What does the intersex person do when coming to know Jesus as Lord? Can they stay as they are?"

"There are arguments both ways but the Bible in Genesis is clear: we are divided into male and female. So if you have a Y chromosome you are God-given as male.

"But let me be inclusive, as they say, for a moment. I am taking guidance from the *Nashville Statement* at the Southern Baptist Convention in America in late August 2017 and signed by over 150 Christian leaders from different denominations and folk from different countries, as we shall see.

"Although the concept of 'intersex' is not directly mentioned, Article six says that the intersex *are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about 'eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb'. With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.*

"They should live a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ, it explains.

"I like to be up to date so in June this year the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America passed *Overture 4*. This endorsed the *Nashville Statement*, a document written by the Presbyterian Church in America Council on *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. This constitutes Christian guidance.

"Article five denies *that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.*

"Article six says that those born with *a physical disorder of sex development - that means intersex - should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.*

"There are many ways to be intersex, about thirty or so, but theologian Denny Burk says that what is crucial is the presence or absence of a Y chromosome. Some people choose the sex they want, but this is Christian guidance because the Y chromosome is objective information about what is God-given sexual distribution.

"In June this year we had a Lay Reader Colin Titan give a biblical view of this topic in our parish church. He was banned from here because, apparently, he was rude to an intersex visitor. I tell you now, that ban has been reversed. Of course we should not be rude, but we have to be clear, and having spoken to him he was not rude but he was clear.

"Let's develop our understanding of the Christian revelation. For example, at the general and concluding resurrection the binary nature of saved humanity will be preserved.

"Jennifer Cox, who takes a soft view on this subject, and would not be rude, and might not be very clear either, because she tends to be egalitarian rather than complementarian. She says herself that resurrected bodies will be either entirely male or female. The intersex will be healed, restored, and become as according to God's intention. She thinks that, rather than follow the chromosome, God will decide and be clear at the resurrection. The intersex will be sexed as part of being healed. I agree with the thrust of this but surely the chromosome is the God-given sign, and God does not make mistakes.

"According to her, at the resurrection those with Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome will either find themselves with reproductive systems or, as Colin Titan would maintain, they will be resurrected male.

"We have a minister of religion in this town, a self-styled bishop, who parades her femininity and being intersex, something she once kept quiet. She - *if* she is resurrected - will find she has got it wrong.

"Well, you may walk out! But Jesus came with a sword, remember. And Colin is right about transgender actions being in denial of the given biological sex."

"Excuse me," I said to the woman leaving. "I'm a researcher. Who are you and why are you leaving?"

"Madge Jack. This is the last straw."

"Have you finished there? As I say, Jennifer Cox is soft on being intersex. She affirms the bodies we have, before the parousia of course. Her book is called *Intersex in Christ*.

"You see, all this bodily variation and confusion is the result of sin, original sin. Thus all sorts of conditions exist that in the sinless world would vanish, including those that deny the binary character of sexual distribution. I'm surprised you are also leaving, Helen."

She said to me, "Dreadful. She'll ruin this church."

"Name?"

"Helen Eris."

"Miss, you are not researching in this church! Look, everyone, ask yourself if intersex or transgender people are really happy. Few of them are happy. They have troubled upbringings in and out of doctors' surgeries. Some of this might not be their fault, but the confusion is in contrast to Christian clarity. Doctors are only trying to help.

"Some say that we who assign a sex are biblical fundamentalists. But, in fact, we are not. If we went by the Bible alone, the men that appear to be women would be taken to be barren women. It is science that tells us that God made them male. We use science as well.

"But we shouldn't operate just so that people 'look right'. Oliver O'Donovan called this being 'Gnostic', in 1982, and N. T. Wright has repeated this as recently as 2017. A man who appears as a barren woman should not be made to appear as a male. Dr. Denny Burk, who in fact was one of the authors of the *Nashville Statement*, opposes such alterations of malformations. This way we are part of the Fall, and we do live and let live. Let the malformations be. But we can, he says, still raise the person to be of the male sex whatever the appearance.

"Let's not think this is just some form of American expression. This year two hundred Dutch evangelical leaders endorsed the *Nashville Statement* with the addition of a pastoral statement.

"A wonderful politician, Cornelis Gerrit "Kees" van der Staaij, signed the *Nashville Statement*. Mr van der Staaij is in the Dutch House of Representatives and Leader of the Reformed Political Party, and he stands against abortion and argues for theocratic government - which Christians should. I rejoiced when up and down the land people stood for political office in a definitive Christian Party.

"But take what has been said today as a marker. The new society in Upper Road preaches sin. We preach against sin. Do not go there. It promotes malformations and behaviours as if they are some original blessing, and that cannot be right. There is nothing original about it; the fall affected everyone and thus the need for salvation: salvation available only through Christ."

Rhiannon Fleetwood reminded us that only the confirmed in recognised churches could come forward for communion - as if Peter and I would!

At the door to leave she said to me, "I'll excuse your habit to research; I'm just pleased that you found out about today's sermon and that you came to hear God's truth stated by me."

"I was hoping to meet you, whatever my habits. Bye Peter."

"Who's he?"

"Part of that 'society'."

"Oh. I did invite you to my vicarage. Would you like to come along soon?"

"Could be now."

"I need to see everyone go, check that we're securely locked, cameras go on standby. I have an hour or so to see you. I'm very busy these days."

"I'll hang about then."

I did and as she left I followed her round the corner. At the vicarage door she said, "Wait outside please and I'll be back to let you in shortly."

It was quite cool outside and I looked into the street. So two women had walked out. Madge Jack was already though our door on Sundays. Then Rhiannon opened her vicarage front door.

"Alice, come in," said my fake redhead opponent when at Somerset. (She was a brunette.) She was now in simple black clerical gear with an all round collar

"Get my name right, Rhiannon," I said. "It is Allie, or Alfia. Or I'll call you Briana. You wouldn't like that."

"Horrible name. I hated it."

"You renamed yourself after a pop track."

"Better than misnaming after a rock track."

"Hmm," I mumbled.

"Sit down in here then. To think that Colin Cromer had this house for decades. And now, it is mine."

"Convenient."

"Curate at Rochester, I was, briefly. A year and a bit. Didn't need any longer."

"Do you know the parents?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"You think about them?"

"No. You only knew me when I challenged the Taunton and Glastonbury Pagans. Your lover - your tutor - went to Bristol, so I lost interest in her then."

"Lynton Plimpton, the Suffragan of Sumorsaete: did he have any connection with Jonathan Eyre, the Suffragan of Margate?"

"You can stop your investigating."

"Sumorsaete passed you on to Margate via Rochester?"

"Two and two do not make five."

"Who sent you to Rochester?"

"Mind your own business. I was happy to lose the sight of your face only to then see it here."

"Did you have sex with Andrea?"

"Ah, that's for me to know and you to wonder. What I know is that Taunton Tantria, and your exploiting lover Abigail Randall, were a pretentious lot."

"Abigail was wonderful."

"She soon dispensed with you."

"And now you're here. This GARFOB thing here: that's bollocks. Your behaviour doesn't follow their principles."

"Also for you to wonder and me to know. Don't research me, you deflecting cunt."

"Deflecting?"

"You never tell the truth, *Alfia*. You run away, they say. I bet you are here to get into Linda Jupitas's knickers to do your intersex fanny investigation."

"That's for you to wonder - except, if I was, I've been going about it the wrong way."

"But you will get her knickers off, and then you will run away again. You're smiling. You've already had her knickers off. Yes you have! You're despicable."

"I love her."

"Don't make me laugh. Why would you, of all people, love her?"

"Because she's got purpose and ideals. I fancied her in Margate."

"Back to Norfolk you'll go."

"Where do people like you come from? Elizabeth Huett told me to stay away from you. I won't let any of you get at Linda. I stopped Jonathan Eyre and I'll stop you."

"But what about Maurice Neptune?"

"I don't know."

"You think Elizabeth really joined your lot?"

"Shown loyalty so far."

"Elizabeth on the theology of orgasms: she's right on that. But she makes a mistake: she bases her theology on experience. Ask Christine Vine, she'll put you right. The children from Jonathan Eyre are chosen by God. Having good orgasms, Alice, is evidence of being chosen by God. That's not experience, just confirmation. I have good orgasms."

"A shithead like you, chosen by God?"

"God chooses in advance. Anyway, God is love, including erotic love."

"Did you have a session with Abigail Randall?" I asked.

"What do you mean by a 'session', eh?"

"Did you fight?"

"She had *no* chance."

"You're such a liar. I couldn't beat her. I finally got her to a draw, and we exhausted each other. She could beat you easily."

"I'm not frightened of you. I have the Lord on my side. You dabbled in Witchcraft."

"So you say."

"Professor Mitton? Dr. Randall? Come on. You slavered in their company. I bet you went all the way with them, witch."

"You definitely had private times with Andrea Lindsey. I don't know how she can marry him."

"Ambition, dear. Lynton makes promises, and if you do what he wants - fair play to him - he delivers. So what about you and the Serninsea Vestal Virgins then? I might start picketing them now I'm here. Will you join me? I will definitely preach against them, and expose them for what they are. Pity Christmas is too close now. So *busy*."

"I'm not joining them, that's all. I couldn't as a researcher. Anyway, I'm seeking something different."

"You're missing a lot of cunt there, Alice, with their hanging discs - a good bit of the old piercing through all those clits. Yum yum, Alice! Is yours pierced?"

"Nope."

"Care to show me?"

"Nope. And my name is Allie or Alfia, as I have already reminded you. I'll show you nothing. I bet if your remaining congregation knew how this conversation was going..."

"But, as a researcher, not hoping to influence things, you're not going to tell them! I'm going to picket not only the Vestal Virgins but this new church."

"If you do I'll square you up and lay you out. You leave Linda alone. You're just as vile as you were. What you've done already is worth punishment."

"Try me. I told you, the Lord is my protector."

"You're mad. Christine is crackers, but at least she has a rationality about her. You don't."

"Come on then. Not sure there is enough room in here. I want to fight you. You'll be out of practice. Fight in the garden! It isn't overlooked. The graveyard is next door, behind the hedge, which is where I'll leave you when I'm done with you."

"Fuck off Rhiannon."

"You're a chicken."

"I can't be bothered. You're not worth it."

"Under instruction from your true love?"

"At least she thinks outwardly, unlike you - you narcissist."

"I'll take it as my win, then."

"All right. She might be magnanimous but I don't care. No half measures. I'll square you up definitely and I'm not being encumbered by clothes. If you say the garden isn't overlooked..."

"Oh what *fun*," said Rhiannon. She checked the CCTV through her television and then went and locked the front door.

We went out through the back door into the garden with its high surround hedges and we undressed out there and I lay my bag down. She was bushy below, brown in colour. I was growing a bit after being shaven at the ordinations.

Rhiannon said, looking at me, "No hanging disc. I'm just thinking of Linda going in that fanny. If I win this, I want my fingers in there."

We faced up. When we clasped hands I kicked her immediately and furiously

in the groin with my left foot; it clearly hurt her badly, so that the clasp of our hands was released. As she lowered, I elbowed her hard on her back, and she went down flat on to the lawn. I kicked her hard in the side and it did hurt as intended. I took her left arm and dislocated her shoulder, and then put her arm back in its socket.

I said to her, in agony, "You always were a pile of shit. I am going to warn you, Rhiannon Margaret Fleetwood, Briana Margaret Stewart. Come near that church negatively, make a slight noise at the Vestal Virgins, or any of the people involved in that place, and any more of your preaching against Linda, and I will put your dead body in that graveyard. And don't think I won't."

Still on her front, on the grass, she said, in between her groaning, "Colin Titan..."

"I don't care about him."

"Let yourself out. Further down there is a gate. You can survey the graveyard. Leave out the back."

So I dressed as she lay motionless with her groaning, in the cool and damp of the darkening afternoon, and I left the way she'd said.

"God bless," she said quietly, still flat, as I walked.

Back at the church, I said to Linda, "Arternune."

Linda responded, "We had a couple of visitors - Madge Jack and Helen Eris. Helen is still here, Madge went to see Bella for lunch. Madge seemed a little curious about naturism. Talking of bodies, there is a hint of sweat about you. You didn't turn the other cheek, did you?"

"We had our own issues from her bothering me in Somerset. I tried to turn the other cheek but she was desperate to slap it. I'm going for a shit."

"Did she slap it?"

"No, I dislocated her arm and then put it back."

"I think I'll have to be more careful with you. Oh, Peter is sending me a sermon summary from memory."

"Tonight, Linda, we make love not war. It's time we did."

However, after evacuating, I went to 135 Toulouse Road at the time that Linda went alone to see her friend Diana. I filled another suitcase and brought it to the Bethel to unpack it before Linda had returned. Back again at my house I relaxed myself by painting.

After that I went to see Annie Fenwick at the boozier. I wore a latex bronze-coloured rose-patterned short dress, and I added a bronze coloured cape with hood. Linda was in bed when I returned, as Annie (in better shape) resumed webcamming, and could only hope that, asleep, Linda wouldn't smell the alcohol on my breath. I crashed out without undressing.

Chapter 25 Naturist Mission

Narrator: Linda *Naturist Club Ministry* (Thursday 19th December)

"We're making an early start," I said to Allie. "Is that what you are going to wear, before it all comes off?" She was dressed in a latex bronze-coloured rose-patterned short dress plus bronze coloured cape with hood; her legs were bare and her long boots were shiny black. Her face was white.

"You slept through last night. I wazzup 'arly with headache."

"I had a good piss and slept like a log. Did you bring more luggage over?"

"Yeah."

Downstairs Allie felt the need to spend ten minutes in the unisex toilets before emerging and twirling her spoon in her cereals. After breakfast the people going along to the mission gathered together.

Allie asked, "Can I take a dokey on our trip?"

"A what?"

"Food in a bag."

"Don't play with your breakfast then."

"I'm getting some'ing for later, mawther. Ars finnicky 'cause I don't fare too well."

Eventually after some distractions I went around the back to reverse my SUV. Allie followed me to assist. She said, "Remember, I am still researching on this mission. It's about the church developing - its identity, it's outreach."

For a busy time at the club, we'd booked a series of double rooms, thus forcing people to share. Knowing this, Allie said to me, "We might need different bedrooms, where I can be closer to a different voice."

"Leaving me already? Look, I can reverse around this corner myself."

"I'll separate and go back to the loo and the others."

"Separating already?" I asked. "Well, hurry up!"

On board was Diana next to me, Kathleen with Winnie, and Allie sat at the back with extra interested persons Sally Torrance, Paula Campbell and Bella Jack (her mother Madge wasn't confident enough to come).

Peter drove Kathryn and his props in his van. Christine was taking Bill and Pauline in her helicopter, piloted by Leon Agnew. This meant that Adam and Elizabeth stayed back, each holding the fort, and Jenny was in hospital of course.

Roger was reluctant to go but had agreed, organising his visit himself.

Given what Allie had said, and because I wanted to repair matters further with Diana, I suggested in the car that I would share with Diana.

Allie said, "I'd like to share with a lead person."

"Defined as?" I asked.

"Christine or Diana. Possibly you. There are others but Kathleen and Winnie will have a room, so will Peter and Kathryn, and Bill with Pauline.

"Leon will do his own thing," I suggested. "It leaves Sally and Paula. What about Bella?"

Diana said, "I'll go with Paula and show her the naturist ropes. Someone could assist Bella."

We hadn't even got to the Wytham bypass before Allie wanted to stop. She went behind a hedge and I heard her throw up, and she was having a shit too. Fortunately my efforts at timing my own bowels were paying off. We waited for her.

"Perhaps she is pregnant," said Kathleen.

"I think," said older Sally, "that she had that gear on last night, and, wherever she crashed out, she didn't get undressed."

"Credible explanation," I said.

"Very credible because she and her mate Annie Fenwick were downing the drink."

"You saw them?"

"By accident. I was with other friends but I recognised her."

I went to the boot and retrieved a kitchen roll I kept available and handed it to squatting shitty puking Allie. I said to her, "You and I need a talk, young lady."

"I am only ten years younger than you, so don't call me that."

Peter and Kathryn pulled in, recognising car and people. So we soon left in convoy and stayed close throughout. Allie was grumpy but stabilised somewhat.

At registration was Lindy Peacock, who allocated half the number of rooms as people.

Christine would share with Bella and Sally in a larger room. Bill was with Pauline in an outside hut. Diana would share with Paula. I was with with Allie after all. (Leon was staying outside the centre and its parkland.)

Kathryn was to stay with Peter and Kathleen was staying with Winnie..

So the cars' missionaries moved from registration to the cloaks area, to undress, and grab the towels before proceeding. Paula, displaying visible labia, some stomach bulk and small breasts, seemed uncertain about her nudity among so many other strangers. Bella assisted with positivity and then Diana took them to her room. Allie decided to have a shower soon having not had one. Kathleen and Winnie had their hanging discs on, although we did not use our Werburgh badges - how could we?

As a bishop, I decided to wear my donated pectoral cross between my breasts while walking about. Every corridor, every space, seemed to have Christmas decorations including several indoor dressed conifers.

My first task was to go along to Diana's room to speak to Paula.

Bella said, as I went in, "My mum would love this, Linda. I'm minded to tell her to come."

"I think it's full up. *Paula*: everyone is different," I said. "Did you notice the vast range of shapes and sizes of the folk here? Some are quite elderly. All these folks will accept you as much as we do."

I thought I'd go looking for Jeremy Symes, to find out how an ex-minister of religion might respond to a mission, but on arriving at reception for directions I bumped into a newly naked brother and sister, Roger Humphrey and Marie Enfield. The resemblance was obvious, including the pubic hair, except that he had something of a hosepipe bending down and large hanging testicles below. This was the first time I'd seen Marie at all and she had a descending string.

He said, "We prefer to be like outpatients. We are in a bed and breakfast down the road."

"Why?"

"Because of who we are."

I was searching for something to say. "Well, do join in with the mission, both of you."

Jeremy was finishing off a final Christmas tree in one of the corridors. "It's a job," he said, "and quite a varied one. And I get to be starkers all day, like Lindy."

"It has that advantage," I said. "Do you want to join in our mission?"

"We'll just be your hosts. You're doing a mission to us, not by us. Lindy is a receptionist as well, properly."

"Right, sure."

"I like your cross," he said.

"It was a gift from Gretta Cox-Jenkins."

"The queer theologian?"

"Yes."

Back with the crowd, and Allie too, Diana whispered to me: "Roger is a surprise. He's gone off somewhere with some woman."

"Sensitivities, perhaps."

"The size of him?"

"It must be all that donating."

"Well, Adam is always wanking and he isn't like that."

Paula!" I called out loudly. "Use the towel to sit on, not to cover yourself up. No one cares. You'll be fine."

Paula came over. "It's just that - how do you do it?"

"Do what?"

"It's all on display. Between your legs."

"Paula. It's the same as the rest of me. That's the point. You were brave at the Bethel, and you are brave to come more into the public. But this public does the same as you."

"It was a small group; we got to know each other."

Diana said, "Some have a lot of pubic hair that covers them, like Mrs. Saraga; some have big labia like you that shows beyond their hair; Linda has no hair and exposed labia and clitoris. So we are all different."

Paula went on.

Before Diana went outside, I asked, "How do you know about Adam's excessive wanking?"

"He's always been like it."

Hearing water in the room opposite our bedroom I asked, "Are you still in the shower?"

"I didn't know where to go to have one. Then it was obvious."

"I'm coming in. I'll soap you."

"I've already done it."

"I'm not doing it just to clean you. Let me come in there."

There was no need to undress, of course, other than my pectoral cross, and although I had a sponge to create a foam I used my hands to apply shower gel to her body. Having done this to her front, and turned her to do her back and bottom, I turned her around again and gave her a long kiss to her lips, with a mutual hug. Her hand went between my legs but she removed it to apply the gel to me as I had to her. After my twirl we kissed again and we basically enjoyed sex under the flowing water.

In our room, where we dried each other with towels and a hairdryer, I felt quite

animalistic and wanted to be all over her. Laid out on the bed to receive me, she said, "Fist me."

"Fist you?"

"Start with fingers and go in up to your wrist."

"Do you *like* that?"

"I wouldn't ask if I didn't."

"Okay. Here goes."

I went from two to three to four fingers and folded in the thumb. She took my arm to push me in further.

"Get your middle finger straight and get to my cervix."

Allie started riving about, her eyes going up into her head many times, I said the only way she could do it back was in my anus. "But I'm trying not to open all that up again."

"Then I won't."

So the sex ended there, and in any case there was a knock on the door.

Hiding my hand behind my back, Christine told me, "Elizabeth and Yojana Asthana are arranging the New Year party with SMS to be held above the casino. We've decided to put in dividers, like screens. It will give more privacy."

"I don't want to know, Christine. Sorry. Elizabeth is doing it, and Yojana, but not me. That's the old group, and you are obviously involved."

"I'm here not there. Liz is on *our* team now and Yojana is a client of Adam's and free of Keith."

"Well, it is your ministry. This here is all our ministry."

Christine said, "Looking at her I seem to have disturbed you two. I'll see you later."

Allie said, "We'd finished, or she'd finished me."

Christine left us. We later joined the folks chatting, sitting and some playing table football. We had the evening meal in the dining area. Afterwards, a number of residents attended a screening of *Bever Wood Comes Alive!* - a very recent thirty-minute film of naturist life at the club signed off by Jeremy and Lindy.

I noticed that at the bar Allie kept to soft drinks and spoke to several people, making friends. She did have a confidence at the bar of chatting to many.

I was in bed when late on Allie came in. She didn't smell of alcohol, and said, "Sorry about this morning. I've done my notes for the day."

"What did you notice?"

"I can't say."

"Well, presumably you noticed that sister and brother are staying at their own cost at a bed and breakfast."

"I told you about them."

"Sally was with you last night and saw you get drunk."

"She was with friends. I said hello. What's your book, Linda?"

"It's about Christianity in the Arab world. We forget about the Nestorians, Allie." Allie lay on her side, pushing her leg into my bum. "Allie. That's nice."

I removed the duvet somewhat, to see the proportions of people and bed.

"Struth," I said.

"What."

"You're just so beautiful. Like that, Allie."

"You and I have seen each other naked many times. You're being botty."

"What?"

"I mean you're being fussy."

"But do you like my botty?" I asked her.

"Show me," she said. So I did, opening my buttocks.

I said, "Let's sleep bottom to bottom."

So that's what we did, although later I woke for the loo and she was almost on her front.

Pause Before the Mission Proper (Friday 20th December)

Next morning at communal breakfast Peter Marshall told Christine and me of a long message by phone from Adam. (It struck me that we weren't ringing each other.)

First, Elizabeth and Yojana had been working inside the church. Second, Adam had learnt - via gossip reaching Margaret McEnhill in Wytham - that Connie Wilson was no longer with Jim. Elizabeth did not know this. Mrs. Carter met Adam in the street and said that the Parochial Church Council had opposed Rhiannon Fleetwood's parish adoption of the Global Anglican Reform Fellowship of Orthodox Belief (GARFOB). Fleetwood, nevertheless, maintained her personal membership.

I said, "Elizabeth and Yojana should not be making their plans in the church but in the Blue Diamond Club."

Christine responded, "She's keeping an eye on the church, and receiving people there, as Adam is working in his office."

We did have an informal chat among ourselves when I said I wanted our church to be an open, progressive, liberal space, especially with the parish church going hard evangelical under Rhiannon Fleetwood and the neo-Pentecostals growing. Everyone agreed, including Christine for whom hard authority allowed soft messaging.

Peter approved particularly. He was giving his show, of course, and would have something on beliefs and naturalistic religion that we could debate among ourselves.

I replied. "Allie did a sermon, for what it was worth, and you can definitely do one. It's all right you grimacing, Allie, but your offering had more to do with comedy."

Allie's forced a smile at me.

Meanwhile, Paula seemed to become more comfortable with her self-presentation and she was noticed talking to some chap. Sally had found a sixty year old man to speak with too. Later on, both had vanished. Roger Humphrey and Marie Enfield were spotted and disappeared about as quickly.

When these blood relatives were spotted again I called them over. "I want to make sense of what you said before. You are here as brother and sister, but you are there, at the B and B as husband and wife?"

Roger said, "You're very perceptive."

I was perceptive about his long penis hanging in an arc, her rounded breasts and both having a neat triangle of pubic hair.

"It's how you are with each other."

He said, "I was doing an ethics topic MA; Marie was working in Leeds'

Student union. We fell in love, and realised that we had the same father. We moved in together until I completed my MA. So we haven't had and won't have any children. Marie here is in a good job administering at the Foss Upper Coast College and I am in no job, except forced into Adam's workfare."

"I wanted to ask you about that. Has the dole given you a holiday?"

"No, Adam has me as if working for him, right now. No doubt he sees advantage in it."

"You're not spying on us, or me, or Allie, for Adam?"

"No!"

"And how does the dole take your relationship? Like regarding your payments."

"The daft thing is, because we claim we are as brother and sister, we are not recognised as partners, even though any other couple would be. If we were a standard couple, I'd get no benefits and I wouldn't be on workfare."

She said, "We love each other, and we are not going to change that for anyone. But we moved to Serninsea to get away from the Leeds area villages. Serninsea has cheap property. We don't want to have to move away again, but, if it comes to it, we will."

"Marie - you are very welcome with Roger and as you are in the church. I won't address the matter again as an enquiry. As far as I am concerned your relationship is your business and clearly you know about genetics and diversity. You're on your period?"

"Yes. Is that okay?"

"Of course. If anyone in the church gossips then let me know and I will tackle that. You're as entitled to your relationship as I am to mine." (However, I didn't mention which relationship of mine.)

Interviewing Diana

I interviewed Diana de Groot in her room (Paula was elsewhere).

I said, "Don't be nervous. I don't bite. The point of these interviews, more often than not, is background: stuff I can't observe."

"Sure. You scare the shit out of me."

"I'm on your side. Linda introduced you to naturism."

"Aye, she did. You want to know about this?"

"It's the purpose of the unstated question."

"I'd better tell you everything you want to know. So just after Linda returned from university, she resumed our friendship and I was looking for something new. I joined Linda going to the Saxiclite Naturist Club and became a naturist there and then. I have been for eighteen years. None of Paula's reticence because previous to that, as a school friend, I'd watched her and did try it at her farm."

"I have to ask you this. You wanted a new outlook, with your friend, because you'd suffered a disaster."

"Did Linda tell you? I'm not sure she knows any of the details. She knows I went away; I suppose she can put things together."

"No, she didn't, but I shouldn't say who told me."

"You've interviewed Adam Magellan. I hate him. He was the father."

"The child was stillborn. I was so sorry to learn that."

"This child was still loved, Allie, and was named. My child was born dead, but I named her."

"That's nice. Sorry: saying 'nice' is inadequate."

"It's all right, Allie. I called her Linda, Allie. You understand that?"

"Oh I can't..." I stalled, lost for what to say.

"What's the matter? I had to bear this at the time. When I went back to Serninsea, Adam, the father, had gone. He went to the join the police. When he came back, he did so without telling me. I found out after he'd married a Romanian woman with a daughter not much younger than him. And of course he is even now still close to those teachers, property developers since, bankrolling his business, ones who had a go at him at school and should have been prosecuted; and they taught their secrecy to him and then agitated Linda and Jenny to have their go at him, the weakling. Adam and Linda both have roles involving secrecy, but it started with those teachers. These days, if Adam is around, I don't scratch his eyes out but I don't have much to do with him."

"I can't stand this. I cannot tell Linda. I cannot tell her."

"What about?"

"Calling your dead baby Linda. Yet another secret I'm keeping."

"How much does this matter, Allie? I'm not in her church."

"But you're here on this mission that shows its characteristics."

"So what? I thought you were unemotional."

"Yeah. Okay. Look, em, you are the bishop's closest pal. I understand that after she was rescued this year you stayed in bed with her, intimately, supporting her. I think you love her."

"And *you* love her, Allie. She says she tells you to 'heel' sometimes but I bet you don't dislike being like a puppy in her company. Plus the fact is that she has been damaged by events - events involving Magellan and those teachers. It's why she is dominant over you - demonstrably."

"It's not about me."

"But you are a real person. Why do you drink, for example? And it has an effect on how you are regarded. Linda is a bad influence sometimes, but she was a victim."

"I drank after I went from home to Somerset. But I got in with some good groups and people, and made a commitment to stop. I wasn't an alcoholic, but had become alcohol dependent until my focus changed. When Linda first saw me, at Margate, I was not drinking then."

"Our town is dysfunction, Allie. You're taking that in, and you're struggling. You know Linda has a low view of alcohol. She gets that from her family and its better values; she gets it rejecting Jenny's family's attitude to drink over the years. And if you want to get on with Linda, you must ditch the drink. So Linda is also a good influence sometimes."

"I am here to research Linda and her church. What you say about Adam and these teachers is good background information, really."

"Allie. Your research holds you back, that's true. You can't make any full-on relationship when following rules and procedures and required to keep secrets from her, secrets about everything that matters. But she is reacting to this as well, which

is why she is so rude so often. It does her no credit."

"Adam has business dominance over her."

"Yeah, he does - he always looks after himself, but do remember that he's still under the thumb of 'teacher'. No wonder the Romanian woman and her daughter scarpered. She discovered the real domineering wife. His wife got respectability, the UK connection she wanted, and discovered the fact that he has only disinterested sex. Don't be under any illusion that Linda has been in a relationship with him. As soon as it began it hollowed out. That's because he is hollow, Allie. I discovered that: he pissed off when my parents shoved me off to Rasa Market to be invisibly pregnant."

"I just note your opinion of him in all these connections you have. Peter doesn't have that view, nor Kathryn, nor Kathleen."

"They don't know him like I do. He fucked Cheryl Mould. He's no better than Keith. Linda doesn't know the full truth about Keith either, to this day. She's not been very good at choosing blokes. Adam could easily have operated in the manner of George Wickenby, if he'd received the SMS contract instead. He'd have followed Linda and reported to her National Church suffragan bishop. The reason Linda has his church I think is because he can rely on her. He can also extract the place should it fail. And don't forget that Ann and Labhaoise are behind everything he does. Not only is Ann loyal to Adam but peculiarly wants to see to it that Linda is all right."

"There's quite some background. Also Adam accepts Elizabeth Huett's presence because he wants her under his nose. How do you think Linda is reacting to her presence?"

"Oh, Linda thinks she's fitting in ever so well - but she's bugged off to her own accommodation! Linda likes to see the best in people: why she was so disturbed by Jim and Connie Wilson. They are the real deal sadists. But she has managed to reach out to Yojana Asthana; she'd meet Fatima Tamuuz - your relative..."

"Her daughter Akemi is my relative, not her. Sixth cousin."

"And then there is this almost disturbed woman Rhiannon Fleetwood. Linda isn't sure who she is but I bet Linda finds some good side somewhere."

"I know who she is."

"*She's* not related to you?"

"Not at all. Anyway, she won't be picketing the Vestal Virgins group or Linda's church."

"Ah, I heard about your recent encounter - the rumours. Did you leave her for dead?"

"That's wrong but I declare an interest, Diana; I did know her in Taunton. Linda knows I recognise her."

"What did you do, Allie?"

"We needed a boundary, in Serninsea, with Rhiannon Fleetwood beyond it. I've clipped her wings."

"Surely, Allie, you're not directing events?"

"Diana, from what you know of Linda, do you think this church project will succeed?"

"The tension with Christine needs sorting out - and not by you. Linda obviously doesn't believe what Christine believes. If Christine fits in with Geoff Virgo and his husband, then Linda will probably have to sort things out with them. So it may all fail, but at least she is having a go. I may have to help pick up her pieces if it

fails; that will be the end of her ministry path and she'll have to find something else to do. And what about you, Allie: are you going to be an academic?"

"Either that or go back to being a farm worker. Back to the simple life. And then it would be Jonnie and me. I don't want that."

"Do tell."

"I was supposed to marry him, and bring our families together. He's my fourth cousin once removed. We've been close since children. We tried to reduce our dialect and accent together, like our own project, and started to invent our own words beyond the Norfolk dialect. Didn't get far with that - we became too old for such a private world. Sometimes with Linda I do put the Norfolk dialect on a bit. She seems to understand some of the words."

"She never quite had the Foss accent - her family is from east Nottinghamshire - but by going off to Bishop Querceto Theological College she lost it entirely."

"Rhiannon Fleetwood lost her accent. And she speaks just like Linda. And that was in Taunton, though her accent was already Cheshire. Her parents were Scottish, and her family line is Scottish. I checked that. I was hoping something might reach around Crianlarich, but it didn't."

"Why would it? That's a tiny place. It features in *The Jacobite Gap Years*. It refers to Tyndrum as well, well before the railway arrived."

"You don't have much of an accent either, Diana?"

"No. Sixth formers tried to rise above being yocals. And now I am married to a Dutchman, and, with him as dad, my children don't have much of a Foss accent. Many accents are dying out anyway. So you give Linda a taste of ye olde Norfolk dialect?"

"Only sometimes."

"You don't do that with anyone else?"

"I did with a girlfriend called Abigail, but she told me to stop it; and with someone called Beathag, she said I should concentrate on learning my folk language I chose, her Gaelic. It was harder than Welsh, but there was no Welsh Beathag."

"And Linda doesn't know any of this?"

"Because I am her researcher. And you won't tell her, will you?"

"No, Allie. I'll do anything you say. I'd just like to see her treat you with a little more warmth. She will reciprocate your warmth: I'm sure of it. So Abigail and Beathag. Did you fight then?"

"Abigail took my left arm out of its socket, and put it back, and taught me how best to recover and to do it to others; in the end we fought each other to a standstill. Beathag was dominating in a more, older, verbal and physical way."

"So you can't really object to Linda being like a mother? She's afraid of your talents and self-confidence. At least you're in her bed now."

"So were you - I did ask."

"Is it good?"

"Slower than I expected. I'm hoping for something here. What about you?"

"What do you mean, 'hoping for something here'?"

"I want wasting. She doesn't understand it. She's too soft, too motherly as you say in the wrong sense. Was she like that with you, in bed?"

"She's worried about you. You're trying to be too independent, Allie, and I

think you don't value yourself. She's not the person to 'waste' you at all."

"She gets angry; I could use that. But you..."

"No, Allie. Don't go down that road. Start getting used to letting her love you. What are you going to do now, Allie, as a result of our conversation?"

"What about her and *you*?"

"Oh we're just friends, close friends. I'm married: I get sex from a man, Allie. So answer my question."

"Hmm. I'll make some notes immediately. I'll keep them secure: scan and encrypt them. Then I think I'll find someone to chat with at a bar here. Something like that. Oh, you don't share her beliefs?"

"I probably do, but not the formal beliefs she used to state."

"You share her naturist ideology?"

"She is far more ideological on naturism. I did not know she was intersex - puzzled why she never seemed to have a period, no tell-tale string out of her fanny - but when she said she was intersex I could see why naturism was made into her affirming herself."

"I get that. I think this ends the interview. You think she should have told you?"

"I was her best mate. She told Jenny but not me. But then they were at it and I wasn't - ever."

"You weren't just looking after Linda, recently."

"Don't question my motives, Allie! Yes, of course you can *question* my motives. I have a husband and I now have a strong literary interest."

"Hey?"

"*The Jacobite Gap Years* novels and television series."

"I hear about its fandom."

"Linda is snooty about the writing and by implication the fans."

"I'm done; I'm going. You can come for a drink with me if you like."

"No. I want to think about things. Do you insist I come?"

"No."

"See you Allie. Lay off the drink. Look at the mess over Jenny. Adam should have stepped up there with his responsibility. He knew she was at risk. But that's my point about Adam."

"Sorry, I really am, about your loss: baby *Linda*. Poor you, poor baby Linda."

"Thanks, Allie. It is something you live with forever, even after you have living children that start to grow up. Baby Linda is a wound that will not heal. And it's partly why I'd like to be on my own now."

"It's terrible. I'm going. Thank you."

Narrator: Linda *Consultations* (Friday 20th December)

I brought together a couple of chaise longues with a narrow gap in between for some 'intimate consultations' with clergy and others according to appointment times. In our naturist condition, they were to lie down on their left side facing me while I lay on my right side facing them. I had a list of the order of consulting.

First up was Bishop Bill Masters.

"Quite nice, this," he said, as his eyes moved up and down my body, his cross around his neck falling down. Mine lay on my lower beast.

"Yes, to get comfortable. Thanks for being on the mission. How do you see what we are doing?"

"An unusual combination of a sort of Christianity and a sort of naturism."

"Sorts of?"

"We're a bit irregular."

"The naturist side has ethical principles; we can show it relates positively to religion. I suppose the question is also how you see yourself in relationship to the parish we're trying to set up."

"A little semi-detached. Pauline and I have gone in with Christine, recognising her talent and her own semi-detachedness. We were our own ecclesiastical set-ups. She suits a stronger combination."

I said, "I suppose there is a little bit of tension between Bristol and here, they gravitating to higher up the candle."

"Gravitating? That would be down."

"Well?"

"We don't resist that. The mind doesn't always reflect clear cut decisions. Our bodies have rituals and reactions."

I realised he was in part referring to his forming an erection in front of me.

I said, "I'd like to see religion reflect more our ordinary, naturalistic reasoning. But there is an art side, and we eat and drink, so definitely there's a place for ritual."

His eyes moved to his possible embarrassment. So I asked about his personal life.

I meant now, but he referred back to Jenny's supposed mother and father, who were both alcoholics and swingers. It was a party, and a one off, by which he became the actual father of Jenny and not her uncle.

I asked, "Sorry to intrude, but how was everyone certain it was yours, if you were - well, queuing up and going inside your sister."

"So nicely put," he quipped. "We were sober enough to wear condoms. Mine broke inside Wendy."

"She once told me you raised her and then her parents."

"Until she was ten. Alone, I raised her."

So Jenny took him as gay, once he told her and she understood gay, a hiding strategy regarding that event of excess, so that he could never have been her father, but it became an issue when she 'got religion' as he maintained the deception.

As for now, he commented, "There seems to be a lot of incest about, more deliberate than my past incident fuelled by excess." He was probably referring to Roger and Marie.

Pauline on her own confirmed that she and Bill were full partners, in every sense, but they could not marry because of the pretence Bill kept up after Jenny grew up. Even a heterosexual civil partnership was unlikely. For Pauline, being naturist was a challenge but it was a fresh experience alongside Bill.

The Reverend Peter Marshall had something of a grower as well. I found this baffling because I was visible like this all the time. He also took to the naked life well.

"Doesn't matter," I told him, as he also glanced down his body and then covered his penis with his lower left hand. So I had a conversation about simplifying the clergy structure, that we would have more in-parish bishops to assist me and

deacons would become priests.

Did he approve? He did. I said, "We'll stick with the discipline of the Church and follow apostolic succession."

"For recognition purposes?"

"Among Liberal Catholics."

By my statement he knew I was lukewarm about apostolic succession.

He thought his entertainment and the coming lecture were essential to make the links between naturism and religion.

The Reverends Winnie Lott and Kathleen Wickenby sat together as I continued to lay on my side with my legs up. Again they approved of an across the board upgrade of our member clergy. They found no conflict in being in the Serninsea Vestal Virgins and being clergy, nor with Allie Shrimpton being clergy alongside them despite her exclusion from the SVV. Once someone had to be excluded, the next stage was harmony again as best as possible.

Another pair together were Roger Humphrey and Marie Enfield. They weren't directly involved in the mission, just helping along and experiencing the naturist club.

"Do you approve of our form of religion?"

"Neither here nor there," he said. "You all seem reasonable."

"Well, I'll be personal then. You fell in love," I said. "That's good. I have to say, close up, you have something I haven't got. Not looks, because my older sister and I look like each other, as you two do, but both of us never have have pubic hair."

Roger said, "Our neatness is part of the relationship."

"But I notice your plumbing, let's say. Sorry, but I do! You don't have large labia."

She responded, "You don't hold back your observations, Linda! I thought naturists kept a kind of silent decorum."

"Oh no! When you've got it you should show it, and show it to the best."

Roger said, "I thought this was body fascism."

"No! Far from it. Yes, you must be authentic with what you've got. But you can groom it, present to the best. Personally I don't care for make-up or jewellery, but I don't appear scruffy. I brush my hair and though I rarely sweat with any smell, I still shower, still be clean."

Looking at each other for reassurance, they smiled and nodded.

Roger said, "You're very observant. I'll be explicit, then. Our first time and you said, 'Deep Love,' didn't you Marie? I reach her cervix, easily, but the circumference fits her. But she cannot have a child from us, and perhaps I compensate by going to the clinic. There may be hundreds of children with my genes."

"You can come to order?" I asked.

"It's frustrating that I cannot fertilise my own love."

I said, "You're wearing a tampon today, Marie. It something my sister and I never have to do. Because they removed her gonads she's had to take drugs to avoid an instant menopause, and yet I will never have a menopause."

"Won't they operate on you?"

"My mother stopped them, and I will too. They say there's a cancer risk, but then there is across many conditions with women. This isn't as great as they claim. Thus the guilt."

"We're ambiguous about our parents. You seem to have good parents."

"My mother protects us, but my father inspires us. Daddy is an ideological

naturist, and leads the family. I adore him. I love walking with him in the fields, both of us naked. I'm used to him. But, yeah, people who visit the Welsh farm can get surprised. Serninsea and our farm shop did constrain her."

"Just to say," said Roger, "our father won't be buying us any presents, and he'll get none from us."

"And your mothers?"

"Just a card, I'm afraid - to the Leeds area being one direction."

Four people not consulted were Kathryn, Diana, Christine and Allie. Well, I saw them often enough.

Narrator: Linda *Allie is Drunk*

In the later afternoon Kathryn and Kathleen surprised me producing guitars (transported by Peter). I'd no idea they could even play. So there was something of a sing-song using *Unising*, from the Musicians Roll of the Unitarians, a collection of religious and secular folk lyrics. Some did some 'thinking prayers' they might be called. One person missing was Allie.

Later into the evening I asked Diana where I could find Allie.

"I don't know, I've been with you singing."

"Just that you saw her last."

Both of us went looking for her. Far off the bass of a music beat became louder. We arrived at a door behind which it was thumping. Opening the door to the blast, older teenagers and most people in their twenties were having a party. Allie, holding a half empty bottle and a thumb above its neck, was giving it some with her naked dancing among people she did not know.

Diana and I went away, and elsewhere we found a group of people playing whist on square tables. We were persuaded to make up a pair. If you won, you moved forward a table.

To close the day I went to the bedroom shared with Allie, but she wasn't there. So I removed my cross, dropped the towel, went to the bathroom, and afterwards got into the double bed.

Eventually Allie staggered in and didn't shut the door behind her. "Fugging hell," she said, with her North Norfolk twang. I stopped reading. "Ah such jollifications with..."

"You haven't done any notes," I suggested, as she propped herself up by putting both hands on the mattress.

"Wha'? Yesh I did, dun't I? No. Yesh. A'll do 'em tomorrow. I be havin' the squits again. That mardle ya'ad; I mean, why're ya bothered? Other people are so much more... interesting. What they said. Sorry, I'm bi' of a lummox." Then she let off a long, wet, dangerous fart.

"Allie, pack it in, stop slapping it on and get into bed. Actually, I think you need a wash."

"Wash? bed? Make yar mind up. Why, you're to fish me? Fisht. Feet. Try feet. 'Ave you tried feet?"

"I'm not going to fight, Allie, not you after your performance on me. It's not nice."

"I meant fisst, umm, me, feet in my... Hee hee."
"Allie, you are completely slaughtered. How much have you drunk?"
"A fair scolder." She wet farted again.
"When did you start?" I asked, putting my hand to my nose.
"When? When? Something when I thought I'd say." She moved her hand forward and gripped my wrist. "No. I *do* have feelings, yeah, and sym... bathy, you know. Ah, bath. Wash. Could have a wash."
"You don't know the strength of your grip."
"Sorry. Don't want to hurt... anyone. I'm not *heartless*. Just 'cause I says little. I don't, no do, give a tosh. Wash."
"Allie, shut up and go to the bathroom opposite and get that wash. And go to the toilet!"
"I *do* care. Linda, I do... Shit. I'm a bit shanny tonight. The room is spinning. And it's about... I be sorry for ya losh. Think I want to say... I am. I am, Linda. Just sayin', in case, because I haven't. Don't. This room is spinning and my guts..."
"What loss?"
"Oh. Loss loss. No loss, not..."
"Allie!"
She spun around and bounced on to the bed with her naked arse. She wet farted a third time. "Shit. Where's the pish 'ouse?"
"You know where it is. Go straight in front of you. I hope there's no shit on this bedding."
She fell off the bed, attempting to rise to go to the toilets. There wasn't a deposit. "Spinning... I'm going to wet everything."
I got out of my side quickly, and said, "For God sake, squeeze your lemon! Allie! Try and get up and I'll hold you, take you."
"Dunt you jam on my foot, will ya? Pish. Wash. Shit."
I took her across the corridor to the bathroom and its cubicle, and she was already starting to pee before I helped twist her around in a cubicle and plonked her down. Still peeing, she leaned over so much to the front she might have fallen off. So I pushed her up. Then she shat into the bowl (fortunately).
"My God that came out of your arse so fast. You dirty, dirty, girl!"
She stood up, and leaned on me. "Wash."
I said, "I can't wash you. You're a dead weight. Hang on to me and I'll just wipe your arse best I can and get the spray off your bum cheeks. You fucking wreck!"
Out of the cubicle, she then tried to walk in front of me, but stalled and fell back to me, so that I was holding her under her arms from behind.
Inside our room, Allie fell on to the bed, so I took advantage of her being on her front and checked her backside. It was remarkably clean. I then rolled her under the duvet. I finally got in myself. She started to snore and I resolved to find earplugs.

Whose Loss? (Saturday 21st December)

When I woke, there was the instant smell of vomit. A naked Allie opened the door with a mop and bucket, and came in to clean up the carpet, complaining of a terrible

headache.

"What loss? I asked, remembering the night.

"What?" asked Allie. "I'm cleaning up."

"You said, something like, you had conversations with other people and you are sorry about my loss. What loss?"

"Not your loss."

"Whose loss then?"

"Nobody's."

"You were very pissed last night and let something out."

"Farting? I was sick after sleeping."

"Not that. Words, dear."

"I'm busy. Can't you see?"

"I can hear as well, Allie, so: whose loss?"

"I'm not well."

"Answer my question."

"Research privilege."

"No it's not because you said you are sorry about my loss. What *loss*?"

"I was drunk and now I'm busy."

"I'm not giving up on this, Allie."

"I'm nearly done here."

"Allie!"

"What was I supposed to have said?"

"Perhaps what you actually said."

"Yeah. Did I say that?"

"Look. To my knowledge I haven't suffered any loss, and you've just said it was not my loss, but it must have concerned me one way or the other. So you tell me what this is all about."

"No."

I got out of bed, walked across to Allie, who let go off the mop so that it fell to the ground. I grabbed her arm and pulled her in front of me and looked at her directly. I shoved her with both hands towards the wall near the door. Her back hit the wall but she came forward.

"Don't do that."

"I'll do more than that."

"Not your loss so can't say."

I shoved her again so that her back hit the wall again. "What loss has someone - someone here, isn't it? - suffered that I don't know about - and then makes it *my* loss?"

"Don't know."

"You *do* know."

"It was a long time ago." She moved forward, as if to confront me but didn't.

I put my hands around her throat. "I've just about had enough of this."

Then I realised that Allie wasn't defending herself, so I loosened my grip. She started crying. She said, "I can't stand this; I just can't take this any more."

"Oh Allie! What is this? What do you know?"

"I can't tell you. Ask her yourself."

"Who?"

"Don't know."

Without thinking I threw my right fist at Allie to thump her, and she simply deflected it away with her arm. With that she stopped crying in an instant. So then I went to upper-cut her in her stomach but she moved sideways enough so that my arm threw forward and I thumped the wall - and it hurt a lot.

Allie said, calmly, "Don't do that."

So I realised her defences were working very well, and chose to say, "I only threw those punches to see how you'd react. Right. Of the people here, it can only be someone I've known for a long time. You were talking to her. Diana?"

"If you say so. Go and ask her. Be an idiot."

"You're not going to answer, are you? No. Let me think. I'm not an idiot, Allie, and I don't live in splendid isolation. Diana."

"If you say so."

I paused and looked into her eyes, and looked at her as if I was trying to see inside her head.

I asked, "Is this about when I went to university and I'd heard Diana had been away for several months?"

"Linda, I really have got a hangover."

"Thinking back, and I was away then, but she was pregnant, wasn't she? She's never told me but I was suspicious. Am I in the right area?"

"It's a naturist centre, this area."

"I've grown wise to your tricks. Of course, there was never any baby, but if there was one it might have been adopted, but why would that be *my* loss?"

"I made a mistake."

"Did she want to give it to me?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

I threw another punch at Allie, and it was simply deflected again, so instead I lunged my body weight at her, the result of which was a knee in my guts that had such force that I fell to the floor and had to get my breath back.

Allie, still in same the position, said, "Leave me alone."

I responded from below: "You... You are not sleeping in that bed with me until you tell me about this loss."

"Then I'll go and share with Diana, and Paula can come here instead."

"She is *my* friend and I will share with Diana. So fuck off now and spend the rest of the morning with Paula. Tell Diana I want to see her here. Now!"

Allie collected the fallen mop and the bucket and left growling. She bent as if to fart but couldn't. I crawled along and upwards and sat up on the bed, facing the door, wondering why this past I knew only a little about concerned me. Surely any baby was fostered to someone else and was not intended for me. Why would it ever be intended for me?

Narrator: Allie *Diana Deals with Linda* (Saturday 21st December)

Linda was on to me about 'Whose Loss?' Dumping the mop and bucket in the bathroom opposite, I ran to Diana's room, and rather banged on her door.

"Who the hell is that?"

I opened it to see her turning her head from lying on her side talking with

Paula.

I spoke at a fast pace. "Diana. Linda does not want me with her any more and she wants you to go to her now because last night I was worse for wear and said sorry for her loss and she's remembered it and wants to know what her loss is and then she started fighting me so I dodged her and then hit her back but I won't tell her..."

"She got violent with you?"

"Yes, and I tried not to but I had to hit her to stop her."

Paula said, "Oh heck. You've hit the bishop? Have you pulled *her* arms out?"

"Hit the bishop?" said Diana. "I'll pulverise Linda. She's a fool. Wait here, Paula. Sorry about this."

Diana got up and went in front of me, saying. "Follow me!"

"I don't want to be thrown out, lose my research, lose Linda."

"You won't. Let's be a bit dramatic for her benefit."

So Diana pushed down the handle and then shoved the door open with her foot.

Facing Linda facing her she said, "You fucking asshole, taking it out on her. I know you. You are an unsympathetic, ever-selfish, *cunt*. She'd spoken to me and got pissed afterwards. No wonder, with what she's having to carry. Oh, she should have kept it quiet but Adam in his lack of any wisdom spoke first and what a burden she's been carrying! You wouldn't know sympathy or love if it smothered you."

Linda said, "What? Hang on. Everyone knows things except me. *She's* come up here, and she's been around five fucking minutes, and she knows all that has been kept from me for years. What does she know about you that concerns me that I do not know? For God's sake, *tell me!*"

Diana said, turning to me still in the corridor, "See what I mean, Allie? Pure selfishness. Me, me, me."

Linda said, "I give up."

"I went away to Rasa Market and had a stillborn baby."

"Oh. When you went to... It was for a baby. It was... stillborn. Well, you would have to have given it away, and when I thought about it, when I..."

"Yes, that's what happened to me. You'd gone off to university."

"I never asked you about a possible pregnancy because it might have been a painful topic."

"A painful *topic*, like on *University Challenge*? We're talking about what happened to me, here, and my child. My body, my pregnancy, my child - you lump."

"But why does it concern me - other than you are my friend? Why is it *my* loss?"

"Allie reacted more than I thought she would. She is a lovely, sympathetic woman. If you knew how much she admires you, and yet you treat her like shit."

Allie said, "Thank you, Diana."

Linda asked, "Once more. Why... does... it... concern... *me*?"

"Because I told Allie yesterday, unlike that bastard Adam, that I named the born dead baby 'Linda'. Adam told Allie but he did not name my baby. She had a name."

"Oh, God. Why did you name it... my name? Because Adam was the father? Was Keith the father?"

Diana breathed and paused. "*Keith*? He was at university a year before you,

you fool. Adam, of course. Adam told Allie: the asshole told her about him and me after you'd left for university."

"Because he and Jenny had been with me?"

"Oh, then I could have named it *Jenny!* Eeny, meeny, miny, moe. Linda, Jenny, Jenny, Linda..."

"No, no. Okay, I get it. I get it, Diana."

"Now then, Linda: you are going to apologise to Allie. Start treating her properly. Come in front of me, Allie, and let Linda speak."

Diana moved to the side a little so I could come through and stand in front of her.

"Sorry, Allie. Yes, I am sorry, Allie."

"Instead of being violent: hug her, Linda. Go in further, Allie."

Moving to Linda, she hugged me. "Sorry for my violence," she said.

I replied, "It's fine. I'm finding things difficult."

"Yes, you are."

Diana then said, "By my calculation it is one hour before getting up, so you should take Allie back into bed. I'm going back to encourage Paula and we'll all see each other at breakfast in the dining room."

Diana left and closed the door. Linda got into bed on the far side and so I got in. She slid her left arm under my head and so I looked at her and put my left arm around her torso. She kissed me on my forehead, which was more than welcome.

"You, our researcher, are carrying other people's burdens," Linda said. "Let's just lie like this quietly."

I moaned and tucked myself more closely into her and she gave me a kiss again as before.

Narrator: Linda *Naturism Lecture & Magic Day* (Saturday 21st December)

Allie still looked terrible at breakfast, as she picked at her food, but at least she could smile at me.

"Allie, eat something properly at least."

"Yes mawther."

Diana joined us, as did the rest on nearby tables, including Roger and Marie, and Paula, and Sally with a man called Jack Smith. Diana grinned at his name - Jack Smith being a character in *The Jacobite Gap Years* novel. I asked them all to be present for Bishop Christine's lecture, who gave me a nod. She, like me, had a pectoral cross in between her breasts.

Quite a good crowd of people gathered for my bishop colleague's lecture. Christine described who we were and where we were from, and our mission was not of conversion in that we were, as she would point out, a "post-secular Church".

Diana whispered to me, scratching her left breast, asking, "What's that?"

"Diana. You're making red marks on your tit. She not only rejects secularism, she rejects the secular affecting the Church."

I didn't recall her ever using that term before but in fact it was consistent with her form of postmodernism, although she might deny the terminology.

Allie alongside me said she would record how people were responding by

drawing; she already had a copy of her lecture. She did and I did not! Part of what Christine said included:

"Listen. We are living in interesting times, when there is no religious revival but the post-secular person makes non-committed references to religion as a means of re-affirming what it is to be human. You see, The more we have technical implants from conception to living to before death, the more we are on a trajectory towards homo-technological or even our own assisting artificial intelligence, and we know that artificial intelligence raises issues of self-consciousness - what it is to be aware. But we are not convinced that technology can ever produce its own self-awareness of awareness, the ghost in the machine. At the same time, the very striving in that direction, towards homo technological, does raise the question for many of what it is to be human.

"We ought to be careful about where we are now. We project ahead about technological support in being human and asking about artificial intelligence. Anyone with vision-based, hearing-based, muscle-based, hand and leg-replacing or assisting technology is still only enjoying an extension of the mesolithic hunter who realised that he could strap his leg with a wooden branch in the hope of his leg getting better, or used rudimentary tools and - on that basis - planned the hunt. The ancients could rotate an arm around its shoulder joint until it goes back in its socket just as we do. We should realise that that the mesolithic human had the same brain as we do; that introduced to today's reasoning and technology the person would soon adopt the knowledge we use. Culturally at sea, yes, but not for long, and we are all the same homosapiens."

Allie said, She's thinking of my encounter with Rhiannon Fleetwood."

"The same mesolithic could adopt the Christian revelation or any faith too.

"Nevertheless, our culture, with its science fiction story-telling, is able to make imaginative leaps to consider androids and then in the stories ask what it is to be authentically human. Gene Roddenberry worked his rumoured Unitarian Universalism into the earliest 1960s optimistic stark no-frills humanism, with Mr. Spock combining a narrow view of 'logic' imposed by the writers on Vulcans as a whole with the earthly communicative compromises of his human mother. Funny genetics there, I think and hardly the later Wittgenstein. In the 1980s and 1990s religion at the edges appears as Star Trek encounters more cultures. Data is an android who wants to be human - emotion is the key, even with perfect violin playing. In Voyager, Seven of Nine is on the road from a collective Borg impersonal existence back to the personal and individual, but only with the support of the congregation and the pastorally minded minister, or captain. By the time we get to Deep Space Nine, cultures clash, terrorism has broken out and that naive Unitarian optimism is over and out - more a light in the darkness. Babylon 5, a competitor of Star Trek, tries to be more realistic with all these supposed sinful types out to get each other, with war and diplomacy. This is not an android question, but a cultures and politics question. Idealism is undermined. Religion becomes part of the mix; far into the future people follow revelations, although of course it is our times that these stories reflect.

"Naturism is nothing if not an attempt to be authentic on its terms, to symbolise by textile absence the perceived essence of humanity. Naturists, however, are just as likely to be technologically supported as anyone else. What naturism says is that the culture of perfection is wrong, and the ideal body is misleading. This is strange given its German idealist background and its later abuse in the madness of

Nazi Greek or Roman referenced body-beautiful, condemning the unbeautiful to lives of destruction. Naturism properly says we are our bumps and lumps and shapes: we are as we grow up with some males looking like pregnant women. Okay, some shape up, but not uniquely - by eating more naturally, by absorbing the sun for vitamin D, the excess barred by sun blocker, and by moving more for fitness. No one is against being attractive, but it's not via the airbrush and it's not by clothes. If you sit on the beach with your legs open, well, so what, because we've all got these parts and frankly this is what we look like. We all have 'this and that' with 'more or less'. There is therefore something not quite right about the naturist woman with unmedical breast implants - it rather defeats the object of what it is to be essentially human. Of course, to be naturist is still to pursue a cultural question, and it is post-secular in the limited sense that the culture of being human draws on more than an accepted understanding of evolution.

"Naturists are not as quite as anti-Christian as they were. They are still, perhaps, of the Pagan, but it's a more positive view of being Pagan, and it doesn't have to involve New Age magick and superstition revived.

"Now I'm a bishop of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia, with small gatherings throughout our nation, including Serninsea where we are from, and our connection with naturism is through Bishop Linda over there - wave! - who grew up with the Saxiclite Club. Don't boo! We are on a mission, and Linda will take a service on Sunday. As you can see, she and I are in your state of undress, hers too, and we incorporated some of the naturist ethos in her own incardination and consecration and for other ordinations. We are both ex-Anglicans. We are both positive in attitude towards sexual expression, another means of being authentically human.

"We preserve the authentic revelation by coming within the mother Church, the Church that involves valid apostolic ministry. The Church waits for and organises spots of heaven on earth until earth bursts into heavenly fruitfulness.

"What we want to do is offer generous pastoral support and religious expression in the setting of authentic human-seeking as happens in naturism. We are in the line of the Liberal Catholic: a whole variety of expressions via small Churches, some of which aren't very liberal and some that are thinly Catholic, except for essentials. Some are super-Catholic, even Eastern Orthodox. We start with the same form, that is episcopal inheritance through the laying on of hands continuously from ancient Churches. Like many, we have Universalist open tables: no one gets confirmed into membership so that all can partake.

"What we don't like is Augustine's theology that shaped the Western Church: we prefer the Eastern Orthodox view and the now defunct Church of the East view of a more mystical reception of authenticity. We thus incorporate different faiths, as the Church of the East did when it arrived in China, and we practice the use of the Jewish mikveh, a pool with steps into it and out, for (I interpret) dying into the holy water and rising, before a life event, and such submersion in water is in all effect naturist in practice. No orifices can be blocked, and the mikveh is taken at any significant life-moment - as within Judaism. The difference is we mix the sexes as do humans.

"Just a note about the entertainment later. Peter here will be working with Kathryn and Kathleen there in the kind of magic than might be called inauthentic, all about deception of the eye. He has a new trick, one where you will see and believe what is seemingly impossible or at least incredible. Changing clothes, even if loose,

very rapidly and then, when naked, changing position. Peter thinks this is symbolic of something, and it is post-secular once it has such a message.

"Peter himself is one of our deacons, although he maintains a secular job in an investigation agency. That's an interesting job, because he looks into people doing wrong things, and does it while trying to be unnoticed. But as nude people, we want to be noticed: it is to enhance individuality and our differences, not to suggest a common mass. The Church has never suggested a common mass - only a Mass that is its worship. We look after the biology and we enchant as revelatory the cultural meaning of it all - thus we embrace intersex and transgender, gay and straight, queer, undefined - and we use religion as the post-secular person does. Such is the first recognition of divine revelation that comes to us and which we recognise particularly at this time of year.

"Thank you very much."

There was good applause. Gosh. I could see her stretching to recognise the humanity of naturism, while holding up her own ecclesiology. Even Diana was impressed, if not with the revelation part.

I smiled at Christine, coming to us, to express my immediate approval, and she slowly put her right hand to my upper left arm

And then naked Diana stood up and carefully grasped both of her upper arms, saying, "That was the first time this religion thing has made sense to me."

"Well I'm pleased about that," said my co-bishop.

I wondered: that was as intellectual as I have done, so why was she understood when I was not?

Later on, Christine was stood at the restaurant bar with Bill and Pauline. Behind was Winnie. Some bloke was bending at the knees to look at her hanging disc. I was with Diana, Paula, Sally (plus Jack) and Allie. Diana needed the loo and went away. Peter, Kathryn and Kathleen were already eating.

We selected our curries and extras and found a table, Allie alongside me on my left. Diana came in to my right, and Christine arrived alone to sit opposite.

Leaning forward, I put my hand across the table just touching her chest with my fingertips in between her breasts and above her cross. "You are special and I am special, and we're good colleagues and friends despite our differences."

Peter, Kathryn and Kathleen, joined by Winnie, had eaten quickly, and the three then left to set up their show on a stage in a small hall nearby.

We arrived close to their starting time.

When the curtain drew back, the ever useful cabinet was there, a bit like a wardrobe, but it had extra panels sticking out each side. Peter was like a naked ringmaster. Clearly, one could now tell Kathleen and Kathryn apart, if only because this silver disc was still hanging over Kathleen's vaginal opening. Actually, Kathryn looked a little larger. Now this was different because, to encouraged boos, Kathleen put on a Father Christmas top and bottoms and a white beard. She went into the box and came out in a second bottomless and in a red blouse. I thought this was good because Peter was no longer relying on a twin for that effect. His magic, therefore, was developing. Kathleen then pulled a pullover on to the red blouse. The pullover had a snowman on it. Kathleen went back into the box, and in an instant came out naked.

Peter introduced some smaller tricks, including one everyone could do. He had a cork circular coaster and a diagonal square hole in card smaller than the

coaster. By pinching the paper upwards, he brought the adjacent two sides of the square together, and the coaster slipped through. He said this was thanks to Pythagoras, but some magicians might slip this into a larger trick - when it was not a trick at all but "the naked deception" of a mathematical restriction in two dimensions in space solved by using three dimensions of space.

Returning to the larger spectacle, naked Kathleen was sawn in half, and yes, a naked Kathryn emerged with Kathleen running in from the back of the hall. That was it and the show was followed by songs sung and jokes told by a succession of other naked performers - with some more *Unitunes*.

"You know, being a researcher cramps my style," Allie said to me, joining me in bed at the end of a day of mission.

I asked, "Have you been drinking again? I can smell it."

"If you must know I've just had two glasses of wine. When you saw me at Margate, I wasn't drinking then. I'd managed to stop, with the help of others. Do you know when I started again? After coming to *your* establishment. It's such a screwed-up place, your church. Plus, there's sod all else to do in Serninsea: it's a god-forsaken place."

"You're lonely. Come here and I'll give you a cuddle."

She came to me, wrapped her arms around me and pressed, and she started crying.

"Please don't drink, Allie," I said. "You are thirty years old. If you still drink like this when forty - my age - you will do such consequential damage that a doctor will say you have to keep drinking to actually stop. If you are fifty like this, it will be too late. You are a very intelligent woman, and there is no need to drink at all. Now just hold on to me." I kissed her forehead.

"I want you."

"Yes, well yes: I understand this. Just cuddle."

"You don't understand my needs."

"So, what is it then? Fingers first?"

"Go in with it all as far as you can and twist and push my cervix."

Service & Swimming Pool (Sunday 22nd December)

Diana said, "I have provided 'support' for Paula. Give her some confidence. Have you provided support for Allie?"

"Yes of course."

"Allie improved herself with her female contacts, at university, but since being here she's lost self-discipline. Even right here she sees Sally making out and then we have the incest twins."

"They're not twins."

"She fought Rhiannon Fleetwood to protect you and everyone."

"I know."

"For God's sake make love to her or something, or she'll spin out of control. You've seduced just about everyone else, and now you have a decent lass. She needs someone to take her in hand."

"I've provided comfort. It's called 'love' when less is more. Where is she?"

"Swimming in the pool, I think."

"I'll go to her."

"Leave her for now. When you sleep with her tonight, be warm towards her."

"It's not as if I haven't been."

"Anyway, haven't you got a sermon to write for this afternoon?"

"I have prepared it in my head, and instead I am going to sit at this table taking people's contact details for emails about our activities. I'll be grateful for any support: we're all on this mission."

"Your mission is obviously highlighting personal issues and problems."

"They usually do, bringing people together, and we're all here with clothes off."

Diana chose to leave me, and soon after Allie came to me damp and with wet hair, and joined me at that table.

I said, "Allie, I love you very much."

"You do?"

"I also approve of your dedication. Talk to me more. Talk to me about irrelevant stuff. Hello Madam. This leaflet explains who we are, and you can read about our mikveh."

The woman said, reading rapidly, "Why don't you do such a ceremony at the swimming pool?"

"What a good idea," I said. "After our service in the afternoon."

Then Allie asked, "Have you got an Uncle William?"

"Yes, sixty-five years old, born in Dunham like my father."

"Obviously he knows you're here."

Christine arrived and was sent off to Lindy Peacock at the reception, for permission to use the pool, probably via management, thus keeping Allie with me.

Meanwhile, Allie said, "I've had the squits again."

I said in response, "I'm a bit farty myself."

The last thing anyone needs ahead of a service, especially in a naturist setting, is a churning stomach and the desire to fart. This churn was underway while responding to queries. It was from the curry, probably, not helped by my plumbing, despite my progress from all those pelvic floor exercises. Diana came back and noticed my discomfort.

I tried a few silent farts from my all exposed bum but this wasn't easy and then I gave up, going to the toilet. I asked Allie to stay and Diana to accompany me because there is a premium on wiping your arse successfully in a naturist camp; I needed someone to check it was all right when done.

Allie said, "I'll have done it," when I was back.

"You're a deacon. Diana can do my domestic needs."

Crisis over I was able to take the service, without vestments on - just the pectoral cross as before. Christine produced four bishops' mitres, so Bill, Pauline, Christine and I ended up wearing these, and I thought we looked daft.

Our service was less well attended than the entertainment or indeed the lecture. However, I spotted Uncle Bill. My homily, or sermon, repeated some of what Christine had said in her lecture, but I was more 'religious' and cultural. This time Allie had to write, because I was speaking without notes, even if I had thought over what I was going to say.

"In a service, we are directly concerned with salvation, and the issue is what is salvation in the post-secular world, and has religion been part of the civic/ public

conversation?

"The clue, then, to the post-secular person seeking salvation, is that of personal authenticity. Unlike Bishop Christine, I am less worried about the Church side. I've no objection to proper Church order, but for me Church should be encouraging and educative, to build individuals and communities, including its own.

"The danger is that 'personal authenticity' could be anything. Arguments that fast-forward to Adolf Hitler are usually bad arguments, but we might be told that Hitler had personal authenticity. He was authentic to himself, surely - until it all unravelled and he killed his dog, his wife and himself, to add to the millions. So it doesn't quite qualify. He was unbending, unyielding, brittle, and his supposed personal authenticity took Germany down with him, having turned Germany into that cruel, brutal, meglamaniac, dystopia of evil.

"Personal authenticity, then, needs collective authenticity too, via accountability. It needs fruits. Authenticity is such that takes us as we are, and then enhances, builds up, affirms, includes as many as can, stops the quest for victims, increases the quest for discovery. Like the Artificial Intelligence that wants to be human, it wants to expand consciousness and not enslave it.

In the Second World War large numbers of men fought, and allied women went to the factories and offices and farms, women as well men worked as spies, and select weirdos with brilliant minds went to Bletchley Park to break codes; meantime in Germany they maintained the fantasy of the homely woman breeding away the next generation of Aryans, whilst the despised were worked to death as slave labour, and bureaucrats made documents in triplicate. There was no personal authenticity for the women, no place for the odd-bod with incredible minds, and definitely not for the slave labourers worked to rapid death. Humanity was denied."

I was pleased that Jeremy Symes and Lindy Peacock were listening.

"This is how I've always understood naturism - it is affirming. It is about bumps and fleshy bits in the usual places among ordinary people. It is not glamour. It's not airbrushing and not perfection, as in the Nazi propaganda films parodying Ancient Greece and Rome. You can add a bit of gloss, of course - no one denies that - but the beauty is the skin as we actually have it and then what is inside, what is the full personality, the personality that is built up and enhanced, so that by our fruits we become known. I have had to adjust to my own skin being damaged by evil individuals pursuing idealism. Of course, we all fail and are wide of the mark, but authenticity is to be enhanced within.

"This is what I understand by incarnation, that this enhancement is in the body as we are. God is as much about loss and how things are as about perfection. Transcendence is always a beyond, and perfection is a beyond. Our fulfilment is to have humanity enhanced as it is, and that way we have salvation with imperfection. Amen."

Lindy and Jeremy joined in the open table communion as if laity, done with my adapted Liberal Catholic liturgy.

I invited anyone in the congregation who had a new aspect of life coming up (or an old one finishing) to join me at the swimming pool in one hour. They would not have to say what it was. We occupied the shallow end and where I stood. Each person or couple waited in a queue above me, where Deacon Peter, Deacon Kathleen and Deacon Winnie checked orifices as clear, rings off too except where impossible or receiving serious objection.

I recognised this chap close up that I had looked at a few times in the service. It was Mr. Grosvenor, only my sixth form tutor. He took part in everything, except the submerging. I still said to him, briefly, "Let's meet."

Allie joined the queue. For everyone together I read out the Jewish derived text we use. Each person or pair then came to me, in the water, and said quietly what the new aspect was unless they wanted secrecy. I put my hand on their foreheads (a new feature!) and said some words. So it was a bit like healing. They then went further into the pool, went as far as needed to bob down and become submerged, and then returned to get out out.

So I had in fact created a new liturgy here, and wondered if in future I'd be in the mikveh pool to bless people as they went through. Of course it was uniformly deeper.

Two who went in, without giving me a reason, were Jeremy and Lindy. Then Allie stood in front of me to go in. She said to me, "I am going to stop drinking."

I felt very emotional, and as well as putting my hand on her forehead I pulled her towards me for a hug. After my words of prayer, "Bless this daughter that she may renew her life," I said, "Submerge fully, Allie, come up and begin again. No more alcohol."

That night, she came in to the bedroom clear-headed. She got into bed and came close to me, and I held her tightly. It was here that I learnt that Allie had no further plans to go either to Somerset or Walsingham over Christmas. I said, "No, Allie, you should see your family, including Jonathan, soon."

She went to sleep with her head on my left breast.

Our mission had ended. Sally had found a boyfriend, and much unseen Roger had gained some acceptability with Marie.

I was quite pleased with the overall outcome at the Bever Wood Naturist Club, and particularly pleased with Christine's contribution. Peter had been good with his act. Perhaps we could have done more, but our folk socialised too.

Meanwhile, Peter suggested that Adam might like the film *Shortbus* as a Christmas present. He'd get it for me. I was unsure but agreed. He said that his, Kathryn's, Kathleen's and Winnie's Christmas had to be on a shoestring. Roger said much the same. I think we all agreed.

Allie joked that she could have been financially secure, but I'd ensured her own poverty. She added, "Poverty is a useful discipline."

"Watch it," I replied to her. When she went on to say she wanted to focus on her art work over Christmas, I asked her not to return to her house alone overnight. I was assured this was not her intention.

Last Moments (Sunday 22nd December)

After the ritual I caught up with Mr. Grosvenor, my sixth form tutor. He looked pretty good, I thought, and he asked me my age now.

"Turned forty. You?"

"Ah. I'm seventy next year. Now then, what's all this religion stuff with this cross between your breasts?"

"Events. I married Keith Jupitas, who wanted to be a clergyman, but instead I

became a clergywoman."

"I read all about the scandal. And you've gone independent. I live here, you know. It's not so expensive, when you deduct some house costs."

"Sir, I did not know..."

"Don't call me 'Sir'. I'm Benjamin, so call me Ben. We used to say in the staff room, 'When is Miss Bode going to wear a bra?' When you took your sweater off, you see, we all got the shape and sometimes your pointy bits. I was supposed to say something to you as your tutor, but I wasn't brave enough. I didn't even ask a female member of staff. But we all knew about your weird family. And now I see them for real - not your family, except a chap who says he's your uncle - but your breasts. About ten years ago I joined the weirdos. I wanted a place to live after my wife died, and this seemed to be a good option. Your impression on me was greater than you think."

"I'm yet to meet up."

"I married Rhoda Hawes after you lot left."

"She was fit then."

"In all ways, but eleven years ago now, about this time of year, she had a massive heart attack."

I said, "Let's find a room to chat."

We found the room that had housed the whist game and sat on two seats facing each other.

I said, "It was quite a disruptive time at school in some ways. Carr Secondary merged with St. Sernin and became Serninsea Secondary, so even in the sixth form we had two tribes. And Labhaoise Vlahos joined the school, the lesbian partner of Ann Dromeghda."

"We didn't know that at the time."

"I did. I went round to Ann's house. She was there."

"Ann was no naturist because the rumours were she didn't like students looking at her legs and breasts."

"They weren't rumours, they were true. She had a go at Adam Magellan."

"Ann and this newcomer left suddenly. Did something happen with him? They started developing houses."

"Adam did get a woman pregnant, a school friend. He went to Nottingham, and returned to Serninsea after ten years."

"I have recognised one of your school friends - Diana King."

"Diana de Groot, since."

"So Magellan, who I gather still knows these ex-teachers, got a *schoolgirl* pregnant."

"After leaving school. I discovered only recently that the baby was stillborn. Very sad, really."

"Ann Dromeghda was fierce. We wondered if she'd abused Magellan. Rumours built but the now disgraced Kay Parker said let it go quiet as he was leaving. What you say raises more questions. But about you! I read, and heard, that you are not completely female? We had no idea about that."

"I am complete and female."

"You look it."

"But I am intersex as well. So the plumbing is different in outcome. Mainly, with some shape differences."

"Your, er, distinctive pussy cat..."

"Twat? Ah, well, that is unusual, in the sense the clitoris should be small and indistinct; but it isn't. But I think we should just accept these things. You've obviously noticed."

"I notice an ex-pupil revealed to me in all her glory. *Two* ex-pupils. I'm not sure Diana has recognised me."

"I recruited Diana to this cause. But you could have seen me naked any time, at any age, like on the farm. Not imagining but out in the open. And I did fancy you a bit, sir, as you were always good looking to a teenager. Oh dear."

"I did imagine you. I was always critical of staff room chat about our female students, but perhaps I am here revealing my true colours."

"We *are* adults, you know."

I touched him with a movement of my hand, and smiled, and stood as if to end the meeting.

He asked, standing, "Do you want something, Miss Bode?" (I remember that question often asked of me, say when I was chatting away in pastoral form time.)

I answered this time, "I could - to complete the past."

He said, "Rhoda saw you after games when showering and commented to me on your smoothness and baldness as I have indeed seen here, if now with a few marks from your age, and I confess making love to her and thinking of you."

So it was that I dropped the towel for my knees and took hold, and inserted him into my mouth, looking up at my sixth form tutor. I peeled him back to make sure it was a most sensitive tonguing and sucking.

"Hmm. Better than Rhoda. I hope I'm not insulting my dear departed."

When I released him from my mouth solid as a rock and ready, I said, "Come on sir, you are a fit sixty-nine year old to go in me."

I got on to a table and opened my legs. He went in.

"God you're tight, somehow."

"The plumbing," I said. "Go on, get a rhythm."

He also sucked on my breasts that had once fascinated him as he did gain and maintain a rhythm.

It won't long before he came and the white stuff went all over the neighbourhood. I sat up on the table and held him close.

I gave him a good kiss and said, "Happy memories, and now another to add."

"Thank you," he said. "You always were a good student at the school. It was a joy to be your tutor then, and certainly you to be mine decades later. A place for non-sexual nudity, says the publicity."

"Oh that's crap," I said. "People behave as they will."

We used the towels to wipe the table and ourselves. With another kiss we left the room, and it was, I realised, time for us to return home.

But that was not before my Uncle William found me and directed me into the same room.

"Hey, somebody has been at it in here. Your father is so proud of you, both of you. He wants his daughters to resolve your differences. May I?"

"If you want."

He ran his right hand over my buttocks in a mirror circular fashion.

"Smooth as you were beyond the marks," said Bill. "There's a lot of guilt about. Your dad tried to persuade Luce about the benefit of her vaginoplasty."

"I see. But not the loss of her oestrogen."

"No. Quite. He supported Luce a lot but realised he's neglected you. Be kind and open to your dad as he makes it up with you."

We parted. Soon I joined the others and dressed.

The helicopter flew in for Christine, Bill and Pauline. The rest of us headed for Serninsea as we had come.

Diana alongside me, as soon as we were out of Bever Wood, said, "Hey, Benny - you know Benny: at last we met! Just before I got my stuff he said hello and rubbed my arm up and down with his hand. He actually lives there, ten months a year."

"He said hello to me."

"I think my nipples lengthened and hardened in front of him," she said. "Did you react?"

"It takes a lot for me to react. I don't send out signals."

"Why are you smiling, Linda?"

"Well, you did once fancy him."

"So did you, back in the day. He's not bad now, either. I suppose, no, your stubby small nipples don't change like mine do."

"Probably not."

"They go like biscuits," said Allie.

"Oy!" I called back at her.

I thought that we should also approach my old club, Saxiclite, to see if they would be interested in a mission later on, so I did a short deviation on the way to call in.

Stripped off again, I was remembered, and I introduced Allie as my 'partner' and this surprised one or two folks there. I spent some time telling some who did not know that my closest family was now resident in Wales, except my older brother residing in London.

Chapter 26 Season's Greetings

Narrator: Linda *Massage for An Older Lady* (Monday 23rd December)

Back at base we looked forward to the normal business of planning and maintaining a small congregation in the run-up to Christmas.

Meanwhile, we had a visit from Mrs. Gertrude Carter, and she made it clear she wanted to see me alone. So we went into the vestry.

"Well, Reverend, Right Reverend, I'd ask how your mission went."

"Did you want to go on it?"

"No, I'm just thinking."

"It went very well. We mixed with them, told them some of our principles, it was two-way, really."

"So you will carry on doing massages here?"

"Yes, you're right to identify them with our naturist ministry. They are carried out for paying clients with Kathryn and Kathleen."

"Not you."

"I can do them; I can ask Allie to be with me."

"Not Allie. You only. Or a man, maybe, as well."

"Sorry, Mrs. Carter, are you asking for yourself?"

"It was something in my mind, imagining, but trusting in you."

"And a man?"

"Only in the fantasy."

"Not Adam Magellan?"

"No. No: you. I wouldn't want anyone to know about it. A massage. Something that recalls memories. This is very embarrassing, but you went to that naturists place and I wondered why I can't pluck up the courage. Anyway, I've said it now and I will be going. Please say nothing to anyone."

"Gertrude. I'll do it. I'm afraid you do have to sign consent papers but I can keep those in my archive. It's our first weekday back and as I understand it Kathryn and Kathleen are busy catching up today, but they do have a number of clients starting tomorrow."

"Oh. Suddenly it is real. Can I go away and come back in an hour? I'll sign your papers now, but if I don't come back forget it. I'm suddenly very nervous."

"I'm surprised but, look, what happens is we undress, we shower, dry with towels, and there is a wider bench to feel more secure, and I can give you a massage. If you want, you can have a nuru massage - body on body with plenty of lubrication, but you won't want my weight on you - on an airbed, and then we shower and finish in the plunge pool."

"Hmm. This afternoon?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Carter signed the consent form, that accepted our intimate contact and that we'd refrain once asked, and she went away.

I was quite astonished. I then rang through to Adam's and if Roger was available. I thought if he was a donor, he might be less worried about someone Mrs. Carter could look at.

Adam was happy to release him, and he didn't need to know why and Roger didn't need to tell him.

So he came up to the bethel. I said to him, "I think she wants to rekindle memories, so this would be like her remembering back. You might give a part of the massage, but it would be me doing it and really it's only like being naturist. Can you do it?"

An old lady?"

"Well, she's active and retired. She is a widow, I think. Well, I know so. I've known her, and she's known me, since I was a kid running around the farm near here."

He knew she'd be back in an hour.

When Allie came in I told her to make herself scarce, and she wasn't even to see what I was doing. Fortunately, though curious, she agreed, and went out of the building.

Messages received included daddy visiting Mrs. Youell, and I was to go along to see them both tomorrow.

I trusted Allie to go out and walk, perhaps to her house, and not to go to any pub for a seasonal drink. On my own I looked up a few Internet videos on how to do massages better.

When Roger reappeared, I gave him keys as I'd lock the dry cloaks and wet room behind us. He could make an entry after ten or fifteen minutes, I thought. He viewed the seating area across from the small library and meeting room.

So would Mrs. Carter return? Was her fantasy to be made real? She did, and she wanted to go directly into the cloaks space. (There were some students in the kitchen).

She said to me, "I wanted to treat myself in a very different way. Do you mind, really?"

"No, and I'd like us to undress each other," I replied.

We stood close, body to body, and we proceeded. Somehow undoing her bra at her back over her shoulders was a significant moment, to slip it down her arms and see her step back and look up into my face.

I said to her, "Beautiful. I don't know your age."

"Seventy-two."

"You know, I never know what to call you. As a child I called you Mrs. Carter."

"You can call me Gert or Getrude. You call me as you feel comfortable. Now you are naked, again."

"Getrude. I'm going to lower your knickers. Let me take in what I see. Oh, yes. I love it. The swirling of whitened pubic hair. It's so long and curls and journeys."

We had a short shower, and directed the water on to each other and then proceeded to the wet room.

"I'm not bed-bound or even housebound," said Mrs. Carter facing the double width cushioned bench for massages.

She climbed aboard and lay on her front. Thus I took a grip first of her shoulders and moved across her neck and down her body. In applying pressure, I kept thinking of brittle bones and the like. At least the white cheeks of her bottom, and her upper thighs, were easier to handle. But her lower legs, ankles and even feet were more of a challenge.

At this point she said, "Oh a man," and Roger used the showers before

towelling himself towards dry and then standing near to the bench. "Oh he is nicely constructed," said Mrs. Carter. "Can I touch that, today?"

"Roger?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Gertrude. Turn yourself over to lie on your back, nice and easily."

"I'm not going to fall off."

I asked Roger to join in, and he did while Mrs. Carter put her hand out to hold his penis that was becoming increasingly rigid. So two of us were working her over, as she nodded to kneading her breasts and moving down

"Your tummy is quite soft," I said.

"It's called having children."

"Oh. Sure. Sorry."

We both went around her vulva more than anything. I spent some time looking at her pubic hair close up. I ran my finger through strands of long white hair, and of course I separated her vaginal opening by parting her thin lips.

"What do you think, Roger?"

"It's like it within doesn't age," he said, "but the hairs are wonderful."

"It does age, and can be very dry."

"Not at the moment!" I exclaimed. "You are *flowing*. Let's continue this. Gertrude," I asked. "Would you like a nuru massage? This is a lot of goo, on all of us, and then we massage you by our bodies on the air bed down there."

"I'm here for the full Christmas service," she said.

So we helped her off, applied the goo between our three bodies, and lay Mrs. Carter down on the double airbed. I said to Roger, "Don't apply your full weight. Try to hover a bit."

It seemed logical for me to go to her top half and Roger to go below. My pubic area brushed her face and mouth in particular, for which her tongue did come out.

"Will he?" Mrs. Carter asked.

"Will he what?"

"Go in. Rekindle my memories, allow me one more time to experience."

"Roger? Treat it like a donation sort of thing?"

I decided to help. Hovering over her head, I pulled her thighs back.

"I want to see, Linda."

So I moved to the side, and sat on my bottom, just moving my hand around her thighs.

Roger gripped his penis and directed it in carefully. "She is nicely lubricated," he said to me.

I said, "Go in deep as you can. Make it big, long and deep."

So he didn't just thrust: he rotated, and worked her carefully.

"Oh this is so good. I dare say you're better than my husband." (He'd been dead nearly two decades.)

Roger needed no more directions, until he asked, "Do I make a donation then?"

"Inside," I said. "Complete the job."

"What a man, what a gift: thank you Linda."

"Thank you Roger," I said, as he continued and went right in with his long, thick, projectile.

And his thrusts increased and became more concentrated in space. He was

pulsing semen into her, and when done she put her arms around him and kissed him.

"What a wonderful young man; what an experience. I could feel it, you know, I really could."

When Roger made his long withdrawal, I said, "Hey, me," and took that into my mouth to taste both of them.

Then I turned to Mrs. Carter and opened her up, expecting a running out of some sperm. But it didn't happen. He'd put it into her deep and that's where it was staying.

"Something I'll remember. Thank you, you two."

So it was we got up and showered (more than at the beginning - the goo to get off), and finally three bodies went down into the plunge pool, to exchange mutual kisses and caresses.

Finally we were in the cloaks area.

"Please," said Mrs. Carter, "Say nothing to anyone. No one. You've brought to reality a desire I wanted to fulfil. I have three hundred pounds I withdrew."

"No," I said.

"For your funds. I insist. I treated myself. But silence on all of this."

I said, "Yes, this in the seal of the confessional. Roger, you did some administration for me. You can talk to me one to one about it later, as can you Gertrude if you want."

"I won't want," said Gertrude. "We carry on as before. Tonight I will have a drink and relive the wonderful sensations of today. Our bodies, Linda, and your beautiful sexual intercourse, young man."

With that we left the cloaks and dispersed.

A little later Allie asked me, "Is Mrs. Carter coming over to us, then?"

I said to her, "I don't think so. She's fed up with over there, but she is such a dyed in the wool Anglican."

"What was Roger doing over here?"

"Were you spying?" I asked.

"No, I saw him coming this way. I went to see Annie."

"Well, as an academic, he does have a writing skill, and I use that when something needs to be 'out of the loop.' And what did you do with Annie?"

"Watched her perform. She was online. No, I was not seen, though she announced she had a friend present. And no I didn't drink any alcohol."

"Good."

Narrator: Linda *Massage for Support* (Tuesday 24th December)

On Tuesday morning Allie and I lay in bed. Thinking of Mrs. Carter still, and touching myself, I said, "I was thinking that you need to relax and integrate more in this community, so on Tuesday afternoons, and the church will pay, I want Kathryn and Kathleen to give you a regular long massage in the wet room. However, because you and I need to get it together, and Christmas Day is tomorrow, I will do at least the first one and this is this afternoon. We ought to exploit the pastoral potential of the massages."

"I will have to put down that this is happening, and how it came about."

"Plus the massage is to help you stay off the alcohol."

"I made a commitment. I once did in a group in Taunton. I meant it then as well, in those circumstances."

"I'm pleased to hear it. Come with me to Patricia's tomorrow, because we are having a party."

Allie said, "Still, that swimming pool submerging in Bever Wood didn't conform to the rules for the mikveh."

"I know," I said, "but we are dealing with symbolism. If we build one, like we did, we do it properly, but otherwise we adapt to the circumstances. Ritual is not a thing in itself - it's to give spiritual gifts."

So, after lunch, I went with Allie over to the dry cloaks area. I got her to undress, and I did too. We used the single width wet room massage table. She lay on her front to start with, and I told her to be quiet. This was a proper massage, but also a blessing. I kept remembering Mrs. Carter. Eventually I got her to turn over, on to her back, and I worked on her legs, and on her shoulders; I kneaded her breasts more strongly than Gertrude's and finally I told her to open her legs and relax. I would only partly masturbate her in this process. And so I did.

"Do nuru," she said.

I stood and thought about it. "Yes. It's part of the service."

"Oh, that airbed needs hosing down. It's been used."

"Yes, so it seems. Well, perhaps the Kath's used it."

"They weren't here."

"Someone did, obviously."

I hosed it down and then dropped goo on to it, her and me. She sank into the airbed and I pressed my weight on to her, circulating, and soon she returned the favour. We did not do extras: I avoided deliberate direct orgasmic actions. When she put her hand to my vulva, I shook my head, but I was prepared to lie on that bed with her on top of me and my arms around her.

Of course I could only imagine Roger thrusting deeply into Mrs. Carter like an expert.

After that it was the showers, and then into the plunge pool together, and it was all rather pleasant when we dressed.

I realised the obvious: that merging her into the community must clash with her role as researcher. Something, somewhere, had to give.

"I recognise that you are burdened with secrets," I said.

"Correct," she said. "They are a burden. You have yours too."

At this point, I prepared for my lone visit to my father.

She watched me, and I asked her, "Allie, do you think incest is always wrong?"

She reacted, "If this is a reference to Jonnie and me, then he is so distant from me..."

"No it wasn't, it really wasn't."

"And let's not forget you come from a small village with other small villages nearby, up against a river. So the number of families interbreeding will be quite high. Villages are like pinch points."

"I mean, like, Jenny's actual father and Roger with Marie. He fits her like a glove. Did you notice?"

"Not exactly. I don't know how they are sure Bill Masters is the father if it was only a drunken swingers' party."

"His condom broke as they each went inside her. Ugh."

"It doesn't add up," Allie claimed.

"Why not?"

"Because she has her uncle's surname, not her supposed parents'."

"Oh, because they were so pissed and incapable he raised her 'til about ten years old, and then, with her parents, she in effect had her mother's maiden name and her mother used that."

Allie said, "I didn't know that: I learn something every day."

"Goodness me. Pigs do fly," I reacted. "What gets me is he can come to order, at the clinic I mean. Adam must be envious."

"Not Bishop Bill?"

"No, Roger. Marie and Roger must be careful with his jizz. She was on her period at Bever Wood. That was brave to go naturist then. Some do wear knickers," I said.

"I suppose you had a good look at his knob and her 'Mind the Gap'," Allie retorted.

"They're so in love."

"They might be," Allie said. "Question is, how it started."

"They met each other and didn't know."

"If you say so."

"Oh, here we go. You know differently, don't you? Yes, you do. I'm supposed to be the bishop here and offering pastoral support, and once again I'm in the dark compared with you."

"That's not what I said. You assume too much. And not so about Bishop Bill. Jenny never told me he raised her so far. No wonder she loses it. Anyway, your father is waiting."

"Yeah, puzzling that."

"I suppose you two will remove clothes."

"At Mrs. Youell's? I doubt it. The puzzle is why we are meeting there. Do you know?"

"I haven't got a clue."

Daddy Visits Mrs. Youell (Tuesday 24th December)

It turned out that daddy had travelled over on Sunday. He said he was staying at the Titantsea Grand.

Delighted to see him, I was nevertheless concerned by his visit being unannounced so far and said, "You could have stayed at the Bethel."

"I'll deal with this later."

Thus I met, too, again, Eliana, seventy-seven, as daddy met our one time farming neighbour.

Mrs. Youell said, referring to me, "She was very good, very attentive, when Yannis was dying."

"He was once a fixture in our lives," I said.

"Yannis used to say: 'There they are with nothing on again.'"

A little later on, daddy reminded her of that comment, and wondered if she had a room we could use in the farmhouse. "We'll be naturist for a short while," he said.

She said we should go ahead.

We went to a far room downstairs in the farmhouse, and my father said, "Get them off," as he did too.

I was happy to do this, but intrigued.

He said to me, "I've been so disappointed to hear the extent of the feud between you and Lucinda, and you and Larry. Your mother is feeling isolated, and I've come here on my own."

"Larry forced himself on me."

"I've told him, he was not skillful. But neither were you. He should have had your consent; he's your brother and you could have accommodated him."

"He forced his penis down my throat, he fucked me without my approval."

"You were curious and he answered your curiosity. You could have come to me. I'd have told you about the comfort I gave to Lucinda. You didn't even come to me after he did what he did."

"My sister has always accused me."

"Well, I told her she was not too old to get a slap from her father, and neither are you. You feud against her too. Get across my knees."

I stood, looking at him, puzzled.

"I'm not joking. You might be forty but you are still my daughter. You're not going to disobey me, are you?"

"No, daddy."

"But you just have. Right. In my bag is a table tennis bat. Bring it to me. Do it or I'll smack your crotch and you'll know all about it then."

I did get it, and because I'd come close I voluntarily laid my long body over daddy's knees. Thus he began with a stinging use of the bat. I'd have preferred his hand; at least I would have felt his hand immediately. My bottom became hot.

Then he moved his palms over my bottom flesh, presumably checking for any marks. He knew about the sensitivity of my smooth skin, not as perfect as it was once.

"That mirror on the wall; if you look in it downwards, you can see your red bottom cheeks."

Of course I got off his lap and did as I was told.

He said, as I looked, "I hadn't been with Luce since she married Dyfed, but in the end I had no choice. I've smacked her recently with my hand and I've smacked you with a bat. They are different so don't use your experience as a comparison. This feuding has got to stop. It's causing all sorts of tensions back in Wales."

"I've tried to calm things, daddy, but she wouldn't believe me that I didn't fool about with Dyfed. She had sex with my Adam."

"Come here and sit on my lap."

"Yes, daddy."

"Neither are you or her too old to receive comfort from your dad."

"No, daddy."

"Shift about your arse to bring it up and make it stiff."

"I'm sorry daddy but I don't want the feud either."

"I'll suck your breasts. You've got lovely breasts, maturing like your mother's. Lucinda is just the same."

Funny that I had that image again of Roger into Mrs. Carter as daddy stiffened.

He said, "I'll come in you, as I did with Luce just before I came here - to Serninsea, Titansea, I mean.."

He maintained his attention on my breasts as I rose and fell, applying my vaginal muscles as best I could.

"What about Leila? Have you ever done this with Leila?"

"Your mother wouldn't approve."

"Mummy approves of Luce and me with you?"

He didn't answer, instead he thrust more.

Soon, he came in me, and once again we cleaned up what had to come out. Nothing had come out of Mrs. Carter.

"You're a good lass," he said, as I sucked his penis clear of our mixture.

"Thank you daddy; I love you daddy."

He gave me two Christmas presents: a vibrating egg attached by wire to a battery pack with speed controls and a corkscrew tapered dildo, probably to pleasure my bottom. I thought the best way to present them in front of Allie was to give them to her as a combined present.

He said, "That's it. I'm going home now. I've been meeting friends and associates before Christmas. Ah, your mother and Leila sent a card, and so did Dyfed on the side - but not your sister or your brother. Get them from the top of my packed case in the hallway. My presents are instead of a card. We'll go and present ourselves, like this, to Eliana and then dress. Well, she should see us."

So this was a different view of me than the one I presented to her and her husband recently. We dressed in front of her, which in some ways was against the naturist ethos. You undress and dress out of sight or in an appropriate place.

I took the cards as instructed. I didn't know why his suitcase had (I supposed) been brought in from his car.

Daddy kissed Mrs. Youell on the lips. He and I went to our vehicles, me carrying his suitcase. He said, "I'm going to find a time to bring all the family, and we are going to end the feud all together. This includes Lawrence. Until then, then."

He kissed me on the lips and squeezed my still sensitive bottom. I still felt aroused as if I wanted him to fuck me again.

Daddy thus drove off, suitcase in the vehicle, and I felt confused.

I went back to the bethel and said nothing to Allie and folks other than that we had found Mrs. Youell in good health if still grieving. I said that my father had also come over to see some friends.

I douched myself early on so that Allie wouldn't discover sperm or my arousal. I made a special effort to keep my bare bottom out of her sight until it was back to the same colour as my back.

Christmas Day Morning (Wednesday 25th December)

And so along came the Christmas morning service, and a moment for me to help

define the place. The service was presided by Bishop Elizabeth, and I was the preacher. Allie, Peter, Kathryn and Winnie made up the team. All others were elsewhere.

It was a good gathering, partly because a number of Anglicans chose to come across on this day. These were Gertrude Carter (as if nothing had happened), Mohammed McArden, Madge Jack (mother of Bella, who'd come along), Catherine Mould (mother of Cheryl), Sheila Gillespie, Tom Bowler, Tracey Graham, Ralph Thickett, Jim Sayle and Flòraidh MacLean.

Additionally Elean Efan of the Serninsea Vestal Virgins was present. So was Eliana Youell, having me my daddy and me. 'Uncle' George Wickenby turned up to, he said, sing carols. We had a kilted reverend who wanted to experience our congregation at this time: Georgie Smith. Her three congregants were with her - to sing, basically. Also, Layla Jenkins, a policewoman, joined us. The Seregas, naturists, came long too.

Friends Diana and Patricia turned up with their husbands and children.

Ralph and Tom probably spoke for many when they made it clear to me that they had come because Rhiannon Fleetwood wasn't holding a Christmas morning service in Serninsea, but in Serninsea Marshes, and they thought they'd make an exception to hear me, despite making it clear they did not agree with what I had done in moving.

They heard me say, well into the sermon:

"In standard Christianity, Easter is more important than Christmas, because Christmas is, if you like, the coming of Incarnation whereas Easter is its crowning, Christ-crucified and then the miracle of resurrection. Yet more attend at Christmas than attend at Easter. There are still some biannual Christians who also turn up at Easter, reminded of such by the one day most Sunday shops must shut.

"And to be sure, now is often about Yuletide and Saturnalia, or about Spike Milligan's 'Walking Backward into Christmas', by which he means a return to a childlike understanding and celebrating this point of the year. It refreshes us: it reminds us of where we once were - a beginning - and of course, as in Christianity, there is an end to all of this.

"I'm going to be stark with you. No one walked to Bethlehem, with or without a donkey, to have a baby. There was a baby, because there was a man, but the baby was born in obscurity, and the later man, a builder, started a religious ministry by breaking free from his mentor, John the Baptist. There is no record of any census, and the Romans were good at keeping records. The Romans would not have had mass movement to non-local places for a census. There was no threat to the first-born from Herod, nor was there a walk from or flight into Egypt. The boy had two parents, whether married, unmarried, or what. The fact that two gospels can give two very different genealogies shows construction. There are no careful 'witnesses' who remember what happened around the birth that give the stories any historical credibility. The fact is that the stories are all post-Easter, that is to say documents of story-making by early Christians who were saying this man was a prophet chosen by God. The mythology reflects how they believed and their culture.

"To be a bit more theological. The earliest 'divinity' given by followers to Christ was post-resurrection and believing in a messiah. Then came the kind of divinity as in Greek culture where a God has sex with a human and produces a chosen one. Later we have that pre-existing divinity.

"So the birth is a pleasing fantasy. Whether the resurrection at the other end is an equal fantasy I leave to another discussion, another sermon perhaps. That has a more communal punch, more expectation about it, indeed more pregnancy, than the birth narrative. Still, it also pushes credulity in the modern mind.."

It looked like Ralph Thickett was getting up to leave.

"Are you going, Ralph?" I asked. "The thing is, in this church, I say what I believe with more honesty, and, equally, you are very free to disagree. I am not required to 'preach what the Church teaches'. Perhaps you will hear me out, with more positive comments too, and then make up your own mind?"

He sat down, and perhaps that prevented a larger walk-out.

"So what are we doing then? Is Christmas just Yuletide and Saturnalia dressed up? Not quite. Because some of the things I used to say in the other place remain true in the story-telling sense. First of all, there is an appeal to the poverty in which one finds a kind of honesty - not in money. There is an appeal to the irregular household: we are not all perfect families. The lowest and despised are welcomed, like the shepherds. Although the birth narrative is rooted in its own culture, the wise men represent an appeal beyond the tribe. Gifts matter, and we give them too. The star involves the cosmos, but please don't try and speculate what comets were passing at that time. This is to fall for an explanatory literalism that isn't needed. Why not replace the census with a sense of pilgrimage? The walk is to somewhere that becomes a holy place. The two accounts in the two gospels cannot be melded, although people do try this: but the emergent tradition, with the Magnificat, sets the scene on the actual adult ministry that perhaps lasted around a year and was ended mid-expectations in a historical sense.

"The fact is that people as groups and individuals celebrate, and here is a celebration. No doubt, for most, Christmas is pretty secular: a demand to shop, eat and give presents. It's very Jewish in many ways: a family event that defines much of who we are, if secularised. But to come here, or go there, or go to a non-conformist place, or indeed for Muslims to say 'Merry Christmas', as their Buddhist or Jewish or secular neighbours can do, is to do the anthropological thing of making an effort to celebrate and to gain the enjoyment of the celebration, and not least to dress it all in coloured lights and a tasty feast to challenge the darkness and scarcity of the time. And then we take this solstice, this Saturnalia, and stretch it to making a New Year, the new out of the old, so the end celebration is about a new beginning too.

"So what then if nothing happened? We make up stories all the time, and out of them we can show the big themes. Religion is undergoing considerable change, and at a time of seeing through the magic and disposing of the supernatural we still celebrate within the solar year.

"Being history-like can be mythical. We simply conclude, historically, that Jesus was the child of a builder, probably working in Sephorris on the coast, born in obscurity in say Caperneum. The specialness to us is in the fiction, is enough to demonstrate that Christmas is really about the universal baby, the humanism that looks at the fragility and yet potential of life.

"I could not have said this in the National Church, where - like I said - I was obliged to preach the Gospel, but now I am independent and have a freedom to interpret, and each of you may."

Afterwards over coffee and snacks Allie found Flòraidh MacLean and heard her Scottish lilting West Coast accent. She tried some Gaelic on her and Flòraidh

spoke in that language! I remembered Allie doing this in Margate with the Archbishop of All England, no less.

Mo McArden said he obviously didn't agree with me, and if he was a cleric and thought as I did he'd find something else to do. So I replied that religion was broader than meeting some dogmatic test, and again that I felt free to express my views exactly as I wanted.

"Hello Gert," I said, to be familiar.

"Let me say I don't like what the priest-in-charge Rhiannon Fleetwood is doing in our parish church." (Phew!) "I've heard she is connected with the Reverend Wilson and the Bishop John Barman."

"She is connected to these people but quite how is unclear."

Ralph Thickett overheard this, and said, "Well, Reverend Linda - are you still the Reverend Linda?"

"That's part of it. Thanks for not leaving."

"I don't think she is going to last long in Serninsea. I'm evangelical but she has a harshness of spirit and something isn't quite right. Anyway, I have a card for you, and everyone who has come here has signed it. We've had a Christmas goodwill trip, rather than go over to Serninsea Marshes."

And, indeed, they had all paid attention.

It was hellos of course to the de Groot and Rhymes families and the kids had enjoyed the carols. I'd see them later with Allie.

After the congregation had gone, Allie asked me what the difference was between that sermon and what I used to preach. My reply was, "Honesty."

Allie also noted that Roger and Marie were missing, though I suggested they were likely quite secular. Many were missing, after all.

Tree and Party

It was as if the conclusion of the Christmas Morning Service was the end of activity in the church for most for many days. Bill and Pauline were staying at his home for the holiday. Christine was in Ebbsfleet. Elizabeth had her room at the Blue Diamond Club. Peter, Kathryn, Kathleen and Winnie all went to Peter's father's house in Caffenmere.

But under the Christmas tree in the church the soon departed left presents for me, as I'd handed over some presents to them. Adam, with Peter, Kathryn, Kathleen and Winnie together, had bought me a square cross brooch in an Anglo-Saxon style. "Serninsea Cross!" I joked, as if like the Serninsea Cross brooch. It was not the same, and it was not claiming to be ancient. Maurice Neptune had posted a book to Diana's address which she'd placed under the tree: Krishnan Kumar's 2005 discussion, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society: New Theories of the Contemporary World*. It was not a theology book, but it definitely dovetailed with some I had, for example by Paul Lakeland. I don't know how Maurice knew her address; I was surprised that it was not about Judaism at all. It hadn't crossed my mind to send him a present.

Given his very recent viewing choices - *Nine Songs* and *Love*, I gave Adam a copy of the film *Shortbus*, all about some alternative types in the United States. Peter

had found it for me at very short notice.

Christine thought she would indoctrinate me by giving me *By Whose Authority? Newman, Manning and the Magisterium*, by Vincent Alan McClelland, published in 1996. It's exactly why I'd bought her John Hick's *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm*, which is a further examination of his 'Real' theism as Spirit, I think.

I'd secured for Allie a copy of the Evans Pritchard book, *Theories of Primitive Religion*. She said she had seen it before but was pleased that she now owned a copy. She also received yesterday's sex toys, all wrapped up.

Allie's presents for me were considerable and, frankly, put me to shame. "I know you don't like clothing, but these are in your sizes." She'd bought me a black halterneck dress with an open-ended front zip, showing a lot of cleavage regardless, with a corset-style lace-up detail at the outer thighs and down the arse including gleaming metal eyelets, and all in a figure-hugging leather-look fabric. In addition she bought me women's thigh-high black leather wedge boots.

"I'll wear these now," I said.

She'd got herself a black shiny latex top with a full length zip that went on and off just like a jacket but showed a varied amount of breast to choice. She'd also bought herself women's knee-high black leather wedge boots. This meant she showed more leg, but I showed more arse.

"I'll buy yours for you."

"No you won't. Jonnie added to my account. It's from him and the family."

We both went in the changing room next to the wet room to change and the only thing that stopped us having sex was the need to get to Patricia's.

On arrival Adam and company admired our gear.

"By the way, did you see your father at all? He's been in the area."

"Yesterday. How do you know?"

"Because he's been staying at Eliana Youell's, trying to buy her farm."

"Oh? I did not know that."

"I do because Ann and Labhaoise want the house to sell off the land. Your father's been talking about employing a few farm labourers."

This sent a shiver down my spine: was he splitting from my mummy? Why was he in Serninsea on Christmas Eve?

"Adam. What do you know?"

"What I know is Roger Humphrey's father came and asked me to find his son. I've sent him a Christmas present of a returned deposit saying I know where he is but needs to be left alone."

"Oh good," said Allie.

"Yes, that's interesting, but about my father?"

"Nothing more than the property exchange issues. Oh and your father had occasional relations with Mrs. Youell."

"I did wonder."

"He was staying at the Titansea Grand," I said, as we looked across towards Ann and Labhaoise.

"Rubbish. Your father was staying at the farmhouse. Ann and Labhaoise found them loosely dressed."

Gathered with the host at Patricia's were folks still in the area: Adam, Ann, Labhaoise, Elizabeth, Yojana, Diana, Aardse, and Arthur, and the three families'

children. All of them remarked on and stared at our gear being worn, especially with my arse-crack on show. I don't know why, but I tried to steer my direction so the children missed it.

Diana alone said to Allie and me, "Patricia said she'd ask Adam along, why we've ended up with him, his guardians and Yojana. Why Yojana?"

"She's been a client of his," I said.

Meanwhile, Ann confirmed they had negotiated in competition with my father for Mrs. Youell's farmhouse and farm, but he wasn't sure he would buy. They offered the land to him but he didn't seem interested.

Christmas dinner was a goose - what else? - with an alternative of a moist multiple nuts roast. There was jelly with ice cream, and Christmas cake, and television to watch - just about.

Because there were children present, there were all sorts of games to play. Pass the parcel, musical chairs, pin the tail on the donkey. I wore my 'Serninsea Cross' brooch on my leather - oh, how ironic.

Diana bought me a CD of Steve Hackett music. *Voyage of the Acolyte*, from 1975, was, she said, related to Tarot cards. Genesis folk were involved in it, with Sally Oldfield, a favourite of Diana.

I gave her Cec Cinder's *The Nudist Idea*, from 1998. It wasn't cheap, this: it's hardback at 678 pages, though sometimes it can cost more than four hundred pounds. Bever Wood had acquired some, I discovered, but had still cost me eighty quid. (I know: I'd spent that much on Diana and yet peanuts on Allie.)

I found for myself, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*, by Margaret R. Miles, from 1989.

Of the moving around and chatting, I noticed a foursome gathering of Adam, Allie, Ann and Labhaoise that became the latter three only. They actually went away from us into the conservatory.

All done, Adam said he'd move between his office accommodation and our church accommodation. Would I mind if Yojana visited the church?

"Absolutely not."

I asked Allie, as the two of us got into my SUV, "Did you know about Adam knocking around with Yojana."

"Not a thing."

"You usually do."

"I've talked with him recently and he didn't mention her."

"When did you do that?"

"Sunday."

"You didn't tell me."

"I just have."

"And what was that with Ann and Labhaoise and you?"

"It relates to our chat. He's been blabbing."

"Was any of it about me?"

"What it was about was... about my research."

"Here we go again."

"No, Linda, that's how it is. If I told you it would alter things. So you show me some slack. I did know Roger and Marie's father was looking for them. He didn't mention your father to me at all."

I drove off.

"Do you know your present gives me a breeze up my arse?"

Allie said, "I live at 135 Toulouse Road. I have a surprise. Come and see it."

"Oh. You do? I'll change route."

We got out at the terraced house. Mo McArden happened to be coming along with some nice looking woman in a headscarf.

He said, "Bloody hell, curate, are you going to a party here?"

"I'm not a curate any more."

"Well, how many bishops...?"

"Yeah. Stop sniggering, Allie. We *were* at a party, this is where Allie has a house. Look at her if you're looking at me."

"We are trying not to look at either of you," he said. "This is Adeela, my sister. That was a very odd Christmas service but better than Rhiannon does. See you around some time."

"Well, thank you. Good to see you Adeela. Come on dear," I said to Allie in front of them.

Allie and I went indoors.

"So lots of canvases," I said. "May I look at these?"

"Of course. But I have one for you."

It was a large acrylic painting, on a 100 by 120 cm canvas, and it was me, nude. Its origins were at Maurice Neptune's posing session that I did. My eyes watered at the incredibly competent painting. It was me and no one else, and I was left staring at it for a long time.

I took her by her shoulders, and gave her a long kiss on her mouth, and pulled her into me.

"Allie, it's wonderful. I think I want it in the vestry."

She took me to her bedroom there, and stripped me of my leather and removed her latex. There were four boots in a line. She is one good licker, and rasped me with her tongue like a dog. I knew what she wanted, so I managed to lose one finger, two, four and a whole large hand down her canal.

"Fucking waste me," she said.

This became very intense, and it was more than an hour later when we were back in the car with a wrapped painting. She wiffed a bit of sweat but I don't.

With the main kitchen closed and no one else about, we joined Adam and Yojana already sat in the seating and dining area, but we would use our own kitchen upstairs.

Adam said, "I had a word with Ann about it and she understands."

"Understands what?"

"About you and me not working, and about your true love here. Yojana and I have decided to get together and see how we get on - a loose, free relationship. Sorry I didn't mention it, Allie, but it was too early."

I said, "Good for you. You're not going to be available for Jenny, then?"

Yojana said, "We discussed it. We might look after her, as and when she comes out. We went to see her."

Adam asked, "That's a large bag, looks like a painting."

"Oh, both of you, look what Allie did. I want it in the vestry."

Adam said, "It does show your bare and clear vulva, never mind your tits; it might be more suited to your own bedroom."

"Back me up, Yojana," I said. "Vestry, not bedroom?"

"People won't understand it," she said.

"Upstairs then," I responded. "We'll either put it opposite, alongside the TV screen, or behind us."

"Behind us," said Allie. "I could do another for the vestry."

"So are there four of us only in this building?" I asked.

Adam said, "Might be two. Yojana and me can live at my place or her parents' when she's on duty early. I'll keep my room here for a while."

"I'm fine about it."

A Wet Bed (Christmas Night)

Lights were off downstairs, and I walked upstairs, Allie having gone up a while back. Arriving on the top floor, a naked thirty year old was in the study.

"What are you doing, my lovely?" I asked her.

"Reading this about Manning and Newman and these characters."

"Ah. Christine's reference back to some dogmatic romantics. She can't help it. Did I hear some knocking, earlier?"

"I put up the painting. It is above the bed. If it falls down, it'll go behind the headboard."

"That's reassuring. Well, I need a Tom Tit, girl, and give it ten minutes, which is what living together means."

About half an hour later on Christmas night, I was sat on top of the duvet cross-legged watching Allie go in and out of the ensuite bathroom. I'd already done everything, including my own shower. She was looking at me, drying herself with a towel.

I said, "Come on. I'll get under the duvet and I'll spoon around you. Come and receive a cuddle."

The duvet came back on and she got in on her left side in front of me on my left side, and I came to touch her around my body and put my arms around her.

"Now, you, you can still do your research, and I don't need to know stuff going on. Be assured that you have my love and my protection, always."

"What, like I'm a daughter?"

"Well, yes, in a way."

"There's something wrong, here," Allie said. "I don't need your protection, Linda; Rhiannon Fleetwood went down like a sack of potatoes. She undressed completely for combat and so did I. We faced up in the vicarage garden. She didn't last a second, and I told her that if she continued to be a nuisance I'd bury her in the graveyard there."

I started laughing. "Sorry. It's just, like, what would Colin Cromer have thought?"

"You are not my mawther, and I've told you *that* before. I was reading this relationship advice blog. Problem relationships are where one partner talks down to the other as if superior, and where there is directed criticism of the person rather than at the event or a situation. So, if you love me, you love me as an equal, and perhaps now you will get this duvet off and let me do what I want to do with you."

"Yes. Yes, Allie. You scare me, Allie."

"What worries me is I'm not satisfying you. Sometimes I think you need a knob and penetrating. These plastic gifts don't do it. And something happened. There was that moment when Mrs. Carter came in and then Roger came along."

"You'll make me laugh. What on earth has Mrs. Carter got to do with this?"

"She gave you a knowing look at the Christmas service."

"Well if she did I didn't know. This is ridiculous. You're talking about Gertrude Carter, upstanding local citizen. And Roger? What has Roger got to do with any of this?"

"Well, something happened, and also something's odd about your father coming here and Mrs. Youell and all that."

"Well, Ann and Labhaoise outbid him and they're selling off the farmland. Perhaps you should join Adam Magellan's investigations firm."

"Roger and Marie are full brother and sister, you know. His dad is called Humphries - i e s - and so are they, depending on how they also changed their name."

"Also?"

"Like me. Everybody's doing it."

"So are you going to satisfy me, Allie, or not?"

So the duvet went off, my legs came forward, at the sides with knees bent, and Allie set to work with her fingers and her tongue, and did a lot of looking.

She said, "I suppose I can still get behind your clitoris - the so-called G spot."

"Yes, Allie, and you're doing it well. You have much experience - with a woman, or women."

"Yes I do."

"Names, Allie. All the first names."

"Abigail and Beathag."

"I know about them. Oh. That's a nice feeling, Allie."

"I was taught well."

"What other names?"

"I fancied Andrea but nothing happened. She was busy. Now she's coming up here; she is married and has a public role."

"Andrea?"

"Lindsey. Plimpton is her married name."

"Sister of Alan? I know him."

"Yes, an ecclesiastical family. A bit like Christine's."

What recent names, Allie?"

"But I have a question for you."

"You're researching?"

"It's background: so background that it's in the dark."

"Go on."

"Did Ann or Ann and Labhaoise ever tell you or you and Jenny to have a go with Adam: sexually experiment and so on?"

"Where did you get that from? Nobody will ever tell you anything that."

"Hmm. People know when Ann and Labhaoise got out of teaching."

"You keep this out of any text. Adam kept his mouth shut, so did I, so did Jenny, Geoff knew little."

"Only that Ann doesn't just bankroll Adam, she also secured this place for you. Adam has no loyalty to you but Ann has some sort of felt responsibility."

"Stop. Stop this now!"

"It's why they were at the party, to speak to me after I spoke to Adam."

"What did Adam say?"

"It's what I asked Adam. He asked about my source. At the party they also said you're becoming my partner to shut me up."

"That's rubbish. I love you. What they did came under the 1956 Act."

"You know that, readily. It's all tru, of course."

"Stop it Allie, just stop it."

"There was something else. Ann tried *you* out. Ann and Labhaoise, quite likely over some sessions. They did, didn't they? That's what came under the 1956 Act."

"I was referring to Adam."

"Were you seventeen at the time?"

"Stop what you are doing. As you well know I was eighteen on the second of April."

"I need ask you no more."

"That answer was not a 'yes', madam. I'll want to see your script in your Ph.D: don't you start explaining stuff you do not know."

"I'll find a way not to put it. Ann was predatory and trying to sort herself out - Labhaoise was involved for a while in this. Labhaoise knew her own lesbianism, but Ann was more ambiguous. Ann abused Adam and then she abused you, meanwhile suggesting you make out with Jenny and see how you each responded to Adam and Geoff, also see how Adam responded to Geoff. Ann projected herself on to others. Did you give Ann reports?"

"Shit. Where did you get this from?"

"I added two and two."

"The number two wasn't available. It's more like two hundred. Where did you get two hundred from?"

"Come in Number Two Hundred," said Allie.

"You fucking cunt, coming here and investigating my life!"

"Fist me."

"Fist you? I'll split you open."

"Go on then!"

I put two fingers into her vagina, and more, and this was like an aeroplane take off. Soon I had speed, violently thrashing at her opening, and pressing on her stomach to get even more purchase. She became runny, and started to spray, so I curved my fingers, and yes got my thumb into her vagina as well with my large hand, and continued the violent pushing and pulling.

Allie was soon riving, and her eyes went up into her head as she shook all over. I wasn't going to stop. She was pouring liquid over my wrist on to the bedding, but I did not care. For once I had an advantage over her, and she was a gonner. She was having orgasm after orgasm - something I could not do - and I wanted to exhaust her. I started yelling and shouting to summons more energy to keep this going, forcing my thrashing fist deeper in, and the cry she made was weird as her head went red and her eyes became uncontrolled.

Her body was twisting and she ended up on her front, but I wasn't going to let her get away, and I tried to stab her arse with my spare hand. The fact was I was running out of energy, and couldn't keep this going. My heart was pounding and I was in need of oxygen circulation, and I was losing posture myself, that spare hand

holding me up again but starting to fail. She was shaking violently, her head going purple, her body red and hot, sweat emerging everywhere, a river coming past my wrist.

Allie was bending forward and back and twisting, shaking, but finally I could do no more. My last ounce of energy was to remove my whole fist in one go, with a torrent of liquid following, and I flopped on to the bed completely knackered myself. She gave out one enormous groan and was shaking on, and as I lay I could tell she was trying to move away from me (or towards the bathroom) but subsequently fell off the bed into a heap on the floor.

"Goodness me," I said. "Everywhere is soaked."

I could hear nothing from Allie, so eventually I summonsed up the energy to crawl over the bed and look down at the naked heap on the floor.

I said to myself, lying on my front, looking down, "I think I've killed her. I wanted to marry her and I think I've gone and killed her."

After about twenty seconds she said, "No you haven't. That's the best I've had since Abigail."

"Since Abigail? Oh, so that's the measure of my achievement?"

"She had more energy than you."

"I'll get a machine to do it, tie you up, thrash you inside all day."

"It was still good, though. Can I come on there and spoon?"

"Yes but we need a dry area," I said, not realising her question there and then, and she crawled up and I spooned around her.

I think she appreciated it. Twenty minutes on we changed the bedding for a wash the next day.

Despite my easy capacity for falling in love, my emotions here demanded that I was more maternal. I had been damaged by Ann (she was right), by Keith, momentarily by Jonathan Eyre, and from the group, but I had also abused Adam and disturbed Jenny. As for Diana, she was problematic throughout. And for a moment I thought of daddy.

Regarding the near violent sex we'd just had, Allie insisted that it was our best yet. Finally she drank a lot of water in the bathroom, had a long audible piss, and came out and stood with a legs wide power stance and stared at me lying on the bed.

She suddenly said, "Let's marry. February I want or some time like that."

My head was all over the place. Daddy had been lying to me when I'd thought he'd always told the truth. I wanted to be mummy to Allie, and tell the truth.

Narrator: Allie *Before the New Season* (To Thursday 2nd January 2020)

At last I had Linda to myself. She had given me massive orgasms in some wonderful Christmas night sex.

Ever since I saw her at Margate, I had dreamed of this possibility of togetherness with her. To come here, to do research, was a chance I could not miss, and to find out about her on her home turf. I had to reassure her about the content of my research: the line of abuse, from Ann to Adam and to Linda was not the centre of my text. I doubted that Jenny even knew that Linda had been seduced by Ann and

Labhaoise.

Meanwhile, this church centre was now ours alone, because on Friday 27th December Adam left Yojana at her parents' home and went to Reading to stay with his still wife Mary Ann and Yootha Ann! He went for a whole six nights. Linda thought this was a long time to spend with them, and wondered about Yojana's role.

We did go out to shop and to see Jenny World on 27th December, who seemed rather confused. Linda explained that Adam was spending nearly seven days with his wife. We did not mention Yojana. We also went out to various parks in the cool weather.

Only two of us rattled around in the centre. The food service went to social services and the local authority and some other volunteers because our students vanished.

I said to Linda on Saturday, "This is one fucking weirdo settlement."

"Settlement? Someone's had a settlement? Not a settlement from Ann?"

"It's geographical terminology for a town or village."

"Of course it is."

"Stop panicking. I've told you. My focus is on the church existing and developing, not backgrounds."

The problem with my Ph.D text was this: anyone outside wouldn't know the location of the church and the names were changed. Journalists could do a minimum of investigative effort to find out the location and connect it to the former scandal, but the real issue was the locals. Anyone in the location would know who was whom and gain information each on the other. So much that was private and secretive would be revealed.

The thought did pass my mind that Linda took me on as an item to shut me up and stop the research becoming a text, but she had not said this.

On Sunday Linda received a message that Adam would no longer use his room. He'd clear it out after Christmas. She showed me:

You might offer it to one or two students, conduct some interviews or similar. Leave it to you.

I escaped to do a little genealogical research, at Toulouse Road on one of my increasingly infrequent moments alone. I'd previously found the Shrimpton connection, after all, using the extensive interlocking Jenner-Rogers family tree with which my family were so familiar. What I was trying out was what I could learn about Linda's ancestry.

Go back far enough, increasing each stage to the power of two, and then go forward with often above the power of two, and connections can be found - as I had found with Akemi Tamuuz. There was, incredibly, very little connection from Norfolk to Foss, but there was Norfolk to the North East. I focussed upon Linda's biological grandmother Janet Anson (born 14th August 1875, died 30th September 1950) of West Stockwith to Gainasburgh; I needed more time but didn't have it because I was with Linda most of the time and she'd understood I'd gone off to tidy up and check everything was all right.

In the Bethel it was like we were masters of all we surveyed, and often we failed to dress.

On Monday 30th, in town, Rhiannon Fleetwood in clerical garb was coming

along the pavement. She paused and decided to cross the road. Linda asked me, "What *did* you do to her?" Her question was rhetorical.

That day Roger Humphrey and his sister Marie Enfield called, and stripped, making four. Nevertheless Marie wanted private words with Linda. What had happened that day when Roger called, when Mrs. Carter was present?

Once they'd all gone, we were back to two again.

A caller on Tuesday 31st was Flòraidh MacLean, who was not bedded in as an Anglican down the road. Linda and I wore dressing gowns and bare (dirty) feet. Flòraidh gave me an opportunity to recall some Gaelic learnt, which I could see being slowly forgotten by me. It had been hard enough getting an ear for it and pronouncing it, never mind learning the words and the grammar. Now I lacked ongoing practice. Welsh or Cornish would have been easier. Those with archaeological interest often chose Anglo-Saxon or Middle English. Absent Kathryn and Kathleen had looked into early and middle English, briefly.

This Welsh aspect raised the question of when I might visit Linda's parents' farm. Linda did shake her head.

Sally Torrance and Paula Campbell called and so four were wearing nothing again. Linda discussed with them the possibility of a Gymnology Centre on site. Linda had received news of just such an intellectual discussion club at Bever Wood - headed by caretaker Jeremy and receptionist Lindy. Paula said how she appreciated Diana's guidance towards greater confidence in the acceptability of her body and displaying it in public. Sally would see her new boyfriend again.

Linda and I went beyond midnight into 2020 with Diana de Groot and family. Patricia and Arthur wanted a more intimate, homely, seeing in of the New Year. We drifted back about 2 am.

Linda said she wanted more from me to decorate the church centre, with perhaps one anonymous nude among abstracts and the like.

"I don't do abstracts, but I can do mystical scenes," I told her. "Abstracts are too difficult."

So for a few moments on the Wednesday away from Linda, rather than pursue the genealogy of Janet Anson, I started a painting, to see if an abstract would work. It would not.

Adam, Kathleen and Winnie were back on the 2nd January 2020. He did not want to speak about his time with Mary Ann to anyone, and as it wasn't a church matter I didn't try to press him. Asked if he'd see Yojana, he repeated, "We have a very loose relationship."

Peter and Kathryn also resumed residency down the road, where Adam had his second and increasingly preferred bedroom.

Elizabeth and Yojana Asthana, and then Christine again, resumed working on Systematic Measuring Services coming back to above the casino. The firm had pulled back on some of its expansionary intentions into South Wales since the scandal broke. This peculiar firm was connecting with Christine's work, for its managers, so that Serninsea was now only a 'rewards' location. ConnectSernin had been added to such firms associating with Christine. Christine told me of meeting a Higher Education student at Foss Upper Coast College, Adrian Laney, that ConnectSernin wanted to employ after his degree. The firm had paid him a small grant, a golden pre-hello.

Linda wanted separation from all this headed by Christine. Yet I knew I'd have

to research it, and her motherly approach to me might clash with this requirement.

Also I learnt that Ann and Labhaoise had put up the farmland for sale. Why did Linda's father want it, but lost out from buying it? Linda had never said a word about this and my best strategy (as so often) was to keep quiet and wait.

Narrator: Linda *Marie Enfield Calls* (Monday 30th December)

Allie and I had been out, and Rhiannon Fleetwood passed us by going across the road and using the other pavement. When back, Marie Enfield called, and wanted to see me alone.

"You should know that Roger and I discuss everything. So what he keeps confidential he shares with me."

"That's a very healthy relationship situation," I said.

"So, to be blunt, the only time he inserts sperm into me is when his manhood gets covered in red. Do you know what I mean?"

"Yes."

"So he told me he'd penetrated this old lady and deposited sperm in her, like he does when giving a donation."

"I wouldn't say she was an 'old lady'. She's seventy-two."

"She has long flowing, going white, pubic hair."

"Yes. It was lovely to see close-up."

"Why did you ask him to do this?"

"I didn't expect it at all. She wanted to see a young man, to rekindle memories. The most I expected was she might have touched him. He was just to stand there. But she was definitely in for a penny, in for a pound. I was shocked, really, but it was important to rekindle all those memories, those desires. He did a very good job. I did tell him to go in deep, and he did have a very good technique. You must be fortunate."

"I am. He ought to have been paid, like he is when he donates sperm at the clinic."

"I agree. Tell me how much and I'll arrange it."

"Fifty."

"Something I need to ask you."

"Yes, our father has been visiting. Go on."

"Well, is it true. You're not half-brother and sister, but full."

"Has he visited you?"

"No."

"He will. Yes, we are fully brother and sister. We told you what we tell others. We started, to be blunt, fucking each other at home. And then we fell in love in that other way. So he and I are very, very solid. Adam hasn't sacked him. Are you appalled?"

"No."

"Our father will try to discover our accommodation, which he will, to drive us out of town."

"That's easy to sort out," I said. "We'll have a room here."

"Knowing that we have the same mother and father?"

"Yep. I'm not sitting in judgment."

"Oh. Not, 'Go and sin no more?'"

"Nope. So hold on where you are, and we'll get you here."

Narrator: *Allie Shower Time* (Friday 3rd January 2020)

Klärchen Sisse opened her front door, partly hiding behind it, nightie on and breasts visible underneath.

"It's me," I said.

"Come in."

Salome Lichtbau came downstairs, in a nightie only, followed by two dogs, a German shepherd and a golden labrador.

Klärchen said, in her moderated German accent, "Look, Dieter and Hendrik, it's Auntie Allie."

I went in and we'd use the downstairs shower room, as ever, which meant first going into Klärchen's grey floor tiles covered kitchen.

Here, Salome announced to me that she was moving in shortly and would become my neighbour. "We're not sure whether to have a civil partnership or get married," she said, "but we'd like to be respectable to the world."

"Sure," I replied.

"Look," said Klärchen. She had two new products to show me. One was rose fragrance shampoo. "This is for Dieter. It will leave him with a fresh fragrance. It's got essential oils and herbal extracts, no nasty chemicals and gentle on his flesh. Yes?"

"This isn't cheap," I said.

"Only the best," said Salome.

"And this is new for Hendrik," Klärchen continued, showing me plastic bottle number two. It was black pomegranate in a shampoo. "He gets a deep clean, fresh, plum-like yes and for his more sensitive skin. It is more gentle, I think, also herbal and some fruit too."

"And what about me?" I asked them.

"Auntie Allie wants a special treat," Klärchen said to Dieter coming close, wagging his tail.

Salome walked over and gave Klärchen a bottle, saying. "This has a lovely consistency for our friend, bubbly even, thick and luxurious: it's an aromatherapy douch gel excess, for the shower, called 'Adge', to make your skin soft and healthy."

"And what are you two using?" I asked.

Klärchen answered, "We are trying a *Prunus Amygdalus Dulcis* Gel Douche excess with..."

"Almond?" I asked.

"...*Althaea Officinalis* Root. 'Padgar' is its shortened name."

"I should have called myself Althea, not Alfia, as I told you before. I should have that, and you the first one. Only joking. And for my hair?" I asked.

"Yah. Salome, please, what do we have especially for our friend?"

"Haritaki fruit shampoo. It will make your hair have more volume still. We have, this time, *picea abies* and *cedrus atlantica* wood oils shampoo, called 'Pacaw'. Beautiful, we expect."

They were showing me hugely expensive shampoos and gels. They must have spent in a month, including for their excited dancing dogs, what either Linda or I spent in years on these products.

Nevertheless, all willing, we three women and two dogs headed for the shower room, in fact a wet room of a good size, a central shower hose from the ceiling and (effectively) a plughole in the centre. There was a two person bath to the side where water could spill over without consequence. It was the best shower room I'd seen other than the rabbi's house.

Thus I received my luxurious body wash and allocated shapoo. Their hands on my front and back was as nothing compared with the care and focus given to the once dancing dogs. I took over, including for my hair. I was busy as dog shampoos went into them. Klärchen and Salome also worked the Padgar into each other.

Out of the wet room there were two hair dryers for hair and bodies, including for the dogs. And when I was done and started to dress, Salome announced that the four of them wanted to be on their own.

The dogs became excited again, as it was time for me to go and return next door.

Narrator: Linda *News that Needs a Meeting* (Friday 3rd January 2020)

Our own people were in and out, including Bishop Elizabeth, so we were completely up and running by Friday 3rd January.

Mid-morning, after the post had come, I opened a letter just delivered, and it was from Jeremy Symes at Bever Wood.

Dear Bishop Linda,

Your recent Advent mission to Bever Wood Naturist Centre was very welcome in tone and direction: very undogmatic and affirming our naturism.

It gave rise to some thinking afterwards among the Managing Committee, of which Lindy and I are a part. We have decided to create a Chapel and Gymnology Centre here, a place where residents and visitors can contemplate and contribute intellectually to a spiritual understanding of being naturist. Perhaps you would consent to being a speaker for a programme of lectures. We should throughout consider the history, purpose and religious connections - problematic and positive - of naturism. We welcome new ideas along with reminding us of established and previously contested ideas.

Yours sincerely

The Rev. Jeremy Symes

Allie was away somewhere in the morning, perhaps to her house I thought. Once back her red hair was absolutely gleaming and shining, "Allie, look, he signs himself 'The Rev.' - I mean that's good he's keeping its use."

Still in the vestry I was watching Bishop Elizabeth going backwards and forwards across the seating area. She was not responding to my gestures to come and read the letter when Bishop Geoff alongside Bishop Luis contacted me via video link to my desktop computer.

"We have some news for the future," Geoff said. "Hello Bishop Linda and Deacon Alfia, from both of us."

"Go on."

"It's excellent news, yet via the sad death of Metropolitan Archbishop Nicholas Peterson of the Charismatic Orthodox Church. Luis has inherited the title. Their congregations are sadly no longer active but the Metropolitan did have a later life in which he still maintained a weekly Mass, some of them by himself in what became spiritualist meeting places."

"Sad? Excellent?" I asked. "Liz! Come here! Oh she's gone again."

Luis spoke. "Yes, because we have decided to merge the two Churches and I will be Metropolitan Archbishop Luis Mar Flacillus. We are going to call this Church, from both names, the Old Charismatic Orthodox Ecclesia instead of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia, also making use of the Old name."

I said, "We, the bishops, have not decided this."

Geoff said, "It's an opportunity to make this change."

Luis added, "I'd have thought you'd have rejoiced, Bishop Linda."

"As I thought I'd made it plain, I don't like the use of 'Old' or 'Orthodox', and we have charismatics setting up here and becoming better known. We are none of these. We're not Old but *Liberal*, we're not Orthodox but *Catholic*, and we are not Charismatic in any institutional sense."

"We are Liberal or Old Catholicism."

So I said, "I have no objection to you adding titles, Luis, but I want the simple, descriptive, ecclesiastical name. I am going to consult the clergy at this end, and I will make clear my opposition and hopefully theirs."

"Then we call a Council," said Bishop Luis. "We need fifty per cent or more of bishops to call one. We have two here. Bishop Christine might well support having a Council and indicate how the Confraternity can offer guidance. We then need one more bishop."

I said, "Me then. I support having a Council to then decide against."

"Through discernment and prayer with the purpose of reaching a consensus," said Luis.

"Absolutely," said Geoff alongside him.

"By the way," I said, "we had a good naturist mission with a lecture, sermon, contacts and even a magic show. From it I have other news, briefly, just received, that as a result of our mission Jeremy Symes is considering having a Gymnology Centre, a kind of chapel and meeting space to consider theological subjects. We have had gymnology meetings here."

"What is gymnologising?" asked Bishop Geoff Virgo.

"Naked debating," I said. "Where all the topics are discussed naked. We've tried the same here in Serninsea."

Bishop Luis said, "I want to say, when it comes to the body and sexuality, and your related events, I want us to consider the earlier Karl Rahner and even Karol Wojtyła. You do know who he was?"

"If you are referring to above the casino then it is nothing to do with me. And I would have thought we should not refer to Pope John Paul the Second for guidance, Bishop Luis. Liz! Come here!"

She came in.

"I'm going out," she said.

"Where are you going, Liz?"

"Jenny in hospital. See if she is recovering her mind. Your red hair is so shiny, Allie."

"Bishop Luis and Geoff are on screen. They want to call a Council on a potential name change. So do I. Do you agree?"

"Yep. Fine by me."

"They're not sure about above the casino. Bishop Luis Callas wants us to consider the earlier Karl Rahner and even Karol Wojtyla."

"Oh?" said Elizabeth.

Luis said, "The body is the material expression of the inner person, but without any duality. That's because, according to the earlier Rahner, the whole person is represented in every action of a part of the body. Each part used symbolises the whole, ontologically. So we can see how the use of sexual parts symbolises the whole, and clearly on the earlier Rahner's account, the sexual difference between penis and vagina must have symbolic power for sexual difference and complementarity."

"Let's discuss this and its relevance at the Council," I said. "You can introduce it to Christine and Elizabeth. As an intersex woman, I have grave doubts on the productivity of this line of thought."

Geoff said, "We will hold the Council here in Bristol. Bishop Elizabeth: Archbishop Luis has inherited the title from Nicholas Peterson of the Charismatic Orthodox Church. In merging the two Churches and Luis becoming Metropolitan Archbishop Luis Mar Flacillus, we need a name change from Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia to Old Charismatic Orthodox Ecclesia."

"I'm neutral," said Liz. "Arguments both ways."

"I prefer simplicity," I said. "And a recognisable name: called this, means this."

"On balance I agree with Linda," Elizabeth said. "But I am open to persuasion."

Luis asked, "What is all this 'above the casino'?"

Elizabeth replied, "It's a combination of SMS management perks and leisure, with ConnectSernin Limited and a few others joining in, combined with sacrificial theology that approves the body and is sexually positive. The company that pays us is not them or ConnectSernin but a front business called Felixtowe Container Connection."

He wished Elizabeth the best (not me!) and the call ended with Elizabeth agreeing with all that we should have our Council as soon as possible - next week. Liz then left to see Jenny; and I said to Allie about going to Bristol. "You could see your professor at Glastonbury."

"Linda. Christine has suggested I see an addiction unit she knows. She has a lot of women going there, in the sex industry, to clean them out if possible. It includes alcoholics. I'm not an alcoholic, but I am close. I made a commitment to you and at the swimming pool, but it is difficult. Your warmth and our relationship is helping."

"Christine is a good egg," I said. "She's made a really useful and practical suggestion. We need her available for this Council. This denominational name really matters to me."

Narrator: *Allie Health Check-Up* (Monday 6th January)

In the morning, courtesy of Christine's private health arrangements, I went for a sexual health check at the clinic. The clinic is run by a social enterprise, and does mainly National Health Service work, but there is a private input.

I attended and sat in a first waiting area, and I recognised Roger Humphrey. He came and sat by me.

"I suppose," I said, "I should not ask why you are here."

"Not a secret, well not from you. It's my first sperm donation of the new year."

"So does that, you know, involve a room and mucky magazines - as my grandfather used to call them?"

"Video screen."

"Stimulation, then," I said. "Couldn't your partner come?"

"Marie *could* come, I suppose. But it might add a bit of her liquid too!"

"She could wank you, like your boss."

"She doesn't wank Mr. Magellan."

"I didn't mean that."

"He does not wank me."

"I only meant his habit."

"So I've learnt about him. He does it on his own. No, I make love with Marie. And you?"

"I make love with Linda. I'm curious. You turned up just before Christmas when Mrs. Carter was visiting. Was there a connection?"

"I can't talk about that."

"So there was a connection."

"I, em, caught the reason why Mrs. Carter wanted to see Linda, so I was told in no uncertain terms to keep it to myself."

"Why were you there?"

"You're a bit nosey, aren't you? Well, given what I knew, I could do some extra administration."

"Can't be why you were asked over."

"Correct. I did say 'extra'. Is your interview over? I mean, why are you here?"

"I'm here for a check up: gynaecology and all that. I just want to be on the safe side of events. Legs open and other groping tells them everything they and I want to know."

"Daft, isn't it, looking at a video, when you're opening your legs for real in another room," he said.

Someone with a female voice called out, "Alfia Shrimpton, can you move to the waiting area down that corridor."

I went down the corridor. "Excuse me!" I said, to a white-coated man leaving a room.

"Doctor Holden Obasie at your service, madam."

"My friend I've just met is here to donate sperm, for which he gets artificial media stimulation. If he came in with me - and I *am* allowed to have a person come in with me - couldn't he do his donation in the same room, stimulated for real?"

"If you nominate him, he can attend with you, but I'm not sure about the rest. I'll go and ask colleagues."

There was a gap while I sat and held me hard.

Doctor Obasie approached with Roger himself. "So long as Roger here makes the donation, it does not matter to us where. The only stipulation is a pure offering into the provided labelled plastic receptacle. Bring it round to the usual desk," he said. "Doctor Feller is just informing the nurse."

We both stood by an open door.

"Thank you Honor," said a nurse as Doctor Feller was leaving. "Ah, enter. My name is Nurse Ophelia Sandwich and I shall carry out the examination."

I followed her to this desk where we both sat facing each other. Roger became a distance from me standing across the room.

Nurse Sandwich said, "First I have questions. Do you have regular sexual intercourse? Is he all right hearing this?"

"Roger's fine by me. Yes, I have had. I prefer sex with women - hand penetration from women."

"Really. Do you have or have you ever had anal intercourse?"

"Yes, but not often. Usually a lot at once."

"When is your period due?"

"It's slightly overdue, Nurse Sandwich."

"Call me Ophelia, Allie. Will you be sensitive from a breasts examination?"

"I'll be fine enough."

"How are your bowels? Will you want an enema today?"

"Roger, would you get off on an enema?"

"I'd stay soft... Oh, *you're* having the enema."

"Roger! A spray out of my arse might excite you."

The nurse said, "You evacuate the water and any contents in the toilet there. You're not spraying it across the room for effect. How are your bowels?"

"They're fine, Nurse Ophelia. I'll skip the enema then."

"Sleeping all right?"

"Yes, more or less. I piss a few times in the night."

"First thing then is to remove your blouse and we'll get up and begin. And you are all right with him here."

"The point is to have him here. He is here to donate sperm into that plastic pot he's carrying."

"I know that. Perhaps he'll drop his underpants and trousers and start masturbating."

"She's right, Roger; the stimulation starts now. Get 'em off!"

So my breasts were exposed, and I continued to undress.

Another no-bra wearer. Is this undressing to stimulate him?" the nurse asked. "It's unnecessary at this stage."

"Yes."

Roger now began pushing and pulling his jolly good length of todger and found a moulded seat for his bare bottom.

"Has Linda seen that?" I asked him, with a smile.

"That's for me to know and you to wonder," he replied.

"Not, er, Mrs. Carter?"

"Allie! Why on earth would Mrs. Carter of all people ever see my knob? Give it a rest."

The sphygmomanometer was ready, as I sat down on the padded examining bench and the cuff was put around my arm held up at the same level as my heart.

Roger said, "Having your blood pressure taken isn't exactly very stimulating. Your body is."

Nurse Ophelia said, "I'll test her breasts next; this should help you. So, Mr. Humphrey, you shave off your pubic hair."

"Partner prefers it well down. You removed yours, Allie."

The nurse said, "It does serve a function and it seems a shame to shave off natural red hair."

So the sphygmomanometer used, I stood up, with each arm put behind my head so that the nurse could press around and detect for lumps and the like. Roger was watching and playing with himself to growing effect.

Now she had a metal contraption to put in my mouth, holding it open.

Roger said, "That could be used for oral sex."

I was unable to reply. The nurse used it to insert a wood spatula and examine my throat. I had to cough and say "ah" a few times. So with the BDSM toy (my thought) removed she rubbed her fingers around my neck.

I stood to have a stethoscope placed under each breast and on my back. I looked at Roger, and boy was that inviting.

Now Nurse Ophelia asked that I lay on the padded bench. She wanted to examine my feet. This made me laugh because the metal piece like for cutting pastry was ticklish. I bent my toes and rotated my foot, each time.

Nurse Ophelia prodded and kneaded by torso, but she looked at the pubic area.

"You see, it's a little blotchy from shaving and the hair is only going to come back. I'm a brunette with a thick bush that protects me from skin irritation, reduces sweat, blocks bacteria and sexual, urinary and yeast infections, and it helps regulate body temperature."

"Thank you," I said.

"Oh, and good, thick, curly pubic hair contains pheromones to attract a man." She pressed about the pubic area, and I looked to the side at Roger who seemed to be pacing himself.

I said, "Roger, bring your seat over and have a direct view."

So he moved his seat so that he could see my crotch more directly.

The nurse extended her body survey by pouring little drops of liquid at strategic places for a hand-held doppler test, so that we could all listen to my pulse. She asked me to get off and do some squats, to then get back and hear the increased rate. Roger seemed to increase his rate too, given that my breasts had bobbed up and down and my vagina opened a little when going down.

Being naked was a good opportunity to get on the combined weight and height device. In metric I was 170 cm tall or 5 foot 7 inches and 63.5 kg. Anyone who knows their tables knows that that is ten stone. I had a body mass index of 20.7 or 21.9, because she got in a muddle with calculating it. It was well within the healthy range, said Nurse Ophelia.

Next, while stood, came the bending of my arms and legs. She asked, "Are you actually girlfriend and boyfriend?"

"No," he said. "I mentioned my partner Marie Enfield. Allie is a friend."

It was time to go back on the bench, and lean on my left side. Nurse Ophelia said, "This should excite him." I had a thermometer placed in my mouth, one in my vagina and one in my anus.

A minute later she looked at the mouth one, then the vaginal one and then the anal one. It was 36 degrees in my mouth and above 37 degrees in my anus and rising to 38 in my vagina.

Yes it did excite him, as there was no need to insert a thermometer into my vagina at all. (I knew that much.)

Also to excite him, she examined my outer labia, which meant he came closer and bent down to get a good view. Ophelia asked, "Do you know the parts of the vulva, Roger?"

"Think so. That's her outer labia, those parting now are her inner labia, and that above coming out is her clitoris."

"The clitoris is a much larger structure than just what is revealing itself now. Stimulate around it as much as on it," she added.

"What, *now*?" he asked.

"Not now. When you two get together."

"We don't get together," he said. "I thought that was obvious."

"Well, what are you doing here then?"

I said, puzzled at this woman's inability to get it, "I invited him as this is better than some video screen for donating. During Advent we did a naturist mission together."

"We did wear the uniform," he joked.

"What uniform?" she asked.

"Nothing! Allie, my partner, me, everyone: we were all naked throughout."

Nurse Ophelia pulled my labia wide apart. "Where does she pee from Roger?"

"That hole below the clitoris, above the vaginal opening."

"Urethra," said the nurse.

"My what?" asked Roger.

"Roger!" I said.

"Oh, yes, sorry, *your* urethra. I've seen Marie - my partne, see - produce a really defined curve of piss."

"It's a parabola: $y = -x^2$," I said, "starting at about $y = -10$."

The nurse asked, "You do the mathematics of expelling urine?"

"No, but I paint and draw curves from time to time."

"Why minus?" asked Roger.

"Because it is an inverted curve with zero at the top," I informed him. "I learnt this from my folkways tutor, although it was definitely off-topic."

With new gloves put on the nurse said, "So it's the business end now," and inserted two fingers into my vagina to feel around inside, sometimes forming a positive parabola and sometimes a straight line. Then, once I'd obeyed the instruction to face away and get on my knees, a finger went inside my anus. I could hear Roger at this point adding force to his effort.

"I detect nothing," she said, removing the gloves and disposing of them. "One more thing here, now," she continued. "I know: your friend Roger can do it. He'll measure the length of your vagina."

So Roger took what was basically a passive vibrator with a measuring ruler on it and he slowly inserted it into my vagina, thus taking a rest from his exercise.

"What does it say, Roger?" she asked.

"Thirteen centimetres."

"Thirteen centimetres is a good size for any penis," said the nurse.

I asked why I would want to insert a penis in my vagina.

"Your partner does?"

"She has a *vagina*. Five centimetres."

"Five?" asked the nurse. "Is that all?"

"Yes."

"That's a pouch! Oh. Oh dear. I think I know who this is. I haven't met... her yet, 'cause I'm more on the private side. Male genes."

"I'm told she's bigger than she was."

Then the nurse said, "It also explains the naturist mission."

"How does it explain the naturist mission?" I asked. "You mean she wants to show everyone her body shape?"

"No, in knowing who it is."

Roger said, "Her intersex is a public statement now."

"Well, we are not here to discuss someone else. I need a urine sample next - you, not me," she declared.

The nurse gave me a labelled plastic container and lid, and pointed to the adjacent toilet. Instead I handed the container to Roger, to hold it as well, and follow me, and above the tiles just into the toilet I peed into it (only) to give him some more eye candy. Just to help him, and out of the nurse's sight, I pulled on his todger and gave him a kiss to his left cheek.

"On to the gynaecological chair then," she said, as I handed over the contained amber coloured liquid. I gave Roger another smile as I hopped up on to this thing, with viewing opera glasses of a sort on a pivot to the side, and Roger was given the honour of adjusting the leg supports so that my legs were secured on them and my vulva was on full outer display.

With new gloves worn by the nurse, a speculum was greased and inserted, and the stereoscopic viewer of sorts with a light was rotated to look down the speculum.

"Want to look?" Nurse Ophelia asked Roger. He nodded and took a view down the viewer, pulling at himself more as he did. Once he'd finished looking, they were removed to the side.

"Is it supposed to be red in there?" he asked.

The nurse looked and subsequently took a swab at the cervix, and blood was on it. She dropped it into a labelled plastic container, and then she took another swab on the side wall for the mucus, and it was dropped into another labelled plastic container.

"It's just starting," said the nurse. "We'll do tests on these: results in a week." The nurse moved away to write on the labels. Roger was left looking directly at me and wanking himself rather hard now.

Thus Roger positioned his own container, and wanked his sperm into it, and put the lid on.

The nurse asked me, "Do you want an enema for any reason?"

"No. I've got one in Rhiannon."

"What?"

"Nothing. A joke."

"She isn't that clergywoman is she? Someone attacked her in the crotch, recently. Can you believe it, an attack like that on a clergywoman? Well, I would recommend an enema."

"No thank you. Roger, they'll be wanting that very soon," I advised. "Don't forget to put your underpants and trousers back on."

Nurse Ophelia said, "We are done. Do you want a tampon?"

"Yes please."

The nurse put it in as Roger was getting dressed. He said he would go directly to deliver his product.

Thus I got dressed, and met him at the entrance and exit waiting area, from where we walked to the bethel and he went on to Magellan's Investigations Agency.

What Roger did not know was that this get together had allowed a familiarity between us so that there were more options than Jonnie if I wanted to become pregnant. I was thirty years old, after all.

Keeping so much to myself, Linda was feeling happy. The uncontested divorce was through. So she and I went to the reopened local register office to state that we intended to get married!

Chapter 27 Council and Glastonbury

Narrator: Linda *The Journey* (Tuesday 7th January)

On Monday while she was elsewhere I sent an email to Allie's professor for me to pay a visit to him in Glastonbury as I would be in the area on Thursday. I thought it best not to say why.

On Tuesday he messaged me stating that there was a conflict of interest with Allie as his student. So I replied that I had pastoral concerns that I'd only discuss there but he could ask Allie if I should see him.

Allie came to me and said she and I could see her professor. I wasn't sure if she meant separately or together. I thought it best to leave such options unexamined.

Allie was in her trademark leathers, and packed some varied gear for the days away. She wanted extra hand and bath towels; I also had changes of clothing, but packed my cassock and full ecclesiastical gear.

She said to me, ready to leave the bedroom, "By the way, I've just started my period and it looks to be a heavy one."

I said, "I noticed the dangling string, this morning. Where did you go yesterday?"

"I just got a health check in as it started. Hey, Roger Humphrey was there donating sperm."

"Huh, in a weird world you could have given him a thrill," I said.

"I'm not so sure even Serninsea is as weird as that, Linda."

"You're such a slag," I said to her. "Anyway, no massage this week."

Meanwhile, as we were getting ready, we had a visit from the Reverend Georgie Smith, she with shortish to her neck hair and like the older Sophy in *The Camomile Lawn*, who asked to look around the downstairs of the building. She'd come to the Christmas Day service with her three congregants but that was all. She wanted a venue to give a lecture and pointed out that she didn't want to use her own dim and fabric-challenged UPCC chapel.

"It needs so much money spending on it, and there is no money. When I came here in 1982 as a twenty-six year old it had a decent congregation but now there are three of those left."

The occasion would bring along various ministers from all around, as she would include some announcements. So of course I said yes and settled for a date of just under a month.

"We're very different traditions," she said, hearing about our imminent journey, "and I will make that contrast as well. A naturist mission too - sounds like fun - but that also helps me think about so-called 'natural religion' that my tradition kind of rejects."

I said I welcomed some pluralism and difference, to hear a different perspective. It helped to give shape to our own mission and purpose. "The Bishops' Council I'll attend might contribute to clarity," I suggested in a rather forlorn hope. "I'm doing some reading on the *Philokalia* to have something to contrast their resource using."

"Never heard of it."

"Eastern Orthodoxy, 4th to 15th centuries: contemplative, ascetical, purifying the intellect through awareness; my interest is about the body, being natural under God. Very large collection, came to be known about in English in the 1980s and 1990s."

Adam drove Allie and me to his workplace, and Peter Marshall was already in place at the reception there. "What do you really think of Bishops Geoff and Luis?" I asked Peter. "Their stances?"

"Horrible," Peter said. "They're oddballs. But then I chat to Unitarians and other oddballs. I am completely against the name change. So are Kathleen and Winnie."

"Yes, well, I think their ideas are unacceptable," I said.

Peter said, "Which means what then?"

"Well, I'm considering how to get more simplicity and less hierarchy. We are *not* changing the name: we must emphasise inclusivity, and, for that matter, I don't want a Metropolitan Archbishop, although it won't have much effect on us. But I don't really care about what he calls himself."

"Sedition in the ranks," said Adam.

Peter said, "You won't get more simplicity in this ecclesiastical outfit: they are determined to go up the candle. Christine can draw on Bill and Pauline for support, and she is likely to support Geoff and Luis going up it."

"Giving them shoves up the rear," I said.

Allie would be the only deacon present at the Council, and there for research reasons only. I bade farewell to them for Allie and I to walk, expecting Christine's helicopter to land in Titansea in some fifteen minutes.

We walked and waited outside the Blue Diamond Club - giving me a shiver. Allie pointed up to the sky and then I heard the rotor blades of an approaching helicopter. It descended to a nearby landing area. Elizabeth emerged from the club that she managed, and Allie and I joined her in approaching the helicopter. Leon Agnew was alone; he told the three of us that Christine, Bill and Pauline had been in Bristol for the previous night. (So she was getting her viewpoint in first.)

As we sped through the air, we learnt that the M42 motorway route was blocked up. After an accident, three lanes had to move into the hard shoulder. Good job there was a hard shoulder, as so many had been disappearing in the cheaper and dangerous move to add a lane in these misnamed smart motorways. Outside Bristol, the helicopter had a place to land a short walk to the Miriam Woodland Hotel.

Elizabeth had her room and Allie and I had ours. I laid on the bed, clothes off. Allie suggested that we shared a shower. I agreed and some blood washed over our feet. After we dried, and I watched as she inserted a tampon, I looked at my gear. I said that next day I would wear my cassock, neglected since Anglican days.

Sharing the bed, I said to her, "This Council we are having: I am going to be outvoted. As you know, I have the rights to the church given to me by Adam, and if we split from the LAE I might have to go truly independent. But I suspect Adam expects me to keep Christine in the building one way or another."

"What about that Margaret Lindbeck and the group she joined?" asked Allie.

"What a good idea!" I said. "Yes. I could get in touch with her."

"Oh no," she said. "I've affected the research; I've influenced you."

"Don't worry. Say I thought of it. And you are a deacon. Secrets, secrets,

Allie."

"One thing that *might* be a secret but I don't think is..." said Allie.

"Go on."

"Kathryn Wickenby is pregnant."

Allie then farted.

"Allie!"

"Must be nerves. Kathryn *is* pregnant."

"Well, you're not pregnant."

"No, I don't want to influence your decisions."

"You know, I thought she looked a bit broader than her sister. She didn't tell me."

"What you didn't notice was, when I threw up once for being drunk on too much Thedde, she threw up at the same time for being pregnant. In Serninsea, people do keep things to themselves," said Allie. "You don't tell the whole truth, and neither do they."

"And neither do you, dear Allie. And what about your role in this Council of Bishops from tomorrow?" "I'll try to stay silent, or come up with neutral words."

"Well, the Reverend Deacon Allie, you will wear a clerical collar. I brought a spare. I shall wear my cassock. You wear a blouse and put it under the collar. No leathers *then*. And stop farting!"

"I anticipated this. I've got other clobber."

"The church is paying the taxi fare to Geoff and Luis' home, by the way. Should be interesting to see how the hierarchy lives. Have you farted again?"

"Silent one. You are part of the hierarchy, along with Christine, Bill..."

"How the other half of the hierarchy lives. Now, if you don't mind, before we search out food, and see Liz at all, I'd like my girl to have a cuddle from me."

"And to you."

"Of course. It would help if you didn't pass your bodily aromas into the room."

Council of the LAE Begins (Wednesday 8th January)

This was another large house. How do these clerics afford it? They had a double garage as well, separate from the house, and from the outside too it was made to look like a small chapel with a cross on the apex of the roof and two black arches as if windows painted on the garage door.

Soon after we had gathered, and greeted one another, Liz and I put on the full gear over our cassocks, and Allie put on a clerical collar with her blouse and trousers.

We had a Mass. In attendance were Bishops Geoff, Luis, Elizabeth, Christine, Bill, Pauline and me. Allie was listening carefully. It was very formal and very Liberal Catholic in liturgy. Bishop Geoff presided and began by saying, "We celebrate Mass before our Council in the hope of receiving the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

The homily was given by Bishop Christine, on Church order and its selective sources. Her argument was the consistency of Church Order and "reflective hierarchy" from the very beginning, but included the place of Mary Magdalene, some of those little mentioned other women (including the phenomenon of 'consecrated

virgins'), and the early Church.

Allie received communion but did not take part as clergy.

Back in the house we gathered at a round table. Bishop Geoff led us in prayer: "We pray to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, our dedication and worship at the beginning of the Business Meeting of this important Council of the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia. Amen."

Allie stalled everyone by asking, "Excuse me. I don't normally, but it would help me if I took notes. Is that all right?"

"Bishop Geoff said, "Yes indeed. Bishop Christine will take and produce the formal minutes."

"Mine will have to remain confidential," said Allie. "Thank you."

We had no apologies for non-attendance.

1) *Formal release of Mar Akelda, Bishop Margaret Lindbeck.*

2) *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali advice regarding Sexuality and the Body.*

3a) *Inheritance of the title and elevation of Mar Flacillus, Bishop Luis Mariano Callas, to His Grace the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Charismatic Orthodox Church after the sad death of His Grace the Metropolitan Archbishop Nicholas Peterson.*

3b) *Merger of the Charismatic Orthodox Church and the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia.*

4a) *Name change of the merged Church to the Old Charismatic Orthodox Ecclesia.*

4b) *Name change of the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali to the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Vetus Charismatic Orthodoxa.*

4c) *A statement of essential principles of the Old Charismatic Orthodox Ecclesia (the merged Church).*

The Council was chaired by Mar Arcturus-Virginis, Bishop Geoffrey Virgo. Bishop Geoff said, "Whilst the first item is relatively quick, and the third item is formal, the second and fourth items are going to involve meaningful discussion.

I raised an immediate objection: "This agenda assumes decisions will be made in the affirmative regarding the name change. This is presumptive."

Christine said, "The agenda does not impose an outcome; it simply suggests the affirmative road map but what matters is what is resolved. In any case, the advice regarding sex and the body could have come from an assumed merged Confraternity but it comes instead from the one we have now."

Then I asked about non-circulation of the agenda.

Christine - indeed acting as Secretary - responded, "This is an Extraordinary Council responding to rapid events. Meeting quickly was your wish, Bishop Linda. The process here is that we are asked if we dissent, and if we do we then discuss further, and only when dissent is removed or declared a minority do we accept the position. These are not to be motions but positions of the Church. Also this impacts on the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali* - its guidance, the proposed name change and then maintenance of its orderly principles - the use of *Vetus Charismatic Orthodoxa* instead of *Apostolica Liberali*."

I then said, "I thought we had already accepted Margaret Lindbeck had gone." Christine again: "Yes, without the Council, we had made that decision."

"So as this is Council," said Bishop Geoff, "we formally release Bishop Margaret. Luis."

Luis said, "I regret that she has joined a definitively non-apostolic group, but it does not negate her orders. We can only release her and send a note to wish her well."

Geoff asked, "Does anyone dissent? No? So we move on, unless Linda has any more observations."

My hand gesture was to tell them to get on with it.

Council: Advice

"Now," said the same Chair, Mar Arcturus-Virginis, Bishop Geoffrey Virgo, "we come on to something specific to Serninsea and inherited from, well, bishops who set up the National Church Confraternity as its Vanguard, one of whom was incardinated to us, and another involved then as a deacon of that Church."

I came in on this: "I wasn't *involved*; I was being pressurised against my will to join in and I investigated them."

"I was referring to Bishop Elizabeth, and Bishop Christine was then a deacon."

"Oh, sorry. Of course."

"Yes, well, that is true about your different involvement, although you are on record as rejecting in the same way much Augustinian theology, Bishop Linda. So by way of introduction I would ask how our experiences and theological outlook shape matters relating to our bodies: as in our gender, sexuality, ethnicity, appearance, age and general health. In this Council we will explore these interactions as a basis for guidance from our own Confraternity. Clearly this is about God, the Ecclesia, and our bodies in their substantive and physical senses. It is not just about bodies biological but bodies cultural, too: the economic, social and historical; and let's not forget that our bodies are part of the wider environment in its dynamic. Luis, please."

Christine said, instead, "If I may. First of all, it's not about our experiences, but whether Augustinian sin theology is reflective of the divine will. Secondly, it's not just Serninsea, but Serninsea is where there is an economic imperative of a religio-secular gathering that brings economic boost to hotels and guest houses, keeps sex workers better employed as hosts, and perhaps keeps a firm involved in Serninsea after pulling out. Otherwise this gathering can move to Casnewydd, because SMS is looking there again after a likely merger failed."

I said, "I thought Wales was off its agenda."

"No, and we could lose our setting of reward and restoration."

I said, "An orgy is an orgy is an orgy."

Christine responded: "That's not what happened at the hotel and you know it. I was in the process of taking it from Bishop John Barman and I ran it differently. You were there. You helped me."

"But you are going back above the casino," I said. "It won't be like lots of hotel rooms and hosts."

Christine retorted: "The body Eucharist we conducted was subtle and restrained, and said 'Go away and do likewise personally.' Yes?"

"This is unusual," Bishop Luis said. "I want to say, when it comes to the body and sexuality, and events around these, that I want us to consider the earlier Karl Rahner and even Karol Wojtyla."

"And the later Rahner modified his stance," I said. "That's because the plumbing argument is so limited because sexual expression is not dependent on plumbing."

"Plumbing?" asked Bill. "I do a bit of plumbing."

"Electricals, then," said Pauline. "Male plugs and female sockets."

"I can wire a plug as well," he said.

Luis continued, "But I am persuaded that there is a natural theology of sexual complementarity - survival and protection of the whole, that obviously involves reproduction."

I said, "I'd rather we drew upon the *Philokalia*, a body of mediaeval period works, mainly..."

"We know of this," said Bishop Luis.

"If one considers the interpretation of Alexander Schmemmann, in his *Journals*: we start with the body, for communication, knowledge and communion. We remove self-interest, to free the body from devouring or repulsing, via the awareness of contemplation and ascetic practice assisted by grace through the Holy Spirit. This is much more comprehensive positively about the body. It involves eros, a longing for the Logos through to the Father. This contradicts what are orgies above the casino, for matters of sexuality must be directly pastoral and body-affirming."

Luis interjected: "What you say does not contradict Karl Rahner and Karol Wojtyla, and I detect a oneupmanship here that is rather against its own intention."

Before I could reply Elizabeth said, "Orgies, as Linda calls them, are precisely not for reproduction but for non-possessive sexual enrichment in the broadest sense."

Christine said again, "It is not about *experience*. Grace, yes."

Elizabeth retorted, "Don't be so dogmatic. Enrichment is the same thing as divinely given: as the one time Bishop of Woolwich, John A. T. Robinson often said: view it from the other end."

"She does when it comes to doing it," I snorted.

Luis went on, "So, fellow bishops, of course the body is central to the economy of salvation. Yes, there are Christian practices that initially overlap with the Buddhist, as in the *Philokalia*."

Elizabeth said, "The spirit we are manifesting or incarnating above the casino is the spirit of barrier-breaking, of liberating, of breaking down constraints. I maintain, with Bishop Christine, that the orgasm is a distinctive route to the divine. Bishops Bill and Pauline, you practise this together in your relationship!"

"We do," said Pauline. "We think of the mystic William Blake! Blake said 'yes' to sexuality in 'gratified desire' and attacked repression. Gratified desire gives a vision that is the discovery of the infinite. Blake promoted the emanation - the feminine element - where sex is interacting with gender in a complex interrelated way to avoid destructive patriarchy. But then Blake warns that sexuality is a tender trap rather than a force of liberation and then sees the female principle as subordinate to the male. Well, we don't agree with his contradictory reservations - of

course."

Luis said, "I think we should get away from the subjectivity of the body in the Enlightenment, and Romanticism, and keep to Rahner, Wojtyla and indeed the *Philokalia* from the East."

"No," Elizabeth said, "We have an expression of love in the widest sense: love for partner, love for neighbour - and we ask, 'Who is your neighbour?' - and sexual expression for love of all that gives the insight into divine love."

"But love as deep and, in the end, reproductive," Luis responded.

"Hang on," I said. "You are a gay man and clearly love is not 'in the end reproductive'. Same surely for you, Geoff."

Luis said, "It is, when part of society."

"Well," I said, "some societies, indeed all societies, have multiple parenting. Some formalise it, and some deny it - whereas it is a reality. Some children in a household have their two parents present, some in the same household have one of their parents present and there are a number of other parents."

"Yes, it is very sad," said Geoff.

"I'd no idea you thought this way," I said.

Elizabeth, who wasn't sitting on the fence any more, rather agreed, "I *am* surprised. My divine sexual pleasure with Bishop Terry Barman, Bishop Jonathan Eyre, and indeed with a number of people, never had reproduction as a part of it."

Christine said, "Well, Jonathan Eyre has had reproduction as a result of his activities. Twenty-six is it now?"

"You don't agree with Luis?" I asked Christine.

"I value his teaching ministry."

"Look," I said, "it doesn't matter so long as the denominational policy is gay etcetera inclusion."

"Not exactly," said Bishop Luis. "We are neutral."

"Hang on," I said. "This is the one area of sexuality that *is* binary. Either we are in favour of inclusive religious marriage or we are not. To be neutral is not to assert it. At Serninsea, our inclusivity is at the heart of everything. I wrote on the documents that the denomination is in favour. If it is *not* in favour, the authorities won't recognise one of our ministries. This is crazy."

Luis said, "Our policy is not to block it in the ministries. We give sufficient approval so that you can have it. But I think your view depersonalises and is for visualising rather than an expression of the inner body by the outer body, a fruit of goodness. We are not seeking to question your inclusion, nor for that matter stop a peculiar inheritance of ecclesiastical oversight with the reward activities associated."

I said, "That's the peculiar bit I'm rejecting."

Christine said, "Listen, we ought to have guidance. This much is so."

Luis said, "Wojtyla took it back to creation, in how Jesus linked divorce with the first things. Go back to original solitude, original unity and original nakedness. Awareness came to Adam - not your Adam! - that was communal, covenantal, as of a gift, to receive in submission."

"Quite," I said, "Communal, together, communicative, responsive, aware, naked and sexual. What's the problem? I have a sexual relationship now with my researcher. She was my pastoral concern nevertheless, despite her intended neutrality and, as I say, I'm positive about what has happened."

"Linda! exclaimed Allie. "Is what I am or do relevant?"

"It is now."

"I'm not joining in with this. No."

"You are a deacon of the Church," said Luis.

Allie said no more, and looked down at her expanding notes.

Bishop Luis said, "You ask, Mar Reticulum, 'What is the problem?' *Sin*. Sin requires confronting."

This annoyed me. "Have you been listening to us, Bishop Luis? I said there is no sense of sin. My sex with this woman is guiltless because it *is* guiltless. It is sacrificial, because I am giving something of my self into this. But there is no sin involved."

Allie said, "Hold you hard 'til we get back to the hotel." This raised a chuckle. "It's not funny, people: she is in for a fistful of trouble."

Bishop Geoff said, "Reverend Deacon Allie, here as a researcher, please restrain your comments."

I said, "I had sex with Rabbi Maurice Neptune. There was no sense of sin. My sex with that man was guiltless because it *was* guiltless. I gave something of my self into our get-together."

Luis looked around, and continued. "As with the Trinity, we cannot be alone, but enjoy unifying with the other, one humankind in two sexes, and it is in the gift that the two are creative, as God is creative."

"This is hypocritical," I stated. "I'm staggered. Bishop Elizabeth, Bishop Christine, anybody? This is offensive: I am an intersex female as you well know. How *can* you refer to 'two sexes' in my presence or indeed at all?"

Elizabeth answered, "The outcome of enrichment has more unity than the thinking."

Luis asserted, "Original unity is one for the other, not one for many," which was a statement presumably after Wojtyla.

"So you agree with me on orgies?" I asked.

"The two in the one become so as the Church is with Mary to the Father and Christ - female and male in this theological sense - and the role of the bride of Christ in the means to salvation. See how then, in total, the body becomes a sacrament of the person in a covenant in which sex is an essential part."

"Bishop Luis, this is confusing," I said. "What are the consequences?"

"What necessary guidance comes from the Confraternity?" asked Christine.

Pauline then said, "Follow the thoughts of Nathaniel Hawthorne in the context of William Blake: *'in Heaven's own time, a new truth would... establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness.'* As for what happens above the casino, see it in the context of what Blake would have known: those occult and clandestine places to explore animal magnetism, antinomian sexuality, Freemasonry, radical Christian mysticism, Tantric Yoga, the Kabbalah, and so on.

Christine looked blank.

Bill commented that this was : "A Huge contribution, there, Pauline," although Geoff was about to move it all on.

But Allie spoke first. "The more interesting people are Nicolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf and Emmanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg believed that the cremaster reflex was able to send the male ejaculate back into the body, sending the orgasmic energy up the spine to the brain to receive it as divine ecstatic bliss. Zinzendorf had

an eroticised blood-and-wounds theology where his sermons preached a vision of sucking Christ's side-wound as a symbol of a vagina or womb for birthing purified souls. He also did ecstatic hymns. God and the universe were seen as composed of dynamic sexual potencies, as in the sephiroth, which interact such to produce orgasmic joy when in perfect equilibrium."

I looked at her wide-eyed, as in, 'Where did all that come from?'

Geoff said, "Well, thank you for that strange contribution but, Bishop Christine, don't minute it as this is a Council of Bishops and, as of now, the Reverend Deacon Allie is clearly not a bishop. I want to write something down."

As he did this Christine said, "Well, she's made the best contribution. The cherubim were entwined in the act of married sexual intercourse, and were an emblem of God's joyful marriage with his female emanation, the Shekhinah - or Jerusalem."

Geoff said, "Hmm. Let's see if we can agree on *this* wording. I can change these words. Here we are:

The Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali gives its Guidance regarding Sexuality and the Body: The Church is the chosen partner of Christ in the means to salvation. The human body receives grace and via eros seeks unpossessive loving awareness: it is in a covenant in which Heaven expects that glorious sex is an essential part. We cannot be alone, but must join with the other, as in the one humankind, and it is in the gift of loving reciprocated sex that people are creative, just as God is creative.

We agreed with that! The Confraternity had issued its first guidance, and Christine said it would be read out at the beginning of the Body Eucharist held above the casino. Then she said, "Can I say, again, that the Reverend Deacon Allie is right: we should do much more on Zinzendorf, and Mar Reticulum should be interested that he used Jewish Kabbalistic meditations to open a path of an ecstatic visionary marriage with the Sephiroth and to God. He also used classical painting and sculpture, and I know that Deacon Allie here paints mystical religious art. This is important, Mar Arcturus-Virginis, and I would therefore like to indeed highlight Deacon Allie's point and minute my approval of her words."

Allie was smiling.

Geoff said, in response, "Then, Mar Werburga, you should minute these points by our deacon as you, a bishop, regard as appropriate. The Confraternity has given its advice."

Council: Name and Merger

"The next item comes with great pleasure. Mar Flacillus, please."

"Before I knew Mar Arcturus-Virginis, I used to work with - knew quite intimately - Archbishop Nicholas Peterson. He was an older man who showed me the ropes. Mar Reticulum?"

"Seeing as you're using them all of a sudden, doesn't he have a 'Mar' this or that?"

"Sad as I still am at his death, I am delighted that he has bestowed upon me his title of Metropolitan Archbishop. This means I inherit the churches, although they are in name only. They did become Bristol, Thornbury, Stone and Cam Spiritualist congregations, four of them indeed, but they have all since ceased. He provided for personal confessions and performed the Mass often alone.

I said, "You get this title regardless of any merger."

"Oh yes. The intention is to merge in the practices of His Grace with my ministry via a merged group. The merging of the Churches alters the character of the Church, which is why the need for a name-change becomes a necessity, really."

Bishop Geoff took over. "Any questions, contributions? Mar Triangulum Australe?"

"What is the change of culture?" asked Liz.

Bishop Luis answered: "There is a line from the charismatic to the spiritualist, but the spiritualist was a development away. He drew much from the East - indeed drew upon the *Philokalia* - , and thus from Orthodoxy as order, but there was a freedom of the Spirit too. Charismatic was the adjective. I think what we have called Liberal can be called Charismatic, in this sense, but we also want to uphold the Catholic inheritance by going one stage back to the Old. This is the merging aspect of it. The name change proposal is much more precise, more descriptive, than the name we have used so far."

Bishop Geoff asked, "Does anyone dissent from Bishop Luis receiving these titles, indeed title-deeds regarding the Church itself, the Charismatic Orthodox Church? No? Excellent. Bishop Christine: please record our congratulations to Bishop Luis and that we shall be conducting a Mass of Celebration at his elevation after this Council. So we come to the merger."

I said, "Proposed merger."

Bishop Elizabeth asked, "Tell us, how does a set of defunct churches affect something that is at least alive, something as in Serninsea?"

Archbishop Luis said, "I think this is unfair. There is a culture of inheritance. There is an inherited memory, one that comes from all we know that took place along what we now call the M5 corridor, Fosse Way, indeed. The congregation in Bristol once functioned as a cathedral. All four had congregations built by the Archbishop and his friends. We can read the characteristics of those congregations. They were retained in the memory, even as they were taken over by spiritualist churches."

Bishop Elizabeth further asked, "Were they taken over by spiritualists or became defunct and then were acquired by spiritualists?"

"The latter," said Archbishop Luis, "but he carried on saying Mass as did his one clergyman colleague, the Reverend Father Teddy Ouse."

I said, "There is something delusory going on here."

Bishop Geoff said, "There is nothing delusory about independent sacramental ministry."

I responded to him, "I am trying to run an actual church: get it off the ground."

Bishop Geoff asked, "Do you oppose the merger as such?"

"I would agree with Elizabeth," I said.

"In Council as Chair I insist that we use formal terms," Bishop Geoff ruled.

"Bishop Elizabeth," I corrected. "Is that sufficient?"

"Yes."

"The point is, from my perspective, there is no consequence in merging."

Bishop Geoff thus said, "So although some do not affirm this strongly, if at all, there is no actual dissent."

Bishop Christine said, "The mere fact that one of the two bishops here is now an Archbishop does have an impact. Although the office of Archbishop carries no extra powers, there is ceremonial and there is recognition. When the Church is merged, we will have a greater symbolic hierarchy. The fact is Archbishop Luis's name will stand at the head of the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Vetus Charismatic Orthodoxa*, if this becomes the name."

"So I dissent," I said. "We have two Churches. You can be Archbishop, but of the other one."

Bishop Christine retorted, "There is only one Archbishop; the merger should be consequential for unity."

Bishop Geoff said, "So with this important statement of dissent, we need to discuss this further, although we may need to press to a vote."

Bishop Elizabeth then said, "I think if we tackle the name, we may allay some of Bishop Linda's fears. She does not want to lose the word 'Liberal' and if we could keep it in, we may have a compromise."

So I said, "I don't like the word 'Charismatic' and I don't like the word 'Orthodox' either."

Bishop Geoff asked, "Do we agree with Bishop Elizabeth's proposal that we discuss the name first in order to possibly facilitate the merger? Everyone is nodding. Good. Are you following this our Reverend Deacon Allie? Does it make sense?"

"Yes and yes, thank you."

"We'll have two sets of notes," Geoff said.

"I repeat," said Allie: "these are for my research only. I'm researching today."

Bishop Geoff said, "The proposal is to have our merged Church called the Old Charismatic Orthodox Ecclesia. Your objection, Mar Reticulum."

"Bishop Linda' will do. In Serninsea we have a National Church parish that is going evangelical. We have a neo-Pentacostalist church growing down the road. This is an opportunity for us to have something not old but new and inclusive. I want us to be interfaith, open, secular, Christian too, not Orthodox. "

Bishop Christine said, "You're not the only bishop there."

"No, but my ministry is to run that Church. We have different dioceses, remember and mine is local. There is also a question of ownership, but I don't want to push that line. I'm happy that you three give a valuable contribution to its make-up."

Bishop Bill said, "I would like to say that coming here, Bishops Christine, Pauline and I have had a good discussion. We saw on the main website the name proposal, of course..."

"Which was done without any consultation," I said.

Bishop Bill continued, "So we ought to offer Liberal Charismatic Orthodox Ecclesia, so that the word 'Liberal' is in there. Please speak on this, Christine. Sorry, *Bishop Christine.*"

She said, "Names are secondary to proper Church order and the place of the Society but they should reflect this."

Bishop Geoff wanted me to comment: "Bishop Linda?"

So I told them, "The words 'Liberal' and 'Orthodox' contradict each other. The

late Archbishop Peterson might have fancied the word 'Orthodox' but he wasn't part of Orthodoxy was he?"

Archbishop Luis said, "His apostolic lines did come from Orthodoxy. Also other places."

I said, "Like you, like me, like all of us, but we are not an Orthodox Church."

Bishop Christine said, "If 'Orthodox' comes out, 'Apostolic' must go back in. Surely, Bishop Linda, you have no objection to this?"

"Nope."

Bishop Bill said, "Explain the Charismatic or free element to these three churches that once existed."

Archbishop Luis did: "The Charismatic was a spirit-led freedom within the congregations. The Mass was formal, but the music and prayer was responsive. The Orthodoxy was about being autocephalous, having authority detached from others of similar kind. I suppose we are independent, a little beyond autocephalous."

Bishop Christine said, "But that's also Liberal Catholicism. Friendly relations with Churches of sound apostolic order, but independence of management."

Bishop Geoff said, "If the proposal is *Liberal Apostolic Charismatic Ecclesia*, I think I dissent."

"I think I do too," said Archbishop Luis.

"There is a danger of a split here," said Bishop Christine.

"Yes there is," said Bishop Bill.

"Who from?" asked Archbishop Luis. "Us two, you two, you three?"

"From whom?," I muttered.

"What?" asked Luis.

"Nothing."

Bishop Bill said, "From whom? Bishop Linda herself! But, I have to say, if this matter is forced then I will go with her."

"Me too," said Pauline. "Or is it, 'Too meen'?"

"What?" I asked, as Pauline smiled.

"Then," said Bishop Christine, "we must press this to a vote but only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: we need to keep our unity."

Bishop Geoff said. "I withdraw my dissent. I suggest we call ourselves Liberal Apostolic Charismatic Ecclesia."

Archbishop Luis said, "I do not, unless we agree to merge and then call ourselves Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia. Charismatic comes before Apostolic."

Bishop Geoff responded, "Oh I agree. And with the merger."

I said, "The merger follows after an acceptable name change. I don't like 'Liberal Charismatic' together. We are not a liberal form of being charismatic. We are a liberal form of being apostolic."

"That we are definitely not," said Bishop Christine. "Come on Linda, I mean Bishop Linda - Mar Reticulum. Let me offer you a further proposal. Call our local church the *Serninsea Liberal Bethel of the...* and so on."

Bishop Bill then said, "Good idea. Actually, Bishop Linda, it does make us different from those charismatics in Serninsea. They are definitely not 'Liberal Charismatic' at all."

I said, "Don't try and kid me that you three hadn't thought up that extra little local bone to toss to me. 'Bethel' sounds like brothel; yeah, and it has grown in use. I

repeat, we are not charismatic locally."

"We have *charism*," said Bishop Christine. "Listen. We are trying to compromise here. You've even got a local definition in a name."

"Right," I said. "Back at base I will emphasise the local name. Bishop Bill is correct that we can put flesh on to a local name. I accept. Do we have unity?"

"You agree?" asked Bishop Pauline. I nodded. "Goodness me, the Lord's name be praised."

Bishop Christine said, "Praise God! It is to be *Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia* from the moment we determine this here. Let us do this national name change; you can set and highlight your church name locally."

"Oh no," I said. "Bishops: I want both noted formally, here and now."

Bishop Geoff said, "Very good. The Holy Spirit is with us. First, we have unanimity on the name change: Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia. Does anyone dissent? No. Oh, this must be for our present Church. We haven't merged them yet."

"Merge them first," said Geoff. "But we'll have to first vote to alter the agenda order."

"No, let's change the name as it is," I suggested.

Archbishop Luis said, "This is most unsatisfactory. The name change reflects the merger - that's the point!"

Bishop Geoff stated, "We have dissent. What do you want to do, Archbishop Luis?"

"Oh, just do it. I don't dissent," said the Archbishop.

Bishop Geoff said, "Then we do indeed do it."

"Hang on," I said, "Same time, the church of the Serninsea and Eastern Foss Parish is to be called properly *The Serninsea Liberal Bethel of the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia*."

Bishop Geoff said, "Minute this, Bishop Christine. Any dissent? No."

"Hang on," said Bishop Christine. "We also register the name change of the Society to *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Charismatica Liberali*. Any dissent? No."

Bishop Geoff said, "Praise God indeed: we've done it!"

Council: Stance & Finish

"Archbishop and Bishops," said Bishop Geoff, "we now come to a statement of the Purpose of our merged Church. Archbishop Luis again, please."

"So it seems to me, as in inheritor of the title and thus the closest person to the merger that we need a restatement of our sense of direction. These are my suggestions I wrote earlier, to be put in some sort of order:

"We are optional regarding our relationship with Freemasonry.

We are optional regarding our relationship with Theosophy.

We are optional regarding reincarnation.

We are Charismatic in expressing free responses to the Spirit.

We are Liberal in allowing clergy doctrinal freedom alongside retaining basic ecumenical statements.

Christ is eternal, considered alive before, during, and after the New Testament drama.

Christ initiated special channels of power and blessing.

There are seven main sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Absolution, Holy Unction, Holy Matrimony, and Holy Orders.

The centrality of the Eucharist means that we are in Communion around the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as the highest expression of the love of God

Whilst Christianity is distinctive, there is a mystical unity found within all religions of the world, with particular interest in Hinduism, Buddhism and neo-Paganism.

The mystical fundamentals of Christianity are pre-Christian in date and in this sense we share the faith that has been believed everywhere throughout time, because it is eternal.

Old Catholic Communion of Germans, Austrians and Swiss began in 1870 in Nuremberg and we trace the Church type to this origin and rejection of papal infallibility, with deeper origins back to 1853 regarding the See of Utrecht."

Unbroken Apostolic succession comes through the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht and other valid apostolic Churches.

Bishop Geoff asked us, "What do we, the Archbishop and bishops, think of that?"

"Not a lot," I said. "Is it really necessary?"

Bishop Christine said, "It is useful to have inheritance, but it needs to be thinned down."

Bishop Geoff said then, "Just as a matter of interest, how does the Reverend Deacon Allie understand the Spirit?"

"Me?" she asked.

"Yes. Just to cut the tension. Off the record."

Er... Think of 'Haecceity' that comes from the thirteenth century theologian, Duns Scotus. According to North Uist traditions, he was a student briefly at *Teampall na Trianaid*, or Holy Trinity Temple, which was a Hebridean university at Carinish."

"Allie, pack it in," I said, quietly but audibly.

"Like quickening," she said.

"Remember your sermon on the Stiffkey vicar? I do."

Bishop Bill spoke. "Let's not get into timeless eternities and mystical assertions, ours or hers. The four operative words are Liberal, Charismatic, Apostolic and Ecclesia."

Bishop Pauline supported her partner by saying, "Bring in the sacraments under the Ecclesia word, then that should be enough."

Bishop Elizabeth suggested that we either do it in reverse order or in order of the words of the Church. "The statement should be the sort you could put on a card. Such as, 'We are an Ecclesia because...' and then the statement is a useful teaching statement."

Archbishop Luis then said, "This meeting has been far more positive than I expected. So let me do this, based on what I wrote but cut down a little:

"We are an Ecclesia because we assert there are seven main sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Absolution, Holy Unction, Holy Matrimony,

and Holy Orders, and the Eucharist is central in defining our communion around the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We are Apostolic because unbroken Apostolic succession comes through the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht and other valid apostolic Churches.

We are Charismatic in expressing free responses guided by the Spirit.

We are Liberal in allowing clergy doctrinal freedom alongside retaining basic ecumenical statements.

"This does leave a lot out. Is it enough?" Luis asked us.

"It's more than enough," I said. "I wouldn't have all that about the seven sacraments. There are many many sacraments. We don't confirm anyone!"

Bishop Christine said, "But we accept the Catholic seven sacraments."

"We should not list what we don't do, and elevate practices into something ontological," I said.

"Then make it loose," said Pauline, "so it's: 'We accept the seven sacraments of Catholicism, and...' or something like that."

Bishop Elizabeth then said something that was very useful: "As we have kept the Liberal title and not Old, we shouldn't confuse matters referring to the See of Utrecht and 1870."

"And the unbroken succession is a myth," I claimed. "There is no point asserting something that simple history undermines."

"It is a mystical assertion," responded Christine.

"It's all very loose now," said Luis. "Yes, fine, we need to give essential positions, in that some of us practise otherwise. So, let me write it." (We waited.) "I'll read it:

"We are an Ecclesia because we accept the seven sacraments of Catholicism, and the Eucharist is central in defining our communion around the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

"We are Apostolic because we maintain the lines of Succession of bishops in valid Apostolic Churches.

"We are Charismatic in expressing free responses guided by the Spirit.

"We are Liberal in allowing clergy doctrinal freedom alongside retaining basic ecumenical statements."

Bishop Bill said, "That's very good indeed."

We agreed that this would be the leading statement and part of the Confraternity's teaching.

So Bishop Geoff said, "Unless there is anything else, this concludes our formal meeting."

"There is one more thing," said Elizabeth. "Bishop Niall Ifan, the former Welsh Anglican Church Suffragan Bishop of Casnewydd, has asked to join us, and so has Bishop Afanen Ffrwyth, the former Welsh Anglican Church Diocesan Bishop of Mynyw."

"I object," I said. "Given the news that SMS is considering expanding into Casnewydd."

Elizabeth responded quickly. "Well, this is unconnected with them in Welsh Anglicanism. Yes they resigned under pressure, for very little, but they were only

proposed for the National Church Confraternity expanding into Wales before it collapsed."

I said, "Rhiannon Fleetwood did less too but look at her ongoing negative impact."

"Who?" asked Luis.

Bishop Elizabeth said, "The new Serninsea priest-in-charge. We knew of her before, and Allie knew her earlier than we did. Very narcissistic."

Bishop Geoff then said, "Policy is that we do not refuse bishops who express an interest, would accept our statements, like the one just agreed, and who we find have an ethical life."

"That is my objection," I said.

Bishop Christine asserted, "They have a more ethical life on some counts than you or me. We have no grounds for refusal."

"Oh well, add them in," I said. "I suppose if they are like Bishop Elizabeth then we've nothing to worry about." People in their pauses weren't sure whether I was being ironic, sarcastic or factual.

Bishop Geoff looked about and simply concluded, "Then we are done. *We pray to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit our dedication and worship at the conclusion of this important Council of the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia. Amen.* I suggest we have our celebratory but brief Mass at the chapel and then conclude with some food.

Prayers and thanksgiving were given for the new Metropolitan Archbishop in the garage chapel. After this we went to the kitchen for tuna mayonnaise and salmon spread sandwiches, both with cucumbers. I declared instead that Allie and I would get on our way and therefore eat out. Still, we were persuaded to have a single sandwich each.

I said to Allie, "Shut your mouth when you are eating. We'll get a bus to Glastonbury, and then tomorrow we'll meet your professor."

"Don't be late for the Serninsea gathering," Christine said to me. "Adam wants you to co-present with Mar Triangulum Australe here."

"He hasn't mentioned this to me."

"It is his lease; he wants you there to represent his interest."

"Simple: tell him to go instead."

"It comes under the religious side. It is your area. Send him a message and see."

Having had the benefit of the helicopter to get us to Bristol swiftly, this left Allie and me relying on public transport for our continued journeys.

Geoff helped by giving Allie and me a lift to Whitchurch Norton Lane, a bus stop for the frequent route to Glastonbury, under street lighting. He'd offered to take us all the way, a journey of maybe an hour, but I said no. With him gone Allie removed her clerical collar. We boarded the 16:15 bus with our luggage.

Narrator: Allie *Bus and At the Guest House* (Wednesday 8th January)

Once the bus was moving I launched an immediate attack on Linda. "How dare you, 'Bishop Linda', represent our sexual relationship to that bunch of misfits as if you

started fucking a parishioner for her own pastoral good? Who do you think I am? 'Oh, poor little young woman there, coming along to my church, a bit lonely: I know what will make her feel cosy, I'll give her a good fucking.' No mention of getting married!"

"Was that why you started showing off?"

"Well, when we make love we do it as equals. And we are tonight."

"They are not a bunch of misfits."

"Fucking weirdos." My guts were moving, and I wanted to use the sensation.

"Hardly the words of a neutral researcher."

"It is nothing to do with my research. I'm giving you a personal opinion. That's what you get when you relate to me as I am."

"Wait until we get to the guest house room. 'Haecceity' indeed, and some 'Dan Scrotum'..."

"Duns Scotus."

I let out a silent fart. It was a beauty.

"A Hebridean university? And then what's all this about Zinzendorf and Swedenborg? Where did you get that from? Oh no, Allie!"

"Study, of course. Swedenborg resisted a spiritual temptress with a vagina containing teeth."

"Lovely. Has your arsehole got teeth?"

"Kabbalistic meditation was his thing - achieving the *kawwanah* or 'pure intention'."

This short outburst of conversation turned into silence and looking into the artificially lit darkness outside.

We alighted at Glastonbury near a pub at nearly 5:20 pm, not quite ten minutes late.

And so, after a walk, we arrived at our guesthouse and room, with Linda still wearing a clerical collar.

Mrs Nia Farr, the landlady at the reception said, "The room has twin beds and an ensuite."

I said, "Double bed. We are a couple."

"I thought, with the clerical collar..."

"You thought wrong," I said. My directing was despite Linda having arranged the accommodation.

"Room three has a double bed - and the ensuite you requested."

At least Linda was silent through that exchange: she let me assert myself there.

In the room we unpacked, and Linda asked, "Am I landed with you?"

"Well, thanks," I said back. "You are until my research is finished, and then if you want I shall vanish into the night. Bugger the marriage then."

"Oh. Well. So when does it finish then?"

"It finishes when I am satisfied. You obviously want to see my professor tomorrow, interfering no doubt, but I will see him to report my progress."

"I have a right to see him, because you are researching in my church and he is your tutor for the project. Come on, let's find something to eat."

We found a sit down place for a Chinese meal

Passing the lady of the house on return, she wished us a good night.

I said to Linda in our room, "Now, I have bought and brought with me a pair of surgical gloves, and we'll need our own towels."

"Why?"

"When we've undressed, put these gloves on because if you have any cuts or so on then we need safety first."

She did as she was told, as she was bound to do, and I undressed myself and then sat on the towels on the floor with my legs apart.

I asked her, "What do you notice?"

"String, still."

"You pull the string with your teeth and pull out the tampon."

"You're frightening me." She put the string between upper and lower front teeth and pulled the tampon out.

I asked her, "Have you ever done this before?"

"Jenny showed me having her periods, and I showed her not having any periods, as teenagers."

"And did you have sex with her then - when she was bleeding?"

"Not really."

"Well, you are with me. So with your hand, you're going to do as you've done with me before."

"Fist you?"

"Yes. Of course. It's a sensation for me and an experience for you."

"Allie? Allie, stop this please."

"Come on, use a few fingers, work me up, and it will get bloody. But blood is normal. You're the naturist here."

"Yeah, but... You're terrifying me."

"Come on, Linda."

So she did as she was asked, and blood was filling and emerging, so it was quite a sight, and she said, "It feels warm in there. Oh my God."

I said, after quite a lot of this, when she had been fully immersed inside me a while, "I'm going to get on my knees. Taking your hand in and out, you can spread the blood over my bottom cheeks."

So there was this in and out motion, and she was scooping, and there was quite an amount - a mirror showed me.

Linda said, "I think this will affect me psychologically. I'm going to have nightmares."

"If you're not used to it."

"I suppose you are used to it. Allie - what has happened to you?"

"I have had it done to me, like now, and I've done it to Abby too. You do learn a lot. How much blood, how thick it is, how consistent it is, how it runs."

"There is a woman I know called Helen McPhail who does free menstruating."

"We've done that."

"And I suppose Jonnie had intercourse when you had your period too."

"Of course. Most recently. I used to let him put my tampons in, from the earliest age. My first period."

"Really?"

"Oh yes. Linda, you see now how much there is, and I'm warm and squelchy, and it's a heightened sensation for me. But I'm going to sit back on my bottom, on the towels, and I'll try and move some of the blood out now."

I changed position.

"What do I do?" Linda asked, as I sat facing her with my legs apart.

"Nothing. Just watch. The blood will gather and I will squeeze it out from within. It's muscle control, but also bladder control. I'll pee very slightly from time to time, and the blood will dilute a bit and come out. Here we go."

Linda watched transfixed. She said, "I'm annoyed Allie. Not at you but I cannot reciprocate. I can't be fisted, like you enjoy, and I can't do any of this. Your self control: where did you learn all this?"

"Here. Somerset. Not the professor, obviously!"

There was some silence as I managed this process of blood movement. Unfortunately, the movements caused me to let off.

"Allie. You've done it again!"

Then I said, "I think we'll finish in the ensuite."

"Clean you up in the shower?"

"No, you can join in. You can pee over my bottom."

"Allie, I am not a pervert."

"It's only a perversion if you think it is."

"I think it is."

Inside the ensuite I said, "Pee on my bottom, please."

For the first time Linda was squatting over me to pee. We had peed in front of each other, but just in the normal passing processes of going to the loo. This had a sexual edge. Her liquid force removed some blood.

But it did all end with a shower, and folding up some very blooded towels, also used to wipe the floor, with two gloves, to go into a large plastic carrier bags. The final part of our sex was for Linda to insert a tampon into me; I told her there'd be less blood going on it.

In the bed, she stared at the ceiling when I put my arm around her. She said, "I'm shocked and I am frightened. Do you expect me to do this every month?"

"Not if you don't want to - but don't be frightened of blood. It is a natural flow. Like your Helen McPhail friend, you can just go with it."

"She is not my friend. She is the equivalent of that Rhiannon Fleetwood. She is an exhibitionist and probably harmful."

"Anyway, in about a month my primary research might be over, and then if you want I will leave."

"It was only seconds ago we wanted to marry. Was that a rush to the head?" Linda asked.

"No, but you won't treat me equally."

"I suppose you will want to come back here," she said. "Though if you did I might still be able to smell your farts in Serninsea."

"I might fart less if we were married," I said to her.

"They give away your agitation, your anxiety, your self-doubt, despite your show of confidence."

"Oh go to sleep, Bishop Linda, Mawther Reticulum."

Narrator: Linda *Glastonbury School* (Thursday 9th January)

I was stood outside, in a park, with the Tor in view, and it was light. Allie, naked like me, passed me a cut-throat razor and a can of red foam and instructed me to shave

my legs. I said, "I never shave my legs: why would I?"

She said, "If you don't shave your legs, you will die."

"Die of what?"

"Die of my hand."

"I will cut you with this razor if you try," I replied.

She pointed at me and I went straight down to the ground. Blood spurted over the grass from my crotch while I stared at the unused cut throat razor.

I looked at her, and she smiled.

"That is my handiwork: the Devil's Mark on you. Had you done as I said, you would never have lost life-blood."

"But at least I can live."

"You, you barren woman, will die. Your life is a waste, and it is my task to finish you off."

My eyes opened.

I got up first, and checked that I was bloodless. I used the ensuite silently. Allie did speak, but nothing much, and we went to breakfast.

I said to Allie, after eating Mrs. Farr's cereals and cooking, "That park looks nice. And the Tor, obviously."

"Abbey Park," she said.

"Er... You didn't mention Mead when talking about symbolic interactionism. Tell me about her."

"You're thinking of Margaret Mead, who did work on gender in Samoa and thought she could find something unique. The relevant person to my work is a bloke, George Herbert Mead."

"Oh. Go on. Talk to me intellectually, Allie."

"Well, culture is broad enough for choices, and we determine the self by how we see others see us. And that's about the relevance of it. Unlike you, I don't have any actual appointment to see Professor Mitton. Are you dissatisfied with my work?"

"As the person giving you the space to do the research, I occasionally need to see the person in charge of the research. Our relationship is confused, contradicting itself; I want to know from him your actual research boundaries. We have a relationship, with intentions, or at least I think we do."

"Things are getting muddled, but one thing is clear: I'm in charge of the research. It's my Ph.D."

"He is your guide, tutor, or whatever."

"Yes. He takes a very keen interest. He will extract some matters into his own researches."

"Steal from his student?"

"No, he has always cited my work. It gets me known too among academics."

"Why did we do what happened last night, Allie?"

"I wanted sex that forced you to notice me, and that's what we did. Because, for once and for all, we are equal, Linda. You demand to see my professor, but you are not superior to me. Of course you can see him and I've never said otherwise."

"Notice you? One more set of nightmares, I'm sure; thank you very much."

"Are you going to tell my professor that you do not like my work? Why ask him about boundaries? I know the methodology and includes boundaries."

"I want to learn more about him. Also asking about the rules of the research is a means to get you happier."

"I'm happy now."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Whatever, I want to see him on my own, at his own place, so I'd appreciate it if you'd let me go alone. Hang about somewhere, outside."

"Outside the door, more like."

"Not outside the door, please."

"You want to come out and tell me what I can and cannot do."

"No. I don't and I won't. Where do I go?"

"You want the School of Folk and Ethnographic Studies."

"I know that much, Allie."

"I can show you where it is."

"And then walk off somewhere, for about half an hour - I would think."

Outside and over the way, Allie showed me a series of houses, set back, that constituted the University of Somerset's School, and pointed out which house for Roland Mitton. I found his room pretty much straight away and his green light went on immediately for me to go in.

I said to him, almost straight away, "I'm here because Alfia Shrimpton plays this distance neutrality card and I want you to cut her some slack so she knows."

"Well, I am sure there is some slack to cut, as you put it, but can we start and ask about how *you* are and about your Council of this Church of yours?"

"Who told you about that?"

"Well, you did, originally, and so did Geoff Virgo in more detail."

"Before or after?"

"Before. He might be in touch again with the outcome, but I'd like to hear from you. I will also use the notes Allie sends me for an article of mine because of my interest in fringe religion: I will cite her research. Tell me: did your gathering start with a Mass?"

"Yes, it did, but as for the meeting, Allie did actually take notes, her own, because Bishop Christine Vine was taking the minutes. Allie looked very fetching in her clerical collar. Funny things, clerical collars... Sorry. Yes, a Mass at the beginning and celebratory prayers at the end. I prefer the word 'Eucharist' instead."

"You didn't answer about your own self. Are you well?"

"Yes. Is it relevant?"

"Always. Don't play the neutrality card! Let us also start our meeting in a similar way to your Council." He first picked up two goblets, a wine bottle, and a knife. "Come out to our quadrangle. That way is north, and you can see objects on doubling-up bird tables to the north, east, south and west and one in the centre. I normally keep big bowls on them but I replaced most of them before your arrival. Let's put the bottle, goblets and athame on the centre one, you see. On the north one I already have what is a burner for incense, and I am just going to light it."

I said, "I get it. So the rock is on the one to the east, a lantern is to the south and water container is to the west. Our four winds, then. This is interesting because when the two Bristol bishops held a Eucharist at my old parish church, it had a four elements aspect, and yet this time in Bristol there was none of that."

"They are progressively, or regressively, going up the candle," Roland said. "So there is already water in that container. And now that the incense is making its presence known, let me light the south lantern. Done! Take a goblet there, hold it,

and here is some wine for you. Finest red, don't you know. Please, you pour mine... Now, Bishop Linda, take the athame and plunge it into my goblet and then into yours. Good. Place it back, and let me say: *O wind from the north, refresh us; O earth from the east, nourish our growth; O flame from the south, warm us and give us energy; O water from the west, give us renewed life.* Drink! Good. Drink up."

"Good stuff."

"Let us go back in, Linda, with this lovely purchase of wine. We let them burn themselves out and I'll bring the items back in later."

We sat down back in his room. I said, "I don't drink - but I will this. That's an incredible wall of books."

"Paganism, rituals, folk faith, stories, ethnic languages, adaptations of religion, forms of pre-industrial economies..."

"About Allie."

"Not yet. About you! Your meeting. What did you expect when you went?"

"They wanted to change the name from Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia to Old Charismatic Orthodox Ecclesia after a merger with a defunct Church and a fellow Bishop, Luis Callas - you know him - receiving a Metropolitan Archbishop title. Anyway, I expected to lose the vote. My associate Christine is an ecclesiastical nutcase. Elizabeth Huett sits on the fence. But Bill and Christine I suppose worked out a compromise and had a bone to toss me, to call the parish Serninsea Liberal Bethel. They still tossed the bone, but by going a bit further to meet my concerns we ended up with unanimity. Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia. I kept 'Liberal' and avoided 'Old' and 'Orthodox' as well. We even managed a definition based on the new name. And we did a teaching statement on sexuality as well. We are positive about sex. I want to talk about Allie."

"Sure. Okay. Allie admitted that she made a mistake. She is very honest. She said that you should or could contact Margaret Lindbeck's group, someone who's already split away into a new group more suited to your own outlook."

"Margaret wanted our ministry located in her Durham area. So she got it by breaking away and joining the Free Liberal Church, or high Protestantism. I haven't split away, though, and we've resolved our differences. Allie is in the clear on that. We explain what we mean by 'Charismatic' and it supports the meaning of 'Liberal' that we use. So it was a good meeting."

"Allie says there is quite a bit of tension there, in your place, in Serninsea."

"Yes, and this is why I am here, because it has affected her. There was an attack by a mentally ill woman on my then partner; there is all the background to a sex cult scandal; and Allie discovered that my close friend had a stillborn baby long back and named her Linda. Now I know Allie is a researcher, but anyone who comes into my church receives my pastoral care. She wears these leathers and the like, making a statement, and then claims she wants to be unnoticed. You may laugh. One day she was still in partying gear because she was drunk, yet when I saw her in Margate she was not drinking. Now we have started a relationship but it conflicts with her as a neutral, distant researcher."

"Margate was the seaside economy conference, when you two first met."

"*Faith in the Seaside.* Nothing will come of it. Allie can be quite violent as well; she can scare people. Do you know about this? And sexually..."

"She is not violent; she is capable of self-defence and often defends other people. I hear that Rhiannon Fleetwood, a pest around here, has ended up in your

neck of the woods: I bet Allie has seen to it that she has not threatened you."

"The burden on Allie's shoulders, in a weird place like Serninsea, has been too much. She would not discuss her work, although she has found a way to talk remotely about research methods. I managed to get her to talk about George Herbert Mead today. She's been lonely and confused, Professor Mitton."

"Roland, please."

"I know she is thirty but she comes across, to me anyway, as if she is much younger, even immature in some ways. Her immaturity is in her loud dress sense: I've tried to look after her."

"Linda," said the professor, "let's be realistic. Allie is a new researcher. She has a number of talents. She sold many paintings, in Walsingham and here with religious subjects. She is an artist, into the mystic. She is religious, too. I gather from some that she can be sexually exciting."

"She had a relationship with one of your tutors."

"Abigail Randall pressed the reset button by moving to Bristol."

"She'd refused to tell me where she lives."

"I don't think Allie knows where Abby lives now, if different."

"I meant Allie, the house she received from Christine."

"She lives in Toulouse Road, number 135."

"I've been there now, with her. But she is still under pressure to be neutral."

"There is an ideal for research, our 'prime directive' of non-interference. I tell you, it's as useless as the one in *Star Trek*. Researchers are supposed to blend in. Yet they almost always influence what happens, either by simple presence or by putting their foot in it. Some admit it, in their research methods write-up, and build it in to the narrative, and some don't. So of course I'll cut her some slack. Your church isn't going to develop or fail because of what Allie does, not unless she *really* puts her foot in it, and even if she did she could even then report it as part of what happened. As for Margaret Lindbeck's group - her suggestion - we can ignore that. First of all, it hasn't happened, and secondly, you would have thought of it anyway. The Free Liberal Church is High Unitarianism. It is based on the Free Catholic model. It is a fringe of a fringe, really."

"No more loneliness, Professor Mitton. No more trying to be absolutely silent. Of course I won't interfere with her research and ask what she knows. But she, like us all, needs warmth. There's something else."

"She is most probably in love with you. You realise this. Are you with her?"

"I find love difficult. I am very fond of her."

"She admires you. It's because she recognises your authority. Some women get right under her skin and you are one of them."

"She wants equality."

"Yes, but she goes for authority figures. She was raised with equality and how to grow up with her near distant cousin. She may genuinely see herself in you. I have an excellent relationship with Allie, and will speak with her."

"You do? I told her to give us half an hour."

"I am going to a farmers' dance tonight. You come, and Allie. I will dance with my student, you dance with your researcher - same person; I hope to dance with you, and there are a few of my academic and Pagan friends there too. Where is she?"

"Somewhere. Give me some guidelines, Roland."

"Be as personal as you like, but don't intervene in her research work. She can write on how she managed a relationship with you and kept her own active intellectual space, her own secrets."

Narrator: *Allie Professor's Advice* (Thursday 9th January)

I was hovering outside the professor's office a little early, when the red light went green and Linda left, and she tutted at me for being there, and said she would sit down at the end of the corridor.

"What did she say, High Priest Professor Roland?" I asked as I went in.

"Well, she has been concerned for you, pastorally, and so she should be, and wants to know about research boundaries in the context of a relationship."

"Oh."

"But come out into the quadrangle. I've got a fresh goblet - mine I've used - and another athame. This wine is good."

There we did a ceremony, that we did before any chat, even in standard clothes, and it was to the four winds. It framed our meeting. Back inside we continued to drink the wine.

"Tonight we have a dance to attend, and it will be good fun. Country dancing. Linda will go, and you can, and I will, and some others you know."

"Will my High Priest former tutor and secretary be there?"

"Yes."

"Please, I can't come."

"I'll tell them to leave you alone. Dance with Linda. It might help you two get on with each other more."

"We are getting on together."

"So what's the problem?"

"I never finished the extra Gaelic with Beathag, and High Priest Abigail does have connections that inform the Serninsea Vestal Virgins. I don't want to give them any updated information."

"Leave off the religious titles. Abigail knows her obligations as do I. But, look, you'll be with Linda."

"What did she want? I wasn't going to say 'no' to you meeting her."

"Linda feels that you have been overdoing the intended neutrality stance. I suppose you've been too isolated, too cold. Participant Observers do give something of themselves. You've over-compensated. You rightly want to limit your religious activities to the church roles. But you should have given Linda your house address long ago - what if you had an accident?"

"Christine Vine knows."

"Yes, but you tell me she's not always in town."

"Got a good helicopter, though, with a pilot called Leon Agnew. She gives him sexual favours."

"You see, you are getting deep into their lives, especially when you went to bed in between two partners, Allie. I don't know if that is dedication or being kinky."

"I got good information. Anyway, they split, and that was nothing to do with me. I have started a paper on getting in deep with informal decision taking."

"Look at the literature on family decision making on end of life matters; formally designated people there may be, but many family members contribute to decision making. Read Jill Quinn, for example, and others. Revisit Barbara Kawulich for methods. You're moving from 'observer as participant' towards 'complete participant' - yes? You have started a relationship with Linda that has imported difficulties that amount to contradictions."

"Not quite a complete participant."

"Wearing a clerical collar?"

"I did at the Council but I didn't take part. I'll qualify that. I did mention Zinzendorf and Swedenborg - sexual ecstasy and the divine. Well, I'm supposed to be participant observer!"

"Ah: 'What are called vices in the natural world, are the highest sublimities in the spiritual world,' said Blake. Blake drew on the theosophy of desire!"

"Linda dug up stuff on the *Philokalia* and eros for the logos and God. She doesn't believe in it!"

"You can of course vary your levels of participation and observation, perhaps keeping to the tramlines, and you know that's Patricia Adler and Peter Adler."

"You know my complete religious side. They do not."

"On your effect on things, refer to Sharan Merriam: it's not whether you affect the situation or the participants, but how you account for your effects. So it started with Linda asserting pastoral care?"

"We are becoming lovers. I want it."

"Allie, this really is becoming a 'complete participant', 'full membership' according to Adler and Adler. Can Linda understand this?"

"She thinks I'm a child. I don't know why."

"I detect a contradiction here: you desire her but the reality is disappointing."

"All she has to do is treat me equally. I have made it clear enough. Then it would be excellent."

"You 'made it clear' as in Beathag NicAmhlaigh made matters clear with you? It wasn't just 'extra Gaelic' like you said, when it was you drawing from a powerful woman figure."

"Hmm. I'm making the demands now from what I want."

"Allie. Dear Allie! Don't frighten the horses. Can you not add Linda as a 'collaborative researcher' as after William Whyte?"

"No. I want her. I fancied her when I went to Margate and I trust my own judgement. I've said I'd leave when this research is done but I don't intend to go, Roland. I'm not going to run away from her like I did from Jonnie and Beathag."

"You regret that Abigail moved university?"

"Why did she have to move?"

"Because you weren't the first and it needed to stop. Let's face it, for all your written research justifications, the basic reality is you went to Serninsea to find Linda."

"Yeah."

"Quite a secret, that, from the world and your research."

"There's plenty else."

Glastonbury and Return (Thursday to Friday 10th January)

My professor was as good as his word, because at the attended dance Abigail Randall and Beathag NicAmhlaigh stared at me but kept away. I tried to keep Linda's back to them or deflect her. It did pain me to ignore Abigail Randall, but she saw the reality with Linda and no doubt Roland will have explained.

The professor danced with Linda, when I found at last Katie de Costa, my age, to soon begin researching about spirituality-driven energy enterprises near Aberystwyth, as I did mine in Serninsea.

I enjoyed dancing with the professor, who told me they are going to reintroduce Kernewek Kemmyn to the language packages. They'd secured one of the estimated five hundred near-fluent speakers to Glastonbury: not Dolly Pentreath, he said, who died in 1777, but a man called Kenwyn Kersey who would be saying to students, 'Kows orthiv yn Kernewek.' There were under forty thousand speakers in 1300 CE, thirty thousand in 1550 when the *Prayer Book* of 1549 started to clobber the language. I learnt so much from Roland.

I also discovered Melanie Windley, from my part of the world, near Fakenham, and not much younger than me. Mel was still doing research methods training towards her yet unformed Ph.D idea on neo-Pagan groups formation. It was like I was being replaced soon! If I was to return to Somerset, I'd be seeking her for a potential relationship, though I'd want her to stop smoking. Linda noticed my enjoyment with Katie and then Mel.

In attendance was a surprise: the Reverend Dr. Andrea Lindsey, the Reverend Alan Lindsey (her brother), Bishop Vivienne Space (the Suffragan Bishop of Morchard) and Lynton Plimpton (the Suffragan Bishop of Sumorsæte). So while I spoke with Mel, on researchers keeping secrets, Linda spent some time dancing with Alan, presumably talking about dialectical theology. Then Andrea approached me to dance. I felt a special warmth from my one-time GP in the locality, as Lynton replaced Alan with Linda and Vivienne was back with Alan.

"You are beautiful tonight, Allie," Andrea said in my ear. "By the way, I've been in Serninsea a while already and you've missed me including at the gynaecology clinic. Visiting here with Lynton to clear up final matters."

"I'm just the same," was my reply.

"You sought out a relationship with the clergywoman in Serninsea."

"Who told you that? Roland?"

"No, of course not. Rhiannon Fleetwood, in one of her communications with me. Such a nuisance."

"I warned her."

"Now then I don't want to have to treat her broken bones or whatever you do."

"You?"

"I will be her and your GP very soon indeed. Lynton will live with me in Serninsea and on his own in Wytham. Are you ignoring, em, Abigail and Beathag?"

"Yes."

"But you're dancing with me."

"Yes."

"Well, let's continue the dance in Serninsea."

Andrea returned to Lynton, as would be expected, but she didn't look happy to me.

But only with Linda did I say, "Now hold me hard!"

And when we walked towards the guest house, we did wander along hand in hand together in the street-lit dark. Inside, I was soon on top of Linda, and we had less threatening (to her) sexual fun, even with my remaining period.

Linda said, laid out and reddened from my intense 'cow licking', "You didn't introduce me to anyone there from your past."

"Well, I knew some of them, but we kept our distance."

"Deliberately?"

"They are my past. Abigail Randall was there and the secretary Beathag who speaks Scottish Gaelic. Andrea was my GP. Ha! I've had my legs open in front of her. She's with Lynton now, and Alan definitely has his eyes on Bishop Vivienne Space, the Suffragan Bishop of Morchard."

"Andrea told me she'll be our GP."

"They are ambitious priests, I think."

"You could have introduced me to Abigail and Beathag. And the younger two?"

"Katie and Mel. New as students to me. Mel's from Fakenham - and was in a younger year at my school. I'm an old hand in Glastonbury now."

"Anyway, your professor is a good man."

"He's sixty-five. I'm close to my professor. It is a very small community and people do come and go."

"I see."

"And do you agree with the sexual antinomianism of Zinzendorf?" she asked me.

"Of course. Weren't we doing it?"

"Hmm. Moving away from it, I hope."

After sleeping closely together through the night, there was then a knock on the door to wake us. When Linda answered, poking her head around the door, it was Leon Agnew.

"Christine Vine has instructed me to come and get you two, so that you're both fresh and ready for tomorrow."

Linda said, "She's got that wrong. She's not fresh because she farts and we're not going."

"I am going," I said from the bed.

"You are *not*."

I sat up. "I am, because it is about the development of the church."

"It is not the about the bethel; it is well beyond the bethel. Allie!"

"It still relates to the bethel, Linda."

"Here we go again." Linda moved from behind the door, showing her tits as I showed mine. "We're having breakfast first, Leon. I fancied staying one or two nights more."

"We're done here," I said. "It's a free helicopter trip back, Linda." (I certainly had more research work to add because I'd not seen one of these above the casino gatherings.)

Leon said, "It is ten-thirty already. The landlady said she will cook you two something, and I might have something myself. Christine's instruction is to have you back before this evening. Saturday evening they come from the Titansea Grand and other places to above the casino."

Linda said, "Wait for us to wash and come down, Leon."

"By the way," he said, you two look lovely. I didn't get to have the pleasure at Bever Wood."

"Get on your way," Linda told him.

We showered together and got dressed, packed our luggage with change of clothes to leave, and with bags taken downstairs had our full English breakfast served by Nia Farr. Leon had already eaten his one-off paid-for meal.

Given the speed of a helicopter trip, we told Leon that we first wanted to do some browsing in the New Age and similar shops and that he would have to wait further. After not too long browsing we got into the helicopter, rose high above the Tor, and, for that matter, the University's houses and inner quad, and then moved in the direction of Serninsea, to land in Titansea, near the Blue Diamond Club, just as the daylight was lost.

Chapter 28 Crisis Point

Narrator: Allie *The Argument The Night Before* (Friday 10th January)

Going up the stairs with me, Linda said, "He's gone then. Door left open. That was quick."

"Advertise it to some students," I suggested.

At the top floor open lounge, the conversation returned to what was bugging Linda. She said, "How many times have I got to tell you? You are not going above the casino tomorrow night."

"I am and you can't stop me. You said Roland told you not to interfere in my work."

"He said not to *intervene*, and this is different. I insist you do not go. It's not of the Bethel, and you're not going. What is the point of being my fiancé if you just carry on as before?"

"It's all connected and I am going."

Christine rose up the staircase slowly to emerge where we were. (She shouldn't have: this was personal space.)

"Sorry. Don't mean to interrupt. Listen. I have this statement, and I want to put it now on the local website. Do you agree to it, Linda? I'll do it tonight for tomorrow.

The Serninsea Liberal Bethel of the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia has this statement regarding sexuality.

As embodied humans, we are sexual beings. Each person can and should learn how to be a good sexual partner. Avoid unwanted pregnancy and pursue sexual health.

Love is positive and sex is positive. We reject any denial of the consensual physical and sexual. Carnal desires are not sinful. The costly sacrifice involved in mutual sexual expression means it should be carried through with due care and attention. The Trinity of Love is inexhaustible; the glory of sex is the sublime grace that comes within its practice, evidenced as a divine gift by the sign of the orgasm.

Self-righteousness has no ethical place; seeking advantage is not a relationship; purity culture is inevitably hypocritical.

Through better sex, the Spirit descends and God is closer.

"Yes, Christine, but why now?"

"Because they are coming here, locally."

"But what you are doing is your own ministry."

"Even if that is true, it is related to this church."

"See," said Allie.

Christine said, "The statement doesn't refer to any event. It is just a stance."

"Christine, I wash my hands of it."

"I'll keep my eye on Allie."

"Christine. Like you did with me? And these stairs are to our private quarters."

"Can I talk to Allie please? She might decide not to go."

"Yes. Please do."

"Let's go downstairs, Allie."

So I left Linda and descended with Christine down into the main seating area. Christine asked me, "Is she cramping your style?"

"A bit, but I can handle her. Things might be improving, except for above the casino."

"She wasn't in love with Adam, and in a way Keith and she drifted, but you're a bit like a cross between her passion for Jonathan Eyre, that he exploited rather than reciprocated, and the potential of Maurice Neptune."

"I'm trying to educate her away from becoming insufferably motherly."

"Nothing is insufferable, Allie. Listen. Suffering is part of life - for a greater purpose. Let me come upstairs and come up with some bullshit for you."

"What?"

"Skirt around things. Not that you wear skirts. Have you just dropped one?"

"She's making me... cramping my style."

"You need to cramp or clamp some more."

So we went up the two flights of stairs and I just opened the bedroom door to go in. Linda was sat on the bed and seemed to wipe away a tear.

"Listen," said Christine. "Allie is particularly interested in what she'll see as the ceremonial side tomorrow. She's not likely at all to join in. In any case we are using partitions and screens, and she can report on that development. She's also more interested in the tension between you here and what is going on there as a kind of inheritance from the old regime. I'll look after her; she won't get into mischief."

"I give up," said Linda. "Anyway, you can fuck off back to 135 Toulouse Road."

Christine said, "Linda, you don't mean that. Allie, make her feel special tonight."

"She can't if she's not here. This is important to me: she will not do what I say and this is important."

Christine added, "Stop being paranoid, Linda. This is no more than research. You and her are a different matter."

"There is no me and her," Linda said. "Not if she cannot understand why she cannot go there. Where is her empathy?"

Allie replied, "Research empathy is via experiencing what you experienced. It's methodology to gain empathy."

"You forget, young lady, that there is a human being and her experiences there. All this academic crap and you don't see the essential wood for the fucking trees."

Christine had a comment. "Cut out the 'young lady' superiority, Linda. She's trying her best."

I asked, "What am I doing Linda? Am I staying or going to Toulouse Road?"

Christine said, "Staying here."

"Linda?" I asked.

"Oh, other people make all my decisions these days. Stay then. It's a big bed; I can ignore you, as long as you stop farting. Cunt."

Christine then said, "I shall leave you two... lovebirds."

Linda insisted, "You've got it wrong, Christine. Look, are you using the computer tonight?"

"Yes," Christine answered her. "That's what I said. Get this message up."

"I suppose that A-frame contraption I was hung on will be a leading attraction."

"That's up to Elizabeth - facilities. Yojana and I have different contacts. People will have safe words and don't have to be cruel, and none of this has absolutely anything to do with Allie."

"Arrgh! Well, Allie, if you're staying here, get a wash and get to bed, as I will as well. That's your side, there, you know, where Adam used to sleep."

Christine then said, "Hang on. Allie. Go to the kitchen below and I'll come and get you soon."

"Changed your mind have you?" Linda asked Christine. "Fuck off then, Allie."

So I went out of the room and went down one flight of stairs.

Now Elizabeth came up these private stairs and approached me. She had been organising aspects of what was to happen above the casino. She wanted to know whether the woman or women who were rumoured to have close relationships with dogs would go to the gathering. They could educate people.

"I know who you mean but you assume too much."

"But will you go to these mystery women and ask them."

"You've got it confused."

"Who is she, who are they? What do they do?"

"I'm not telling; there's nothing to tell."

"But will you do it?"

"I'll see if she is interested in attending, but I can't ask about rumours."

"Thank you."

Elizabeth went away down the stairs.

Narrator: Linda *The Night Before Resolution* (Friday 10th January)

Allie had walked out of the bedroom and now Christine faced me across the bedroom.

"Listen to me, Linda. I haven't changed my mind and I don't make decisions for Allie. And neither should you. Don't go on with this superiority footing, because you'll never get off it."

"I'm frightened for Allie. She's vulnerable and not the confident bitch she pretends to be. We'll end up with a second Jenny. This place is sending her round the twist. We can't have her looking at strangers humping."

"You are too motherly."

"Sometimes I think it would be good if I was a mother. I might have had a normal, boring life. Take Diana. She has a normal life with a couple of kids. As for Allie, you are not a good example for her."

"Come on. You know that she has seen and experienced far more than most. Think Zinzendorf, Swedenborg and Blake."

"You're right. Of course you are right. She is a complete and utter *slut*. If she was my daughter, I'd be *ashamed*."

"Linda. She is not your daughter! What is this? She is only ten years younger than you. She has whipped her clothes off in front of people with confidence; she seems to handle herself very well physically and sexually."

"At one point I knew so little from her she might well have had her hymen intact. Then I discovered she's been shagging her cousin every night since puberty. She's faced domineering lesbians at university. She comes here and it gets worse. There's that pornography actor Annie and that one who does her hair. I've had it bad - and in that very place I never want to see again that she wants to visit - but I don't want a new wreckage next to me."

"Don't be ridiculous. Let's repeat the point: you are not her mother; she is your equal. Fiancés are equal. And yes you had a bad experience in there, but don't project that on to others."

"I just feel this need to protect her in the circumstances of you and Liz organising another orgy in that horrible place."

"You need a child, Linda. You're forty and a maternal desire has caught you up. I got rid of my urges long ago."

"Huh! I gave that one up through sheer necessity, because I am barren. A bloke in female clothing, some think. I don't want a child."

"You have feminine feelings."

"I can't have a child. I can *imagine* an ordinary life, can't I?"

"*She* can have a child. As a couple, you can indeed have children. Stop denying your own feelings."

"She was a filthy bitch at Glastonbury. She more than matches you."

Allie wants to use her skills to protect you. Think of Allie's treatment of Jonathan Eyre and what we are sure happened with Rhiannon Fleetwood. She was on her period, wasn't she, going to Glastonbury. So I can guess what happened, more or less. Helen McPhail does it. I do it."

"How do you know?"

"I bet above the casino will turn her off. She'll see the ceremony we do, and she'll come away from what people do and that's it. If she's so advanced, it will not matter to her."

"Advanced? *Advanced*? I give up. Oh, I'll let her go there then. Advanced my arse. But make sure you watch over her."

"Linda! It is not your place to let her go or not go anywhere! She makes up her own mind! *You* could come. Adam wants you to go and make announcements."

"I am not going in that place and not to that event. Full stop. Fuck it - I can't control her but I'll damn well control me."

"Fair enough. So be clear that Allie your fiancé is not an extension of you."

"Bring her back now."

Christine went to get Allie. She came back.

"Well?" Allie asked me.

"I don't want you to go, but I won't stop you," I told her.

"And do I go home now?"

"No. It might be the last time we're together, if you do something beyond observing when there."

"Well, I'd better stay then."

Christine then said, "Bye bye, you two. I'll get this on the website and I'll lock up when I've gone."

Lying in bed, neither of us doing anything, Allie started to sing:

"I like...

Digging out the rigging

*Or frigging in the rigging,
But tribbing on the rigging
Is what I want to do."*

"Not tonight. And I repeat about tomorrow: this might be the last time we're together, if you do something beyond observing. *Slut*. Go to sleep."

Narrator: Allie Asking Klärchen Sisse (Saturday 11th January)

I was irritated about what Elizabeth wanted. Christine was in and out again on Saturday so I told her of my irritation. "Elizabeth wants to exploit rumours when Klärchen is my friend."

"Elizabeth wants a 'spectacular' event. To me, even if it is true, there is no redeeming of animals via a relevant ritual. At the minimum animals need to have a symbol system to communicate and show deviousness. And animals do not give consent."

"You're all assuming too much."

Still, I rang the neighbour's doorbell. After some minutes holding herself hard, Klärchen answered the door from behind it, concealing herself and telling Dieter and Hendrik alongside to stay. "Oh, Allie, hello; come in please."

So I did. She was in her nightie and nothing else. I said to her this: "Right. There's this above the casino event tonight, and do you remember about all that in the media before and I mentioned it to you."

"Yes."

"Against my better judgement I've agreed to ask if you and Dieter want to go to it, and Salome too with Hendrik."

Salome Lichtblau emerged at the top of the staircase, also in a minimal nightie and gave me a view of her fluffy pubes. "Why would we want to go there?" she asked.

"Because of the rumours," I said. "I'd advise you both - you all - not to go."

"Does everybody blab this now?" Klärchen asked.

"The problem is, as you know, once Linda told her husband that you'd said 'not now' to Dieter, it went all around a certain type of person. Elizabeth is that type but she asked me who is involved and what they do, as if she doesn't know. Christine thinks it's you."

"You surely know my answer, and Salome's"

"Of course. I agreed to ask, so here I am. Anyway, it's tonight so it's not as if they gave you much notice."

"Nor have they the guts to come and ask me and Salome themselves and be confronted about the rumours."

"Linda never gave away your identity. Christine found out otherwise. And I think I have disturbed you."

"And perhaps you would tell this Elizabeth and Christine too some personal information that I am with Salome and the dogs are downstairs, evidently."

"No, I can't because I'd confirm your identity. I am sorry to have disturbed you two."

"But would you like to stay, Allie? We can come down. We can all shower and

wash your hair. We missed you yesterday."

"Linda will be happy that you have said no as she is dead against the event. She knows who you are; she's warned me off seeing you."

"Perhaps you can nudge Linda in the direction of having less interest in us."

"I try and I tell people it's none of their business. Some of them will think I am researching you, when I am not; you have no connection with anything I am researching."

Salome walked downstairs and the dogs became excited. Salome asked, "Are you researching above the casino, Allie?"

"Yes. It is connected with the Bethel, whatever Linda says."

Salome said, "It's an orgy, isn't it?"

"It starts with religious ritual, and then I think it may well be."

"Are you joining in?"

"To the extent that people answer my questions. I've had a health check."

Klärchen asked how the mission went.

"It was a bit difficult because I learnt things I didn't know and others didn't know. We were exposed, in a sense, in more ways than one. But beyond saying this, I can't say anything more. It was at Bever Wood, the site of an old colliery returned to nature."

"You like walking about naked?" Klärchen asked.

"Yeah. I'd better be going."

Then Klärchen said to Salome, "Let's all go back upstairs. If you do fancy a shower, Allie, we'll be having one in about an hour."

"Thanks. Also I'll go to the sea front before I go back in so I can say I've been there."

"All the best for this evening, if we don't see you before," she said, as I left them.

Back at the church I told Elizabeth, as it happened, that "these women" are private people and the ongoing rumours are damaging. They weren't going to 'educate' anyone, as they had nothing to educate about in particular.

"So there are more than one of them. We'll just have to have a different attraction for everyone."

That said it all, really. An attraction she wanted. Indeed Linda was pleased that Klärchen and Salome had turned down attending, and commented that I should have done the same.

I then went around there for a shower and had my hair done. Back at the Bethel, when Linda saw my hair all full of volume and shining an uncoloured bright red, she was furious.

"You've been next door to make yourself look good for tonight. You utter, utter, *slut*, Allie Shrimpton. Put one foot wrong above that casino tonight and you are out of here: out of here for *good*."

"Calm down. I've only had my hair done. They did theirs and their dogs'."

Narrator: Linda *About the Room* (Saturday 11th January)

So they'd all gone across, leaving me and a few others in the building. Then I had a

visit from Marie Enfield.

I said, "The room is available if you two want it."

"I suppose there is a price to pay."

"There's a rent; it is quite reasonable."

"I mean in terms of Roger. You want sex with him."

"Well, even if I did I couldn't have what I admired: the image in my head."

"What image in your head?"

"Completely inserted, deep into Mrs. Carter. It was beautiful."

"Hmm. What about seeing him and me?"

"He'll fit you like a glove."

"So would your price be to add this image to the one in your head?"

"Much as I'd like to see you two, I am not making any such demand!"

"You see, the rumour is that Mrs. Carter is telling people that you are inventive, creative, people-focussed, and she has impressed the UPCC minister - the one who's retiring - so much so that she chose this place to give her retiring lecture."

"I didn't know there was such a connection."

"Mrs. Carter, I hear, knows the remaining women in the UPCC chapel. I heard from Mo McArden's sister. By the way, has my father visited you?"

"Nope."

"And what if he does? Would you be forced throw us out?"

"Absolutely not. Look, it's just a room but you would get all these facilities too."

"So what is going on away from here?"

"They're having an *orgy*. I'm sure they'll welcome you in, but they'd want you to attend the religious ceremony."

"Is it like the Romans then?"

"Could be."

"Roger and I only want our privacy. We supported your mission - supported you - and we also wanted to try naturism where we were not known. But not something like that."

"Good. Do you want to view the room?"

"Roger is in town. I'll call him and bring him over."

In some fifteen minutes he came in and waved across to me. He went up the stairs and after another fifteen minutes they came down the stairs and, holding hands, put their thumbs up and left the building.

I received a text half an hour after that saying they'd take the room and move in as soon as possible.

Narrator: *Allie Introducing Above* (Saturday 11th January)

I'd come in with Christine, and all I needed to do was watch people arrive. They were making their own way from the Titansea Grand and other hotels and guest houses, including Yojana Asthana's.

I was surprised that Kathleen Wickenby turned up with Winnie Lott, who said, "We'll be naked but only serve snacks from this kitchen. I've brought these leaflets about the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia."

"Out of date," I said. "They changed the name."

"Still, people can look. We like your gear. How do you get your hair to look so lovely?"

My gear was from Somerset originally: latex based, shapely, revealing my crotch shape, with some flaps to open: nipples, crotch and bottom. Christine was like Elizabeth, in front-opening ecclesiastical gear.

Linda's feared A-frame contraption or anything like it was not present. In the narrow end of the oblong hall, with the kitchen to the left and entry doors to the right, there was a white cloth covered long table with candles and goblets on it. There was an open space to gather, but then this hall space contained many four-way partitions and screens. In and among these dividers were many beds, couches, airbeds, chairs, cushions and a long massage table near the kitchen to the left. Curtains were closed but the fire escape was clear to the left, with a long set of steps down to a service road behind. Furthest from the altar table were some rooms at the far narrow end. There used to be stairs there to a theatre stage in the floor below, the stairs gone.

Condoms were in bowls. There were vibrators, dildos, anal balls, and various oils on scattered tables and the odd trolley. Whips came in small cat o'nine tails and single strands. Beyond the double doors masks were available, for entry. Out there were the stairs down to the steel double doors for both entry and exit at a one end sealed-off passageway, but off to the left on this first floor were showers and cloaks and toilets. I realised that anyone disabled wouldn't come up to this first floor: there was no lift up and down.

Masks worn made it difficult to know who was coming in. However, unmasked Kathryn Wickenby came in with unmasked Peter Marshall, and Peter helped me identify the people to later put in my notebook that I'd left in the kitchen for rapid notes. Some names would definitely have interested Linda.

Some of these had undressed in the cloaks area, but others wanted to remove their clothes in the hall, perhaps at a particular bed or couch. Perhaps it marked territory and reserved a space.

To assist Bishops Christine and Elizabeth were Bishops Bill Masters and Pauline Junor, in yet more open to flesh ecclesiastical gear. I knew nothing of Bishop Arianwen Bron, a bishop in Eglwys Geltaidd Mynydd Trawsnewidiad, a Gnostic group, in a simple open green and gold gown and whose revealed body was early pregnant, like Kathryn, and very attractive, other than for some crass tattoos. Why she was present was a puzzle. Obviously I recognised the naked Rabbi Maurice Neptune, who said, "Allie my dear!" to me and hoped I would provide him some company later on. James Thorne, in a t-shirt and trousers, was one no longer at the parish church, who once worked with the defunct choir.

Sir Sanjay Bunker otherwise known as San Bandyopadhyay, Chair of SMS and much else, had a room to go to at the far end and emerged from there undressed. There were Archibald Holborn, the Research and Development Director at SMS, and Janet Hayes, Marketing Developer across the SMS business, both in the buff. Some other business people included brothers Charles Brabazon, a banker, with his brother, Peter Brabazon, into marketing.

Laura Kingswood arrived alone. My memory suggested this was unusual. George Wickenby had come along, banned from having any more massages at the Bethel. Naked Kay Sally Parker, a now retired headteacher of Linda's old school (her

headteacher back then) came along with naked friend Annie Fenwick and Jordis Bingham, sex workers. I was surprised that Sanjay Singh, a newsagent in Serninsea, had come along (there was Sikh couple that ran a different newsagent) and he was yet to disrobe. There was naked Fatima Tamuuz, Jenny's one-time priest-in-charge, who'd been seen in town with her daughter, my sixth cousin, a few times. Her daughter was elsewhere, thankfully.

Others along were Christine's helicopter pilot, Leon Agnew, undressing, and Kathleen and Winnie's Vestal Virgins colleague, Gloria Mabaso, who had a gorgeous brown to black skin. I knew they weren't virgins but I didn't think any of them mixed in this company.

Kathleen pointed out that several people attending were controversial from Linda's point of view. There was Helen McPhail with Stephen McPhail, the exhibitionists and already rubbing each others' bodies: Stephen had mentored Linda. Most controversial of all for Linda, surely, was mask-wearing and in the buff Keith Jupitas himself, Manager of Compliance at Harwich, Linda's divorcee, arriving with local and also mask-wearing naked Yojana Asthana, involved in planning this event. So what was all that about her and Adam Magellan? Keith was supposed to be with Cheryl Mould living in Harwich, and he was back with her. Adam and Yojana had been deceptive, perhaps. The two really controversial people not present were John Barman and Jonathan Eyre.

However, controversial to me, and showing that all the fundamentalist and GARFOB stuff was rubbish, was Rhiannon Fleetwood. "Hello Violent," she said to me. "I wouldn't miss this for the world. Fancy a fuck with a big dildo later on?"

"Not really, thanks," I replied.

She gave Fatima Tamuuz a sloppy kiss. However, she coupled up with James Thorne. That was interesting.

Furqan Ahmed, of ConnectSernin (a technology firm: no connection to the public house) in Titansea turned up.

In addition there were a good number of Werburgh Geese and Ganders, basically bare and crotchless gear prostitutes providing ad hoc partners. I knew about the multiple meanings of 'Geese' local and mythological.

A few people were business-based that Peter, Kathryn and Kathleen did not know.

Christine, Elizabeth, Bill, Pauline, and Arianwen stood behind the table, and naked reverend Deacons Winnie and Kathleen brought in wine and bread to the long table.

This was when latecomers arrived, including Margaret McEnhill with Penny Schofield. Their presence surprised me. "Allie, where's the best place to lie down and enjoy?" Penny asked me.

"I don't know. I'm here to observe."

Bishop Elizabeth said, into a microphone on her opened gown, "Ladies and gentlemen - in a non-binary way, of course: in a minute or two we'll start."

I went in the kitchen and wrote some names into my notebook while Kathleen and Winnie got in some early naked groping and snogging. Then I came out.

Elizabeth spoke again. "Well, it's absolutely great to be back with you again. Most people I recognise and some I don't. I'm Bishop Elizabeth Huett, and the last time I was involved in this gathering it was led by the Contraternity in the National Church. Now, however, we are part of the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia,

and we are continuing to be very positive about sex and the divine orgasm. You were all asked to look at the Serninsea Liberal Bethel Statement on Sexuality made available online early today, and we have a similar teaching statement on the LCAE website as guided by its Confraternity."

"Pity," said Rhiannon Fleetwood aloud.

Christine said, also into a small microphone, "That's the way it is, Rhiannon. But thanks for coming: you're very welcome."

"We're under new management," said Elizabeth. "However, we still require your discretion, including Rhiannon, because this is that sort of event that we want you to know about but not everyone wants to hear about. You may remember last time when Rabbi Maurice Neptune led us in a chant to say, 'I promise to support the The Worshipful Company of Serninsea Theatrical Players by observing the utmost discretion in wider society.' Well, we are not doing that any more, but the stance is still relevant and it is good to see him again despite receiving a denominational rap on the knuckles. If you want refreshments, Kathleen and Winnie are naked in the kitchen but not accepting offers for sex and please don't go in the kitchen yourselves. They'll come to the door and bring what you want. Please drink plenty of water. Alfia Shrimpton in the rather fetching latex *with flaps* is a researcher, and she's all confidential."

"Can I say that I can go into the kitchen so won't always be out here. I might want to talk to some of you people along the way."

"Try not to upset their enjoyment too much," said Liz.

Christine said, "I see her as part of God's work. Try and help her, folks."

What interested me here was the references back to The Worshipful Company and the Confraternities, which suggested continuity rather than something fresh. Christine was the new boss: same as the old boss, perhaps.

"Now," Elizabeth continued, "everyone here is to enjoy themselves, and that means you go with whom you want along with the proviso that the word 'no' means no. Plus you've either been to the clinic and are clear right now, or there are those preventers in bowls. Also, sit on towels like the naturists do; with the best wills in the world, some of your arses are shitty.

"I've forgotten some important points. First of all, can we just think of our late friend and one-time participant, the Reverend Kenneth Osis, who recently committed suicide. We also should think of our fantastic initiator, Jenny World, who is in hospital, I'm afraid, with her recurring mental illness. I think she would have joined us tonight. We won't do a minute's silence and all that. And hello to new people: you're not forced to do anything. This includes our researcher. Watch others, if you want. Photographs and recordings need consent."

Christine said, "This is not a dating agency either. Sex in here is to be for its divine impact. What happens here is sacred to here."

With Elizabeth's introduction over, Kathleen brought Christine an aspergillum and an aspersorium, and she thus went around the space dipping the former into the latter to spray water all over the people and place. Christine stopped and exclaimed, "Every blessing and bring down the Holy Spirit on our activities."

Once done, Kathleen took away her water-spraying devices.

Elizabeth continued: "Can I mention that we rejected having security cameras in here, but masks are for your anonymity if needed. Please don't ignore our raffle. We are collecting for a good cause, for retired seamen."

I gave a smile over that choice of charity.

She went on, "The prize is a session with our slim Lucy Catchpole here. She does have a lovely young body, as you can see in all its glory. Lucy says that she wants to lose her virginity to one of you folks here. If a female wins she can still give her a good time. For that reason, she doesn't have a Werburgh Goose badge yet. Tickets are ten pounds each, but where could you meet a delightful lass like this for ten pounds? Tell you what. Show us what the folks here can enjoy."

"No dogs?" asked Helen McPhail.

"It was a ridiculous rumour with no reliable basis in fact," said Christine. (On the other hand, the rumour had spread around this lot.)

On the massage table, the featured young woman got on, widened her legs and spun around.

"But I have to say that unfortunately our sixth former here excludes our headteacher, deputy head and teaching student from the raffle entry, just in case. You see, Annie, you're a year older now and Lucy has taken your place! *You* can put a tenner in."

(I did not know a deputy head and teaching student were present. I had it to add to my notes.)

Some came forward readily dropping ten pound notes into a dish by the kitchen, and Kathryn, showing her small bump of pregnancy, was handing out numbered tickets.

"Before we go to our beds and seats and airbeds, let us consider by ritual the revelation that comes through the orgasm. We have two women and one man to be initiated within today's Body Eucharist. Do you want to join us at the altar table, Rhiannon?"

"No thanks. Anglicans cannot participate in others' rituals."

"Won't stop me," said James Thorne out loud.

"I'm a clergywoman with responsibilities," said Rhiannon.

Narrator: Linda *Christening of Sorts* (Saturday 11th January)

Roger and Marie came into the building carrying bedding. I was in the library/meeting room, considering some additional titles to have delivered, when he came over and said, "Give us fifteen minutes and come up."

So I did, and when I went up I was almost embarrassed to be the only one dressed. I should have undressed before ascending the stairs. My togs came off rapidly and was immediately drawn to Marie's body.

I ran my right hand down her left arm and said, "Obviously I saw your body at the mission, but it is beautiful. Roger is so fortunate to have a sister and lover like you."

"One breast is bigger than the other."

"Marginally. So what? May I touch them?"

Roger said, "Don't get Marie too wet or I won't have any purchase. It's why we limit foreplay. We are going to christen our new room, and it's great you are with us, Linda."

I did feel her breasts, and she reciprocated. Hers were smaller than mine but

a shape that would have set mathematicians with all sorts of lines and angles to discover perfect ratios.

I asked Marie if she'd mind bending over, so I could feel her bottom cheeks. She was quite smooth.

"Your rosebud is delightful," I said, spreading her bottom cheeks.

Of course I reciprocated.

Roger indicated that Marie should get on to the bed quickly, on to which they had put their bedding, the duvet now pulled off to the floor.

He nodded so that I should get alongside her. I said, "Please, let me?"

As a result, as he made himself more ready, I exposed the head of Marie's clitoris and applied my tongue around. I parted her lips - as much to look as excite - and saw some moisture.

He said, "If you over stimulate her, I'll have to go into donor mode."

"Did you with Mrs. Carter?" I asked.

"No. I suspect she produced more than in decades but there was purchase, grip, and it was good."

"It was," I said.

So now I lay alongside and put my hand on Marie's left thigh as Roger positioned himself.

I said, "I did something like this with a friend and her husband. It was part of a programme to spice up their sex life - my presence."

Marie asked, "Did you do anything?"

"I did, yeah. She was rubbish at fellatio, he was rubbish at cunnilingus."

"Show me - with Roger."

So Roger diverted his target, as I paid him attention. I did a lot of tongue work, but when he went in deep to my throat Marie's eyes almost popped out.

She asked, "How do you do that?"

Obviously I could not answer. But when he came out I said, "I'd have to teach you, and it does take time."

Now he went into her, and as I suspected they were a perfect fit. He went right in and right to the limit. He had full manoeuvrability, and his technique, and her reception, in her face and body, was a delight to watch. I touched his balls, but neither he nor her needed stimulation.

"Marie is on the pill," he said, "but what about I come in you, as part of the christening? You, our landlord, so to speak."

"I'm not really your landlord," I said. "Allie and I rent to the bethel in the same way. It'll have to be shallow."

When he withdrew the complete length from Marie, I opened my labia to welcome him in, and certainly plenty remained outside, glistening with her lubrication.

Very soon he pumped into me, and he cried out, "The bedding!"

Marie jumped to protect their sheet, cupping her hand to receive what he'd put in, and sucking from it, meaning she was tasting and consuming a combination of his semen, my lubrication and her lubrication.

When he was done he went on to his back, and we made space so that Roger was in the middle. It let us touch him as he started to go down.

He said, "I name this room our new home."

"Well," I said, "that was very pleasant. It will definitely add to the images in my head."

I then asked them if they would consider using the mikveh. It could be now or later. We'd need to shower first.

So we went downstairs. We showered, including directing the hose into both Marie's and my vaginas. Then we headed naked over to the mikveh - only some catering students were in the building - and I read a text of blessing.

I said, "Let us submerge the old life and head towards the new life, of living here and your relationship with other residents like me."

So down we went - Roger, Marie and me one by one - into the water and submerged, to hold hands under water, and return up the other stairs one by one, to walk around and leave the mikveh with hugs. It was back to the wet room and cloaks.

They went back up the stairs but I stayed naked in the consulting room. I'd chosen the books. Roger and Marie, now dressed, brought me my clothing, and they left for a restaurant.

Feeling satisfied, I put my clothing on in expectation of people returning from the orgy. I was satisfied that I'd had sex personally and pastorally, not impersonally and with exploitation as above the casino. We agreed to keep the sex quiet, as with the encounter with Gertrude Carter, but we'd admit to the mikveh transition.

Body Eucharist

Elizabeth now said, "Please be gathered at the front for our Body Eucharist, a celebration of all things sacrificial and good, to include within it the initiation of Michaela MacKenzie, Rebecca Holloway and Leslie Paul."

I guessed that Michaela might be forty-something and the other two fifty-something, all of a little larger than average builds.

After a pause, Bishop Bill Masters began by saying, "*In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In Christ's Body, the Church, this Mass incorporates a Sacrificial Service of Initiation into the Vanguard of the Church under the guidance of the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Charismatica Liberali or the Confraternity of the Theocratic Principality of the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia.*"

Now I had seen this service on the website, as it was practised at the Titantsea Grand Hotel. What I wanted to note were the changes.

Christine Vine thus repeated that the Vanguard is not about a superior form of Christian but about guidance to bring about the expected Kingdom. It was sacrificial, to bring about salvation. Now she said, of course, "Only bishops of the *Ecclesia Apostolica Charismatica Liberali* organise the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Liberali*; and their priests may join them as initiators, although guest clergy may assist in the Eucharistic act. Those initiated come under the authority of the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Charismatica Liberali* and receive a white Badge of the Werbergh Goose in black.

This was similar to Confirmation, and yet not, she explained. She said to them that we are all: "erotic theosexual, Christosexual, Spiritsexual beings, aware of our lifespan, bodies and sexuality." She praised God as before, in a trinitarian kind of

way.

I was confused: were initiated members of the Werburgh Geese members of the Church or not? Apparently they were not; perhaps like the famous Winchester Geese they were part in and part out. But what were they then?

Bishop Bill Masters spoke in the liturgy as before, that we find God in our corporeal selves, again in a kind of trinitarian manner - Communion is gaining an awareness of our bodies. This he linked to the original Jewish source, and then sending out Apostles to all nations.

None of these initiates were clergy, so the instruction that clergy had to be able to at least say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments hardly mattered. The others just had to give service and sacrifice - including their own corporeal being - to others.

Christine said that the candidates had given written consent, but they were asked here to assent and confirm their coming under the authority of the *Principatus* (etc.).

"*We do*," the three said together, from the liturgy.

The "Body Mass" (Christine) was approached with an instruction to seek forgiveness and make amends or, if not prepared to do this, consider skipping the Mass itself.

Bishop Bill said that in the "Body Eucharist" bodies are offered in preparation for God's grace through God's body. Bishop Pauline addressed the initiates to take the fluid of bishops carefully and healthily. She mentioned that all concerned had received certificates of good sexual health within the past days.

So much said by Bill and Christine was about preparation and cleansing and to receive mercy and praise to give thanks.

Bishop Bill gave the Collect: "*O God on this day, bless our gathering and our intimacies. We humbly beseech you so that in all our thoughts, words, and works, we may ever seek your honour and glory.*"

Christine's Creed was completely different from the one recorded as given at the hotel. Instead she used the Council Stance. "*We are an Ecclesia because we accept the seven sacraments of Catholicism, and the Eucharist is central in defining our communion around the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are Apostolic because we maintain the lines of Succession of bishops in valid Apostolic Churches. We are Charismatic in expressing free responses guided by the Spirit. We are Liberal in allowing clergy doctrinal freedom alongside retaining basic ecumenical statements. Amen.*"

It was back to 'The Peace' and 'Draw near with faith' as before. I joined in with the kissing, and some meant it too. Quite nice, really. I accepted Rhiannon's deliberate approach.

Then Bishop Christine stated: "And so we, the ordained of this Ecclesia, will transfer part of our living, Spirit-given, life-fluids, to the candidates for initiation, in an Act of Apostolic Life, and then you may come forward for Communion. Take our sex areas to your mouths for the embrace, and then receive."

Clearly this was going to be a more explicit event than at the hotel. Linda had approved of that one.

Christine instructed the people and the initiates. "*Our Lord said, this is my Body or Flesh and this is my Blood or Vitality. Initiation candidates, come and wait until all have partaken. All the time on this earth you have enjoyed your body,*

otherwise you came into this world with nothing and you will leave with nothing."

The bishops seemed to make tongue and genitals contact with each other, in the form of kisses to said parts, and one penis insertion into Elizabeth's mouth by Bill, prior to eating the bread disc and prior to drinking wine. We had here Christine with wine, Elizabeth with bread, Pauline with wine, Bill with bread and Arianwen with bread.

What was I to do? Observe or participate?

Among others, about half way through, I went forward. I approached Arianwen to first lick her hairless pubic mound, and then after wiping the area with a cloth she gave me my bread disc, and I ate it as I chose Pauline to lick her equally hairless pubic area, for her to wipe it and then for me to receive a sip of the wine and have the goblet top wiped.

What this meant was that not only were we sharing wine between different mouths to the same goblet, but this followed licking what seemed to be very recently shaved and lightly perfumed pubic areas. I had thought of taking in Bill's penis, which meant his grip of the cloth on his member after such an insertion. And I noticed the odd man who inserted it too, so Bishop Bill was being very holy about it, because he was definitely heterosexual by my information, the gay stance being a diversion for his daughter to think she was his niece.

The one person who did not partake was Rhiannon Fleetwood; yet I and others had received her kiss of peace.

The three candidates for initiation waited until the end. Three airbeds were brought forward by Kathleen and Winnie and placed in front of the altar table. Michaela MacKenzie, Rebecca Holloway and Leslie Paul lay on one each from our left to right.

"Listen and remember," said Christine: "we are erotically theosexual, Christosexual, Spiritsexual, and this act is inspired by the Holy Spirit."

Christine squatted above the head of Michaela, Bill above the head of Rebecca, and Pauline above the head of Leslie. I didn't know if Michaela was lesbian or not, but the upshot was she was manipulating with her fingers Christine's pubic lips and inserting her tongue, whereas Rebecca was licking Bill's balls and taking in his penis to her mouth, and Leslie was doing as Michaela did but heterosexually.

I suppose rubbing the cloth so often meant that Bill was more easily able to ejaculate into Rebecca's mouth after some of what she did rather impressively to him, and then he was able to rise, turn and acquire for her a bread disc to chew as she sat up. Christine urinated a small amount into Michaela's mouth, and thus Bill leaned over and gave her a bread disc too. I think Pauline was just wet from engaging in sex, and this was deemed enough, and so Leslie received a disc from Bill as well. From sitting positions, they turned to receive the wine. There was no attempt to rinse their mouths. This was the point: they had taken the bishops' fluids as part of receiving the hosts.

This was full-on, then, and not as circumspect as reported about the hotel. They meant it, and everyone saw it. This Body Eucharist, a thanksgiving to the Divine, was strongly sexual. I wish I'd been at the hotel to make my own evaluation.

"Candidates," said Christine, "By taking our bodily fluids, in the context of a Holy Thanksgiving, we initiate you, Michaela MacKenzie, Rebecca Holloway and Leslie Paul, into the authority of the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Charismatic Liberali* or Confraternity of the Theocratic

Principality of the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia. You are now Werburgh Geese, male and female, and you give your complete loyalty to the Confraternity into which you have been initiated and do support with intimate bodily love other Werburgh Geese, male and female."

Christine again: "*God, hear our prayers.*"

We all said, "*God hear us.*"

Christine again: "*These people as Werburgh Geese, both male and female, will give their complete loyalty to the Confraternity into which they have been initiated.*"

So they were 'in' then, I thought, still unsure.

"Support them please, and make love with them! Let us pray. *Almighty, eternal and living God, who once regenerated our initiates by Water and the Spirit, and who forgives them since: through your gifts of grace at this ceremony give them a renewed sense of purpose in membership under the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Charismatic Liberali, and give them the confidence to use their bodies and life-force in the spreading of service within Your Gospel. Amen.*"

I noticed the slight clumsiness with using the word 'Geese' and dealing with two females and one male.

The service concluded as it had at the hotel, and the airbeds were taken back to their positions before, and the folks went off to get their places around various screens and partitions.

I went into the kitchen to make some notes. After a short while, Christine came in, still in her open gear. She said she'd needed the loo, the other side of the wall, having stopped her own peeing within the ceremony. Relieved, she came in to ask me if I had questions.

"Why were you more explicit this time, Christine?"

"It was more restrained at the hotel but here they're used to it. I said 'yes' to Elizabeth in that the McPhails wanted to come and Fatima Tamuuz being in town again. Liz, Fatima and Akemi visited Jenny yesterday. I said yes to Keith with Yojana, only because Linda had refused to come along, otherwise I'd have rejected his participation. Elizabeth did not ask if John Barman and Jonathan Eyre could come, and if she had I would have refused them regardless. Listen, Allie, I believe in this. I didn't orgasm straight after the hotel ceremony, but I will tonight, mingling with the people of God, and Bill did in fact for the initiate, which is pretty good at his age! We are trying to bring in the Kingdom, and this is how we do it. God will be impressed and must respond."

"But are they members of the Church are not?"

"They are Werburgh Geese. That means they agree to come under the authority of the Church's guiding institution, and accept the vanguard role."

"But if as baptised they are members of the Church; what is the sacramental act of initiating? What does it change?"

"Two questions. They are baptised to be saved. Baptism is an act of salvation, and yes they are members of the Universal Church. Werburgh Geese involve the baptised, and the initiated are confirmed to its programme of action. They act on the guidance of the specific Confraternity of the Church. But the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia has minor and major orders of clergy only as members."

I wrote this down because it seemed to me to involve a contradiction.

Members of the Serninsea Vestal Virgins and of Taunton Tantria were primarily members of those groups. They were also members of the loose overarching *The Bodies of the Concerned* and were *Ambassadors* and *Fighters of Concern*. This is why a member of one group was expected to become a member of another in a new locality. That's why I broke my initiation act and vow, and 'bodies' meant my corporeal body and all the institutions of the post-Buddhist groups that had formed. Essentially the Christians and the post-Buddhist Pagans were playing around with the same concepts. (The post-Buddhist groups were not Gnostic in basis.)

Christine had more to say. "Linda thinks we are extremists. So what? We haven't given up on this at all, not a bit of it. And Apostolic Succession is absolutely crucial - our body fluids have to be valid and legitimate when we or our priests initiate. I tried to get Bishop Niall Ifan, or Nigel Evans, to come and would have sent my helicopter, and incardinated him first, to then initiate Michaela, but he is too ill presently. We needed another male, really. Michaela did very well, under me, because, as you'll see, she is very heterosexual. She showed an example there of self-sacrifice, licking me and accepting my urine."

"Don't the post-Buddhist groups solve the confirmation puzzle?" I asked.

"Your Taunton Tantria etcetera are all confused, because your lay membership seems also to suggest some sort of priesthood."

"Protestants?" I asked.

"Well, there you go," Christine replied.

"I'm not in it any more, but we recognised our bodies as we were and who were were, and offered service via a commitment to develop them in assertive defence and sexual confidence. I still have those principles but broke from membership to do my research."

"You could rejoin, now. Aren't you a Fighter of Concern?"

"Anyway, they might not have me. And what about actual Pagans, with levels of initiation?"

"Too much is ad hoc to be sure about what is going on there. Werbugh Geese should develop sexual confidence. But they are lay. Listen, the ontological difference is reserved for clergy, and priests are extensions of bishops. We give a little bit of ourselves to laity as a mark of their decision towards commitment."

"Pagans have High Priests."

"Yeah yeah. Now much as I'd like to chat, I want someone to give me an orgasm. This orgasm is an extension of the ritual thanksgiving. I suppose it would be best if I'd done as Bill did, orgasm at the ritual itself. I'll admit that much."

"One more thing. Rhiannon Fleetwood is here."

"Oh, Elizabeth invited her and it's fine by me."

"She's a troublemaker."

"Elizabeth has told her to behave. If you want, you can have sex with me in this setting. Do you want that? You'll have to make me come!"

"I'd rather interview," I said. "I've kept my gear on."

"You've got flaps! The offer is open, Allie. I'd like it."

Christine thus went searching for her requirement, and I also went out of the kitchen in my intention to interview.

Interviewing Above the Casino

Business trader Peter Brabazon was engaging in the missionary position with Bishop Arianwen Bron, on a bed. So I sat on the floor nearby, and I reached her body height.

"Hello," I said, unsure what to say.

"Join us," said Peter Brabazon, while pumping away. "Have to get that gear off."

"If you can answer, bishop, please do. Take your time," I said to her as she turned to look across at me, her face strained and her breath quickening. "What Church are you from?"

"I am a... Druid-Bishop in the Eglwys... Geltaidd Mynydd Trawsnewidiad. Mmm. We are, as Christine would say, apostolically sound. Gosh. He's good, isn't he? It is bringing back the Druids... that we lost."

"I'll move on. You're too busy."

"Read up on the Unitarian lolo... Morgannwg and his, mmm, connection with the... Druids, and now... their place in the Gorsedd."

"We studied him," I said, and did not add that lolo Morgannwg was a fantasist.

"I'm getting... closer, Peter." She further said, "Can I answer you later, my sweet? I'd like to have you, as well. Get your clothing off."

"Thanks. Enough for me," I said, getting up.

Around another partition was our Peter and Kathryn, and they were fucking quite gently. "We're not going with anyone else. Supporting Christine."

Moving about, I gave a wave to Leon Agnew, the pilot, who was enjoying one of the sex workers brought in for the occasion.

I found Charles Brabazon, Peter's brother, fucking into a substantial growth of pubic hair possessed by Helen McPhail, alongside Stephen McPhail fucking Fatima Tamuuz. "Can I talk to you folks? Please don't stop. It will be very brief." They seemed to nod. "You're Stephen McPhail, and you were Linda Jupitas's mentor, weren't you?"

"I was. She was disobediant. It's water under the bridge. Hey, Rhiannon's coming over. Go with her."

"I'd rather not. But you're on the 'other side' of Christine Vine versus John Barman."

Helen said, "Christine's Church runs the show. But we know Tess, obviously."

"Tess?" I asked them, as a woman behind me stroked my bottom.

Rhiannon said, "Come on, let's have some pleasure for a change. Get that fucking stuff off."

"Excuse me, I'm busy. Who is Tess?"

Helen said, "Bishop Elizabeth. It's a pity Jenny couldn't come. She once had a queue of seven blokes, one after the other, with a thirty minute total stopwatch on all of them. She was good."

Stephen then said, "Rhiannon wants you."

"I don't want her."

"I'll find someone else," she said, grabbing my PVC covered right breast from behind and then letting go. Then she realised, and opened the flap for my breast to drop out. "Peace and love, woman!" She went looking for someone else.

I felt an itch on my left breast so opened that to scratch around it.

Helen said, "Hey, she's come prepared after all! You're researching Linda Jupitas's new church?"

"Yes." I closed the flaps.

Helen said, "She had such potential with us. Have you had sex with her? Come on Charles, get the rhythm right or I'll have to sort you out."

"I'm not sure I should say," I said.

"I'll take that as a 'yes', deary."

"The point is, did *you*?"

"Definitely. Both of us. Linda finished us off all right with it all going public. Thus we have Christine now. Tell her we were all very troubled by Ken Osis dying."

"Why did you punish Linda?"

Stephen answered. "She needed virtually destroying to come back up reformed... Christine, for all her... talk about sacrifice, believed too much in personal choice."

Fatima said, "Interesting questions and answers. Get on with it."

I said, "Christine has a sacrifice view but also has clients."

Stephen continued, "Jim Wilson and Connie - shame they've gone - weren't hard... enough if you ask me. Sorry, but that is what I think. We nearly succeeded so that Linda would never again disobey."

Helen said, "She had a duty as a priest. She let us down. But we forgive: it's in the past."

I asked the woman under Stephen. "Fatima. Sorry to interrupt. Do you have any ongoing relationship with Philip Shrimpton?"

"No. Are you related to him?"

"Yes. Fifth cousin once removed."

"That means you're sixth cousin to Akemi."

"It *does*. I know because of my heroine Alice Shrimpton. Alice is the four times great aunt of Philip."

"Love to talk, Allie, but I am busy and have my priorities."

"I'd like to meet Akemi."

"You would?"

"Yes."

"Sixth cousins are very distant. It'll have to be soon."

"Four in the afternoon tomorrow? 135 Toulouse Road."

"I'll bring her. Akemi has a baby sitter."

"Thank you very much. Enjoy your evening."

I found Maurice Neptune, leaning back against the wall between curtained windows, who was being masturbated by one of the provided Werburgh Geese. "Allie, beautiful Allie. Will you join me?"

"I want to interview you."

"On the end of my penis, I hope."

"Er, well, you're busy." This did not work, because he dismissed the prostitute, and thus I was with a familiar man facing an unfamiliar proposal regarding men and me (other than Jonnie).

"Is this sexy gear to protect your virtue?" he asked. "I've seen such gear: flaps to open."

"Linda is my fiancé."

"Share and share alike," he said. Thus he pulled at the vulva flap and I was

exposed enough for him to simply go into me. I treated his movement as part of the interviewing.

I asked, "You've come here after your disciplining?"

"Evidently. I am friendly with Christine *and* Elizabeth. I am so pleased that they are working together. I hoped to see Linda here."

"No chance."

"Because she is your fiancé?"

"No. She hates this place after her experiences here."

"I wanted to have her, if for one final time. But now... I have you. You don't think I can see her privately, now?"

"How?"

"I could ring her." He concentrated a few moments on his thrusting. "You really have got a lovely vagina; it is very snug and wet, Allie."

"Yes, I'm enjoying it."

"Would it be worth me walking over to the church? Like her and me there, instead of here?"

"She's so against tonight she'll not want sex. She's warned me about tonight."

"You have to behave yourself?"

"I'm sure I'm fine with you. Are you going to tell *me* about some Jewish theologian or philosopher?"

"I told Linda those things partly because I wanted her to be a rabbi or an informed rabbi's wife, a rebbetzin."

"Yeah."

"I could tell you instead... about the algorithms... I developed... when I was a banker."

"Nice."

"I made money... when the markets dropped. Are you enjoying my insertions here, just like the market going up and down?"

"Very droll, Rabbi Maurice. It's just a fuck: a male member doing its thing. Though I like you."

"I'm going to have to chat with Charles Brabazon after our pleasures. This is a place for networking."

I said, with my sufficient enjoyment, "I don't want to ask about theologians or banking. John Barman: tell me about him. He used to run this event. "

"Allie: people fuck and then network. As for Barman, I was friendly. I liked them all. I think he has plans to resume... being an active bishop."

"Oh?"

"Along with Jonathan. Widen your legs a bit. I'll open your nipples' flaps. Lean on me."

"How do you know about Barman?"

"Because he contacted me."

"He did?"

"Are you on birth control, Allie?"

"Yes. Something like this could happen and now has."

"Then I shall come inside you."

"Okay."

At this point, Rhiannon was behind me again, opening a back flap and putting a finger to my anus.

"Why don't you fuck off?" I reacted.

The rabbi shook his head in disapproval at my comment. Then he shared his seed with me, and I leaned further over and kissed him, to say I'd move on, turning my to glance at her.

Maurice then said, "Now now, Allie, this is a place to be generous, to turn the other cheek if you like, even to those we don't like."

"She's already been in between both cheeks," I replied.

She said, "Come on Allie. Look at me. Generosity!"

As Rhiannon continued poking my arse, he said, "We two should have enjoyed one another in Wytham. I did admire your body in the jacuzzi."

"Ah," said Rhiannon, behind me, pushing her finger far in, "the truth emerges."

Ignoring her I said, "I thought you had an excellent technique with Linda."

At this point I gave Maurice a kiss to his forehead, jerked my bottom forward to release her finger, and walked around Rhiannon. Suddenly, I fancied experiencing Christine. But when I approached her, Christine called out that the raffle would be drawn and people ought to pay attention, either by pausing or coming from the screens and partitions to look at the draw. Rhiannon followed me closely, as I closed my various flaps, but we stood to look on like most participants.

Rhiannon took my attention by sucking her finger that had been up my arse.

Bishop Arianwen, now freed of her fucking, was asked to draw the one winning ticket. She said, "Someone take away the virginity of slim sixth-former Lucy Catchpole! God loves those who cease to be virgins. Where is she?"

This seemed to me to be an interesting rewrite of the Christmas story.

Elizabeth then added the point: "Yes, someone will deflower our shy and hiding away lassie, Lucy Catchpole herself. Thank you headteacher, Kay Sally Parker, for introducing us to her so that she can do her duty."

The long-serving just retired headteacher waved her hand and then covered her mouth.

The winning number was held by... Keith Jupitas. He emerged (no longer masked), and came to stand near Christine and this massage table.

Christine demanded, "Lucy, come out, shy one."

Elizabeth said, "Take a break from your sixth form Oral levels."

Slim Lucy, his prize, came from the kitchen naked, holding a cushion below her small breasts, her eyes looking down. She dropped the cushion down to drop on to it with her knees, to start sucking off Keith. Yojana came behind Keith and started stroking his bottom as Lucy did her prize-giving. Rhiannon reached around me, pulled the flaps down in front of my breasts and pinched my nipples. This time I let her do it, because I saw Maurice looking at me and smiling.

Lucy then got up on to the massage table, and Keith got on to it as well, with Yojana clapping them, as Lucy lay back and gave her open-legged prize. He was clearly up to the job.

Give an inch... My bottom flap was down and Rhiannon put her finger up me again.

Yojana said, "Deposit loads in her," and thus Keith took her cue. He removed her apparent virginity completely. Everyone clapped, and Lucy withdrew back to the kitchen.

Now came the entertainment, and Helen McPhail came forward, presumably finished with Charles Brabazon. She sat on the massage bench and opened her legs

wide. Ah, it was Mr. Oldfield coming through the double doors, and the people gasped not because he soaped her up so rapidly but because he produced his lethal cut-throat razor. He then moved swiftly around her crotch, and when he removed the soap with his rag the hair had all gone. She then got on her knees and stuck her bottom out, so he soaped that and any hair around her anus had soon gone.

"Wow!" said Rhiannon from behind me.

Of course I remembered him doing me, and this man was a pure expert. One of the Werburgh Geese prostitutes came forward, and her hair was similarly gone in a flash, so that the tattoo on her thigh of a snake was revealed fully for its head and tongue touching her pubic lips.

Christine thanked the two women for growing their pubic hair, especially 'Strawberry' who'd lost her new tattoo behind hair to do this. And Christine thanked Mr. Oldfield, known to her family for many decades, she pointed out.

People went back to sharing their bodies, and I thought about my next interviewee, but was again pestered by Rhiannon.

"Widen you legs then," I said to her." She did. I put my semi-curved fingers to her opening, and put my arm around her shoulders. "Ready? I'm going to press down on your shoulders, so you resist me and press up. Ready?"

"Yeah?"

"Do it now!" Pressing down on her shoulders, It took me one thrust to punch my way into her vagina, curling my fingers to a grip and losing my fist.

Of course she screeched, groaned and moaned. I gathered my strength, and with that arm alone lifted her up and placed her on to my shoulder.

Seeing this, Arianwen Bron started clapping, as did a number of people including Keith Jupitas and Helen McPhail nearby.

I said to Arianwen, "Take her off my hands."

"Off your fist," Arianwen said back.

So I took Rhiannon down on to her feet, plopped out my fist followed by some clear liquid, and gave her an aggressive mouth to mouth kiss, pushing her then towards Arianwen.

My next interviewee was obvious: Keith Jupitas, being approached by newly shaven Helen McPhail. She said to me, "I claim the prize-winner, but do come back soon."

Well, I wanted to write up my notes, and did so in the kitchen. A dressed Lucy winked at me and said she would leave the building on Elizabeth's advice. My notes done, I could find Keith.

Helen McPhail was sucking him and masturbating herself, this after his prize-won performance.

I said, "I'm hoping Keith can talk to me."

"You're the researcher," he said. "Linda's church, Professor Roland Mitton, I hear."

"Yes."

"Come closer," said Helen, the result of which was my hand joining in assisting Helen's mouth effort. Gosh, I was wanking a man who was once Linda's husband into Helen's mouth.

I said, "You prepared your ex-wife for her role in the National Church Confraternity."

"I was definitely in favour of her future role, yes."

"She was punished," I stated.

"She became the priest, not me, and she had the special role to enact. I'd have done it; why couldn't she?"

"Did you prepare her over a long period? Her anal canal is enlarged and she said you did this."

"That was when we were students. You've obviously slept with her."

"I've seen it. I'm her fiancé."

"I see," said Helen. "She's turned lezzy to go after you."

"And not for Adam," I added. "You did free menstruating with her," I said to Helen.

"She must tell you everything."

Keith said, "I developed her deeper route in. Keep going both of you. Let Allie suck me, Helen." I did, and put in some effort. "Hey, Allie's good - where did you develop suction like that? Not with Linda, obviously."

"At home," I said, pausing the action. Helen was wanking him. I resumed additional sucking, looking at him.

"All we did together... proved - when the new situation came - that she was a great... candidate for the Confraternity. She would sacrifice herself. When she didn't, she put herself... in a very bad place."

Again I paused. "And you left her for Cheryl Mould."

I resumed.

"The marriage was over. I was acting for the Confraternity. I'd have fucked her later but only within the Confraternity. Now if I do get ordained, it won't be in Linda's Church. I'll keep away."

Pausing the fellatio: "Would it be in Christine's? She's very strong-willed, quite dominating."

Me resuming, he said, "Not by choice. Have you had sex with Christine?"

I didn't answer for a while. Then I withdrew to say, "I thought I might tonight; otherwise she says she's too expensive. Do you want to be ordained soon?"

"Ask fewer questions and suck more!"

Helen got her hand around my body to bring me closer to her, and momentarily change my focus to her. She said to him, "Open the flap to fuck her, Keith, and I'll do the one round the back."

Turned to face her, the flaps down, she placed a finger into my anus, and then raised me upwards, my bottom sticking up.

He went into my vagina.

As he found a rhythm, I asked, "So how will you be ordained, Keith? Obviously not using the rites of the National Church!"

"I'll do similar to Linda. I'm in touch with people. There are plans."

As Helen used a hand to expose and feel my breasts, I assured him. "My notes are confidential, Keith. You can tell me."

"You sleep with my wife!"

"Ex-wife. I'm her fiancé now. I never discuss my work. We have strict boundaries."

"Linda won't like what Geoff Virgo and his partner have planned. I'm in touch with Terry Barman. He has his plans."

"Who's that? John Barman's brother?"

Keith said, "Terry Barman *is* John Barman. Same man. I'm beginning to like

you, Allie."

She asked me, "Have you ever been fisted, love?"

"Often."

"Linda done it?" Keith asked, pumping away.

"I shouldn't really say."

"Did she fall out with that arsehole Magellan? Most people do."

"He's left the premises."

"Then fucking you is quite a privilege," he said.

Helen added. "We always knew that Linda was flexible. Are you flexible? Can I get my hand in too?"

"Do it."

Leaving my anus alone, she adjusted her position. A whole hand was added to the penis in me.

I decided to slow them down.

"Wow, you have some strong muscle power. That's learnt!" Helen called out.

"In Somerset."

"Must be the apples." Then Helen said, "Keith, Linda's got herself one good lover here. She and Linda must be incredible. Allie is a revelation. Orgasm time for her."

Keith soon ejaculated into me, and Helen used the new lubrication to work me up.

"We're going to have to have you at the next gathering here," said Keith. "Yes to Yojana but my journey was definitely worth it, finding you."

Keith focussed more on working my PVC covered breasts with his fingertips, reaching from behind. It happened: I shuddered from Helen's fisting efforts, and she did not stop. So I shuddered again. She realised that I was multi-orgasmic, and on that basis she slid her hand out partly and Keith slid his larger hand in, stretching me. They knew what they were doing, and I had one orgasm after another as they alternated their hand work.

At this point I had an audience: Christine, Elizabeth, Rhiannon, Arianwen.

I was starting to lose it and eventually fell to the floor. They laughed.

Keith and Helen moved away. Rhiannon could not resist but bent down and inserted her fist, and I shuddered again but showed some anger. She soon removed her hand.

As I looked up, Keith was talking to Elizabeth and Elizabeth was shaking her head.

I shook my head too, finally, and was able to get up and, once steadied, roam some more. On a bed Yojana herself was sat enjoying the snogging company of Annie Fenwick, my drinking buddy, and Jordis Bingham, another sex worker, so I leaned on this bed.

"Hello Yojana, hia again Annie, Jordis. I'm researching tonight."

"Supposedly," said Annie for a moment. "You're so wet on your thighs you could fill up Rutland Water." (The flaps were hanging down.)

"Yojana: you've been a client of Adam. You're not *really* in any relationship?"

Annie said, "Give it a break, Allie. We're having fun!"

Yojana said, "Nah. A useful deception. I saw you with Keith. Did you like him?"

"Yeah. What's Adam's role here - not here?"

"It's his lease, so he is being paid for what is a private party. The finances go his way."

"And we thought Keith was with Cheryl only now."

Annie touched me around where I was soaked. She said, "You must have enjoyed Keith."

"It was mainly Helen," I said, as Annie's set of fingers went the same way as others had gone.

Yojana asked, "Have you interviewed my uncle yet?" Her fingers also slid into my vagina.

"No. He is..."

"San Bandyopadhyay. Sanjay Bunker. He is a client of Christine's and she is with him again in a back room."

I gave Annie a parting kiss and removed both of their fingers.

The first thing I did was go into the kitchen and made a number of reminder bullet points for later longer notes. I closed all the open flaps. I then went to the other end of the hall and a door to a narrow corridor and three back rooms.

I knocked on the door of one of these rooms, and inside sat with her head down was a naked Christine and vomit all over the floor. Her gowns were on a chair. As she slowly turned her head towards me her eyes were wide and vacant. I'd never seen Christine look so white.

I asked, "Where is, er, San Bandyopadhyay?"

"Toilet: the one at this end of the hall, in the far room."

A naked Peter Marshall suddenly came in. "I'm afraid you have to stop. Are you all right, Christine?"

"I threw up on him. Three times. I got him to do it, just the once. That's why he's in the loo: he can't take it."

End of the Gathering

Peter then said, "Look, there are a load of police out there and no one is allowed to leave. But a short while ago Fatima Tamuuz said she was going to the hotel, the McPhails have gone and no one can find Elizabeth."

I asked, "Police?"

Christine stood up. "We'd better see what is going on, then. There's nothing illegal here. San? San!"

Christine put her gear back on, but the vomit made her bare feet slippery on the ground. San Bandyopadhyay wasn't around, so the three of us went into the hall, and I could see that a woman officer was reading my notebook.

"Hey, that's my research notebook!"

"Is it indeed? Well, we'll have it as evidence because I have just seen a reference to sixth former Lucy Catchpole, which was our tip-off."

There were also another five male police stood by the double doors out. Two female officers then came in through those double doors.

This female officer with my notebook said, "So, Ladies and Gentlemen, you'd better stay as you are, in your various states of undress, and you clergy I take it are the ones in open gowns and stuff. No one leaves here until you have given your

name, address and contact details, and you may have to look in your bags to give us proof of identity. We will take a photograph of each and every one of you as well. Don't worry, just your faces and any distinguishing tattoos. Start to form a queue."

A policeman among the initial six, PC Duncan Harris, asked, "Who is the principal person in charge of this?"

Christine came over and said, "I am. And I think you'll find that Lucy Catchpole is in fact Beatrice Taverner, who is nineteen and has never even been in a sixth form. She is one of my workers and left to see a client. The police here know me and I don't tolerate underage prostitution."

"Maybe," said the policewoman with my notebook. Ms. Vine, we'll speak to you at the end. Who are you - your name?" asked a policeman, looking up and down my gear.

"Reverend Deacon Alfia Shrimpton. Your name?"

"Not wearing an open gown? You seem to be the only person covered up!"

"I'm a researcher. I'm in the independent church here, but I am a researcher about it from outside Serninsea. And your name?"

"4125 PC Diana Constance."

Christine still nearby said, "Yes, Allie is as she says."

"Age?" asked PC Constance.

"Thirty."

"Your address."

"135 Toulouse Road, Serninsea."

"Have you lived here for the past five years?"

"No. Because I'm a researcher from the University of Somerset at Glastonbury."

"Your home address - before university, please madam."

"Columns Farm, Walsingham."

"We have your notebook, so you'd better have a receipt. Someone get me a receipt for that notebook. Tell me, is Christine Vine here your bishop?"

"Not directly, but it's Bishop Linda Jupitas. She would not come tonight."

"Division in the ranks? She's very wise."

Another policeman came forward and took a photograph. This policeman said, "You can leave. If we need to interview you, then we will ask. Your notebook might need explanation."

"This is for my research; it contains confidential material."

"Or relevant material regarding tonight's event. You'll get it back. Go. We have others to process."

So I walked over to the bethel in my glamour costume while Christine stayed with the police. I expected Linda to be displeased with events.

Bishop Elizabeth Huett had at last displayed her true hand; the police were not knowingly asking after her, Sanjay Bunker, the McPhails, Fatima Tamuuz or, it seemed, Rhiannon Fleetwood.

Narrator: Linda *At the Bethel* (Saturday 11th January)

"Thank you for telling me anyway," I said to the Reverend Rhiannon Fleetwood,

who'd come into the bethel with news. She wanted to make a rapid exit to the vicarage, where she said some of those who'd left early had gathered.

The police had raided above the casino, on a rumour of a minor taking part in sexual activities. She was a sixth former called Lucy Catchpole, although in my visits to the school I'd never met such a named person.

Allie came in through the private door, in her PVC shiny stuff, walking over.

"Ah, here comes the chief slut of Serninsea."

"The police came," she said. "Hey there's some water on the floor and it's a bit damp. Has someone used the wet room, or the mikveh?"

"Hmm, yes. While you were watching people shagging meaninglessly over there, here you missed what you should have been researching: an actual mikveh ritual."

"You did the readings?"

"I did and I joined in, with Roger and Marie taking their room and looking forward to the future."

"The police raided above the casino."

"I know. Rhiannon Fleetwood called in and told me."

"She's quick off the mark. She left early, like all of those in the know."

"There are people who left early and went to her vicarage."

"They would be Elizabeth, Fatima Tamuuz, the McPhails, and probably San Bandyopadhyay."

"What were the McPhails doing there?"

"Enjoying themselves. Look, I am one of the first people out. The police took my notebook. I wrote in it about what various people said. So they are invading my research privacy. They think there was underage sex going on."

"So I've heard. And was there?"

"No, it was a con. The woman was a sex worker, and never even been a sixth former. Keith won the raffle. Oops."

"Keith. You mean... *my* Keith?"

"Er... Yes. Ex-Keith. Ex-yours."

"And he was with Yojana Asthana?"

"Er look, this is... Look, I found out he wants to get ordained. But this research, it's confidential."

"Don't you come this research privacy bullshit with me, young lady. This is on a whole different level now. Was Yojana Asthana with him or not?"

"Er... Oh fuck it: yes she was."

"What a cunt - him, I mean. Ordained? What's that about? Anyway, his partner is pregnant, for goodness sake. She does not approve of all this either, so it's as good as cheating. Ordained my arse - and what Church? Who else was there? Anyone I know?"

"I don't know who you know."

"Oh deary me. Let me ask you some questions. Was... John Barman there?"

"No, and neither was Jonathan Eyre. Fatima Tamuuz was there. Rhiannon Fleetwood was there, obviously. Someone called Bishop Arianwen Bron was helping to lead things."

"Never met her."

"She is a Druid-Bishop. There's something else."

"Go on."

"Almost certainly Elizabeth and others set up the police raid."

"Hard luck. Who else would I know there?"

"Mr. Oldfield shaved Helen McPhail's pubic hair away in seconds flat."

"She always was an exhibitionist, like her husband. What is Christine doing now?"

"She would have refused the McPhails permission to attend if you'd attended. She wasn't asked but she refused permission to Barman or Eyre regardless, Linda."

"You're a bastard for even going there!"

"Me? What's it got to do with me? I didn't know these people would be there."

"And how did you interact with all these people, eh?"

"I interviewed them. I was the only one clothed - the bishops had open gowns. I didn't get San Bandyopadhyay, because the police came in when I approached his back room and faced a sea of vomit."

"Vomit?"

"All over the floor."

"Christine, I suppose. So he evaded the police? Did they arrest you and Christine and the rest?"

"We were detained and recorded for further possible investigation."

Peter had just come in through the public double doors. "We were each detained briefly on suspicion of criminal activity taking place. I think - we think - that Elizabeth tipped off the police, and the police came for the fun of it. *They* know Lucy Catchpole was not real. Everyone knew it was a joke."

"I didn't know it was a joke then," said Allie. "When I write notes I write what people say. Inverted commas come later. The police have got my book."

"So Christine is still there, hanging back," Peter said.

I said, "It's no joke at all that the McPhails were there. Hang on, it's the fuzz."

We waited while this single policeman approached, introducing himself as PC Duncan Harris.

"Are you Bishop Linda Jupitas?"

"I am."

"And you are? Oh, you're that..."

"Allie Shrimpton."

"Peter Marshall."

"We're looking for Adam Magellan."

I said, "He's at his own accommodation, above Magellan Investigations. Why do you want him?"

"He has the lease for above the casino. We'd like to know his part in this activity."

Peter said, "It was a private party."

"I'll ask *him*. Money was changing hands: the raffle and its prize that a man called Keith Jupitas won. That was before you enjoyed him, Ms Shrimpton.

I looked at her fiercely and slapped her face, without her stopping me.

"I could get you for common assault there, Bishop Jupitas."

"You cunt."

The policeman said, "If you mean me I'll arrest you."

"I meant her."

"Moderate your language, please. I shall go and speak to Mr. Magellan, then, madam." He left the building.

"So, who else went into your cunt, cunt?"

Peter said, "Mind if I withdraw?" He did, towards the kitchen.

"I did what I did to get information."

"And so what information did you get from my bastard ex-husband? Hmm?"

"What happened meant nothing."

"Bye bye, Allie, I think you're going to Toulouse Road tonight - and every night."

"That book was in the kitchen, out of the way of most people. Christine might get to read it. You have the seal of the confessional, and researchers should have the same. I'll contact Professor Mitton tomorrow and get him to write a stiff letter of complaint."

"Not the only thing stiff. You're a fool. Bye bye," I said. "You knew the consequences."

"I want my book back."

"Your mother and father did not raise you to be like this."

"I'm not so sure," Allie said, as she rose to leave the building and turned away. "Or about yours."

"What did you say? Fuck off."

I went upstairs to the half empty double bed, angry at the betrayal. There'd be no marriage!

Moving On and More Young Men (Sunday 12th January)

After a standard Sunday when Christine and I took the service, Christine joined me for breakfast. I wasn't too happy with her. The Reverend Deacon Allie Shrimpton had skipped the service.

Christine had Allie's notebook. She said to me, "Once they'd read it they realised it told them nothing, but I think they might have photocopied a few pages. I have a good relationship with the police. Last night they said they had to act on the tip-off but they spoke with Bea Taverner and of course she was nothing to do with any underage sex. She's thin and looks the part."

"Was Adam annoyed?" I asked.

"He's since been informing the media, to see if he can make money."

"Have you been to the Blue Diamond Club and given Elizabeth what for?"

"I suspect she's not there any more, but I will find out for sure. By the way, Keith will come here on his way home back to Harwich. Did you send Allie away?"

"Yes. I take it she fucked my ex-husband."

"And Helen McPhail, Annie Fenwick had a go, and it all started with Maurice Neptune."

"He was disciplined by his denomination, and he goes *there*?"

"The notebook said he went there hoping to meet you."

"Well, I was but streets away. I suppose she didn't tell him that."

"She told him, if I understood it right, not to bother."

"Oh, *did* she indeed? Like I wasn't to bother with Jonathan Eyre, that time?"

"She did you a favour then. Shall I ring her and tell her to come over? I'm afraid I have to do some reckoning with her. You behave yourself, Linda, and let me

get her responses."

Christine made the call, to discover that Allie was already on her way to face my music.

As she came in and stood facing us, Christine said, "Allie. The police entrusted me to return your notebook. They didn't hang on to it."

"They should have given it to me."

"But I keep prostitutes off the street and I used my good relationship to get it back. Listen: you were a bit free with your talking last night. Sit down Allie. Linda, listen: your researcher, who keeps her mouth shut, was blabbing our business to all and sundry."

"Was I?" asked Allie, taking a seat opposite me at the edge of this long table.

"For example, blabbing that I am sacrificial but act with clients differently, and you expected sex with me but otherwise I'm too expensive."

"Really?" I asked (and it wasn't really a question).

Allie said to Christine, "You said I could have sex with you, but then you were too busy - with your client."

"Mmm. Linda, more seriously still, I had a message from Helen McPhail this morning, because she'd like to see Allie again. Allie, were exercising your tongue. Helen asked you if you'd had sex with Linda, and, asked if it was good, you said, 'very good,' and you asked if she'd had sex with Linda."

"That was the point!" said Allie.

"And when Keith asked you if you sleep with his former wife - he first said 'wife' - you affirmed the matter, but went on that you never discuss your work with Linda and it has strict boundaries. It has to be said, Allie - you were spewing out opinions and other people's private business."

I got up, walked over to Allie, and slapped her across her face hard, and she didn't deflect me. I sat down again. I said, "You two-faced cunt, you. You've spent so much time telling me nothing, and now you've been wagging your tongue about my personal affairs to all and sundry."

Allie called out, "That's my notebook, not yours, Christine!"

Christine said, "Really? Helen thinks Allie is great. Apparently you have strong vaginal muscles, Allie, and Linda must have a good time. Allie, what's been going on?"

I spoke instead. "This... This is nothing less than a betrayal of me: someone who has loved you and cared for you and proclaimed a coming marriage, and yet you... Yes, 'spewing' is the right word because you were spewing my precious personal life to those creeps: people I never wish to see again."

"These were 'other people'," said Allie. "They're outside our conversation loops."

Christine said, "Obviously not, Allie. Listen: you keep your views to yourself."

I said, "I wouldn't care but this is my inner life: I have risked things with you, Allie; and to think I could partner you, when you've just shat all over me."

Christine added: "Things go around the bush telegraph. You took the ritual and you had sex, and some thought that you were Linda's representative because you were self-declared as Linda's fiancé."

I stood up ready to wallop her again.

Christine instructed me to sit down, so I did. She had more. "Maurice Neptune wished he'd entertained you sexually as well, instead of dumping you in a jacuzzi

bath when in Wytham. That's not in the notebook: Helen says you admired the rabbi's rhythm with Linda."

I said to her, "My rhythm? How dare you. You fucked a man asking after me, you selfish bitch; you could have told him to come here, you selfish bitch."

"You made it clear you wanted nothing to do with the event. Anyway, he doesn't want to see you outside an event like that."

"Who says?"

"He did. That's in my notebook."

"I want to punch you in the stomach."

"No you don't. That's *enough*," Christine asserted. "And so, Allie, my final comment is: you don't go blabbing our business to others. Oh, Allie, don't start crying. I thought you were made of tougher material. I *hate* it when people start crying." Christine looked about. "Yeah, I've said enough. No violence now, ladies. Sort it out peaceably. Bye bye, see you both shortly."

I sat and leant backwards and just looked at Allie. "Hopefully, your research is coming to an end."

"I'll have to wind it up."

I stood. "I won't hit you. It won't compensate for my sense of devastation. You're a bitch and I hate you. You've no sense of reciprocity, never mind any return of the love I've showed you. Do you know what love is? I bet you don't."

Allie was about to walk off, towards the staircase, but with a certain Keith arriving she stayed, wiping tears with the backs of her hands.

"Oh. *You*," I said. "Here comes a real shit. You're not welcome, Allie, to listen in."

Allie took her cue and resumed going to and up the staircase. Keith was looking over the building, taking his time and I waited.

"So this is the place," he said, eventually. "Modern and quite compact really. The word went out that you wanted to see me. I said 'hello' to Christine out there."

"Come to my vestry."

So he followed me in, as I sat at my desk and he stood. He said, "This looks like part of an extension. I had a look around the back."

"A good snoop, eh? There used to be a garden here. You took advantage of my inexperienced and fragile fiancé."

"Definitely not," he said. "So you didn't really want to see me."

I said, "Yesterday confirmed one thing. I shall drop the Jupitas surname. I was going to keep it, but you are a complete shit."

Keith said, "She's skilled, your new redhead lover. She can take a trip to Ingle Barrow any day to see the McPhails. They want more."

"No surprise that Adam Magellan lost interest in you; but did you lose interest in him, especially with that spirited sex shocker coming along?"

"I'm not discussing my private life with you."

"Your lover - fiancé - discussed plenty. So does she live with you up those stairs then? Couldn't let me look around up there?"

"It's none of your business. What I know is I don't cheat. You're cheating on Cheryl - again."

"Cheryl will come round to understanding it."

"Meanwhile, it is said you are getting ordained."

"Ah, is this why you wanted to see me? That's my business."

"Who will ordain you? John Barman?"

"Then wait for the public announcement. Do you mind if I go to the loo before my journey to Harwich?"

"Over there, directly across. Unisex."

"I'll go on the way out. You might want my address, for any particularities."

Thus I gained Cheryl's up to date address.

Off he went, going to the unisex toilets across the way.

When he re-emerged, Allie came down the stairs with two full large bags.

"Hello, Allie, again," he said across to her, as she stood just outside the vestry. "Thank you for all that sex last night. Rhiannon says you claim to be a lesbian; for a lesbian you're pretty expert at working the old penis with mouth, hand and cunt." He said, further: "With those vaginal muscles, Helen speculated on your incredible lovemaking with Linda. Moving out?"

Allie's response was: "Why don't you get lost?"

"Jonathan said you were an aggressive sort. Bye bye."

At this point two young men came into the bethel through the main doors.

Keith suddenly looked like he wanted to circumvent them, but one of them blocked him and with his hand shoved Keith's chest.

With this, Allie dropped her bags and ran over to become a third person Keith would have to avoid.

"I think I'm going," Keith said. "Excuse me lady, gentlemen."

Allie responded, "You don't move anywhere. Try to and you'll hit the ground. Make your way to the vestry. If you don't, I'll force it."

As he showed no movement in that direction, Allie rapidly kneed him in the stomach and swiftly spun him around to put his arm up his back and frogmarch him to the vestry, to be placed in front of my desk.

"Come, gents," Allie said. "What's this about?"

Thus, I signalled them to come in, past Allie, and she pulled Keith back. I asked them who they were.

"Well, my name is Ludovic Warren, and I'm twenty-three."

"And my name is Kevin McClelland, and I am seventeen."

"Oh shit," said Keith. "I really must be going."

"Stay," said Allie to him from behind him.

"And the reason we are here is because we discovered ourselves as half-brothers, because *he* is our father."

"Oh," I said, "Well this *is* news. Do, Ludovic and Kevin, tell me about yourselves. He's only my former husband and yet I know nothing about you at all."

Ludovic said, "My family relocated to Lude because of him and my mum. They would have nothing to do with him. I've since discovered Kevin, and, at my age, I now decide contact."

Kevin then said, "My mother told me - my eighteenth is in March - that I had a half-brother. As you might expect, Bishop Linda - is it? - this was a shock. Mum learnt how the Warren family years before had moved to Lude. She has stayed in Serninsea, and she has received maintenance for me, that soon ceases - *father*."

Ludovic said, "My mother never received a penny. The family wouldn't accept it."

"Well well," I said. "And Keith, did you know that these half-brothers had found each other?"

"No. I paid maintenance for Kevin, quietly."

"Very quietly. Well, Ludovic and Kevin, you'll be further pleased to know that you will soon have a half-sister. This time your father - you really are low-life, Keith - is actually marrying a woman that he's made pregnant. For all I know, you might get another half-sibling from her stood just behind you!"

"Birth control," said Allie.

"Of course, every lesbian uses birth control."

Ludovic said, "We want to confront him, not just about the past but what is he going to do? Now we've caught up with him, at last, he can at least spend an hour with us."

"Yes," said Keith, "if the redhead let's me leave. Don't have a baby, redhead, because I'm not paying out any more. Anyway, it might be the rabbi's. I think I got some of his spunk on my cock. Right, well, we three can talk among ourselves then."

I said, "I'm really happy to see you two young men at any time, of course, but please do not let me have to deal with this man any further. Take him away."

Keith pushed past Allie, and the two young men left a gap.

I said to Allie, waiting and looking at me, "I'll be glad not to see him ever again. All right, Allie, I'll say thank you. So *what* are you doing?"

She turned to face away from me. "I am very sorry. I think my research is over, ending with that above the casino event. I can't think there is any more."

"I think you are wrong. I want to uncouple this place from above the casino completely and you can finish your research with that fact demonstrated. I can't choose my researcher but, you know, I'd like her to do a good job and finish properly."

"I stay? Seriously?"

"As a researcher. The fiancé bit will have to die its death. Sorry."

"Originally I wanted to carry on with my research until I was sure that this place is up and running - with your permission. Then I shall leave for Glastonbury and Norfolk. But, if you don't mind, I will take these bags and sleep in my house from now on. I've let you all down."

"Quite. At least you admit it."

"I do want to stop the research as quickly as possible. I'll communicate with my professor from my house about what has happened and send him relevant notes."

She placed her keys on my desk. I was stunned despite the rift. She turned and walked away, with heavy bags, and left through the double doors. I'd said nothing further, because I did not know what else to say.

Ten minutes later Christine came in. "Has Keith been in then? Your eyes are red and watery."

"His two sons came. Look, as you can tell, I'm not very hospitable."

"He's got two sons?"

"They turned up. They must have known his whereabouts and followed him. Half-brothers. Sorry, Christine, I'm just not in the mood to see anyone now - even you. Perhaps especially you."

"Because of Keith?"

"If this was all of it, I'd be smiling."

"Where's Allie?"

"She's packed her bags and said goodbye to the circus. When I've finally

separated this place from above the casino - and I mean it, Christine, I shall - she will leave. Please, I want to go upstairs and lie down."

"You've grown accustomed to her face," Christine said. "I'll go over to Toulouse Road now before I get Leon to fly me to Ebbsfleet. He had a good time last night."

"With Allie?"

"Her intention was to interview until Maurice dismissed the sex worker and pulled in Allie. The others had their prices for answering questions."

"Now you tell me."

"So I get to Ebbsfleet and then the helicopter will be going in for a service and the odd repair. Cars are so slow when you get used to a helicopter."

"The rewards of success," I said. "Some have it and some definitely don't."

"See you soon."

"Let her go," I said. "There's a bit more for her to research, but perhaps she should just go."

"She'll want to run away," said Christine. "She's done it before."

"It would be of a pattern."

Narrator: *Allie Sixth Cousin and her Mother* (Sunday 12th January)

The doorbell went at precisely four. I opened the door and it was Rhiannon Fleetwood, Fatima Tamuuz and Fatima's little girl.

"What are *you* doing here?" I asked Rhiannon Fleetwood.

"Just that you're dangerous, so I am here to keep watch. Go on, let me in too, I won't interfere."

Both women noticed all of the art work done or being done, canvases to use, and paints.

Fatima said, "Akemi. This is your distant cousin, Alfia. Her second name is Shrimpton, but your second name is mummy's."

I said, "Akemi. I have a ball here that I coloured with my own bright paints. Our shared ancestor is a James Shrimpton, who was alive from 1840 to 1893 - a long time ago."

Rhiannon said, "She doesn't know what a 'shared ancestor' is."

Fatima said, "Say, 'Thank you, Allie' to Allie."

"Thank you, Allie," the toddler said to me.

"My original surname was Rogers, Fatima, and my name was Alice. Alice Shrimpton, James Shrimpton's daughter, was a heroine of mine, born in 1865, and she is the five times great aunt of Akemi. Alice was married to Brian Rogers but kept a lifelong intimate partnership with Elizabeth Ford. Alice lived so long and I discovered that many of them died at a very similar time. Son Morris was born in Wells-next-the-Sea and died in Gainasburgh. His son James was born in Gainasburgh and died in Hull. His son Patrick was born in Hull and died in Hartlepool. They all worked on the rivers or the sea. After that the descendents lived as south as York, and in Durham and back in Hartlepool. I realised that Philip worked for SMS in Hartlepool."

Rhiannon was looking through my paintings. "Mystical Blake. You're into him,

then."

"Swedenborg, Zinzendorf. And Abigail was too," I said to her. "Why are you so corrupted?"

Rhiannon said, looking at her phone, "Keith Jupitas has sent me a message. You've left Linda. You're running away again! He broke free of his sons and denied them their conversation and is on his way to Cheryl. What are you going to do now? Running back to Roland?"

"My professor? What do you mean?"

"Come on! He's a well-known Pagan and so is Abigail."

"There's some more research yet."

Fatima then said, "Akemi! That paintbrush is dangerous. Oh, thanks Rhiannon."

I said to Fatima, "Rhiannon here gave away her children but you didn't."

"I didn't just get pregnant from Philip. I wanted a baby and he consented in advance. Akemi doesn't see the things I get up to. I'm not retracting from what I do - it's just not appropriate for a child."

The doorbell went. I answered it.

"Oh, Christine! Em, I have, er, Fatima and Akemi here. Rhiannon too."

"It's all right. Fatima and I used to know each other rather well. What are you doing here?" Christine asked Rhiannon.

"Just offering some protection for them. Keith messaged me a few things including Allie threatening to assault him."

"Well, you're not needed now," said Christine. "Allie may be subdued but I remind you of the vicarage garden."

"Yes," I said.

Rhiannon took the hint and told Fatima that she would be back at the vicarage.

When she had gone, Christine said to Fatima, "You were warned in advance last night."

"Tess told me, Rhiannon, San and the McPhails that we'd have to get out and then reminded us before we actually did."

"I worked with Elizabeth and consented to you and the McPhails being there. She seems to have got her own back."

Fatima said to Christine, "Barman and Eyre would have come - despite your previous dispute with Barman and your success."

"Elizabeth didn't invite them. She's not that stupid."

"She actually told them to stay away. You know, Liz was never part of Linda's outfit. Adam Magellan will have known that."

"I was too optimistic about her. Linda now has every reason to split from my activities. Anyway, I came to see Allie."

Fatima asked, "Is this private? Shall I go off with Akemi?"

"Not really. It's the mess you've left us in, although our specific issue is Allie's fault. Blabbermouth. Did you think they would all disperse and Linda hear nothing?"

"Yes, to be honest. But I got carried away. It started with Maurice."

Fatima then said, "You were impressive. Everyone thought you were fantastic."

Christine said to me, "You do all this research ethic and then you blab away personal stuff."

"You've already said."

"You are also supposed to be a Reverend Deacon; have you heard of the seal of the confessional?"

"Of course."

"Have you left Linda?"

"She says I can complete the research. I don't want to leave. I mean, seeing Akemi also makes me want to have a child."

"Really? You're going about it the right way - *not*. Have you not thought that Linda has maternal feelings?"

"She does?"

"She suffers. Right. Listen. Linda still wants you, but she thinks she must throw in the towel. The love she has for you has somehow gone down the wrong track - but that's not surprising. I blame her family."

"Why?"

"Because, from what I can gather, she's like some women who have strong fathers and they never seem to separate from them. She also has a dominting sister, an equal, so she doesn't want another competing equal. She'll drop you as impossible and thinks she could give Maurice Neptune what he wants."

"He's not available. He told me."

"What you do is press the reset button. Apologise and ask for forgiveness. You then tell Linda everything: every sexual detail above the casino, especially Maurice. Then tell her he won't be interested in her personally. This narrows her options."

Fatima said, "She doesn't know about Sallie Sarah? Oh dear."

"Don't mention her, Allie; don't give her that name," Christine said.

"Who is Sallie Sarah?" I asked.

"Maurice's intended. From out of his congregation."

"I didn't know. So he wanted Linda as a final hurrah or will he behave like Keith does with Cheryl?"

"Let Linda jump to conclusions because dropping you makes her think of Maurice. Then *he* will put her off, not you. He still thinks she'd make a good rabbi, but she'd only be a rabbi now. Then you say, you really do want to marry her. It's your future; it will have to be a shared baby."

"I was wondering what I was going to do with my life after researching," I said. "I want to continue the family tree, and I want more options than Jonnie back at home."

Christine advised, "Exhaust matters with Maurice first. Listen, Allie: have you got it?"

"Yes. But Linda is hopping mad and might not accept my apology."

"A massive apology and all the sex details."

"What if she's already contacted him?"

"She is dithering, as ever. I don't think she really wants to lose you. She knows you will research for a little longer, so it gives time to see if things can be repaired."

"Why do I apologise first? I will: I want to apologise. But why first?"

"She will make her discovery from Maurice, about Sallie Sarah, and you'll have your apologising out of the way. She needs to be a proper mother, and this is your life's sacrifice."

"Thanks, Christine. If it works."

"Now I've got some women to see to try and persuade them to leave prostitution, or at least go online and leave the streets."

Christine left, and Fatima stayed. "You should know that Akemi and I are going to Tamworth, and will meet up with the rest of them. Don't tell those you know - I don't care really but I'd rather you didn't."

"I won't. I've learnt that lesson. I really love Linda. The thing is my family wanted me to marry Jonnie. We grew up together and we don't have normal sibling-like taboos."

"You *could* marry your fifth cousin once removed: Philip."

"I am a lesbian. I really am. I did Maurice and Keith because of Jonnie. I've never seen this Philip and, even if I did, I'd never fancy him. At Somerset I had the freedom to go with women, and ended up with women in authority - a tutor and a secretary of the department. I got into Taunton Tantria like Abigail and she was also a witch. And then there was Andrea, an Anglican priest and therefore only secretly in Taunton Tantria. She was my GP too. She's the one who got away because of Abigail and also her pursuing Lynton, the suffragan bishop."

"Ah. That's one of the group with Anong's group as its origin. Fighters of Concern, or something, they all became."

"Yes," I said. "Anong is notorious, even among those who know her. She pursues the theology of disgust. It suits her extreme Buddhism. Sheila Patterson."

"You are well-informed, Allie. A proper researcher, eh? You seem a bit messed up personally, with this family neighbour so close."

"I love Jonnie deeply, and I could live with him, but I would never desire him."

"He'd give you orgasms. I get orgasms from men. All that fisting you liked, that's a thick penis substitute - especially with that vice-like grip you can do."

"I insist I'm a lesbian."

"I don't want a personal partner. I don't think I could handle that. It's why I dominated Jenny. I know I may not have helped her fragility. She lost all her beliefs, but the rumour is that Sarah Deimos, the suffragan up there, lost all her beliefs as well. That won't be because of Harriet Leda, her live-in partner, who is a Christian and would-be naturist. Jenny keeps Sarah's secrets."

"I've learned my lesson."

"I would have offered to stay with you tonight, but I don't suppose you're minded for that."

"Not really. What about Akemi?"

"One to one with nice people's all right. You're a nice person. Well, Jonathan - ours - says you're a fighter but I have found you to be pleasant. You just don't take shit and neither do I."

"Yeah. Thanks to Abigail and Beathag. Abigail got me into self-defence, via that Taunton Tantria, and Beathag was over the top with the discipline and I had to square up to her. I had some naked fights with Andrea. She's gorgeous."

"I'll be going."

"Where are you staying?" I asked Fatima.

"Yojana's."

"I'd love to go to bed with you, Fatima, but you're right that my head is a bit messed up. I need a clear conscience tomorrow. I need to give a massive apology, and see if Linda responds."

"It's your last night of freedom, then," Fatima said. "I won't tell Yojana where I've been."

"Hmm."

"Go on, Allie. Let's have some lezzy non-committal fun."

"I'll could get a pizza delivery and we can have some non-alcoholic - I'm afraid - drinks."

"I'll get Rhiannon to take Akemi off my hands."

"She's a destructive gossip. No way, Fatima."

"Then Akemi stays here."

Akemi was nicely tucked in on an airbed I kept available, and Fatima came to my bed. She showed her incredible skill, and discovered for herself the extent of my continuous orgasms. And she did say that the Holy Spirit had touched me with the crash of a descending goose. All I knew was that she had worked me through sheer sexual skill, and I tried as much as I could to reciprocate the orgasms. Here it was: technique and outcomes. But I wanted a particular person, and I lay with Fatima asleep next to me, her arm on me below my breasts. Technique and outcomes matter but I wanted a person with whom (as Linda would word it) to build a life.

I dreamt a weird dream that night, even in company. It wasn't about Fatima alongside me, but Abigail Randall, my one-time tutor and lover. This dream was in a Chinese Temple, and it was a bit like an old version of *Kung Fu* as seen on a satellite channel some years ago. Abigail declared, as she did in reality, that I would never beat her physically, but the context here was to 'draw' with her and complete my time in this supposed Somerset monastery. I was at the exit. Anong was present, and bowed to me, as she had once visited Taunton Tantria. In the dream I lifted the pot, and although red hot it failed to mark my flesh. Outside the monastery exit was Linda, and she was my future, and she had a hot stamp with the initials B and P. I gave her my hands and she so marked both forearms, burning the skin.

However, in the real world I needed courage to approach Linda.

Chapter 29 Aftermath

Narrator: Linda *The Police and the Media* (Monday 13th January)

I woke alone. I'd no idea if and to what effect Christine had spoken with Allie or not. Bella it was who came up to the bethel with Roger, unwanted by Adam. I was disappointed to hear that Peter and Kathryn had been at the orgy, even if keeping themselves to themselves. Kathleen and Winnie doing refreshments disappointed me.

Soon Bella approached me that there was a telephone call from the police. It concerned Adam and me, and so I wondered if the police had uncovered more than just a joke at a private orgy. The policewoman said that we were each to go in to the local station. We would not be arrested but they had questions to put to us separately.

Adam arrived from his work place and so asked Roger and Bella to return. He said. "Looks like there's a low crime day, or perhaps too many of the Wytham lot are on expenses in Serninsea."

At the cop shop I was first into this small room, where the conversation with me was to be recorded and kept for seven years. The one female officer present, PC Diana Constance, explained (again) that I had not been arrested and had come in by invitation.

"Recognise this?" She produced three hardback writing books inside a clear plastic wrapping.

"No I don't."

"Found in your old curate's house, the one you used to live in."

"I left the house empty except for what belonged to the Church."

"These are the final volumes of the diary of the late Reverend Kenneth Osis."

This was completely unexpected.

"So you think that I cleared out all of my stuff but left that man's diary volumes behind?" I asked, "Have these conveniently turned up?"

"Why convenient?"

"After Bishop Elizabeth did a runner. She knew the police were going to raid above the casino."

"How do you think these got there?" the officer asked.

"I don't know. The Spirit of Ken Osis materialised? Oh no, that did happen."

"What?"

"Nothing."

"A religious joke, I take it. He wrote about you just days before he died. Oh, and many days and weeks previously. In fact, as we know, a long time ago he took pictures of you naked."

"I assume I am in there, yes. And yes I was a model, late to it when twenty-seven. He had been a studio client. He kept the photos. In fact, some of them turned up at my training vicar's when I was there. He didn't do it; Bishop Barman sent them for effect."

"You had sexual relations with him and it is in here in great detail. A touch of cruelty I'd say. Do you normally have sex with your 'confessor'? It says he was your

confessor. You were naked with a friend, drawing him in."

"I'm a naturist. So is Diana - he saw us both. I was when I was a model. I have been all my life."

"He writes about Adam Magellan. Why?"

"He was my partner. I don't know why he'd write about him."

"Keith Jupitas..."

"I was moving on. I had to conceal matters in Anglican ministry. It is very dishonest, you know. You cross your fingers at the creeds and you conceal your relationships. To be an Anglican you learn duplicity."

"So did you *use* Ken Osis? He thinks so, later on in here."

"I wanted to encourage him to have confidence. I wanted him to find someone else. He was fragile."

"I suggest that he killed himself because of you. He also desired Diana de Groot. She's a naturist, you say. What happened was hardly being sensitive towards someone fragile."

"There were potential conversation loops. We had to be sure he kept confidences, that he did not pass on material to John Barman, who was then a suffragan bishop. She helped me."

"Should we interview her?"

"To what end?"

"He wrote so much of it down. He used names, dates. He refers to confidential conversations that are not explained in here but you could find much of what he did write embarrassing. You had a motive to conceal these books."

"Check out Jim and Connie Wilson for motives. I hear that they are in Tamworth. How *are* travel expenses in the police service?"

"I'll ignore that. Did you succeed in finding out whether Kenneth Osis passed on material about you and Diana de Groot?"

"As best we knew, he kept confidences. The bishop seemed to glory in information about everyone. Bishop Barman obtained these diaries after Osis's death. Reverend Jim Wilson found the diaries, and kept a few back. Somebody has been in town and placed them. The person with the keys to the curate's house is the Reverend Rhiannon Fleetwood."

"You think. Wilson is a name that is in here. Connie especially. This Reverend Jim's wife had sex with Ken Osis frequently and he talks about decision making with John Barman, but he actually felt left out, and then his handwriting is bad after they put him on some A frames contraption and threatened him. He didn't want to join Connie Wilson's group, but they made him."

"Ken Osis *imagined* he was at the centre of decision making, and he never was," I stated.

"The Reverend Jenny World. She is the one now in a psychiatric hospital, I understand."

"Yep."

"So he and she and Connie were in various orgies, some in the same place as Saturday's, but he did score one success because he writes that he persuaded them to use theatrical metaphors to hide the group. He was trying to recruit you into it, once he was in it."

"He didn't succeed."

"Interview terminated 11:10 am. As stated, we shall keep a copy of this

recording for 7 years and you can write to hear the contents if you so wish. The books will be viewed by the coroner. Our reading of them over the last few days suggests that we have nothing to charge you over. The Saturday night orgy was a private party."

"Nothing to do with me, PC Constance."

"Doesn't matter. Interview is over."

"But what about who took the diaries? Because these people kept them from the Coroner, like."

"Your partner is outside waiting. Ask him to come in."

"He's not my partner now," I said to no effect.

Adam came out ten minutes later. "What a load of bollocks. She was fishing for information from me. I told them to ask Christine or you on religious matters and all the sex. I said you became my partner but were free to fuck whoever you liked."

"Whomever." I asked him: "Are you going to investigate the present whereabouts of Bishop Elizabeth Huett?"

He replied, "Not a finger will I lift. Good riddance. However, I've knocked up an article to go with the press report of the orgy above the casino. You'd better read it. Better still, rewrite it and use your name."

"Oh?"

"The thing is, if you don't, Allie's research will reveal what you don't want, especially if you've fallen out with her. Get in there first and we'll take the modest payment I'm afraid into your church and my business - split it fifty-fifty."

I edited rapidly the piece that Adam had written badly; my English was much better than his, even for a tabloid. I also wanted the full story told my way and not his.

After all the scandal of the sex cult in Serninsea you'd think that there'd be no more orgies. But there was, on Saturday night, 11th January 2020. It was led by Bishop Elizabeth Huett, Bishop Christine Vine, Bishop Bill Masters, Bishop Arianwen Bron, and other independent clergy, some of whom had attended before. There was a new participant, the new Anglican parish priest in Serninsea, the Reverend Rhiannon Margaret Fleetwood. Trained in Taunton, she was once known as Briana Margaret Stewart from Chester.

I did not take part. I failed to persuade colleagues not to go. Bishop Elizabeth Huett of my own independent Church organised it. The police concluded, despite their raid, that it was a private party, and that the prize of ending the virginity of a sixth former was pure fabrication: she was a young-looking local prostitute. Also present, and winner of the raffle to deflower the imaginary virgin, was my ex-husband, Keith Jupitas. In the stupidity of the prize, Kay Sally Parker, the retired headteacher of the secondary school, could not enter the competition.

Let me make it clear. I am Bishop of the parish of the Serninsea Liberal Bethel in the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia, and this event was formally detached from this parish. I tried to persuade my researcher not to go, but she saw too many ongoing connections to ignore it. When the police raided the event, they took her notes and returned them the next day.

The lease of the upstairs of the building - above the casino - used to be the Anglican Church's, but it was taken over by a private investigator, Adam Magellan, after the scandal. He took a rent payment from the organisers.

The police raided the party because of the false information given by Huett and some participants; this was 'getting their own back' for Adam's and my exposure of their previous secretive sex cult that also met above the casino in Serninsea. Thus they made their escape before the police arrived, but left behind to face the music were Bishop Christine and my researcher, among others.

With all this scandal and my researcher's ability to dig out local secrets, we come to some connections that involve Adam, myself, his business supporters and ex-teachers. For the first time we reveal connections that have existed in this locality, beginning at the time when Ms Parker became headteacher in late 1996.

From September 1996, both secondary schools had merged into one. An existing teacher at the Saint Sernin High School that became Serninsea High School, Ann Dromeghda, disciplined Adam Magellan for gazing at her body, the result of which was he ended up having sex at her initiative in her house, to be joined by a teacher from the closed Carr Secondary School, Labhaoise Vlahos. He was one of the first students to be eighteen at the school, born on 3rd September 1978. Similarly, it was after my eighteenth on 2nd April 1997 that I was seduced by Ann Dromeghda and Labhaoise Vlahos once I'd asked her about lesbian feelings. She then advised I join with my friend Jenny in controlled investigative sex sessions with Adam Magellan and a gay friend of his - who ran off from our encounters. I could discover my sexual responses.

At that time, duty of care legislation that would have criminalised these teachers did not exist; it was all based on ages of consent. Nevertheless the teachers did not start the 1998 term; they both withdrew together to start a property development partnership. They weren't investigated at the time. Adam and I both showed our abilities to keep secrets over the years, something we'd both use in later life.

Ever since, the two ex-teachers have supported Adam in his business ventures, especially when he took redundancy from the police and began his investigation business. Adam has since fathered their children, but takes no part in raising their family. It seems they have kept an eye on me too. This is how my church came to be financed: not just from the media payments at the time of the damaging scandal, but through their financial oversight. There were always rumours around Adam's ongoing connection with his one time teachers, but of course I knew what happened with me and why Jenny and I approached Adam in the way we did as upper sixth formers.

Ann, Labhaoise and Adam approve of going public on this matter, and it isn't just because my researcher might reveal these connections (how the church was financed), but because it lifts a burden of secrecy and tackles ongoing suspicions and rumours. It is the same as when I revealed my intersex identity: I no longer have the burden of keeping the secret that I did within Anglicanism.

As for the orgies, I want to take steps to remove any connection with my Church - denomination and parish - and although I am positive about sex and the body, this event is inadequately pastoral and does more harm than good. Serninsea has a legacy it must clean up.

Adam approved of this article at lunchtime and with a click it was off to *The Daily Morse* to appear the next day. He would take all telephone calls and emails in

response.

Narrator: *Allie A Visit from Annie* (Monday 13th January)

I sent a text to Annie and the upshot was Annie said she was working but I could go along to 15 Languedoc Street. I was wondering how, if I no longer was connected with the Bethel, I'd get income enough to survive.

She said, once my coat was off, me in a tight blouse and jeans, sensible shoes, "I only touched you - nice and wet - and got a kiss; too busy with Yojana."

"Thing is, I've likely blown it with Linda. She never wanted me to go. Yesterday Christine came round and said I have to give a full apology to Linda. I have to give Linda the details of what happened with me and the rabbi, but let her find out he's unavailable. Then I've got to offer myself to have her baby."

"Ugh. You don't want babies. You'd have to find a man."

"That's the point. The obvious candidate is my cousin Jonnie, but he'd want the child to be his and mine. The family would regard it as theirs."

"Go to the sperm clinic. We've got one."

"I know. A chap I know called Roger goes regularly. He was there when last week when I was checked up. Artificial insemination is not exactly on the NHS, when you are fertile. Not sure what Linda would think of Roger. Anyway, what about you and Yojana then?"

"Yojana puts it about a bit. She's having difficulty with Keith, that he's not quite as connected with her as he was. Any more showers with Klärchen Sisse and Salome Lichtbau?"

"It's a really happy house there."

"Even Saturday night I didn't see you naked."

"I was interviewing."

"So why don't we ever do anything different beyond the pub, Allie?"

"I'm here now. Things are so fluid."

"Anyway, I've got to go to work. Be different; join in."

"You should go to university, Annie."

"Once again, I'm not getting into debt. I earn money now. Anyway, if you go back to Linda she'll only want to dominate you. I'd give you equality."

"I'm not available if I want Linda."

"But you've said it yourself, she's broken with you - unless you grovel. Anyway, Goosechat beckons. Got to put in the hours."

"You think of things to chat about?"

"The pink thing goes in my fanny or arsehole, Allie, so every time they put in the money it buzzes."

"I'm curious."

"It does involve sex."

"I can sit out."

"Chicken. Having an active guest can more than double income."

"It's your work."

We moved to a bedroom with a computer and large screen. Annie put on two LED lamps. She dropped a couple of hand towels nearby. She went down to red bra

and panties, on the bed, but with no underwear on I decided to take the plunge and went nude. I could be a guest, with a pink vibrator inserted either in my arse or vagina.

"Allie, you have to obey the rules of Christine's Goosechat and one is a false name. My name here is 'Headgirl'. You will be 'Gael', spelt like the Scottish folk. Tokens cost them ten pence each, purchased in multiples of ten, and I get five pence for each one, but today I'll splitting them with you."

She gave me one pink, long, thin, bendy plastic thing. It had a small spherical end and a bulbous end. I chose my vagina.

Annie said, "No urinating but you can imitate squirting, so long as it is well disguised. Try not to get the computer wet. Right, time to get connected." She clicked on an icon on her computer screen.

"Is that an HD camera?"

"Christine now insists on it. Widescreen. The messages are on the right, and they see a more compact version. Goosechat will put us through in one minute."

Rules: Don't spam. Cam hosts do as they want, you can ask only. Don't argue and don't be rude. Email addresses get removed before they appear. Cam host Headgirl is running Vibe, Tips, antispam. Connection established.

Notice: Vibes are set to respond:

Level 1 - Tip (1-14 tokens) Low vibration 3 seconds

Level 2 - Tip (15-99 tokens) Medium vibration 5 seconds

Level 3 - Tip (100-499 tokens) Heavy vibration 7 seconds

Level 4 - Tip (500-999 tokens) Very Heavy vibration 30 seconds

Level 5 - Tip (1000+ tokens) Strongest vibration 1 Minute

Tip affects all vibes at once.

Annie held up the pink thing and slipped almost all of it behind her knickers. Then she said, "Hello everyone! Hello Dr. John, hello Bob, hello Adam, hello Mikey! It's a special day today because I have a guest and she's ahead of me, in the nud. It's Gael!"

I thus said, "Hello everyone," and waved.

Mikey gave a tip of 10 tokens.

Mikey: Where's the music?

Adam gave a tip of 10 tokens.

Annie replied, "Ah. Our boss says we can't use it now because she needs a Performing Rights Licence. Thing is, Goosechat is a small glamour webcam service, and they know where we are. We're located in Serninsea, Eslaforde, Wulfstan and a few other places. Seems some in other offshore services' narrowcasters can play music, dance to it, sing to it, and nothing happens. The boss is looking for some music we can all use. Sorry."

Adam: Why is your name Gayle, guest?

"Adam, I am called Gael because... Well, let me say: Tha mi dìreach dèidheil air a bhith an seo."

Annie asked, "What does that mean?"

"I just love being here."

"Give me a kiss on the lips."

I did. Annie started masturbating under her knickers, so I did the same exposed.

Adam gave a tip of 15 tokens.

Dr. John: You are awesome, Headgirl. Lovely guest.

Dr. John gave a tip of 10 tokens.

Bob: Beautiful, sexy, both of you. What a guest! Can't we see some more?

Bob gave a tip of 100 tokens.

HelenMc has joined.

It wasn't long before Annie had around forty named viewers. There would also be many more undeclared: stingy, non-contributing viewers. Her underwear came off, her striptease undermined by me being nude. To more buzzes and cash cascades, she presented her arse to me and my task was to place the bulbous end into her anus. So I did the same - it freed up the vulva.

ThicknReady has joined.

ThicknReady: Wow! Who's the sexy redhead? She's got nice tits - let the dog see the rabbit.

"Hello ThicknReady, again. Yes, I have a redhead guest and she's called Gael. Open your rabbit, Gael."

Adam: You two in these Werburgh Geese?

I then said, "Headgirl is, but I'm not. I bet Goosechat likes its cam operators to be Werburgh Geese. Is that right, A... Headgirl?"

"It's not compulsory. You have to be initiated to join that local association."

"Like Saturday."

"Mustn't talk about that."

"Whoops. Sorry."

HelenMc gave a tip of 100 tokens

Annie gave a heightened reaction to the remote buzzing.

The tips kept coming and she waggled the pink thing dangling out of her arse. In fact she kept masturbating, and as the buzzing continued moved her hand rapidly from side to side and then sprayed all over the place. This just encouraged them, and the buzzes were also encouraging me to do more.

After grabbing a towel and rubbing it between her legs, Annie received a question on the side panel.

Chopper: Are you happy with life, Headgirl? Remember what you were saying the other night?

"I have few close friends. One is Gael with me. We go for odd drinks together. But it's fair to say we keep our distances too. Yes?"

"Yes, I suppose so. I'm more my own woman today."

"I don't open up in front of people in real life. I'm more comfortable chatting here. Some people wonder how I can connect with people online when I can't so well in real life. It's because you are all anonymous or with made-up usernames."

I was pretty sure that 'Adam' was the one I knew.

Querceto (new member) has joined.

Querceto gave a tip of 100 tokens.

RobRoy has joined.

Annie continued: "I don't see your faces; I don't hear your voices. But I connect. In real life I am an introvert. I don't get lonely. I like being alone. I'll go to the pub but might sit on my own. But here, within the rules of Goosechat, I can open up and talk to you. I sit and lie down with nothing on, and I can talk to you all while I receive pleasure. I am comfortable with my body. Gael often goes about nude. I did hope..."

"I do in some company. I hope I still have a close, naturist companion. Maybe not any more."

"Online I don't have the same anxiety I have in real life."

Querceto gave a tip of 100 tokens

Querceto: You go to the pub, Gayle, presumably with your clothes on.

The cascade noise of cash accompanied a pulse going right through us. We both masturbated more, and then she sprayed again but by a bit less.

Porterhouse has joined.

Porterhouse: Doing any blue films you two?

After a slight pause, Annie said. "Welcome back Porterhouse. I am. Gael is her own person. There's a barmaid I like and I'll invite her to a video shoot. There's a chick with a dick I'll work with. If she was on here with me we'd have to appear under 'Trans'. Mainly I get gangbanged on video shoots by loads of men but half of them wear masks and face coverings. We women have to show our faces - it's not right!"

I said, "I've done it - in Somerset."

"You're kidding," said Annie.

"When you're an undergraduate student you need cash fast. This might be my future."

Querceto gave a tip of 100 tokens.

Querceto: This is like news to me, you cam workers making videos.

Annie said, after recovering, "That's an odd comment for a first time visitor, Querceto! You're very generous."

(The Querceto word was familiar, but I couldn't place it.)

RobRoy: How do you spell Gayle, Gayle? Just wondering.

I answered, "Gee ay ee el, so it is to indicate Gaelic speech.

RobRoy: You a native speaker of our highlands and islands language?

I said, "Mòran taing. No I am not. I learnt it as part of a means to empathise with Celtic communities of different kinds. I had a Gaelic speaker who was very sexual, and she added to my learning - in more ways than one. Some of my student friends could never hear and separate out the Gaelic words. I can. Some even struggled with pronunciation. The department..."

Annie said, "Don't say where it is."

"They're adding Kernewek to the list: that *is* something, given there are some five hundred fluent speakers only. It's all learnt and modern Cornish is a bit of a reconstruction."

Dr John: I'd like to examine your tits to begin.

I continued. "I think Scots Gaelic is down to below twenty thousand now, and is struggling. Welsh is doing well with many secondary speakers, speakers who've learnt it. That sports presenter, Muslim chap: he learnt it at his Caerdydd school and then at Prifysgol Abertawe. It needs that kind of support to grow: schools are the key. Youngest minds do languages easiest. You can make first or fluent language speakers that way. That would be almost impossible in Cornwall, though I heard of a couple who are raising their four children through the medium of Cornish. Some think Anglo-Saxon is more useful for archaeology. I'm an academic, sort of."

HelenMc: Tell us your sex techniques, Gael.

HelenMc gave a tip of 100 tokens.

Annie did some shaking.

I thought of an answer.

"Develop your pelvic muscles, HelenMc. I did this with other women in something like combat training. Get control."

HelenMc: Go on, I dare you to do some female ejaculating Gael.

BobbyBalls: Learnt languages and combat training. You a soldier?

I said, "Combat training, or self-defence, is different. It's about women and bodies."

(Then I recalled the origin of the name Querceto, but I would not tell Linda I knew.)

I said, "Okay, I'm going to try to come."

Querceto gave a tip of 1000 tokens.

Adam gave a tip of 15 tokens.

Adam: Does Gael fancy Headgirl?

HelenMc gave a tip of 100 tokens.

RobRoy gave a tip of 100 tokens.

Dr. John gave a tip of 70 tokens.

Bob gave a tip of 7 tokens.

Mikey gave a tip of 12 tokens.

That was enough to send us both mad, so I rapidly circulated my fingers, and sprayed right over the camera. Headgirl didn't spray anything like as far. Water was everywhere.

Annie using a towel around then said, "Of course I fancy Gael."

I said, "I've some relationship repairs to do. Not with An... Headgirl."

"Let me tell you about one chap. He was my fuck buddy, a friend with benefits. I never forget how I felt so betrayed. It was amazing sex, an amazing connection. Of course, with a friend with benefits, we could fuck anybody: it was not an exclusive relationship. But then I discovered he was fucking my best friend at the time. For months they lied to me and yet they could have told me. You're not like that, are you Gael?"

"I'd hope not."

"You'd show me loyalty."

"I would. If things don't work out."

"Second choice isn't a good place to begin, Gael."

Porterhouse: Friends with benefits means casual sex. You going to cry again from those blue eyes?

"No, Porterhouse, It was an open relationship but it still needed trust. No, I am not going to cry because it is a while ago now."

HelenMc: Any men you've fucked recently, Gael?

HelenMc gave a tip of 10 tokens.

With some thought for a certain viewer I said, "I had a long intimate relationship with a distant cousin. He was my regular male contact, but I fancy females. He was with me as I grew up: we had baths together, slept in the same bed; he saw my very first period, we've wiped each others' bottoms. So when I fuck men, they remind me of him. But I want a female long-term partner, and there is one and one only woman for me. Sorry, Headgirl. So, as I say, I've some repairs to do - I'm really sorry for all my mistakes. I want to marry her and have her baby. And with that I'd like to leave all you viewers now with your regular host."

I got up and went off camera to dress.

"Folks. I'm going off line for two minutes to say bye to my friend."

When dressed I said, "Bye Annie. Oops."

Annie said, "No sweat, it's off. I've made a lot of money so I'll give you two hundred quid."

"I pissed all over you carpet."

"I clean it often."

"Bye then. Your customers are waiting."

"Nice to see you naked at last, Allie. Pass me that bottle of water. I'll need it if I'm going to carry on doing the display."

Narrator: Linda *Intentions and Viewing* (Monday 13th January)

The reverberations continued. "Christine was too trusting of Elizabeth Huett," I suggested to Adam at lunch. Peter and Kathryn had come to eat at the same table.

"So were you," he replied. "Christine didn't care, so long as the event took place."

"You took the money."

Adam said back to me, "I knew the worm would turn. It gave the media something to report. Next time Christine has sole control, or with you, or it doesn't happen."

"It won't happen with me at all," I said. "I want to press the need on all our parish clergy to stay away. Yes, you Peter. You two should not have gone. Kathleen and Winnie should not have helped out. Christine is of a different diocese, as are all the other bishops. And if there is a next time, put it under your holding company, Adam, and not as part of the religious operation at all. Not at all, Adam."

Kathryn asked, "Adam, you don't suspect Christine is part of the Huett people?"

"No," he replied. "She's quite independently minded. She took the gathering away from Barman and was rewarded by the police raid."

I said, "I agree but she still connects this event to the religious operation. I don't want it."

I recalled Allie's idea of approaching the Free Liberal Church. I wondered if this was a possibility, and it might extract Christine and her high Catholicism from me and my high Protestantism!

Allie wasn't about, so next, with Adam gone, I wanted to follow up Rabbi Maurice Neptune's wish to have seen me Saturday night, even if Allie had said he would not want to see me outside that context.

I sent a text to him. It stated that I wanted to discuss everything: *Theology, being a rabbi, love.*

I received a reply within minutes. He could see me Wednesday. The thought crossed my mind that if I became a rabbi I would not necessarily escape the horrible orgy, because he had attended and might want me there.

Then I had a thought. He was fucking Allie on Saturday evening. Was Allie going to see him outside that context and this was why I could not? Was *that* it? Perhaps he suddenly preferred her! No, I was getting paranoid.

Then I received a message from Adam with a link to within the webcam prostitution service Goosechat owned by Christine. There was Allie as Annie's guest, 'Gayle' with 'Headgirl', and so I registered as Querceto. Among the tips it listed:

Level 3 - Tip (100-499 tokens) Heavy vibration 7 seconds

Level 4 - Tip (500-999 tokens) Very Heavy vibration 30 seconds

Level 5 - Tip (1000+ tokens) Strongest vibration 1 Minute

Tip affects all vibes at once.

Allie might get this effect too - she was there and that pink vibrator thing was

in her too. (I knew what it was.). Anyway, it was time to be generous, especially as Adam was being mean. I kicked off with 100.

I heard Allie say, "I hope I still have a close, naturist companion."

I was about to give a 1000 tip until I realised that was a hundred pounds! I gave another ten quid. I also added a message:

You go to the pub, Gayle, presumably with your clothes on.

Then came a revelation to me. Allie said she had taken part in pornography videos to pay her way through university as an undergraduate. I didn't want to give away my identity in a half-disguised message:

This is like news to me, you cam workers making videos.

Annie responded, after her latest orgasmic display, "That's an odd comment for a first time visitor, Querceto! You're very generous."

'Gael' spelt out her name and mentioned Beathag, as a sex tutor as well as for Gaelic. There was this stuff about her technique and "combat training" that gave an insight into Allie's sexual education. I then realised that HelenMc was Helen McPhail, who challenged Allie to ejaculate.

To back this up I went fully in with 1000 tokens. Others were adding in their amounts. There were buzzes, cascading cash noises and riotous sounds.

The effect of tips was to send them into a masturbatory frenzy. I could see the piss had its origin from Allie's urethra as the spray went right into the air and all over the place. Annie managed less.

After this nonsense, Allie seemed to have enough. She mentioned Jonnie and then "repairs" that she had to do with me, talking intimately. She wanted to have a baby.

She wanted a baby!

I was obviously moved by what she had said, but thought that we might forever go on fighting each other; and despite him going down in my estimation, I ought to at least investigate Maurice and the whole rabbi option too.

Then she decided to leave, there being a small break in transmission. I put it off.

I shivered when I realised how much I'd spent. I hoped much of it would go to Allie. She mustn't return to getting money through pornography: she needed protecting and mothering.

The Initial Reset Button (Tuesday 14th January)

In the morning Jagjit Kapoor sold me *The Daily Morse* and my article was in there. He'd seen it and said the event on Saturday evening was "disgusting" and he was very sorry for all my experiences over a long time.

"I try to move on. I needed to tell of my experiences, to clear the air at last. As for Saturday evening, I wanted nothing to do with it and am taking action so that in future it either does not happen or is completely unconnected with what we do."

The church received a payment of a four hundred pounds for the article, so presumably the same or more went into the investigations agency or the holding company. It was very much less than payments for the scandal revelations. Adam and Peter came in for lunch, and Kathryn joined them.

It was Kathryn who said, "Uncle George has been doing some ringing around, to the Midlands, doing some back-tracking. We know where she is."

I asked, "Who?"

Adam let out a long breath.

Kathryn said, "Huett is living with Barman. You know which married couple is there as well?"

Adam said, "I do and I don't care."

I said, "It doesn't take a detective to work that out."

She said, "Jim and Connie Wilson."

Adam said, "I let that woman, Huett, come here only because we could monitor what she was doing, and when she went to live at the Blue Diamond Club it was only a matter of time before she did what she did."

"So you wanted the controversy yourself, Adam?"

"Didn't raise much money, unfortunately."

On the same matter, a little bit later on and when I was alone in the vestry, I received a text from Geoff Virgo.

We have heard reports in the media that the so-called 'orgy town' has been at it again. There was a police raid. We read your own disturbing article. This brings the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Church into disrepute. Whatever our views on sex and the Divine, we must be seen to uphold the highest ethical standards. We already had great doubts about how things happen in Serninsea and this has proved them to be correct. As founding bishops of this Church, we must protect the reputation of our Church and will need some apologies and assurances that we can issue in terms of a press release and website page. These must come from Mar Werburga Bishop Christine (her ministry) and Mar Reticulum Bishop Linda (her diocese). Meanwhile, you might like to read our exciting new profiles on the Church website. The Holy Spirit descend upon you both. Every blessing. Mar Arcturus-Virginis

"It's like the Anglicans all over again," I said to myself. So in the vestry I read the website.

Geoffrey Peter Virgo was originally baptised and raised as a Methodist, and lapsed for some years; in early adulthood his faith found him again and he began to study the early methodical ordained ministry of Wesley the sacramentalist. Receiving faith led Geoffrey Virgo to uphold the traditionalist Anglo-Catholic witness. Nevertheless, he was unhappy with Anglican and Roman Catholic forms, and, seeking further apostolic origins, undertook study at the Norwegian Institute of Early Christian Development. He was awarded many citations for the depth of his study. Roman Catholicism was in no sense 'inevitable' and interest grew in esoteric alternatives that kept the essence of the original faith. A particular interest grew in the earlier and later formations of Old Catholicism and Liberal Catholicism, when he joined the Liberal Catholic Theosophical Church (where Theosophy had become optional), receiving minor ordinations. He met up with Luis Mariano Callas, who

shared an interest in expressions of Universal Christianity. This was when they decided to form their own Church, first called the Liberal Apostolic Universal Ecclesia, later shortened by removing the word Universal.

Luis Mariano Callas was by upbringing a Roman Catholic and became convinced that this Church had suppressed essential theological truths, and he joined, also through minor ordinations, the Liberal Apostolic Teleological Church for the possibilities it opened up for discovering lost connections in Christian development and contemporary impacts. He studied at the Continental Theological University in Antigua.

To lead their own Church together, both men were ordained ordained deacon, priest and bishop by Bishop Harold McFague, Bishop Blanco Black, Bishop Matthew Cohn-Sherbok, and Bishop Evan Pritchard. Geoffrey was elected as Mar Arcturus-Virginis. Luis was elected as Mar Flacillus.

For a time they developed the Ancient Religious Society of Saint Alfred, which pursued charitable and educational work. With its rapid development, the institution was passed to a larger Liberal Catholic communion where resources were more plentiful. As a result of this developmental and intellectual action, both men were awarded the Doctor of Divinity from the Continental Theological University in Antigua.

The Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia entered into some years of stability, with both men being conditionally consecrated by Archbishop Bertrand Peepel, Bishop John Lewes and Bishop Lee Merkel, and later additionally by Bishop William Masters, Bishop Pauline Junor and Bishop Arianwen Bron.

Both Bishops therefore enjoy these lines of successio apostolica: Anglican, Armenian-Uniate, Celtic, Chaldean-Uniate, Coptic-Orthodox, Greek-Melkite, Irvingite, Liberal Catholic, Mariavite, Nonjuring, Old Catholic (Junior Line), Old Catholic (Senior Line), Old Catholic, Order of Corporate Reunion, Russo-Syriac, Syrian-Antiochene, Syrian-Gallican, Syrian-Malabar, Syro-Chaldean and Druid-Archaic.

On the basis that the Irvingite succession (correctly the Reformed Apostolic) is documented as coming from the Holy Ghost, each bishop and their successors can be considered Angel and Bishop.

These two leaders themselves led the ordination of three more bishops and a number of deacons.

This year has seen Mar Flacillus inherit the title and elevation to Archbishop, with the merger into the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia of the Charismatic Orthodox Church, and after the sad death His Grace the Metropolitan Archbishop Nicholas Peterson. Thus the Church is renamed the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia. The renewed Society called the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Charismatic Liberali seeks to give educational guidance, monitor matters of Church order, and carry out charitable work.

Mar Arcturus-Virginis is also to be elected Prince Apostle Black IV, Archbishop of Great Britain in the Apostolic Corporate Church, probably requiring a further name change to Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Corporate Ecclesia.

Both continue to advise on the establishment and management of small, autocephalous, dispersed Churches, drawing on their own experience.

"Prince Apostle Black the Fourth?" I exclaimed aloud. "What shit is that? Is this an episode of *Blackadder*?"

I rang Peter so he would have a chance to look at this. He looked straight away and pointed out that I was also now an 'Angel and Bishop'.

I said, "I've had enough of this, Peter. Yet another name change is proposed. Luis gets ahead of Geoff, Geoff overtakes Luis: Luis is an Archbishop, Geoff is a Prince Apostle. This angel is supposed to issue an apology for Saturday evening. I will not."

Peter called the website, "Fantasy island."

"Shall we change denominational identity? What about that group at Durham - Margaret Lindbeck joined them?"

"I say yes to a more sensible bunch for a denominational identity."

As a direct result I wrote and sent an email to Bishop Margaret Lindbeck, now of the Free Liberal Church.

I hope you are well. I'd like to arrange to meet you at the earliest to discuss to a substantial depth the basis of your Church and its operation. This is with a mind to do what you have already done as a bishop, Margaret: to change allegiance of this place, should my colleagues agree. I'd bring my researcher. Please reply. God be with you. Bishop Linda.

A reply came within the hour.

Bishop Linda Jupitas. Greetings! We would be delighted to receive you, any delegation, and your researcher. I suggest you come to the village of Bishop Middleham as soon as this Friday 17th January. You can then meet Bishop Dominic Himalia and Bishop Alexander Styx and myself. To God be the glory. Bishop Margaret Lindbeck, the Free Liberal Church.

Friday was excellent and by various messages we arranged a time. I then sent a message to missing Allie.

I'm considering changing the allegiance of the Serninsea Liberal Bethel to the Free Liberal Church. If you are serious about completing the research, you need to know that I and hopefully some supporting clergy are going to Durham on Thursday and likely will stay overnight. After all, even if we conveniently forget, it was your idea to approach the Free Liberal Church. I doubt Christine will be interested. Do you want to come?

I wrote to Christine:

I'm considering changing the allegiance of the Serninsea Liberal Bethel to the Free Liberal Church. Hopefully a group of us will go to Durham on Thursday for Friday, meeting them this week. I don't suppose you'd be interested. You're welcome to come, but we'll drive up and so would you if your helicopter is out of action.

She replied:

I would like to come. The helicopter is indeed unavailable, and actually I've stayed in Serninsea throughout and managed my business from here. I was going to

travel south on Thursday, but now I'll go north. Send time and place details.

Allie thus drifted in during the afternoon. She said immediately, "Linda. I want to apologise profoundly to you for me blabbing to everyone. I should have taken your advice."

"Oh. The slut repenteth."

"Really, truly."

"Well, Allie, your apology is well received. As for finishing your research, this development means travelling with me and maybe staying with me again."

"Just as a researcher I take it."

"Yeah. Did Christine speak to you?"

"Yes. I will keep my mouth shut in future with other people."

"So what is your view of female ejaculation?"

"Can be excessive lubrication."

"Not over the top of a camera?"

"It's nonsense."

"I saw you online. And did you once make some DVDs?"

"Now you know, Querceto."

"Ah."

"By the way, I forgive you. We can all move on. And regarding moving on, I am going to see Rabbi Maurice Neptune on Wednesday. Perhaps I'd train to be a rabbi."

"Can I come to that?"

"It's potentially more personal. I need to investigate long term stability, both for my career and me personally. If I trained to be a rabbi, I'd make arrangements for here as suggested. Now, have you seen my article in *The Daily Morse*, Allie?"

"I can feel easier putting that background into my thesis."

"Now, assuming agreement among the clergy, even if Durham falls through, I really do want to leave the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia. Do you understand the strategy? I could be a rabbi and put this place into the Free Liberal Church, or we all go into the Free Liberal Church."

"So I can't come to see you discuss being a rabbi?"

"If you *must*. But anything personal this time and you must go outside our room."

Allie agreed to have her weekly pastoral massage from Kathryn and Kathleen, and I went into the wet room to view their work and her body, and she returned to 135 Toulouse Road in the early evening.

Her body was exciting, and it might get pregnant with a baby for us both. And Maurice was surely going against his disciplining. Yet I still had to examine these potential futures. Maurice and I were theological equals and I'd learnt a lot from him.

That evening Sea TV said that the police had decided not to pursue prosecution after the raid. There was no one living on immoral earnings. The police apparently had issued advice to Adam Magellan and Christine Vine (I was pleased to be excluded) but were sensitive to "aspects of the local culture."

Narrator: Allie *Connection* (Wednesday 15th January)

Christine sent me a text:

I've seen a video of you at Annie's webcam. You blabbed out about wanting Linda's baby before you got to apologise and tell everything. Adam had sent Linda a link, and she spent silly money making comments. Are you going Durham way?

I replied:

I didn't know Linda was going to connect. I realised she had because I recognised Querceto was her theological college. I've already apologised a lot and I'll tell all today. I'll follow Linda's travels.

"Good morning, Allie," Linda said, as I arrived for a trip to Wytham and the rabbi. "Are you ready to go now?"

"Yes. Watered and dewatered," I replied.

"As we go", she said, "I need a briefing on what happened with you and the rabbi. I need to be very well informed. Do you understand why?"

"Yes. You've cancelled seeing Diana?"

"Of course. Afterwards, If only others go to Durham, you'd need to be there with them. Let's get going."

We walked to her SUV around the back and she manouevred it to set off.

As we entered the road I said, "I will tell you all. Before I went to Maurice Neptune, I'd not taken part in any sex, and unlike everyone else I had not stripped off. When I approached him he was being masturbated by a prostitute. He called me beautiful and asked me to join him, and before I could say he was busy, to avoid such contact, he dismissed the prostitute. He said he would be interviewed on the end of his penis."

"Circumcised."

"What? I had flaps I could open. He described himself as friendly with Christine and Elizabeth. In fact he said he liked them all, including John Barman. He'd expected to see you there. He wanted to have you there, because he did not think he could see you privately any longer."

"So you told me," Linda said, as she headed for the Caffenmere road to get to Wytham.

I continued. "He had wondered about coming over himself to the bethel. He asked me to use my mobile phone to send for you. He called my vagina snug and wet."

"So why didn't you call me?"

"Because you were refusing to go above the casino."

"He wanted to come to the bethel to make love with me!"

"He wanted to *fuck* you."

"He has affection for me."

"It would only have been as it was with me."

"How do you know that?"

"Let me tell you it all and what I have learnt since."

"Go on, I'm *all ears*."

"I half joked if he would tell me about some Jewish theologian or philosopher,

but he said he told *you* those things because you could be a rabbi and could still be a rabbi, and you'd be a good one, and he would talk to you more about that."

"But not about the other."

"Instead of theology he could talk to me about algorithms he'd developed, and about making money when the markets fell. He compared the markets going up and down with me going up and down. I asked him about Bishop John Barman instead. He was friendly with him. He thinks Barman will be active again soon."

"That fits with what Keith said."

"He asked if I was on birth control, and I said yes in case of events like this, and so he ejaculated inside me. I moved on at that point."

"Dripping, no doubt."

"No. He thrust it in deep."

"I suppose his sperm was off to try and find an egg."

"So, to conclude, he will talk to you about being a rabbi, but he cannot see you personally. The rest I have heard since. I can tell you that he is engaged to be married."

"Engaged? You have heard this since, from third parties?"

"You can find out from him."

"I'm not going all that way to find *that* out. Right, on this road we stop at the first layby."

She pulled in and rang his number. "Hello Maurice. I messaged you about coming and talking to you about theology, being a rabbi, and love. You said you'd see me, but Allie has indicated that you might not want to see me personally."

"Of course I'll see you personally," I could overhear, and so she looked fiercely at me, "but not about love between us. I have become engaged. She is called Sallie, and she is local here, and it will be a good Jewish wedding, and you are of course invited."

"Oh," Linda said. She mouthed the word 'sorry' to me. "The other thing is I've rung because I've just arranged to check out the Free Liberal Church, a group based in Durham. They'll see me on Friday and perhaps I should check them out before I'd ask your advice about roads to being a Reformist Rabbi. I'm most grateful. So I'm suggesting I come over only if that Durham meeting doesn't go so well."

"I thought I would have to wait forever," I further overheard. "I can see that you'd want to check out a liberal Christian based group first. But Sallie will be giving me support as a rabbi's wife."

"She will be your rebbetzin. Er, thanks ever so much, Maurice. I'm sure we'll see you again." The call ended and Linda said, "Oh, *shit*." Then she said, "What are you staring at?"

"You."

"He's engaged to this Sallie but he's fucking you? I wonder what she thinks about *that*? That's like Keith all over again. Are they all like this?"

"It is relevant to my research that your half-wish to be a rabbi seems to be at an end."

"No 'seems to be' about it. We'll go into Ingle Park and then go back, after I have gathered my thoughts."

So she turned left off the main road.

At the park Linda said, "Let's get some fresh air for a few minutes." We walked towards a long copse. "Anything else happened of any interest? Spill all the

beans."

"Bishop Arianwen Bron was fucking Peter Brabazon and both wanted sex with me, but I declined."

"Don't know them; they are not of interest to me."

"Keith won the prize of the virgin sixth former when she was neither. I wanted to interview Keith, but when I found him he was no longer with Yojana but with Helen McPhail. I ended up having sex with both at the same time. It was impossible to do it any other way."

"Life can be so difficult sometimes. So you were on birth control?"

"Do you know when I started on birth control, taking the pill?"

"Enlighten me."

"I was eleven, nearly twelve, when my mother took me to the doctor's after my first period and I had my first contraception then."

"Struth."

"Aunt Sally, his mum... Why are you laughing?"

"Aunt Sally."

"She showed me how to use a condom. That's how it was. But mum told her I was on the pill and so long as he stayed true to me there was no need for condoms. The four of them wanted us to marry, and did everything to support our intimate attachment to each other. And so, as teenagers, he did penetrate me a lot and I did enjoy it. I wanked him off, sucked him, got fucked, the lot. I liked to play with him. But, the thing is, beyond him, I had no interest in boys and fancied some of the girls at school. But they saw me close to my cousin. Often children so close like this develop a private language, but we did the opposite. We tried to pick and use more universal words and accents. I think it is because all the kids were broad Norfolk."

"You got to university and did horrible porn."

"It was a short step on from Jonnie."

"Oh come on. He was your affectionate cousin. That with loads of masked men was totally different."

"You've had similar - the car showroom."

"Hmm. Let's move on. Do you really want to have a baby for us?"

"Yes."

"Did you say that deliberately?" Linda asked. "What a time and place to say it!"

"I was being different. I slept with Fatima the night before."

"Oh, did you now? There's no point me calling you a slut when that's what you are. Did you say about a baby deliberately?"

We arrived at the copse.

"I just came out with it. I'd forgotten Christine's advice."

"Which was?"

"To apologise first, to tell you all that had happened, and let you find out for yourself that Sallie Sarah was engaged to Maurice Neptune."

"More concealing."

"Well I didn't know until Fatima and Christine told me. Akemi is my sixth cousin. Distant, I know, but Philip Shrimpton is the father."

"So you saw your distant cousin and ended up in bed with her mother."

"She was pretty good too."

"So you would have let me drive all that way to be humiliated by Maurice. I

was a sort of Aunt Sally."

"Then I was to make my case, my offer."

"So these days you do what Christine tells you."

"Only because I'd lashed things up so far. Anyway, want hear more about my past?" I asked.

"Go on. Let's walk back to the SUV."

"How *exactly* did you end up with that SUV, Linda?"

"Get on with your past."

"Jonnie and I were intellectually different, when I went on to do A levels and he decided to work on the farm. As kids we were often covered in paint. School thought I was good at art, but I was as interested in art reflecting belief. That's Walsingham, after all. I got paintings into Walsingham shops. A nice little earner, they were. Jonnie isn't very good at painting.

"With my school coming to an end I looked at university places: he and they saw the Anglia prospectus and the Wytham prospectus but the one that mattered to me was Somerset - Folkways."

"And your tutor became your girlfriend."

"Abigail Randall seduced me in her home and I felt fantastic. She took me to Taunton Tantria - although she was also in a coven - and there I learnt an open sexuality and the so-called combat training. Abigail and I were often naked fighting. She encouraged me to try and attack her hard, but she got the better of me until near the end. We ended up sweating like hell and our wrestling and fighting often ended up in fierce orgasms."

"Stop it Allie, you're making me feel randy. Get in the car."

"She learnt that I orgasmed on and on and some nights I practically passed out. Then she left Somerset for Bristol, although she continued to live in Creech. She'd had a way with students, so Bristol was a reset. By the way, I'd drunk heavily at Somerset until Abigail stopped me, and Taunton Tantria made every effort to stop me resuming my drinking."

"She left Taunton Tantria as well?"

Linda drove off, back to Serninsea.

"As a Fighter of Concern she joined the Sneyd Steamers in Bristol, that changed their name to Bristol Milks."

"You are kidding."

"They did a lot of steam baths and massages. Taunton Tantria did a lot of self-defence and also Tantric practices. I used to like legs open, soles of feet touching soles of feet, staring at vulvas and making deep and loud noises. But they changed their name..."

"To a 1970s joke?"

"...because they use breast milk for communion."

"So does this lot here."

"I left by coming here - so didn't join 'this lot here'. There was also Andrea Lindsey at Taunton Tantria, my GP there."

"Oh really!" exclaimed Linda.

"I fancied her but being my GP stopped anything."

"Someone has to exercise restraint. Certainly not you."

"The School Secretary didn't. Beathag just wanted me as her possession. She did make me go teetotal. She frequently slapped and strapped my arse."

"Good idea. I was considering this myself."

"I tried to get away from her, but only really succeeded when I came here."

"Enough, Allie. I want to consider what I've had, what I've got, and what I've lost - but I want to do it silently, if you don't mind."

After some moments of silence I said, "I fancy your larger body parts and slim shape: your generous breasts, wonderful skin complexion, voluminous hair growing back, a big smile, that you're not delicate and petite."

"Allie, body shape is controlled by the oestrogen from my gonads while the 'Y' chromosome is mainly responsible for growth. That's not my effort: that's how it works."

"I am allowed to fancy your appearance. What big teeth you've got!"

"Pack it in, Allie. What about my personality?"

"You're intelligent. Similar interests and experiences to me, for sure."

"I'm damaged, I'll admit it. I want to mother you in the face of danger because my mother has mothered me."

"Apparently, I read: in the Wild West 'CAIS' women were self-selecting as prostitutes because they were tall, lean, attractive, and didn't get pregnant."

"Annie is a prostitute. She's not 'CAIS', is she?"

"Today, some supermodels are 'CAIS'."

"Are you leaving when the research is over?"

"I told Professor Mitton *not* that I am leaving and will return to Glastonbury but that I intend to stay here forever. He said this will have to go into my thesis, and would in fact be good material on the progress of an involved participant observer. He also wished us the very best, and insists on coming to our wedding."

"I don't like driving when I am shaking," Linda said to me. "But we're nearly back. So you listen to me rather than Christine, for a change. Like Christine says: Listen! Sometimes, just sometimes, things really *matter* to me, and you'd better know what they are. I can't help who I am. You just do not understand how deeply I want you inside me, and how frightened that makes me feel and that's why I then say such authoritative things."

"I might understand."

"God, I so want you. Let's go back inside. You can see me and handle me in detail - microscopic detail."

Narrator: Allie *The Fall of Rhiannon Fleetwood* (Wednesday 14th January)

Back in the bethel Linda's hand running through my hair as Rhiannon Fleetwood burst through the double doors.

"Fucking cunt Linda Jupitas you've cost me my job," she shouted for the handful around to hear.

She made a bee-line for Linda so I rose and kicked her in the crotch, which caused her to stagger. Then from behind her I put my arm around her neck and said, "If you're not careful I'll break your neck."

Linda was frozen and wide-eyed.

Rhiannon started shaking about and struggling. Obviously I couldn't carry out my threat, so I kneed her in the back, turned her and with measured impact knocked

both elbows into her upper back to see her fall to the floor.

"Sorry, everyone," I said, "but this woman is dangerous and she must not be allowed to touch Linda."

Fleetwood on the floor, after coughing, said loud enough, if in a croaky voice, "Your article, naming me going above the casino, has caused the PCC to tell the bishop to get rid of me."

Linda said, "See if I care."

I received applause when I picked Fleetwood up, but her arm up her back, gripped her around her neck and frogmarched her towards the double doors. Outside the building I released her, and told her, "I'm warning you. One touch on this property, the slightest touch on Linda, and I will see to it that the rest of your life is physically crippled. Get it? Now fuck off and do what your PCC wants - leave the area."

I shoved her away and she looked back at me, before setting off back to the vicarage she occupied for now.

When I came in, Linda smiled at me, and indicated that she had some business to do. She sent a text to Bristol, containing this:

I notice on the denominational website that you want another name change again. We negotiated the name change in Council, and this is the one we should keep. All the bishops are equal. I note you have separated out Christine and me to apologise, and you as founders and with extra titles suggest you have seniority. You do not. Mar Reticulum.

She received a reply an hour later.

Our seniority is not implied and not explicit. However, with Mar Triangulum Australe having left your locality in less than satisfactory circumstances, the opportunity does arise for a necessary change of identity and projection forward. We are the founding bishops and this Church is a treasure to us regarding its direction. The word 'Corporate' is hardly offensive. We await the apology and explanation from Mar Werburga and yourself Mar Reticulum regarding the police raid so that our Church can restore its good standing, and your good faith in the matter is that the Church name can then be changed. May the Holy Spirit guide you all. With every blessing. Mar Arcturus-Virginis and Mar Flacillus.

Linda said, "I'll try and gather everyone tomorrow, Allie, and we'll have a meeting. Meanwhile, tonight, it's me at your house."

"Yes of course," I said. "What about Diana? You could still visit her."

"Leave it cancelled."

In my house Linda said, "Keith bought one in this style on our honeymoon in Walsingham."

"That's because I sell these," I said, "to people back there. Good kewter."

"Keith sold it on to a priest who was sympathetic about his disappointment after his non-selection for ordination. Keith had enthused about your painting but we were on the bones of our arses then. Not that I'm not now."

"Which one was it?"

"Christ Resurrecting in the Dawn Sunlight."

"I've done very similar so many times since."

"Can you do a Saint Sernin, and versions of artwork already on the Toulouse Basilica and other associated images?"

"Sure."

"Good, so that when done we will get them hung at the bethel and we can represent Saint Sernin better than the parish church. But now, Allie, I think I want you in your bed, with me, here."

"It's not as big a bed as yours, but it is a double."

We had some veggie bake and indeed Linda stayed over. I now allowed myself to be in love with her and the sex we had was very erotically charged. I let her slap my arse a few times/

She said, at that moment, "You're a very bad bad girl and someone has to take you in hand. That someone will be me."

Narrator: Linda *Journey and Approach* (Thursday 16th January)

Early next morning we took some of Allie's existing canvases to the bethel, and Roger down at the other place said he'd come up and hang the pictures.

Morning calls indicated an ability and willingness for a number of us to go to near Durham, including Peter. I thought the sooner we left the better.

Christine was having breakfast and organising property buying from Ann and Labhaoise by phone. I asked, her "Look, are you going to do a grovelling apology like they want, to go on the main website and have it act as a press release?"

"I don't see that there is any alternative."

"And they are doing the name-change thing again - seconds after agreeing one already. What's a 'Prince Apostle' when it's at home? I am *not* doing an apology and explanation."

"I'll do it."

"No! Not in my name."

"An apology offers internal peace."

"No! The police raid was based on misinformation from Elizabeth getting her own back. Well, I'm investigating the Free Catholics and we're leaving after breakfast. You can choose for yourself - it wouldn't affect your right to come here."

"Margaret might be apostolically sound, but the Church isn't. I have some ideas on that."

"I might prefer it as it is: Free Catholicism or High Protestantism."

"Indeed! That group as presently constituted has no secure ecclesiastical order."

"Precisely," I said. "Suits me."

"That's a shame," said Christine.

Adam didn't need his trusty sidekick, although Peter had offered to work extra hours some time later.

Then Christine surprised me. "There are suggestions going about that Barman and Eyre are getting active, and, given what Elizabeth has done, they might actually join the LCAE.."

"I thought they wouldn't join our Church."

"Yes, but you've indicated to Rabbi Maurice Neptune and therefore others about moving to a different group. That makes a group they can join."

"There are no private conversations any more."

"And we are supposed to accept all bishops who want to join, based on the veto principle once they've joined."

"But we don't want *them!*"

"Catholic theory states that the validity of sacraments does not depend on the moral worth of the individual. Nevertheless, if Barman was going to join I might then seek another communion. I really want to keep a grip on the *Principatus Theocratici Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Charismatico Liberali* - or the equivalent."

"So you want to see if Durham can change?"

"Dominic Himalia is not a proper bishop. Even he says he only a Superintendent minister. He makes a point of not being episcopally ordained."

"We've got the deacons plus Kathryn going. Two bishops are better than one, Christine."

"I'm also a researcher," Allie added.

I had an idea: "These Free Catholics: could you accept their Presbyterian election principle if we can get them to accept all bishops being apostolic in ordination?"

"The change would be something like that."

"We have disagreements but we've walked our path together. And if you come we'll at least have two bishops up there, four deacons and one lay supporter. My SUV and Peter's van are sufficient for our numbers."

Christine said she did want more information on likely new clergy joining the LCAE, and asked Bill and Pauline by phone if they could get an answer from Bristol.

So we put together overnight bags - Christine had one anyway for staying in one of her Serninsea houses - and we set off in my SUV and Peter's van. I took Allie, Christine, Kathleen and Winnie. The question was who would be in the front seat. Allie gave way to Christine, the two bishops in the front seats. Allie was on the back row, alone.

Christine used her phone to secure initial accommodation in Sedgefield, to discover via Kathleen then on her phone that Kathryn had done the same. Kathleen agreed to include herself and Winnie in Kathryn's found accommodation. The upshot was two modern functional rooms located at the edge of Sedgefield and one room for Christine and one for Allie and me in a refurbished place in the centre of town (Tony Blair's old constituency and where the new Prime Minister stamped his feet to begin as a 'Tory Blair'). This place had a courtyard, with beams across bedroom ceilings, and had St. Edmund's church quite close.

I suggested that we ought to be better co-ordinated than this for our meeting. At least we found one restaurant for all of us in town, called Gogo and Anima, with a bias towards Basque food, where we would be able to discuss our approach.

We ordered Marmitako Tuna, Chuletas de Puerco Salsa, Lamb and Beef Piperade, Kokotxas Gelatinous Fish Heads (!), Pisto a la Bilbaína and Pastel Vasco cake. And why not?

At the restaurant Christine received a call from Bill. Bristol informed Pauline and him that the two South Wales bishops were about to join the LCAE, but there was nothing on the others. Bill and Pauline wished us the best for the meeting;

Christine knew their views and they would follow Christine's advice.

Meanwhile, there was an idea for a women's bath group. Kathleen suggested that the wet room in the bethel could be made very hot and moist, with use of the showers and plunge pool. The unitary WCs with showers nearby could also be made hot. On a Wednesday women only could pay a fee to undress, or wear sheets, to gather and relax in these hot spaces. We could add suitable sofas in the seating and dining area.

I said it just might not be a money spinner with the extra heating and water meter bills, but it could be a service to the community. "Good ideas."

The main conversation together in Gogo and Anima only confirmed what we had decided to do anyway: add our congregation to their denomination and ask for apostolic succession. After the meal, I drove two of our carload - Kathleen and Winnie - and Peter took Kathryn to the other accommodation, before returning into town where three of us were in the same place overnight.

I took out a tablet from my bag to remind me about the Free Liberal Church from the website: names, developments, news.

Allie asked, "Can I use that when you're finished?"

Annie had received one day's suspension for Wednesday for discussing Goosechat policy and payments. "Oh, she's dribbling ice cubes down her body; let me see what messages she's received."

BobbyBalls: I'm the prince with the found shoe.

ThicknReady: I wish I had a lady like you, I would be the luckiest man alive.

DectectoristSex: You're an Anglo-Saxon.

Digger: She's a Viking warrior.

Digger gave a tip of 10 tokens.

Porterhouse has joined.

ThicknReady: I have never wanted to Norman French kiss a woman like I do you.

ThicknReady gave a tip of 5 tokens.

Blowme: You're attracting immigrants.

Porterhouse: Oh I want Norman too kiss her... right down there.

Porterhouse gave a tip of 1 tokens.

Chopper: She's a French impressionist. She's giving an impression of having an orgasm.

Adam: You remind me of a lass during school days.

Dr. John gave a tip of 10 tokens.

SumoThat: Putting ice on your nipples will cool you.

Adam: I bet you were skinny as a kid.

Chopper: Has the cat got your tongue tonight?

Dolt: Cold water won't make you fat.

Dr. John gave a tip of 50 tokens.

Adam gave a tip of 10 tokens.

Porterhouse: Where's she gone?

Doit: Gone to get some more ice.

Porterhouse has left the room.

Digger: She's a Pagan warrior, like a Scandinavian.

Dr. John: have you thought about rape and pillage? I'll elucidate...

HelenMc: Where's the redhead?

SumoThat: Hopefully you've started to cool down, Headgirl.

Painter: Love those pink nipples.

Painter: The light is so good.

Blowme has been removed and offending messages have been deleted.

Dr. John has been removed and offending messages have been deleted.

Adam: Where do you get breasts like those from?

Chopper: Wonderful pubic mound. Subtle.

HelenMc: Headgirl is at the top.

Allie now said, "I think she's doing all right, but she is very quiet. By the way I got two hundred quid from Annie.

"You forget that each token is ten pence and that they add up."

As it happened, Allie and I did not have sex. Simply, we were too tired after travelling and eating.

Narrator: Linda *Meet the Free Liberal Church* (Friday 17th January)

I drove the three of us to collect the two elsewhere, for the seven of us in two vehicles to move north and slightly west to Bishop Middleham. So appropriate a name! (We might even have chosen pub accommodation with a clerical name.)

In an older house in the misnamed High Street, we met our hosts around a table. Our delegation consisted of two bishops, four deacons and our minutes taker (Kathryn), facing three bishops and three ministers. These were Bishop Dominic Himalia (resident here), Bishop Margaret Lindbeck, Bishop Alexander Styx, the Reverend Paul Kuiper, the Reverend Sally Charon and the Reverend Duncan Deimos. Duncan took their minutes and it turned out that he was the brother of Sarah and Louise. Ex-Anglican Louise was carrying out pastoral work in Peterlee.

After the usual bureaucratic meeting bits, introducing our team, I went first: "We are ordained members of the Serninsea Liberal Bethel, currently part of the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia. This bethel was built very recently from the gutted two houses, a double garage and an added back extension. The extension is also to the first floor accommodation and there is a top floor too. I have managerial rights over the bethel based on ownership by a secular friend. We are proposing to take this bethel out of the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia, and would like to consider joining the Free Liberal Church. We would bring this ready-made effectively parish church of ours into your group, and thus extend your group's reach into Foss."

Margaret said, "I was received here from the LAE, as it was then, and we are happy to receive your proposals. What is it that would be brought into our group?"

I said, "Just the local church or bethel, really."

Christine said, "We have two bishops in Bristol who, roughly speaking, want to do something else. We have two more nearer who will do more or less what I will do. I come into the area from outside. Linda, who is local, like these clergy except one, is driving this proposal."

Dominic stated, "Our team have elected me to speak, and we have agreed positions. However, anyone can speak and we may need to withdraw for

consultations. First of all, we would prefer it if you were proposing a merger: if you form your own denominational Church or persuade the Bristol Two, if we can call them that, to leave you with the LCAE. It's neater and more equal that way.

"These are doable technicalities," I suggested.

Dominic continued. "Then there are some issues. First, you do have creeds and articles, even if loose about them. We cannot accept that. Secondly, we maintain the Presbyterian principle; in short, we elect our bishops from the whole clergy equally. Bishops guide, but they do not lead. We are not anti-Catholic, definitely not anti-Universal, and our Christianity comes about through theological preferences not demands. However, we uphold the central Eucharistic rite with many interpretations as to its meaning."

I said, "So as a group we have red lines. We accept doctrinal flexibility. I am quite happy to drop creeds and articles, in fact I am happy to drop them from a great height and bin them. Nevertheless, we want to stay connected to the Apostolic heritage and the family of Catholic, Orthodox and Eastern Churches. Bishop Christine, please."

"You do define yourself as Christian, don't you?" she asked.

Dominic Himalia responded, "Many flavours to the ice cream. I don't mean *The Simpsons'* joke about Unitarians, either."

She stated, "I see on your website that you describe your ordinations, those with an apostolic background and those without."

"Only as a matter of description."

"Now I have this ecclesiastical name, Mar Werburga, and so we have what we call Werburgh Geese, locally, usually, and..."

Alexander Styx interrupted: "We don't do fancy names. I was offered one in a previous arrangement and said no."

Christine said, "I want to keep a Society guided system of education, social work, Church order, rooted in something like our *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Apostolica Charismatic Liberali*."

"English only," said Alexander Styx.

"I see," she said. "When you prepared for this meeting - I know you've only had a few days - were you prepared to bring the Apostolic principle into your Church? This is the elephant in the room, I think."

Dominic Himalia replied, "It is, and it has big tusks. Some of us are *proud* to be non-episcopal in ordination. But we are prepared to be flexible, so long as the principle of equality is not threatened. Nothing by the back door."

"Can we say we have," Christine was asking, "bishops and also superintendents, priests and also ministers, even though they all come with the same rights for voting?"

"Not like that," said Dominic Himalia. "I am not less than Bishop Alexander."

Christine said, "Bishop Linda, I think we need to withdraw for consultations."

Before you do, said Dominic, "Don't you have a principle of *sub-conditione*?"

Christine said, "Yes, but it applies when someone already has an episcopal-based ordination, when we just don't know how sound it is, or when we apply another one for the apostolic lines. What are you suggesting?"

Dominic said, "In a magnanimous gesture, for the sake of the prize before us, we would accept a case of uniform ordinations, but across the board. Your priests, deacons, yourselves as bishops, and then all of our priests, ministers, bishops - as

we call ourselves."

"Bishop Linda," said Christine, "we need to treat this seriously. I still need to tackle other issues of Church Order. We will withdraw to the next room, if we may, to consult."

The upshot was that, to do ourselves again, we would need additional ordainers, people with likely different lines of apostolic inheritance. However, Christine said she could see the rest of us were happy with flexible ministry definitions and if so she would have her own separate ecclesiastical arrangement with Bill and Pauline. But I said again that, whatever happened, she was not going to apologise to Bishops Geoff and Luis in any way that involved the Bethel. Christine decided she would have one more try at securing for herself satisfactory Church order, including for a guiding society. Back we went.

"We would do what you proposed," Christine told their team, "but we need to find other ordainers. However, I want the apostolic principle recognised. So I propose a name-change: suggest the Free Liberal Apostolic Church."

"No," said Bishop [Superintendent] Dominic. "We did discuss, in preparation, accepting a change of name based on absorbing a new ecclesial culture, so long as we don't lose or upset what we already have. If you put in the word 'Apostolic', then we need it balancing, by something like 'Equalitarian' or 'Democratic'."

"Don't want it sounding like a small political party," I said. "Actually, we are making a lot more progress and more quickly than I thought possible."

Dominic said, "The trouble is, 'Free Liberal Democratic Apostolic' does..."

"Sound political," said Margaret.

"All right," responded Dominic. "We could have 'Free Liberal Apostolic Democratic Church' - but it is quite a mouthful,"

Our Peter said, "Free means Liberal. Better to keep Liberal, of the two words. Free means like dissenting Prots."

Margaret said, "I agree, but others here might not. We'd be pleased to hear from your other clergy, as well."

I said, "Well, same way, we'd be pleased to hear from the Reverend Paul Kuiper, the Reverend Sally Charon and the Reverend Duncan Deimos too."

"Your memory for names is better than mine!" joked Margaret. "We need to consult, I think."

So, off they went, which meant that we could also talk among ourselves. After a rather unfocussed chat, I said, "Come on Christine, you can go along with this. After all it has been Liberal before, and the use of 'Ecclesia'. It's not second best to 'Church'."

She said, "I want us to be recognised. It needs to be *legitimate*."

Kathleen now said, "I read a website where the Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia was, among others, specifically not recognised, and not just over the rumours of Bill Masters' and Pauline Junor's orders. So the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia is equally illegitimate, on that basis."

Christine said, "Our orders are sound. This is circulated rubbish. Yes, autocephalous Churches, of which we are one, are notorious for recognising and not - oh, here they are."

Bishop Dominic Himalia said, "We will do it. Liberal Apostolic Democratic - and we make you an offer of generosity of spirit - Ecclesia. How about that?"

"Most generous," I said. "My clergy please respond."

"Agreed," said Peter Marshall.

"Agreed and most generous," said Kathleen Wickenby.

"Agreed and the same," said Winnie Lott.

"Oh, sorry, yes it is generous," said Allie.

"However, we have a price," he continued. "Your Latin use ends: only English, The Society to Guide the Liberal Apostolic Democratic Ecclesia. Also, drop the Werburgh Geese. If you've got members of something, then they are members of the Church."

Allie suddenly said, "I wondered about this, whether the Werburgh Geese were Church members or not Church members."

"But that was the point," said Christine. "They're not. We are clerical. And how is it democratic to have a laity that cannot vote? In my method, the Geese covered everyone - laity and clergy, associate and just clubbing together as in identity - but there is no pretence that the Geese as such are members."

"Actually," I first mumbled, and became louder, "Deacon Allie is right. There is some confusion. People come 'under the authority' of the Confraternity and yet these Werburgh Geese are not Church members."

Christine said, "Geese *act*: like responding to the Holy Spirit, they act. They are initiated to give a commitment to act."

"Goosechat," said Allie.

I said, "Allie, stop it. That's irrelevant."

"Oh no it's not," said Christine. "The Holy Spirit gets everywhere, even among online sex workers. I chose that name deliberately."

"But it is not relevant to this and has nothing to do with the bethel," I said.

"We are closer than you think," said Alexander Styx. "After all, we have a pastoral list of laity to whom we minister and we hope they act reciprocally in supporting us."

"Geese? Farmyard Geese," said Dominic, with a smile.

Christine said, "Then I want 'The Farmyard Society for the....'"

"It was a joke," Dominic said.

"Maybe not," I said. "Farmyard Geese instead of Werburgh Geese has a gentle humour to it. Geese is operative to our area, whereas Werburgh isn't. Toulouse, you see, via St. Sernin. Werburga relates to different areas - Chester and Bristol - if also about geese. Then go back to the sixteenth century and in Southwark... Oh dear, this is beginning to sound daft."

"It's not daft," said Christine. "These symbolic words matter: surely you of all people believe that, Linda - Bishop Linda."

"Er, yes, I do. So, therefore, what is the effect of the symbolism of initiating? A pastoral list might involve reciprocity, but they are not initiated."

Dominic said, "*Farmyard Geese* would need to be a much more separated group, and *Society to Guide the Liberal Apostolic Democratic Ecclesia* is just that. So we'd have for clergy one big ordination bash and a change of name. Clergy members elect bishops equally, bishops get consecrated along apostolic lines. No creeds, no articles, no doctrines: just a central ritual and an emergent Christianity with a good dose of humanism and the like."

I asked, "Are we happy? Yes? We *are*. Can I ask your other clergy?"

"Yes," said the Reverend Paul Kuiper.

"Yes," said the Reverend Sally Charon.

"Yes," said the Reverend Duncan Deimos.

"Except," said Dominic, "You go away and think about it. We will discuss it to find any issues and problems. We will send you a document for agreement. It will be based on this, and maybe something we've not thought about. If you don't like the document - but, really, try to like it - say so. All of your clergy will need to sign it and return it."

Allie suddenly asked, "You do do all marriages - not just male with female."

Sally Charon was first to say with direct eye contact, "Yes. It's on our website."

I said, "Good. In the meantime, the bethel comes out of the LCAE."

"No it doesn't," said Christine. "We stay in unless thrown out or do this as we move out."

I told my fellow bishop, "I'm finding your logic harder and harder to follow. Allie, stop scratching your head. It's unbecoming."

"It's about patience, deliberation, pacing, good order," Christine replied.

"Give us a few days to make the declarations," I said. "Happy, Bishop Christine? Yes you are."

"We've not discussed sex," said Winnie, "other than Goosechat."

"What about it Deacon Winnie?" I asked.

"Her sex work, Christine's ministry, above the casino that has the Body Eucharist."

Dominic said, "We do reject original sin but we see no place for a Body Eucharist or forms of initiation. We could draw on your experiences to learn positivity but some of what happened strikes me as mistaken even on a limited ritualistic basis. I thought you were writing against it."

I said, "You wouldn't want to repeat what has happened in Hartlepool and Serninsea, including recently."

"But I would," said Christine. "Properly regulated and organised. Anyway, it probably needs reviving again."

I said, "I won't be associated with any attempts to flog your dead horse. This is about the bethel as it stands and what it does getting a new denominational identity. Dominic is right - I'm against it."

He said, "I assumed you were, otherwise we wouldn't have entertained a merger."

"Good," I said.

My bishop colleague concluded, "Like Goosechat, like any future Geese, you want all that activity remote. I get it."

"This is music to my ears," I said to everyone. "Thank you Deacon Winnie for raising the matter and allowing clarification."

This happy meeting was followed by a social chat, where we also exchanged information on our areas. Their Church was based in the Durham area, but had been stretching out northwards.

Night Thoughts

We returned to Sedgefield for a pub grub meal of pies at the Black Labrador, where

everyone was happy but it was plain that Christine was harbouring doubts.

A message from Adam wished us well and stated that Jenny would leave hospital on Monday. I passed on the news.

We asked at our accommodation whether there was a room with a third bed in it, or a good sofa. Allie's plan regarding ongoing conversation was that Christine could get into bed with me at night, and she could be on a single bed or sofa. In fact a sofa in another room was brought into our room with an added pillow and duvet.

I said alongside Christine, in her nightie, with Allie beyond and me naked, "We're dealing with names again. Bloody names!"

She said, "Well, before you sleep and dream about lots of names for lots of Churches, I have some news for you. Adam sent me a message that he wants me to take over the lease for above the casino."

"Why does he never tell me anything?"

"Perhaps he feels no obligation, any more."

"Other than it may be a religious matter."

"You can't have it both ways."

"*Your* religious matter. Or it isn't at all. Now I do sound confused."

"Listen: if I don't get the lease, someone else will, and we could lose control. The authorities are sensitive about the Blue Diamond Club and whether it really does hold private parties."

"Who's 'we'?" I asked her. "I've just said it is your matter."

"Like it or not, it is associated with the Bethel."

"No! Not any longer. This is top of my agenda. Sorry, but it is."

"But it shouldn't get raided again; there'll be no more silly stunts."

"Not with Elizabeth Huett gone, but would you have the McPhails in again, and travelling Fatima Tamuuz? Moving to the Free Liberal Church under a new name has the opportunity to change all this."

"Not so much if they adopt the apostolic principle, as in the Liberal Apostolic Democratic Ecclesia, the Society to Guide the Liberal Apostolic Democratic Ecclesia and any Farmyard Geese or whatever..."

I said, "Your badges would have to be F and a goose!"

"I want to sleep on it. For me, the Latin added something."

"The common language of the Roman Empire was Greek," I said.

"You said it - 'common language' - whereas Latin has a sacred quality."

"You know, Christine, you're in my bed at last overnight, and yet I have a girl sat on a sofa under a duvet staring at me. So yes we'd better sleep on these things. Have you got everything so far, Allie?"

"Yep, wife to be."

"Oh, yes," I said turning to face Christine. "Would you perhaps marry us?"

"Of course," Christine said. "Light off now, please, Deacon Allie."

But then, with the early light of the morning coming in, I couldn't understand what John Barman was doing in our room. Christine was asleep alongside me. Barman pulled the duvet off, exposing two naked bodies.

Christine woke and said, "Oh, Terry!"

When I looked down at myself, I was pregnant.

Barman had a knife. "I'm going to cut this out."

Christine said to him, "You can put your hand in and pull it out but it won't be apostolic. But cut her open and make her suffer and it will be apostolic."

"This is my baby, not yours," I said at Christine.

Barman said, "Knife, cut, I'll destroy her skin."

"Allie! I cried out.

Christine started masturbating as Barman raised his knife high.

As the knife came down, he slumped to the side and his knife went into Christine. Apostolic purple blood spewed from her slashed stomach underneath him as he laid on the dead woman.

Stood above was Allie; she'd given him a hand chop to his head. "That's my baby to grow," she said, and instantly fisted me, removing my baby and placing it up her own vagina and through her cervix, her arm very contorted.

I said, shaking, "I'm your bishop but I am scared of you. What about dead Barman?"

"I will cut him into pieces and eat him, so that'll make me a bishop as well. Anyhow, Christine's dead. I'll dump her body in the local church."

My eyes opened. Christine was dozing alongside me, with her nightie-clad body facing me. Allie was lying on the sofa over the room, also asleep. I went back to sleep myself and if I dreamed again I did not remember it.

Decision (Saturday 18th January)

In the morning Christine had more to say. "I was thinking, while you were sleep-masturbating, that this isn't going to work."

"I was what? Wake up, Allie."

"What? Where am I? Oh. What?"

"You were dreaming, probably," I said.

"Altjiranga," she said quietly but clearly.

"What?"

"Dream time."

"Allie, Christine has accused me of sleep-masturbating, whatever that is. She has been thinking, hands-free."

"Listen. I have a different plan. Bill, Pauline and I could revive an older Church title from their past. Bishop Bill Masters was of the East Angles Liberal Catholic Church; Bishop Pauline Junor was of the Orthodox Catholic Ministries. They were both one person Churches. What I am saying is that the three of us join up under a scheme that suits us. I can then do above the casino to my aims and objectives, and it need not concern you. Linda, you don't care about Apostolic Church order."

"I've been loyal to its demands."

"But you don't believe in it in your blood and bones. I do. You and the rest can then join up with this Free Liberal Church as being, you know, High Protestantism - if that's what you prefer."

"Oh. That's a shame. I wanted to keep you, despite the above the casino matter."

"Give us visiting rights to your bethel. By the way, you can resume masturbating, if you want. Awake."

Allie gave a kind of choking laugh.

"I wish you'd take that nightie off, Christine," I said to her.

So she did! "If it helps."

Allie seemed to widen her eyes and smile. "Toileachas."

Christine said, "Come and join us, Allie. Sort of celebrate a new way forward. You know I suspended Annie for a day - but of her choosing. I received a report that she broke the rules, viewed it and saw that her talk when you were a guest was on the edge of what is allowed."

"Yeah."

"I suggest Allie that I give Linda the means to receive divine approval. You can join in."

Allie said, "For going into High creedless Protestantism?"

"No! For the peaceable way she, of impeccable apostolic inheritance, has facilitated the preservation of the apostolic remnant elsewhere."

I was brought to a pleasant orgasm by them, assisted by my apparent earlier self-pleasuring.

On my exhaling some gasps, Christine declared, "The Holy Spirit has indeed sent Bishop Linda a sign."

Okay, she was as bonkers as could be: but I rather enjoyed the result.

We requested a further meeting at Bishop Middleham. They'd regather Saturday afternoon. We thus had time later that morning for our group to walk along the river in Durham below the cathedral.

"Altjiranga Mitjina," said Allie.

"What?" I asked.

"Dream eternal.' The aboriginals refer to this when they do the walkabout."

"You *are* weird, aren't you, Allie."

"That makes at least three of us, this morning," she responded.

"What happened this morning?" asked a curious Kathryn.

"The conversation," I said, "had a very strange outcome."

We made our way to the Cathedral, as Christine was interested in Saint Cuthbert. Then we returned to Bishop Middleham, the place. We met the same people again, plus Louise Deimos, and the Reverend Judith Brown - a specialist on Hinduism, apparently, and not averse to carrying out rituals to Ganesha.

Around the table Louise asked, "Are you glad to be outside Anglicanism? I am."

"Yes, it's less duplicity."

"Better restart," said Superintendent Dominic Himalia. "You requested this."

I said, "You'll be aware that the main defender and proponent of the apostolic principle is Bishop Christine Vine here. Although I wanted to keep her with us, we have decided to part on friendly terms as she sets up an independent sacramental Church based on traditional and apostolic transmission principles, with a guiding society that she likes to see operate. She's still going to conduct services in the Bethel, but as a visitor of a different Church. Therefore, the rest of us - and we are all present - would like to join your group just as it is. I understand it to be either High Protestantism or Free Catholicism, with flexible ministries, doctrinally free, and operating on a Presbyterian principle in electing Bishops and indeed selecting clergy. I will be dropping the 'Mar' name. We will not require a guiding society."

"Quite a change," said Bishop Alexander. "How can we refuse you? But we would want to mark the change, I think, and for this I would like to consult our team."

Louise said, as they got up, "We should welcome them with open arms."

They were gone, and came back after five minutes.

Bishop Alexander said, "Obviously we are happy to receive you and welcome your Serninsea Liberal Bethel, an actual working parish. Please join us as a one-day denomination."

"*Serninsea Liberal Catholics*," I said, thinking on my feet. "But it could take time to make that a legal reality."

Bishop Alexander Styx asked if this was really necessary. Their discussion had recognised the need to act quickly and generously.

Dominic therefore said, "Then come over as your local bethel. We propose subsidiarity of organising and that we mark your entry by changing our denominational name to the *Free Liberal Ecclesia* and legally as soon as practically possible. That means decisions regarding your Serninsea Liberal Bethel remain for your people alone, but even with such subsidiarity we expect you to respect the Presbyterian principle locally. This means that the Bishop cannot overrule."

"Ah, a problem," I said. "I don't overrule and don't suppose I ever would, but I have like a reserve golden vote by which I can defend the place and overrule in emergency."

Bishop Dominic Himalia said, "I think we can fit this in as part of our agreement. This is an emergency power, for extreme purposes, such as an attempted takeover. Probably you will never need to use it. We also have defence rights in reserve on property and ownership matters. Make some sort of statement that these powers are intended as emergency only."

"This starts?" I asked.

"One minute past midnight tonight.," said Dominic. "Our name change starts then too, pending legal alteration. Also I'd like to visit your place, for a theological sermon, say 9th February? And perhaps we can see you or one of your folks up here some time?"

"I'll put 9th February in our calendar to hear you. Yes."

This was a straightforward meeting and soon over. We put some signatures on drawn up documents, including a statement that my powers are intended as emergency only but without limitation. Then we left their team with handshakes, whilst giving a lift to brother and sister Duncan and Louise to Hartlepool - a full car load. This time Allie sat in the front and Christine on the back row.

In Hartlepool we said the briefest of hellos to Sarah and Harriet. Duncan would take Louise to Horden near Peterlee tomorrow on his way to Seaham. We went south on the A179 for the A19, the A168 and on to the A1(M).

I asked in the SUV, "What will you do Christine?"

"Messages I've already exchanged suggest that Bishops Bill, Pauline and I are forming *The Albion Orthodox Catholic Ecclesia*. The guiding society for Church order, governance, missionary and social work will be the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Albionis Catholico Orthodoxa*. We chose 'Albion' instead of 'East Angles', because I do travel to Hammersmith and Ebbsfleet and I am from Rainham. We are three equal bishops and we will be looking for more. We will keep our bishop names - I continue as Mar Werburga. The Werburgh Geese are continuing. Ah, there is a message here from Adam, who has received this news. He insists that you keep the overrule on all Church matters. He *could* give it to me, if you insisted on dropping the overrule power. But I am telling him 'no', now, because this would make your Serninsea Liberal Bethel the visitors. And I can tell him that your

complete overrule has been accepted by them. You may need to reassure him too."

We were going down the A1(M) before facing the frustrating slow roads in Foss. And at a services halt north of Wetherby, in the open air, I put together a message with Christine and Allie either side of me.

For Bishops Mar Arcturus-Virginis and Mar Flacillus of the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia (LCAE). This comes with every blessing. Mar Werburga is leaving the Church, the LCAE, in order to form the Albion Orthodox Catholic Ecclesia (AOCE) with the guiding society for Church order, governance, missionary and social work, the Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Albionis Catholico Orthodoxa. This Church is being formed with Bishop William Masters and Bishop Pauline Junor. The entire remaining clergy team of the Serninsea Liberal Bethel, including Bishop Linda Jupitas, the former Mar Reticulum, is joining the Free Liberal Church being renamed the Free Liberal Ecclesia from just after midnight tonight. This leaves yourselves as remaining bishops in the LCAE, freed to make name changes and undergo elevations as you wish. We are not prepared to make any apology regarding recent events in Serninsea and you must not give the impression that we do. The police raid was the sole responsibility of the former Bishop of your Church Elizabeth Huett, Mar Triangulum Australe, by misinforming the police, and warning selected others but not us in advance. May the Holy Spirit descend upon your Church ministry. Bishop Linda Jupitas and Mar Werburga Bishop Christine Vine.

"A kiss of peace please," said Christine to me. "It is for all we have done together, and what we will do separately. A bit like this country and the European Union."

"You are Albion and we are very ecumenical..."

"Will you do God the service of the kiss of peace, Bishop Linda?"

"Is that all right, Allie?" I asked her, alongside.

"After this morning?"

"Oh aye," said Winnie, nearby.

Christine said, "Bishops do not need the consent of a deacon, unless this is reflective of your own new Church order."

"It's hardly masturbation," said Allie.

"Oh aye," said Kathleen.

So Christine and I kissed on the lips, which seemed more like a snog with plenty of her spittle.

"We should do more," she said, staring into my eyes.

I said, "We could use the mikveh tomorrow."

"Save it until after a meeting to release us," said Christine.

"Ah, yeah, good idea," I replied.

Friendly Division (Monday 20th January)

Sunday was a refreshing day with Christine doing her worship with her bishops and

afterwards me doing our service among our clergy and, more importantly, with a congregation of seven people.

That night in bed I indicated a wish, first to Allie, to soon priest all the existing deacons including herself.

Monday late morning I lay alongside her in bed. "Good morning, Allie. I see you are at last awake. Do you know it's eleven in the morning already? How's *cunt*? Describe, analyse, philosophise, and present your findings to me in the flesh!"

"So if the universe contains laws, it takes a rational thinking person to operate according to those laws."

"You know perfectly well that I did not ask, 'How's Kant?'"

She then said, "If you think Descartes said, 'I think, therefore I am,' then George Herbert Mead can be thought of saying, 'We interact, therefore we think,' don't you think?" She started giggling.

"You are going off-topic. 'Cunt,' I said, and it was quite clear."

"My professor told me about this 'Religion of the Natives' - a history conference - in Canterbury that he attended."

"Not 'Kent'. I'd asked, 'How's cunt?' and I want your findings."

"Sure. Why am I 'cunt' by the way?"

"Well... It is the centre of your universe. I will buy you an engagement ring."

"I wonder what Annie has been doing. She goes through the night."

"Are you going to look at that every time now?"

"No. Oh, she must have finished. As for a ring, save your money. My cunt doesn't need a ring. Leave that to Kathleen and Winnie."

"A wedding ring on the wedding finger of your left hand, surely."

"Beads. 'A'e you got beads?"

"I shall get some beads, dear Allie."

"My cunt is very receptive, Linda, of communicative subjective sense-experience, from objective touch, if you'd like to investigate."

After placing my hand on Allie's pubic mound and lowering a finger to push inwards, I said, "I want you to think about what men are going in there. It will need a single sperm of a single man to make a baby, but the more sperm in there the better our chances."

"Is it quality or quantity, Linda?" she asked. "It sounds like a choice between working with Annie or perhaps Roger's rich mix."

"Hmm. Interesting choices," I responded. "Meanwhile, Adam is due to receive Jenny this afternoon. We need to treat her with sensitivity if she comes here."

We had a late breakfast in the public area. "Hang on, I've got a long message here," I told her.

We regret but must accept your decisions to leave. We point out, as I am sure you are aware, Bishop Jupitas, that the Free Liberal Ecclesia is not apostolically sound and that you risk your orders as valid but irregular by placing them in such a gathering. On the matter of Mar Triangulum Australe, in fact she remains a Bishop in good standing in this Church. She states that her actions highlighted immoralities within the above the casino event, which she rightly ended through informing the police.

We have news assisted by your departures. After recent pastoral and therefore confidential approaches, we have now decided to receive the following

bishops for incardination: Bishop Niall Ifan, formerly Suffragan Bishop of Casnewydd in the Welsh Anglican Church, Bishop Afanwen Ffrwyth, formerly Bishop of Mynyw in the Welsh Anglican Church, Bishop Jonathan Eyre, formerly Bishop of Margate, in the (English) National Church, and Bishop John Terence Barman, former Bishop of Bolingbroke in the (English) National Church. We shall also receive the Reverend Fatima Tamuuz, formerly in the (English) National Church, and we shall ordain to deacon and priest Keith Richard Jupitas.

At the forthcoming Council in which we receive them, we shall first formally recognise your departure from our Church: Bishop Linda Jupitas, Mar Werburga Bishop Christine Vine, Mar Simili Anseres Bishop William Masters, and Mar Popolari Bishop Pauline Junor. We do not recognise your subsequent ministries - you are not in communion with us - and this extends to Mar Werburga Bishop Christine Vine, Mar Simili Anseres Bishop William Masters, and Mar Popolari Bishop Pauline Junor, although we understand that their new Church will be apostolically sound. All the deacons under your superintendance are released as well. Nevertheless we ask the Holy Spirit to guide and bless all of you. Mar Arcturus-Virginis, elected Prince Apostle Black IV, Archbishop of Great Britain in the Apostolic Corporate Church, and Mar Flacillus, Metropolitan Archbishop of the Liberal Charismatic Apostolic Ecclesia (L.C.A.E.), to be renamed.

Allie said, "They love being long-winded, I'd say. So it's four bishops out, and four in, and one priest in and one person to become a priest."

"Keith would not join my Church; well, technically he was correct."

"I'd say I obtained quality information," reckoned Allie, staring at me.

"Research methods have come on in recent years," I commented. "Meanwhile, I'll do the admin to get our Bethel all-marriage registered status under the new denomination rather than the old."

"Is that complicated?" she asked.

"No. Allie: look behind you. Jenny is back holding Adam's hand. Hello Jenny."

Allie said, "Hello."

"Hello," Jenny said back.

Her face looked a bit vacant and strained. Adam, squeezing her hand, said she would share his bedroom elsewhere and he would make sure she took her medication. Adam added, "She knows about Elizabeth Huett leaving, so no need to mention her any more."

"Other than she has the approval of the Bristol Two. Hey, they haven't mentioned the Wilsons."

Jenny said, "Fatima and Akemi visited me."

Adam said, "Fatima has gone with Akemi to Tamworth. Eyre and Barman are in Tamworth, joined by Elizabeth, but if the Wilsons are there then they must be doing something different."

Jenny now said, "Your hair is getting longer again."

"Yes it is," I said, unsure what to say. "Be a while before it is down my back again. But that's where it is going."

On the new democratic principle the message from Bristol was forwarded to all the clergy. We held a meeting later in the afternoon, of all the clergy, plus Kathryn, where Jenny and Adam observed what happened from their more distant seats. Bill, Pauline and Christine attended, as we all agreed their release to form

their own Church.

"So we resolve to give access rights: you can happily hold your services other than between eleven to one and four to five thirty. Note Kathryn please that Bishops Christine, Pauline and Bill of the forthcoming Albion Orthodox Catholic Ecclesia are always welcome to use the Bethel and its facilities."

Peter asked about potential of published apologies regarding above the casino.

I said, "Please keep a watch on misrepresenting us on the LCAE website: no apologies or bending the truth."

Adam from nearby said that if they published untruths then he might get a solicitor to go after them.

I asked Kathryn to change the minutes to include Adam and Jenny as guest attenders, also giving Adam's ownership details, and what he said.

Adam said, additionally, "There is a sadness here, that we have lost a friend in Geoff Virgo."

"Thanks to the politics of fringe Churches," I said.

"So-called fringe Churches is how we found him," stated Christine.

The main resolution was that we were now part of the Free Liberal Ecclesia and would organise ourselves clerically on the Presbyterian principle.

Meanwhile, Adam also told us that there was a new virus arising in China. It might affect us and it might not. Its origin was China and its 'wet markets' they thought but it was spreading through the world.

"And now," I said, "I invite us all, including our three leavers, to use the mikveh as we mark a new stage in our institutional journey. Adam? Jenny? Maybe not. And when we are done, we have another new marker for the future.

Warning the public, and closing the doors temporarily (Adam did this), all the clergy then undressed in the cloaks area, showered, checked each other's orifices, and Kathleen and Winnie removed their clitoral hanging discs. We processed to the mikveh, submerged ourselves in succession, and read words of blessing for the future. Kathryn facilitated our drying. We returned to the cloaks area to dress and Adam unlocked the public doors.

Then we had a new painting unveiled on the wall: *Christ Resurrected out of the Sea*, a mystical, dreamy piece, as painted by the Reverend Alfia Shrimpton.

After all this Peter showed me the website of our former Church. Our departure was noted but reasons were not given nor our destination denominationally. That Church would now become the Old Charismatic Apostolic Corporate Ecclesia (OCACE). It now had two Archbishops: one a Metropolitan and one a Prince Apostle.

He also showed me an email, for the retiring Reverend Georgie Smith wanted to lecture in our Bethel about Christian understanding with reference to Bernard Manning.

"Oh dear," I said to that.

Chapter 30 Potential Futures

Narrator: *Allie Archaeology and Sex Work* (Tuesday 28th January)

I went to the clinic on my initiative to have an intrauterine device fitted, so to cut out the chemicals.

"Hello Allie. Well, I am your GP again, but here. Knickers off and get on the bench, please."

"Hello Andrea. I thought a nurse would do it. I'm not wearing any knickers."

She said she would examine me before any nurses did and update the records. So in went a speculum, and a light went on, and she had a good look inside. "Everything seems to be all right, with a little redness. May I ask why you are having a device fitted?"

"To avoid getting pregnant until I want to get pregnant."

"I was under the impression that you had lesbian relationships, including now."

"I'm going to have a baby for Linda. How is Lynton? How is his behaviour towards you?"

"Stop! This is a professional consultation only. I ask the questions. How was your last period?"

"Heavy."

"I think I want to take your blood pressure and listen to your breathing. Take your top off, please. My stethoscope might be a bit cold."

"Breathe on it."

"We don't do that." My breasts visible to her, she lifted my left one to place the device below its drop.

I asked her, "What's this virus Adam Magellan mentions? He thinks it matters."

"Keeping a watch on that."

She took my blood pressure - slightly high.

"I heard you were a guest online. Stay out of the sex industry here. I hope I can make a difference, coming here."

She inserted the device.

"I want to stay protected, say from cousin Jonnie and any others, but remove it quickly to conceive."

"I'll say this. Everyone who gets to know you, loves you. Linda perhaps doesn't realise just how fortunate she is that you have chosen her."

She stared at me and instructed me to get dressed.

"Call in at the Bethel, Andrea."

"It's problematic. I'm likely to be doing more at the parish church. Oh well."

"You're a Pagan at heart, Andrea."

"I'm afraid I've my next patient to see."

I returned to the Bethel thinking that my researching phase must surely be nearing its end and new horizons were opening up.

Meanwhile, still under instruction to have a weekly massage, Adam added Jenny to the twins' roster.

I was undressed and lying on my front on the massage table in the wet room. In came Kathleen and Kathryn, and both undressed to nudity, to work me at both ends. Kathryn was now visibly pregnant, and of course I looked at that as my desired own future. So she told me about her morning sickness and sense of changes within. Then Kathleen said that she could not allow her sister to have a child on her own, so that she and Winnie were looking for a biological father.

Kathleen told me that Adam had said that it might now be unwise to get pregnant, because a third of China's patients from this new virus were requiring intensive care. On the other hand, being pregnant might occupy time lost to economic activity!

Jenny walked in, as if there was no privacy.

"Adam doesn't want me to get pregnant. I am forty, anyway. He likes your friend Annie, but only watching her on screen. So I wank him while she does her stuff. He changed his Internet package to unlimited data, before I came back, just so that she can be on screen all the time."

"Why is Adam so interested in this virus?" I asked Jenny.

"He had a virus as a child, before he knew Ann and Labhaoise and even Linda. He's always been on the look-out for viruses since."

"And looks out for most things," I said.

Kathryn said, "Uncle George told me that Adam became intense when recovering from illness alone in bed. He read intensely, he thought intensely, and he predicted future doom."

"It figures," I said. "I'll add it to my background information."

Jenny wandered out of the room.

Kathleen said, "You do know about the father of each of Ann and Laoghaire's children?"

"Oh yes, it's Adam," I responded.

"So we are asking Peter tonight. I mean, Peter and I will get it together with Winnie - all four of us - so that he comes into me in a loving setting."

"Aren't you going to use a turkey baster or something like that?"

"You're far too Norfolk with that idea," joked Kathleen. "Not with someone we know so well. He will be quick inside me. He can take his time with Kathryn, can't he!"

Kathryn said, "He'll be loving with me while Winnie will be getting Kathleen excited and receptive; he can then do his duty with my sister."

"This must be the model for us," I said.

"Oh!" reacted both twins together.

"Yes indeed! There are some options of available males."

"Your cousin Jonathan," said Kathleen. "I want Peter so that, genetically, my son or daughter will be brother or sister of Kathryn's child."

I said, "The problem there is Jonnie would want to be an active father."

Kathleen explained: "Adam can't father more than the two he has. Nor Peter. Everything in moderation."

"Roger donates," said Kathryn, "but anonymously, although the law allows someone over eighteen to find their donor. Adam gives him time off work, like he approves of wanking."

After a short while I transferred to an air bed. The two dribbled and poured gunge over all three bodies. Kathryn indicated that she might have to stop doing

nuru massages soon, because it was all based on the pressure of her weight.

I said to her, above my face, "You do know that your pubic lips are thickening. I've just realised."

Then the strangest conversation began, while they were using their bodies against mine.

"There's a new dig starting in the marches," said Kathryn.

"Well, you can't do it. Not after a few weeks more."

"I can sit and scrape," she said, with her larger breasts going across my face.

Kathleen said, rotating on my legs, "Winnie can join in, like I'll ask her for help with massages."

Kathryn said, "We were interviewed on Sea TV this morning. Look at their news cycle this evening."

We were soon done, as ever, and showered before we went into the plunge pool, all four of us, jumping in the water, and enjoying a bit more sisterly and friendly body-rubbing.

Kathryn said in there, "Answer me a question. How come Linda stopped Kathleen and me massaging our uncle and yet she has given a room to Roger and Marie, brother and sister?"

"I think she has moralistic moments and is then inconsistent. Other than that, I do not know. There must be another reason. Yeah."

After everything and we were in the seating and dining area, Kathryn said, "We want to make the wet room hot, and have women in there and around the place relaxing."

I said, "I'll make another entry into my research if it's agreed. It won't make money."

Kathleen said, "Not everything is about income: it could be a relaxing social space."

Kathryn added, "But it used to be a social service provided by local authorities when many people did not have baths in their houses. This was long before I was born. The Romans and others did collective bathing and collective shitting, but we're not advocating the latter service."

Linda approached us. "Wet hair."

"The plunge pool," I said.

The two Kathys saw their next client arrive, a man with a bulging stomach.

Linda asked me, "Did they do nuru on you? Do they always do nuru on you?"

"Yes. Very professional. Kathryn now has all the signs of pregnancy. Bigger breasts, thicker lips and the emergent bump. I'm quite jealous, Linda."

"You mean 'envious'. Is Kathleen envious as well?"

"Put Sea TV on at six pm," I said to Linda.

So at the appropriate time we put the screen on. Kathryn and Kathleen were talking (yesterday) to a male interviewer, a Media Studies student at the college, Karl Turner, on location in the Serninsea Marshes.

Kathryn said to him, "So it will be Roman dig for looking again at what made the economy work at that time. But a dig is a dig. The question is: 'What were the Romans doing in places like this, among the tribal Celts?' Or more to the point, 'What were the British Celts doing to take advantage of the Romans?'"

Kathleen added to him, "It's a question of the day, Karl."

So the interviewer asked, "Which day is that?"

Kathleen put it, "Both theirs and ours, since you ask."

So Kathryn said to him, "And the substantive answer has been different among archaeologists."

The interviewer put it that, "You were telling me before that the old view was Romans were living in cities and military camps; the new view is more flexible."

Kathryn answered, "Yes. The Roman finds of metal, and similar items in places like this, show settlements based around a recycling industry. So the Celts were working alongside each other in workshops and with kilns of various kinds. Today, right - talking about today - capital is cheap and manufacture is so efficient that machines build consumer goods and we throw them away. But in Roman times and coming on top of our iron age (and bronze was still important), labour was cheap and manufacture was expensive. So Roman items of value and direct practical use were repaired and recycled, and value was in the expense of the item and not in the labour cost. So in the area identified where the Serninsea Cross brooch was never *actually* found, indeed, among an absence of grave goods, there is likely evidence of many Romano-British finds."

"What has been the impact of the fake Serninsea Brooch or Cross?"

"This is the point," pronounced Kathryn. "The fake brooch had the potential to bring local archaeology into disrepute. Good job the bishop fled, I say. He is said to be living in Tamworth. The brooch using a cross was his idea, and carried out, as we all know now, by a very clever craftsperson Helen McPhail with her husband, a metalworker, Stephen McPhail - also a local plumber."

"It had to be declared a fake quickly," said Kathleen, "otherwise archaeology in this area would have been badly damaged. We'd plumbed the depths but this dig is a vote of confidence."

Kathryn nevertheless continued: "It is hard to believe, and long before industrialisation of course and any proper differentiated labour market, that this area was a manufacturing centre, a recycling centre of valuable and wanted items. Individuals had skill and made a living on toga pins and metal for jewels."

"May I ask you about your pregnancy, Kathryn? You can't dig when larger."

"I can sit with a knife and scrape. I can hold a metal detector, although detectorists have had their reputation knocked despite having had nothing to do with the fakery."

"Reputations have been knocked all round," said Karl Turner. "How are matters resumed now?"

"Well," said Kathleen, "we have a researcher at the bethel. We contacted her boss in secret. Professor Mitton of the Glastonbury School of Folk and Ethnic Studies and the University of Somerset used his good offices to contact archaeology colleagues. His intervention proved crucial to restoring local activity and now we have this dig."

"Thank you very much to my guests Kathryn and Kathleen Wickenby. Back to the studio."

I said to Linda, "Professor Mitton has an obvious interest in the organisation of past societies: doing their historical anthropology and sociology, bringing them to life."

"Very good," Linda said. "Barman was a disaster, including to archaeology in this area. I wonder what rubbish he is dreaming up in Tamworth?"

"More positively," I said, "you have impressed my professor. He's supported

this area. And now Kathleen is going to have a baby. I want a baby too. This must be our baby," I said, "and not just mine."

"Time to make love," said Linda, switching the large screen off. "Not that I'm expecting any miracles!"

Upstairs, Linda asked, "What's that?"

"An intrauterine device. I went this morning."

"Why?"

"So as not to get pregnant, but also to get pregnant on demand."

"I am not going to get you pregnant."

"No, I don't expect you will."

"So, first of all, you go to a clinic - I assume, unless our Bethel massage service now includes fitting these - and you don't tell me. So you've got protected in case, what, some male of the species pops in there with some semen? Is that the idea?"

"Well, it's about Jonnie, really, and letting the device settle *in*. Before we marry, I want to see my family, and explain everything to Jonnie. Obviously if we agreed he was to make me pregnant, we can pull it out first and I'm instantly available for fertilising."

"Allie Shrimpton, you are incorrigible in every sense of the word. This thing in there ought to have put me off, but the sight of you exposed makes me feel horny."

"Release your horniness then," I said, "with me."

Narrator: Linda *The Reverend Georgie Smith's Lecture* (Saturday 1st February)

We had a distinguished turnout come into our building. The Reverend Georgie Smith must have had good contacts.

The Methodists were in early. The Reverend Celia Coggan, Methodist minister in Wytham was present, as was the Reverend Denise Mullins, Methodist minister in Wytham, both seen at the Anglican retreat.

Alongside her was the Reverend Charley Darley of the Foss Group Unitarian Chapels, along with Meg Richards, the American at his Wytham chapel. I said a hello to them and hoped to chat later.

Allie and I of course recognised the Reverend Doctor Andrea Lindsey, GP, and husband, Bishop Lynton Plimpton, the new Diocesan Bishop for Wytham. The Reverend Alan Lindsey, Andrea's brother, was present too.

Other Anglicans were the Reverend Margaret McEnhill, with her partner Penny, and then locals Gertrude Carter, Mohammad McArden, Tom Bowler, Ralph Phil Thicket, Jim Bill Sayle, Beatrice Kerr, Eva Angela Kell, Tracey Graham and Flòraidh MacLean. My former colleague, the Reverend Christian Skidmore, an Anglican Evangelical from Breadwick in Wytham Diocese, sat on his own and stared around the building.

Surprisingly we had the Reverend Benajah Abernathy, Baptist minister and friend of the late Ken Osis. I sort of dodged around him. Presumably he related somehow to the UPCC minister, perhaps of the older 'three denominations' (Baptists, Independents and original Presbyterians) connection.

We had Nellie Richards, External Relations Monitor, and Hattie Schepsutte,

the Clerk of The Serninsea Vestal Virgins, attending. They used to use the UPCC chapel.

From the world of politics we had present Councillor Gethin Layne, Transport Councillor in Serninsea, and Stephen James Davison, MP for Serninsea and Eastern Foss.

Most important, perhaps, were Georgie Smith's remaining congregation, all elderly women: June Keble, Florence Newman and Ruth Doddridge.

I would now count Madge Jack and Catherine Mould as attenders of our bethel rather than Anglicans. Sally Torrance, naturist, came along (clothed). Our clergy were all present too, and Christine, but not Bill and Pauline, of the Albion Orthodox Catholic Ecclesia, arrived last minute.

And there were people I did not know.

I said, once the clock touched 7 pm, "We're very happy here to host the Reverend Georgie Smith, who is going to speak on *A Free and Full Faith: My Retirement Lecture*. She does retire from tomorrow."

There was a round of applause.

"Here we have a free faith, especially since we've joined the Free Liberal Ecclesia. Yes, we are no longer Liberal Catholics here but Free Catholics, that some see as High Protestants."

"Or High Unitarians," called out Charley Darley.

"Our speaker will explain her own definition. We have kitchen eats and drinks afterwards. Welcome to everyone. The Reverend Georgie Smith has been part of our towns' Christian ministry for as long as anyone can remember."

There was more applause.

Georgie took up a position behind a lectern just into the chapel. She had prompt cards only.

"I thank Bishop Linda and the owners and occupiers of this church - I understand you call it a 'bethel' - for letting me speak here rather than in my own building. I'm reliably informed by local Anglicans still that Linda is the source of much excitement in these parts but whether it's doctrinally sound is a matter for discussion. I'm the Reverend Georgie Smith, the UPCC Minister, indeed here since way back in 1982 when I was but twenty-six. The latest news in my building is not good, as my congregants will testify, and had the Vestal Virgins not moved to here I would have advised that they find new premises. My congregants are but three in number (and I hope they don't mind me saying) elderly female members of the United Presbyterian and Congregationalist Church locally. I introduce June, Florence and Ruth. No men, no one younger than seventy.

"Let me refer to the group who used to pray for the area and paid to use our building. Nellie and Hattie are here. I know that the Anglican vicar, Colin Cromer, would have nothing to do with them. We didn't either - they just hired the space, but we are all human beings, all trying our best.

"There were consecrated virgins in the Roman Empire, beyond the Vestal Virgins. They rose above gender laws, and, being free of men, became free to preach and minister, like Apostles. Coming away from their families, these virgins opened house churches and did not veil themselves and indeed adopted men's clothing and hairstyles or even shaved their heads. Theirs was a bracing and sharp presentation that could not survive the coming descent of tradition. By the late third century, the emperor Diocletian ordered violent attacks on chaste Christian women.

Soon, women were unable to minister, prophesy, or baptise. Well, I have ministered, prophesied and baptised and I look back to the first one in this country, Constance Todd, later Coltman. For in 1917 she became the first trinitarian ordained female minister and was a Congregationalist, if rather an odd one, believing in the Virgin Mary as an intercessor. The Congregationalist Kings Weigh House in Mayfair, London, was as high as a kite, and had the sacramentalist William Edwin Orchard as Minister, and he was associated with Joseph Morgan Lloyd-Thomas, the Unitarian. I'll say hello to the Foss Unitarian Minister Charley Darley, who is here. I'll refer to Unitarians later. Kings Weigh House is now a foreign community Cathedral.

"Seeing as I'm talking about others, what about here? Here is so very different from my inheritance. You are all clerical, and I can imagine one of my predecessors turning in his grave as he waits for resurrection. Well, he's spinning already with post-Buddhist Vestal Virgins and Unitarians present.

"Anyone heard of Bernard Manning? For those who have: you'll likely say that he was that revolting comic in the 1970s. But I mean Bernard Lord Manning, who was a Congregationalist that defended my corner of the Christian Church and would have attacked such theological diversity and priestcraft. He was born in 1892 and died in 1941, son of George - a Congregationalist minister. Our Manning was a university lecturer in Mediaeval History and an expert on hymnody. He argued for a free faith and also a full faith, and thus attacked the Anglicans, Methodists too and *especially* Unitarians. The Unitarians were free but not full - rather empty in fact, rather like *The Simpsons* joke about nothing contained in the Unitarian choice for ice cream. Manning made some key speeches in the 1920s and 1930s. These lectures of his formed something of a defence and advance for the future of Congregationalism. He saw the potential of close relations with Presbyterians and Baptists, whilst recognising their particularities. Given that so many English Presbyterians went Unitarian, it was the Scottish and related Presbyterians that merged with his old denomination, forming the United Presbyterian and Congregationalist Church, and the Baptists have carried on. So those that had presbyteries of ministers joined with those whose congregations called ministers. I was called to Serninsea back in 1982 and stayed here. Some have accused me of running down the church, losing the faith as decline set in.

"Unfortunately we are all, including these new and diverse types mentioned, dealing in tiny numbers. It doesn't really matter if you're liberal or of a supposed full faith - all who were once large are going the same way. Oh, yes, there are charismatics down the road. I can see them rising and then falling. There is no magic formula, and let's not bring magic into it. Bernard Manning wouldn't have.

"Please don't confuse my seeming negative comments with a long held desire for ecumenism, because we do the Table of the Lord and not the Table of the UPCC. But there are conditions, and these are the pursuit of a free and full faith.

"A free faith means freely arrived at, defended and promoted, and not governed by the State. Legal, yes, but not privileged.

"What is a full faith? It is by both Word and Sacrament. On the Sacrament, it is the food blessed by the prayer of his Word, by which our own flesh and blood is nourished, as Jesus was made flesh. But the fellowship of doing this comes after Pentecost, the completion of the act of God that brought about the Church. It is after Pentecost that the fellowship can form to do the transforming act. This is after Justin Martyr's insight, and it is a very strong doctrine. The Word is the proclaiming of all of

this, the telling of which comes through the formed fellowship. I was but difficult sixteen when the UPCC formed.

"Something else. It happens that this place has adopted the most used name in the New Testament: *Ecclesia*. Hebrew based, *Ecclesia* always asserts an ongoing dynamic coming together or response as well as a being together.

"Some think the Church was how the proclamation and good order was made, but Bernard Manning called this an inversion, the cart before the horse, and it's by putting the Church first that mechanical and legalistic conceptions arose. Thus come notions of valid but irregular, and regular but invalid, something of issue to many Catholics. So in our witness, apostolic succession is guaranteed by Word and Sacrament - the Good News creates the fellowship, or *ecclesia*, whereas in Linda's previous grouping the claim is that apostolic succession guarantees Word and Sacrament."

"Bishop Christine remains as a Liberal Catholic," I said.

Christine added, "More now an Old Catholic. Church order matters."

"I'm more religion as art, symbolism open to interpretations. Sorry, Georgie."

"So the *ecclesia* fellowship is vital, and Manning admits it's all pretty instantaneous, but the fellowship necessarily *completes*. We insist on the historic background for the Gospel Word we proclaim and its unification in the Sacrament, whereas you here seem to think you can have a spiritual exercise when the history is in doubt. This is also in reverse: it puts the rite and its effect before the basis of the rite."

Allie then said, "The social anthropology of rituals does put the rite first, because the rite binds people in a material and spiritual gift-exchange. It works across religions."

Georgie continued. "You've got the particularity and generality the wrong way around. We insist on a particular divine order, not a general human order, and this is what is meant by a full faith freely maintained. Members should not be members who are unwilling to take the Sacrament. You talk about Church and denomination, and that's the common expression, but by it we mean the fellowship.

"Bernard Manning was right to say we proclaim the mystery and do not diagnose it.

"In these parts, to make our witness, we UPCC have two churches in Wytham and one in Spaldswick. We contribute to one more. That's it for the whole of Foss. For such a vital insight, that's not a lot is it? I received recently an instruction to move, but I am not: instead at sixty-four years old I take my retirement, and I'm afraid the Serninsea church will close for good.

"Bernard Manning defended the Reformation as forged in Geneva. Luther was a transition, basically. Hus as a radical background doesn't get a mention. The Reformation was indeed a re-formation, and radical in a narrower meaning of return to roots. Myself, I think Calvin in Geneva was a most distasteful character, but from him and that version we get the 'full faith' that we freely proclaim.

"Bernard Manning meant the delivery through our Church of a straight-talking and plain administration of the Word and Sacraments. I notice the art in here: he had no time for it as such. Everything was biblically based, of course, New Testament after the Old. He disliked the Anglican tendency towards natural religion, the supposed equivalent of a picnic or a game of golf on a Sunday. He was unsurprised that a Unitarian minister could move to Anglicanism and find it 'full' in the sense of

natural religion and ordered legalism. Oh, he was critical of Methodism too, as in the Anglican shadow, as it never found the roots of the original Reformer denomination fellowships. Ecumenism is based on fellowships giving their witness, not on denominations, despite the need for legal identities that do function in human society, that saw our merger in 1972.

"Linda here tells me she co-operates well with the Unitarian minister for his Foss churches, so Bernard Manning would double his dislike of you for both ritualism and vacuity and I know that Charley and Denise are friends despite no institutional sharing relationship with their churches. Same with me: I meet Charley quite often and have private confidential talks, but actually we don't agree on belief."

Denise spoke up: "I think, whether as a Methodist or not, I reach over to encourage and be encouraged by Charley on some belief matters."

Georgie stated, "Forced comprehension or unification was replaced by toleration, but toleration does not mean agreement."

She continued. "See, some say the age of the Father was until the appearance of the Son, and the age of the Spirit followed the ascension of the Son. But this is to divide the Trinity, and that we do not do. Nothing is superseded."

"Unorthodoxy is found throughout, and in latitudinarian Anglicans, but it isn't liturgy that preserves orthodoxy but divine grace as a passion preached."

"Congratulations to the new diocesan bishop taking his role, and his wife Andrea, coming here. I love you, really. Regarding Anglicans, you may say that the new occupant of the vicarage in Serninsea is not like this at all, being of full faith, but she operates in the context of Anglicanism in its broader setting."

"She's leaving," said Mo McArden. "And she won't come in here."

"So I gather - both of those. Rhiannon Fleetwood has certainly ruffled some feathers, but not one of her fallout came the UGCC way. I understand one or two have come this way, assisted by Linda being the former curate. One person has been to see David Scott the Methodist minister of this circuit (but he's not present). Let me try another colleague. The Reverend Christian Skidmore - and hello to him - to the south of Wytham diocese seems to have a more stable Anglican charismatic evangelical foundation. It suits well-off, ambitious, London commuters. Bernard Manning could not see Episcopalianism in all its varieties - despite the fact they are outside England - trying to avoid its Christianity resting on the lines of the Mosaic dispensation. The Church of Scotland fared better, more distant from the State's control, but still has tinges of Erastianism."

"I knew the Anglican vicar Colin Cromer as long as he was here in Serninsea but I'm *still* not sure about his stances. I got on with him well enough, but he seemed to represent a highly institutional middle Anglican way. You surely knew him closer than me, Linda, but in terms of golf he was straight down the middle of the Anglican club."

"By the way, from your online record of your sermons, I don't agree with you, Linda, either. I just don't get it as offering anything to grasp. Same as Charley."

I said, "People who come here observe basic rituals but think for themselves, and that's what I encourage."

"That won't do it for me. I have to pronounce when I preach. However, unlike fierce Bernard Manning, and his unwelcome references to the 'Judaic' in his stereotype of Judaism, I'm going to admit to being tired in what I do offer. I may as well be honest. You see, this has become for me a too long and too hard a witness."

I'm indeed accused of serving out my time, and letting a church run itself down.

"Its more serious than this because the tradition is basically done. It's very depressing. For a long time, up to 2002, say, I talked growth and recovery. Then I realised it was fantasy. But there was even then still an offer to make. It's not just that their one-time young minister isn't any longer, but there is no demand for what is supplied. No one understands what Bernard Manning and others readily understood. Of course I continued to minister pastorally, but we are not social workers. So we must stop the huge effort of running a place that cannot be run by three people and one more, even one more paid a wage thanks to historic trusts and a denomination scared of its future prospects.

"You see, I am orthodox - I really am - but I am going to admit that I don't think like my forebears did in any ordinary sense. I think for everything else in a naturalistic fashion, and so I combine both Christianity and quantum weirdness. Apparently quantum weirdness explains things. So I do understand Linda's quest to have a religion that relates more directly to ordinary methods of thinking and add in quantum weirdness. But what of our stuff? Is it stuff and nonsense? Given her views, I don't understand her clericalism at all, although she seems less wedded to it than her recent co-religionists. I just wear a skirt, you know, to present the Gospel.

"So let me be positive. I believe in our orderly religion, plain and simple. Surely the founders of the faith and the Reformers had profound receptive insights. I don't like all these poststructural theological devices, literary biblical methods, ecclesiastical Platonisms, and all the rest. It has to be historical, even if it is hard to do. The supernatural intervention may be fantastical, but it does have to relate to that man Jesus in his actions and outlook and that direction set by Saint Paul. The early churches matter; what happened as insights into gathering doctrine also matter. I can't admit that the trinitarian direction was mistaken. Running through all this something called the Holy Spirit. The Bible isn't all history, but there is enough in it and the Church Fathers matter.

"Some will say I am hesitant, and thus no wonder the small church in my charge has failed. But I have, in freedom, maintained the full faith. I'm just admitting to the difficulty and one wonders then about the Holy Spirit here and now.

"What should happen here is that someone new comes along and ministers to the UPCC witness here. But no one is coming. We won't even have the visiting minister, like the Methodists can. Methodist numbers are also pathetic and, again, it lacks any modern day unique selling point. No one understands these divisions any more. I'm told there were once Methodist Unitarians in Lancashire, and for a time their church polity was different from the English Presbyterians as Unitarians. They knew about these things then.

"Apparently the Methodists today have an active closing and merging strategy, but the UPCC just lets its churches fall off the crumbling cliff. No one wants to come over from Wytham or Spaldswick to some isolated spot on the coast. They didn't and they won't. I might draw their suspicions, somehow.

"So it will be interesting to see what happens right here - I mean in this building. You've got naturalistic religion, even naturism I understand (you can't get more naturalistic than that), lots of bishops and priests as a craft, and some sort of pastoral service and rituals based around food and ceremonies for moving through life. It wouldn't get me out of bed, as I say.

"I will go silently into the night knowing that ministry is often an experience of

weakness and failure. I *would* join the list of ministers on the chapel wall, one of whom was UPCC, but that wall will crumble or be brought down and so this addition will not happen. Thank you for listening."

A muted applause followed.

Lecture Questions and Chat

There were some questions.

"I am the Reverend Benajah Abernathy, Baptist minister, and I admit I've had conflicting feelings about coming here - with what happened with Ken. Perhaps the sin of curiosity has got the better of me. Congregationalists often regarded baptism as relatively insignificant in order to ease their ecumenical union with Baptists. It never happened. Why not be a Baptist for your remaining years?"

"Because I regard the 'full faith' as including full baptism. From the earliest days baptism was of families including children. It's part of grace, part of the full faith. It is an act of the Ecclesia not just a response of individual adult belief. Baptists ought to centralise more, as the UPCC has done. I'm sorry that your friend committed suicide but we can't go on blaming others for an act of destructive self harm."

I said, "And I do not accept the blame, if this is what is implied."

The Baptist minister shuffled in his seat but said no more.

The Reverend Celia Coggan, Methodist minister in Wytham, asked, "So what's wrong with Methodism?"

"It's the junior partner to the Anglicans, from where they came and where they could return. They arguably have 'missing bishops'. Congregationalists and Presbyterians go back to primitive origins. Both Episcopalians and Methodists have only the ghosts of Presbyterianism in them. Presbyterians were the centralised and organised result of Congregationalism and Congregationalists the result of decentralised Presbyterianism. It made sense to come together. And the Baptists didn't."

Celia commented, "He rather liked Methodist hymns, the earlier ones."

The Reverend Alan Lindsey commented: "You have given a very sad and defensive approach. My sister here, the Reverend Andrea Lindsey, the new GP here, will have her own view, as will the bishop, but if we accept the notion of a 'full faith' then it is best established in argument, via a dialectic against naturalistic or any other kind of faith. This notion that a free faith is free from the State is but an institutional freedom and has rarely been so historically; rather, I see freedom as in the theological cut and thrust, tackling tradition, throwing at it theological enquiry, and then discovering the strength of the full faith. You have suggested the beginnings of this approach: the inadequacy of naturalistic faith point by point against sacrificial Christianity, but I'd just put up one against the other, and also bring in the working of the Spirit."

Georgie said, "Welcome Andrea and Lynton Plimpton to where we live."

Andrea informed us, "I'll move into the vicarage once Rhiannon has gone; Lynton will also have his large property in Wytham."

Her husband Bishop Lynton said, "I'm a focus for unity, not disputation. I'm

going to maintain my silence."

Andrea said, "I will say that naturalistic religion has a sacrificial nature, and the understanding of Christian myth comes from naturalistic death to life."

I said, "You're doing what Allie does."

Andrea continued: "Son of Man had various strains but people were well versed to take up a sacrificial interpretation of Jesus killed on the cross - the good death. So, yes, general concepts guide specifics. Being dialectic, though, is like operating a yo-yo, and in the end can make one giddy. Sorry, bro. Better to build slowly with what works, using plenty of analogies, and understanding myth. Allie of this bethel is pretty hot on that."

And do you preach that?" asked Georgie.

"Oh I rarely preach anything. I heal people using science and also the full range of their minds. I'm a stop-gap in local Anglicanism. Rhiannon Fleetwood and I have got on in the past, but I will be quite passive in the local church once she's gone."

Sally Torrance spoke up. "I do worship nature, and so what if I can do it here? I don't mind people knowing that I am a naturist, and this place accepts us."

"I said of a certain excitement coming from here."

Charley now said, "I'd like to comment. Every Unitarian keen to learn their own institutional memory should read Bernard Lord Manning. He attacked us and modernism in general, and saw modernism as drawing in the fundamentalist who promotes another kind of legalism. Freedom carries risk, and for many liberty leads to liberal interpretations. You're a moderate caught in a trap, by separating this from that, and so you are as institutionally unfree as all of those you accuse. Congregationalists kept their orthodoxy through confessional statements and membership, whereas Presbyterians rented pews and let their ministers get on with it, ministers who'd attended the academy and wondered why they should preach differently from what they had learnt. So Congregationalist ministers have always been in that confessional trap, though some churches did become very liberal in turn and on their own."

"I'm not trapped; I'm taking about consequences," responded Georgie. "I'm not for a Cheshire Cat approach to religion."

Charley went: "Miaow!"

Allie then said, "We also have the phenomenon of secular clergy, who preach what the Church teaches but in fact do not believe it and wait for the moment to get out."

Georgie replied, "But I at least *wanted* to believe it, and recognised this duty of proclamation. I've admitted to the difficulty of the free and full faith and my tiredness given the contexts of today - the ideological challenge, its lack of social purchase. At least I have avoided in my working life what I see as a descent into naturalistic religion which, frankly, anyone can make or follow."

Charley added, "Talking of hymns, I think Manning liked the hymn *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* by Edmund Sears, a Unitarian minister, because Sears believed in the divinity of Christ. But Sears took his viewpoint from John's Gospel, which some see as distinctly Arian, especially John 17:3."

"It's why Protestants do believe in the Church Fathers. I preach the faith of the Church, because the Church gathers to preach the faith."

Christine commented. "But they were formed, in the Church, advancing to a

settled doctrine! Listen. The New Testament wasn't written beyond a setting and then sought people to gather. Its oral traditions, and scraps of writing, for the Gospel writers, were the Church. Before anything was written, the resurrected Christ gave the gathered Apostles their Great Commission. From the beginning, bishops with groups of churches organised the sacramental practices. The Church is continuous and the point of tradition is to maintain consistency."

"But if the revelation is of God, then the Church gathers to *receive* it. The Muslims have it that the angel says 'recite' and, in a sense, that is what happened here, although we admit to human vagaries and linguistic imprecision in the act of reciting. You turn the Church into a form of Qu'ranic perfection."

"I do not," responded Christine. "But the Church is the Body of Christ and carries his authority through its apostolic representatives. Jesus didn't say, 'I have these ideas and you might like to come along.' He said, 'Follow me!' and so they were there. Those of authority lay on hands and bless ministry like a chain."

"But Christ, the revelation, sought them out, and they *followed!* And we say the apostolic representation is in the free and full faith expressed. You can appoint all the people as properly as you like, but if they spout heresies then they are not transmitting the apostolic faith."

I said, "We've reached an impasse there."

"But I am gathering no more, and I won't be having a retirement ministry. Some retired ministers go on and on. At my age of sixty-four I stop. I have already served my notice. My three congregants know that there is no service tomorrow, and no more from me ever. They too will soon retire their duties: chair, treasurer, secretary. I'm not winding the place up: they are. I won't be involved."

Charley offered the thought: "Who could ask for more, when you're sixty-four?"

Denise Mullins then noted, "Not one of your colleagues is here. Why is that? Is it your straight talking or because you have refused to relocate for your final years or for a retirement ministry?"

"Ah," Georgie said. "A request did come to relocate, but was it insincere knowing I'll say 'no'? I bought my house here and exchanged it for another via women known to this place. It wasn't a manse, as such. If you are suggesting there is gossip, well I have always found gossip destructive but all ministers have it to bear. Linda here tells of those who knew her as a teenager here and some keep what they know to themselves - protecting their own. I was born and raised in Derby, and came here aged twenty-six to minister after theological college and university at Manchester. Yes there was new gossip here but based on my role."

I had my own comment. "Manning's view of Judaism is surely a caricature, and Jesus himself was part of messianic Judaism. Jesus did not free us from it, suggestable only via an incorrect reinterpretation of Paul. Manning can say what he likes about legalistic episcopalianism but he cannot equate it to apparent Jewish legalism."

Georgie said, "Yes, it's all wrong, that, but it doesn't take away from the wider argument, the return to roots via the Reformation in Geneva, the free and full faith, and the fellowship that gives it expression and completion. But this is an argument for others, from tomorrow onwards. The records of the UPCC church, here, and a detailed history, will be deposited in the Foss County Record Office at Wytham."

I called the questioning to a halt, and invited people to use the kitchen, and

conversations could commence.

I gravitated towards Charley. I asked him why he would be friendly with straight-talking Georgie.

"There is a pastoral coming together, but Georgie will talk to you. First let her retire and get used to a new life. There were other places to meet, such as the Church Hall, but, partly with my influence, and from the odd Anglican, she chose to speak here."

"I'm intrigued."

"She meets Denny and me, partly because I meet Denny. There are these unofficial friendships - almost networks - in Wytham. She's kept to a stricter and more isolated existence in Serninsea, and has done so for forty years. Let her come to you. Anyway, I might be around a week tomorrow and, also, let me know when you have a naturist get together."

"Really? Our Gymnology class resumes on Wednesday for 7:30. I'd be delighted if you came. Is this about your breasts removal?"

"Partly. You've heard that Alan and I have separated; removing my breasts was the final straw, but Alan was distant even when Christine and you first met me."

"It's been a lot to ask of him?"

"He married Charlene. Charley meant Charlene, then. Wednesday might be difficult. We'll see."

So I would wait for Georgie to reveal more of herself, literally.

I noticed Allie talking with Andrea, and of course we'd met so recently in Glastonbury.

Georgie asked me, as people left, "I wasn't too antagonistic, was I?"

"It was all in the best possible taste," I said.

"Oh no," she said. We don't want to move from Bernard Manning to Kenny Everett."

Narrator: Linda *East Wemyss Prize for Diana* (Monday 3rd February)

Christine walked in with a clergy friend visiting. He was the Reverend Jógvan Dahl, an independent Catholic priest, with his wife Oddvør, she a member of the Fólkakirkjanboth in the Faroe Islands. Christine and Jógvan held open bags with robes visible inside. Introduced to Allie and me, the couple were living in the Shetland Islands and he was becoming part of The Albion Orthodox Catholic Ecclesia. This meant Christine's Church would have a very large geographical spread, but very thin in between!

I asked Jógvan and Oddvør if Allie and I could talk alone to Christine. Oddvør took Christine's bag.

I said, "After Georgie lecturing here, very different from us, I'd at least like to talk to these charismatics in town. You are related to this movement."

"Yes. My family connections. You've met my Roman Catholic brother, Linda, and then Peter Vine is our maternal grandfather, and Daisy was his wife. Daisy was the religious one; my mother was less fervent. I'm afraid I am the black sheep of the family. I am a prostitute, and Daisy in old age did regard me as sinful even before I became really sinful. I mean, she set the standard and my brother and I rebelled in

our own ways. I have met Martin Burton, the inspiring link, and he has little time for me. Have you got this, Allie? You're the one for family trees. Who found this out?"

I said, "Adam, not Allie."

So it was that Allie, Oddvør, Jenny - joining us - and I watched activity in the chapel as Bishop Bill Masters, Bishop Pauline Junor, and Bishop Christine Vine ordained Jógvan Dahl as priest *sub conditione* and then Bishop of Hjaltland and Føroyar of The Albion Orthodox Catholic Ecclesia. Sadly, they did not use the mikveh.

Jenny came and chatted with the man she considered her uncle. Once the Church contingent and Oddvør left us, Allie, Jenny and I had some lunch.

"Hello Diana," I said to my friend walking into the bethel. "To what do we owe the pleasure?"

"I've won a competition! I've got to pick a day before the tourist season starts to stay two nights at Mrs. Cairns' in East Wemyss, except it isn't Mrs. Cairns' in real life."

"Ah, *The Jacobite Gap Years* book one."

"Not quite correct. As on TV. Television pictures parts of East Wemyss as old Inverness, with a little of the 'Lang town' in Kirkcaldy for some modernity. Our 1990s charity nurse visiting Clava Cairns with her female friend vanishes. Our heroine ends up in old Inverness."

"I read the book's opening scenarios."

"The prize in the real world is a room for two or three for two nights, where the Smiths stayed. Would you like to come?"

"Why not Aardse?"

"He's busy. It's even with a choice of dates, in March. You and Allie could come - there's a single bed along with a double bed. I'd rather not go on my own."

"Where exactly is East Wemyss?" I asked.

"Fife. East coast. Near Kirkcaldy. We could travel around from there."

Diana was going, regardless, of course; she said she would pick mid-March, and she might drive there and use the holiday to see similar television locations, for example around Edinburgh. She would contact her online friend, Glenda McKay, up in An Aghaidh Mhor, apparently something of a *The Jacobite Gap Years* obsessive herself.

Allie was positive about such a trip; she'd like to see Scotland, but she doubted there was anywhere to try out her Folkways learning of Gaelic. She had one ancestor who was born in Crianlarich and might look up the original home. Kirkcaldy was well away from any Gaelic speaking area, and always was, although Gaels called the town Cair Chaladain.

Diana left us looking rather happy.

I said to Allie (and vague Jenny) it could give our wedding a timing for sure and our honeymoon some structure: places to go. But would Diana feel like a spare part? Allie thought not, in as much as travelling to television interpretation locations would offer her own focus.

Adam turned up to collect Jenny and offered some foresight that we might be isolated in our houses after the World Health Action for Treatments (WHAT) declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30th January.

When Allie and I were at a loss at what to do, so we went and had sex together, after which we both read some Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow -

Womanspirit - stuff.

Gymnology (Wednesday 5th February)

I received an email from a chap called Daniel Beeching, so attended to it privately.

My family are paying a visit to Serninsea. A friend Jim with Harriet from the old days has moved there. I don't think you know them. We're staying at Promenade Guest House for a few days. Remember me? I remember you, certainly, at Saxiclite. Now I live in Nantwich, with wife Tina Dee, and our children Thomas, 10, and Theresa, 9. I saw all about you in the media. We arrive late Sunday 9th or 10th, weather depending, and leave Thursday. Could have some time alone to say hello, or bring the wife and kids who'd prefer the beach even in the cold.

Tuesday 11th, say 2 pm? Serninsea Liberal Bethel. It's on Upper Road: the new chapel in the old terrace - double doors and a single door at each end, tenfoot alongside north end. I could meet the wife and kids - up to you.

People were coming in to our *Gymnology* 'Class' before 7:30 pm. We were undressing in the cloaks area and moving swiftly to squeeze into the consultation room, with its library element. Towels were on the seats and more available.

The unclothed core number were my friend Diana de Groot (still excited about East Wemyss), Kathryn (showing her ever bigger bump) and sister Kathleen Wickenby with Winnie Lott, Bella Jack, and Allie Shrimpton, of course. I asked Allie to introduce us once everyone had arrived.

Coming from upstairs were the otherwise very quiet and almost unnoticed Roger and Marie. He said, "We think we can come here with discretion."

"Yes," I said.

Next layer I suppose were Louise Saraga with husband James Saraga, Sally Torrance and visitor boyfriend Jack Smith (the name caused Diana to smile), and Paula Campbell.

Then we had a new fifty-five years old person with us called Janet Jenkins (an attender at the Saxiclite Club). Andrea Carrithers, forty-two, came with her husband John Carrithers, forty-eight, of no former religious association at all, but who thought we might be a safe space to meet. Evelyn Johnston, sixty, had been to Wytham Unitarians a few times. Aadesh Easwaren, fifty-four, arrived with his boyfriend, Adrian James Wigmore, sixty: they had visited the parish church on moving to Serninsea and could not stand it. Celia Haddon, an online publisher, thirty years old, came in.

Then in came a young woman, Megan Furley, a long black-haired barmaid known to Allie. As she appeared from the cloaks area, Megan proved to be very hirsute with wild black hair around her crotch and underarms, except that she'd oddly crafted eyebrows with grey makeup. Perhaps she had shaved her legs. Megan had a large rose and a thorns flower tattoo on her inner thigh and a moon one on her back. Megan asked Allie after Annie, but Allie supposed that Annie was working.

This was such a crush in that room that I said, "Someone go out there and

inform the folks that we are coming out into the seating area, and close the doors to any more of the public - except naturists. Please take the towels and continue to sit on them."

Allie then said, "Megan, I didn't know you were sympathetic to naturism."

Megan said, "Annie's trying to get me on Goosechat, so I've come here to see. I came here for small numbers but there seems to be a crowd."

I said, "Megan: we all respect each other here. Well done for coming here."

So we gathered at the sofas and seats, on towels. There I said to them, especially Kathryn and Kathleen, "It's a pity we haven't found a practical way to do the steam room provision. The wet room is too small, and there are more showers elsewhere but we'd need the heating so high, and we want to keep the mikveh as sacred and not double up as another plunge pool. Much as I'd like a ladies only and even a gents only gathering, this is not in the ethos of naturism. But over twenty of us here, including some of our clergy, is pretty good. And one of these clergy, Allie, has some big words for us."

"Hello," said Kathryn, turning her head. "You are?"

"We're late. It says, 'Closed to the public,' but we came for..."

"Fine," I said.

"Carol Wood and Gilly Wallace. Do we undress now?"

"Go for it," said Kathryn. "We don't do strip shows, but just lay your clothes on a seat over there."

"This gymnology is starting to get traction!" I commented loudly. "Bring a couple of seats over, Carol and Gilly: welcome. More towels! Are you friends? How old are you?"

Gilly said, "Special friends. Thirty-two and thirty-five."

"You are?" I asked of yet more coming in.

"We are Geoff Hindley and Janet Gibson. Man and wife, fifty-one and fifty-five respectively."

"I recognise you," I said.

"My brother, he being the MP for the south of this county. Surprisingly, he's visiting us but would not come."

"Well, naturists are discreet. Take your clothes off and pull up more chairs. We sit on towels." In a louder voice I said, "I haven't had a congregation this big yet! They have grown in number, but not to this."

We all sat and were chatting.

Allie at last stood and said, "A brief introduction! Hello everyone! This is a Gymnology class of the Serninsea Liberal Bethel held as part of the Free Liberal Ecclesia. Now Katágymnos is a Greek word meaning completely - katá - and naked - gymnos. And here we are: katágymnos. Gymnasium is a term which should mean we exercise naked in a place, but it is used now as a place of any indoor exercise. Our gymnology is the exercise of the mind, and we do it naked. Gymnosophy would be to study nakedness, but we are not doing that. We just study, and do it naked."

I said, standing up, "Allie here once told me about indexicality, that is how we assume a church is a church. We are stretching matters to meet naked."

She said, "It is how one assumes something is something, and based on conforming to expectations, almost like having a list."

I then said, "We here widen indexicality. Now, if we think about the New Testament, there are commands, and these form the indexicality of a church. These

are: to meet to worship, as in Hebrews, to give thanks, as in Thessalonians, to baptise, as in Matthew, to celebrate communion, as in Matthew and Corinthians, and to preach the Gospel, as in Romans. Do we do these? In our Serninsea Liberal Bethel, in the Free Liberal Ecclesia, we have the right to be theologically selective in how we do these."

Allie looked at me a bit deflated and sat down.

I continued what was my lecture. "We see here that some of this material comes from Paul, not unusually. I think we have to be very selective, not as to whether a text comes from Paul or not, but whether it is relevant. And a lot of it just isn't. There can be universal principles from specifics in his time, but this is always a matter of interpretation. If you reject the specifics, but keep the universals, you have to be pretty clear what the universals must be. Disagreeing over such universals undermines the concept of the universal - when a universal becomes specific."

Louise Saraga said, "What?"

"Huh. They always said I wasn't very clear when I was a curate over in the other place. So, what am I getting at as 'universals'? Beyond prohibiting false teaching, whatever that is, there are other suggestions: don't presume, and people should be peaceable in approach. But what's all this about women? Some in the evangelical world think that women *can* teach in a church, but only until it becomes established - when a man should take over. The specific stuff about covering your head by Paul suggests a more universal point about appropriate dress for a woman in a church. Well, we have an answer for that one here. *We're* not covering anything. You can see the lips of my vulva, if you want, and James' and Jack's and Roger's, and so on, penises too. On the Pauline specifics, we all ought to be married, and widows over sixty years old should be listed. How do we universalise these? Some say all this is anyway to concentrate too much on the messenger rather than the message.

"Incidentally, Allie and I are going to be married naked. People are just going to have to adjust to us standing there. Are you going to shave below Allie, and look like me?"

"Yes. Then you'll even more easily see my lips as well."

"Why I don't shave," Megan said. "Especially today."

"Anyway, back to my point about what we do in a place like this."

Allie said, "It's *naturism!*"

"It is that," said Janet Jenkins.

"Yeah, sure. *Liberal High Protestantism* says we are free to be subjective about beliefs and inheritances. We had a lecture about a free and full faith recently. We'd go back to Jan Hus and the earliest radical reformation. Eastern Europe had a short time of toleration and pluralism. Equals all, and naked we are equal."

Allie said, "You can go right back. Never mind the Reformation, the Adamites combined Christianity and nudism. Augustine of Hippo denounced them. In 380 CE the Synod of Saragossa forbade Priscillianist congregations from reading scriptures in the nude. But the later Hussites were split: some Hussites killed most of the Bohemian Adamites."

"Well, back to Paul then," I said against my intellectual competitor. "Therefore, as I was saying, we don't know what the universals are, and as a result we just discuss how sources, whatever they are, might apply - if they do. We discuss and do

not impose. So, I get to my point. I used to go along with a collective belief stance and, you know, people supposedly then varied in their *interpretations*. Now I'm not going to tell any of you what to believe. Instead, we say, in High Protestantism: there is a collective element in that we just do the rituals and see what comes about, and see how the *actions* guide us. Allie, do talk about indexicality and the gift."

She said, "Not about Bohemians?"

"No."

"Our indexicality includes meeting for worship. We give thanks. Gift is a mystical benefit that we may receive. If we baptise, we do it as a symbol of gift. We do celebrate communion but interpret this in whatever way we wish, in the hope of gift-exchange from the actions, and we preach, not for the apparent authoritative stance, but for the purposes of discussion."

"Thanks. So I no longer care whether you or I are Christian or not, and I don't think it matters."

Aadesh Easwaren asked, "Really? That far? You really are the polar opposite now to Rhiannon Fleetwood. She's also started wearing brighter fashionable material."

"The PCC passed a vote of no confidence," said Adrian Wigmore. "But the bishop has the final say; he received deputations very quickly but she could stick it out."

I continued. "And we are *not* 'this place being a polar opposite to that place'. This is not what we are about, whatever the importance we may give to institutions. Do you *want* guidance, Aadesh and Adrian?"

"Possibly," said Aadesh.

"I can provide resources that come from learning, but then we all can. Some of my theological learning is pretty useless now. By the way, Evelyn, I want Charley Darley to come over more often. He might have come today. There is no competition between Free Liberals and Unitarians."

"I go only very occasionally. He came over here to see Georgie Smith. He is separating from his husband, since his breasts were removed. I think something is up between Georgie and Charley."

"Really?" I asked. "Do you know anything about this, Allie?"

"No and why should I?"

"I thought you knew about everything that was going on."

"My research is coming to an end, and I don't research everyone and anything. I research about here, like it going Free Catholic and hosting a naturist gathering - anonymity assured."

"Good. So then, we are High Church in our activities, meaning being gathered and ordered and symbolic. We do things well and this is to facilitate everyone's sense of enquiry. And here we are, doing it." Janet Jenkins said, "Can I suggest why we do it naked?"

"Brilliant. Please do," I replied.

"Because it means we don't hide anything, and we lay things on the line, so to speak. This is all we have. It's almost like a kind of poverty. I wish, actually, we could walk around here every day like we do at Saxiclite. By the way, they miss you there. They know about you - even remember you growing up and as an inquisitive teenager, though they say you were a bit of an innocent."

There was a chuckle of laughter.

Sally said, "When Jack visits, we are naked. Of course we are. We go over to Bever Wood."

Allie said, "I need to know more, Janet. You, Linda, an *innocent*?"

There was a further chuckle of laughter.

I said, "Let's stick to the point for now, Allie."

Sally added, "Look, the students aren't even blushing at us."

"We will soon go over to them for some drinks and snacks."

Celia Haddon then said, "We often publish material referring to Paul. He is an ambiguous figure. So many follow him slavishly, but you alluded to the fact that not everything in his name is his."

Aadesh said, "And one of those who does follow him slavishly - she says she does - is the Reverend Rhiannon. Jim Wilson did before her; did he really hurt you, Linda?"

"Yes he did, but fortunately most marks are nearly invisible now. Perfection is not what we are about, however. Experience is written on the body."

I noticed Allie look down.

What Diana then said was interesting. "I used to wonder how you could be in a Church. Now I see you have moved to something, albeit tiny, that changes the rules. So it lets you breathe. Some people need the guidance and stance that you won't give, but I'll accept instead that some prefer resources. I'm not a Christian and don't pretend to be, and I've come here because this is the only functioning naturist gig in this town. I'd rather talk about Adolf Koch and the Freikörperkultur with the Lebensreform movement."

"You could introduce it."

Janet Jenkins said, "I'm up for that."

Diana said, "He wasn't a Nazi; he was a socialist in his naturism, and that's important. He had a difficult time."

"We must discuss this," I said. "It is directly relevant to religion, and a church is a proper place to discuss the whole ethic of nudity and the body. If it isn't the place to discuss the body - incarnation - then I don't know where is."

So I ended my presentation, and we stayed naked and milled around as we were for diverse chatting. Some students had decided to remove their clothes but put their aprons back on. This was very clearly one of the directions in the future for this Bethel.

Roger and Marie told us that earlier on Roger had been to the clinic. He was donating sperm again. Allie and I looked at each other. My thought and hers surely was: why couldn't he donate some in our direction?

Janet Jenkins remembered some names from the Saxiclite days with Allie listening intently. Dan Beeching was a name mentioned, about whom I said nothing whatsoever.

This session had been a big success and clearly it had a clientele. They also donated money and it more than paid for itself.

I suggested to Allie that we bring forward the next gymnology meeting, perhaps to have it in a house somewhere, a meal, to keep this good thing we'd found going. Would someone do this?

Suggestion for Diana (Wednesday 5th February)

Allie and I went to Patricia's, still excited by the progress of the gymnology session. This was, however, our time, a private time.

Allie gave Diana a suggestion we'd discussed. "Our honeymoon. Where we go matters not to us, particularly, but I would like to go to Crianlarich, the birthplace of Margaret Urchardan, my most far flung ancestor. But for the rest of it we can tour around daytime and enjoy ourselves night time, you know. And I'm suggesting that you, Diana, might decide all these places in Scotland. Add it to your prize in East Wemyss. Your prize also determines, more or less, the date of our marriage."

"Right..." Diana responded. "Well, I'd like to tour some of the locations in *The Jacobite Gap Years*. I can meet a friend too, at the end - probably."

Allie said, "You plan them; we can fit in. We shall marry on the twenty-second of this month. We will romance ourselves, and you can romance literature and television."

Diana said, "Great! I'll do the route planning, with places to stay. The obvious places are Glasgow, Edinburgh, obviously the Kirkcaldy area, Stirling and Clava Cairns, and other places relevant to *The Jacobite Gap Years*."

I was pleased that my friend mattered to Allie.

She said to Diana, further: "I'd like Jonnie, my closest lifelong intimate friend, to give me away, as he needs to release me; so then, as you two are pals, please Diana have a significant part in our wedding: not to give Linda away but be a supporter, be her best woman."

As for a gymnology meal, it wouldn't suit here at Patricia's and Diana didn't want it at her house. Aardse wouldn't like it, and many people required a lot of preparation and clearing up.

Narrator: Allie End of the Research (Sunday 9th February)

Ovulating was about now and we needed sperm-giving candidates for my pregnancy. Current names were Roger, whom I'd been with in the clinic, and Jonnie, my fourth cousin once removed.

We had an unexpected and last minute visit from Charley Darley, free this Sunday. (The previous Sunday was Candlemas; Ash Wednesday was coming up on the 26th.)

He came with Georgie Smith, the recent lecturer. We were able to chat more, and he spoke of recovering from his transgender operations. Our new denominational Bishop Dominic Himalia, a superintendant bishop from the Free Liberal Ecclesia, arrived after them. He'd set off early but under-estimated road speeds available at this end.

I sat next to Linda, who intended to take back seat at the front throughout. However, as Dominic Himalia had said that he had the outlines of a sermon to give with ad libs, Linda asked him if he would dialogue with Charley Darley, and they agreed. This dialogue was something new for me to record, where Dominic would begin with his sermon he had planned, for Charley to interrupt and then it all might go off-script.

We had a congregation of seventeen to hear this, not including the clergy. This was by far our best yet, including clothed naturists, and three that were Unitarians of sorts in this area.

Dominic said, "Well, thank you very much for hearing me preach, and I welcome the opportunity to have a dialogue sermon now. What a wonderful idea. And I'm very pleased to engage with a member of the Unitarian denomination. I don't think we've met before, but I have heard about you."

Charley asked, "When this church in Serninsea took your road ahead, I thought I would look you people up. Similar, is it not, to the 1920s?"

"With some theological updates," responded Dominic. "For with our formal liturgy we have freedom of thought. I think we are freer than Liberal Catholicism and not likely to go too high up the candle."

"William Edwin Orchard, down at Mayfair, did."

"Not Holy Trinity Mayfair," butted in Linda.

"No, Linda. Yes he did, Charley. Quite right. But Lloyd-Thomas did not. I wish to preach on the Real Jesus. Who was he and what does it say about God? The notion of him as a cosmic redeemer is a myth, and I mean myth both positively and negatively."

"I would have asked you about that," said Charley, stood close. What do you think, Georgie?"

"No no, this is your shared sermon. I'm listening."

Dominic declared: "I dismiss the mission to die as a blood sacrifice, that death was defeated and he gave a mission to the Church. He did not demonstrate nature miracles; he well may have demonstrated healing and made a theological point about healings and exorcisms in the battle against evil that the Kingdom would complete."

"I agree," said Charley.

"Oh dear. I do hope we have a debate."

"It depends if you've come for a debate or contradiction," said Charley. "Remember the *Monty Python* sketch?"

"Hmm. His main teaching was the Kingdom of God - especially in Mark, a source for Matthew and Luke. Close, very close, about which he spoke in verse and epigrams - like the rabbis did."

"Yep."

"He said this Kingdom reversed the usual order: it benefitted the downtrodden and the outcast."

"But were his disciples such?" asked Charley. "I think they were resourceful people, business people, and they had to leave their families."

Maybe," said Dominic. "He drew on Jewish rules, but then would add, 'But I say unto you!' in his assertions."

"It does not add up to uniqueness. Many rabbis will also have asked what were the important, deep, spiritual messages in the rules - how to obey the rules in their spirit of their meanings."

Dominic responded: "I did not claim uniqueness. He said character matters and rules are useless without compassion."

Charley said, "He was not God incarnate, because he prayed to God! Evangelicals skirt around the impact of John's Arian 17:3 as John has all the 'I am' statements. Here we get to a divine Son of God as a philosophical development by

Christians but even then not God the Son. So what was the context of what he did believe?"

"Perhaps, Charley, Mark thought Jesus was divine, but Jesus didn't say it, and surely if the 'I am' statements were early or from Jesus's lips then Mark and the rest would have thought these worthy of inclusion."

Charley said, "Don't forget that every Bible other than the Jehovahs Witnesses' one keeps in the story of woman caught in adultery - in John - despite the fact that it was not original and appears as an extra story maybe in the 300s Common era."

Dominic answered, "I suggest we go back to the inter-Testament belief among Qumran Essenes for a priest Messiah and a King Messiah."

"Not an Essene, surely."

"I didn't say he was. Background. We have the Teacher of Righteousness as well, a founder from around 140 BCE. It's not Jesus who is directly influenced, but John the Baptist, and Jesus accepts the Baptism in water that John offered - a sign that the Kingdom was coming, the Spirit was outpouring, that Israel needed cleansing. Jesus is different from the Zealots, in that Jesus expected the peaceful conquest of the world. What do you think, Charley, about Jesus in this?"

Charley responded: "We're having a problem disagreeing. We should have asked Georgie. Say something Georgie!"

"I am saying nothing."

Charley said, "Well, thank you for saying something."

Dominic said, "Jesus probably didn't consider himself as Messiah earlier, but might have done later. But I think, with Machovec, that Jesus expected another: that he was nevertheless essential in the preparation for another to come."

"Possibly. Who is Machovec?"

Linda asked, "May I?"

"Yes," said Charley.

She said, "He was a disillusioned professor of dialectical materialism and Marxism-Leninism in Czechoslovakia who wanted to advance the political-cultural ideas of Jan Hus and the pre-war president Masaryk. He wrote *A Marxist Looks at Jesus*, unpublished and destroyed in Czechoslovakia, and found himself dismissed until restoration in 1989."

Dominic continued. "Thanks. Now Galilee did produce a number of failed messiahs. Jesus was one of five sons and several daughters, and he became a builder. He didn't marry..."

"Contested by some, but I agree. The wedding feast was not his own."

"And his metaphors came from building, and from fishing and ploughing. He used this for the coming future of bounty and conviviality, for which removing demons and renouncing sin was the path. He did not found a school or community, but was a wanderer with purpose."

Charley said, "This might be a moot point - you're splitting hairs. The disciples were the heads of the tribes for the Kingdom, actually or symbolically."

"Hmm. Around the Lake they went, and soon headed for Jerusalem, to prompt God, so to speak. Give history a push. After such preparations and offered meanings, the Kingdom would come in by an eruption. Those sayings that make up the Sermon on the Mount - they are about how it will be. Still not disagreeing? No?"

Charley said, "Enemies and criticism he had. Locals at Capernaum saw

through him, they thought; many Pharisees would have regarded him as lax in his choice of company. He seemed to lack respect for supposed religious experts."

"Ah. No." Commented Dominic: "He justified it all expertly and was open to debate, in a forthright manner. He favoured those who knew they needed salvation, rather than those who expected salvation."

"Oh, I agree with that," said Charley. "And women provided support, like 'The Tower' in the person of Mary Magdalene."

"But Jerusalem was the centre," said Dominic, "and there they had to go. And this is where he made his crucial disturbance."

"Yes he did; but he would have fully observed the Temple in its divine purposes, including ritual animal sacrifices. He did *not* prefer Synagogue type religion. I don't think he demonstrated preference."

"Maybe or maybe not," said Dominic. "But he pronounced God's judgment on the Temple, and that annoyed them. At the likely passover meal, Jesus ritually bound the disciples to his necessary fate - the fate that would lead God to act. He did not institute a new ritual."

Charley then said, "If not a passover meal, it was in the manner of one. I think Jesus planned with Judas to betray him. This was a Hebrew Bible prophecy Jesus acted out. It wasn't just annoying the Temple authorities and waiting to be arrested."

"This leaves an ethical problem," said Dominic, "if you think that."

"That it left the Bible writers with a problem is a different issue," said Charley.

"Not sure it is just theirs," responded Dominic. "But look, against your suggestion, Jesus agonised over his future: not to be put through the trial."

"The suffering servant model," said Charley, "and the agonising still happens even if Judas does the necessary."

"Really? But what of Judas and his death? Surely if Judas was doing what Jesus asked, he wouldn't have ceased to be a disciple via self-destruction."

Charley said, "Well, their view of death was different. Judas had nowhere else to go, having acted as he did, even in a plan. Jesus would die too. In death, if the righteous would be raised, Judas would be raised, if he did the right thing. Whatever, the account as given is not quite right at all. The writers opted for a scapegoat not a colleague."

I asked Linda. "What do you think about this?" I was loud enough to pause our preachers.

Linda said, "There is a clear moral issue about manipulating events. But we just don't know. Georgie, please say something more than 'no' to us."

"I go by the account as given. Carry on, you sceptics."

"Well, some more speculation," Dominic offered. "Jesus's disciples showed weapons. Why? This meant a fast tracking past Ciaphas to Pilate."

"I'm saying there is so much wrong with the story," said Charley. "I think it went more or less straight to Pilate's signature and he gave it not a moment's thought."

"The disciples ran, but Pilate tried to find out what was happening to Jesus. No disciples saw the crucifixion. We think he was called King by the notice that makes up the upper part of the cross. And then we get Jesus buried by a devout Jew."

"Or left for scavengers, or a common pit," said Charley. "The Romans didn't care about the convicted. They had problems with monotheists who did not accept

polytheism."

"Was Jesus buried?" asked Dominic.

"Nah - a later tradition to emphasise the body: spiritualism was rejected on Jewish grounds. But you see the pull towards the Gnostics. The Jewish Church, of course, failed."

"You think he was raised?" asked Dominic. "Spiritually, I think so," he suggested first.

"I think it was rituals, and visions in expectations. Once dead, it could not be another expected; he was the cosmic Messiah to come, and was expected, or he was nothing and he wasn't nothing. They weren't defeated. They had the one hope, and they had their religion with its outpoured spirit at work." Charley looked at Dominic with some intent.

"Possibly. Or it is precisely the defeated who have to have hope. People who are doing well don't need a leg up. But what does it mean?" asked Dominic. "Like to this day?"

"That's the problem," said Charley. "Because of a wholly different way of thinking - *then*. The demythologising of doctrine now destroys doctrine. What is left of the mythos that you mentioned first?"

Linda then said, aloud: "It's not what the good Bishop Christine thinks, who admittedly stayed in Liberal Catholicism. She thinks the whole story is about sacrifice, and sacrifice yields results."

"It's not what I think, either," I said, wondering if I should chip in but doing it anyway. "Giving material effort into something offers real results in binding people together. That's where sacrifice happens - the material giving."

Charley said, "You don't think we are left with a religious humanism, Allie?"

"Binding through offering is human. It is the relationship of the individual to the collective. It is why the myth works, at least at some level."

"You really *are* religious," Linda said to me.

"Why do you doubt it?" I asked. "I've had many religious encounters."

"Spiritual?" asked Charley.

"No," I answered. "Religious. It involves collective memory, and it is remembered and misremembered in institutions."

"She agrees with me," said Linda. "You two preachers seem to agree."

"Ah," said Dominic, "but although the earliest Jewish believers in the Jesus movement did not believe he was divine, they focussed in on him very much, and it isn't just the move to the Gentiles that developed notions of divinity in Christ. And this is why I am not unitarian in my theology, because although Christ had no conception of himself as divine, it is reasonable to give that notion of divinity to him, if not exclusively or completely. It is reasonable to consider the real, body-based world of Jewish belief and resist some of the stresses of Greek philosophy to turn Jesus into some sort of philosopher of heaven - but the language of divinity and connection starts to be relevant."

"Well," said Charley, "Jews spoke Greek; the Hebrew Bible had a Greek translation. It was the common language of the Roman Empire. But monotheism was attractive to Gentiles, and the Jews had that, just as it also became attractive to the Arab world - to embrace Jewish monotheism. The symbols were not the cross, but others, like the fish."

"Fish around the eucharistic bowl," said Dominic.

"So I think the implication is a high up even pure God, yet one that is coming to touch people," said Charley. "And that leaves a kind of spiritual humanism, because we do not retain, here, Jesus's supernaturalism and we've lost connected revisionisms since."

"I think the implication is the divinity in humanity," said Dominic. "Clearly as a result of reflecting on resurrection faith, as a result of Judaism going Greek."

"But comes at the price," said Charley, "of Jesus the God being unaware that he was God, and surely God is all-knowing. So, in a way, we have to start again. Jesus is worth learning about, but is dislodged. All these movements were relative."

"Ah, but I think there are more closer, material, theological implications," Dominic said. "I agree with Allie. What about others down here?"

Deacon Peter then said, "I think I'm more in the spiritual camp. Practice, like Buddhism, like the imagination of the Pagans. I don't agree with Linda and Allie, or you, but more with Charley."

Deacon Winnie then said, "I think we are bodily, and what we have comes through our flesh and blood, our milk and our mucus. When Kathleen gets to a certain point, she will be ready to give milk. That is a profoundly binding act, giving milk - healing and sexual as well."

"Binding to feed my baby and no one else," said Kathryn.

"I shall be more generous," said Kathleen. "Baby comes first, but I shall share."

"So more is involved in this," said Dominic. "Anyway, my point is that we must investigate a historical Jesus; we must recognise the problems this raises, but we are entitled to shift our religion too in a reflective manner, as it has shifted all along."

"Oh," I agree with that," said Charley.

This was the end of the sermon and debate, and fortunately Jenny had recorded it through various microphones. It went on the website quickly, as a sound file.

Georgie then said, "I've said to Charley before, if you mess about with it then it starts to crumble. Bernard Manning thought something happened to you via the cross and Easter. I used to preach this."

As one Deacon I presented the elements; Dominic presided, with Linda in support.

In the notices at the end I had an announcement.

"Everyone. As you know, I have been here researching this place to see how a church gets going. I am now satisfied that this church is established and likely settled denominationally."

"I hope so," said Bishop Dominic.

"And whilst I will listen on, tonight's research diary entry will be my final regular one. I might do haphazard updates. I will write up my research, and I will examine a lot of literature, here and at my Toulouse Road house. But from now on, I am in this church and community like the rest of you, and the main thing is that I will marry Linda in our naturist wedding. I will of course respect confidences, but not with the same motivation as before - instead I'll do as others do and pastorally too. As for the research, I want to just think, write and form it into a readable text of about 90,000 words. So I should say, also, thank you for tolerating me, but rather than leaving, I am staying."

To demonstrate the new situation I did not follow Linda into the vestry when

she had chats with Dominic Himalia, Charley Darley and Georgie Smith. Called in by her I said, "The researching phase is finished." Instead I talked weddings with the Wickenby twins already making arrangements and rapidly to marry. They could share our day - naked or otherwise. Spread the love!

It turned out that Charley and Georgie would try some naturism at a more private, closed gathering. They left first.

I wished Dominic a good journey back, going into increasingly windy conditions to the north.

I fancied going out, and Annie would be in the pub before she went to work. I told Linda, that I would not follow Annie to her work. "She'll be on her own."

Linda said to me first, "Charley wants to go naked - with his breasts removed and vagina clear for all to see. Why Georgie wants to accompany him is a mystery. She's been absolutely single for forty years here, you know."

"Curioser and curioser," I said and then set off.

"But we need an event of invitation."

Narrator: Linda *Future Teaser* (Sunday 9th February)

I had a four-way chat with Bishop Dominic Himalia, Charley Darley and Georgie Smith in the vestry. Allie refused to listen because she had stopped researching!

Dominic first asked how the place was self-financing, and I said it was early days but it didn't look good. I was trying to be a full time minister, and soon Allie would have to find some kind of income.

Charley said he had a potential solution, of two prongs, which he had wanted to talk about, and it was to draw on the trust funds of the Unitarian denomination itself and then local trust funds in the county.

"Come on, I've only just joined Dominic's group here, and I've no reason to be unhappy with it."

Charley said that, first of all, they were desperate for ministry candidates; secondly, I have had real relationships with Unitarians. I further came with ecumenical relations and structures including these liberals, and I could be seen as a pivot, even bringing along a new congregation. It could mean more flexibility via going on the Roll of ministers, after training, and therefore being able to draw on national funds.

Dominic didn't see it; he thought the denomination would reject outside bodies like ours.

Charley said, "The thing is, and it applies to you too, Dominic, they've got loads of money tied up and a comparative absence of people. Now the whole training regime used to be rigid and college located, physically, but they've had to open it up to a whole variety of people in a whole variety of situations. I want to investigate."

"Except," said Dominic, "there is a historical rejection of Free Catholicism: that it was seen as disruptive, fantastical and unstable, and they don't like our practice of frequent Eucharists. It's a different approach."

So he said, "Believe me, Linda is in a strong position. She's got a background now and she has this physical place, and if the Unitarians can be fully represented in

this place, even if it is attached to the Free Liberal Ecclesia. They will want her - and some will seek to offer her employment on specific trust funds. It could be that, formally, someone else here heads up the Free Liberal Ecclesia authority and Linda becomes semi-detached."

I said, "I didn't expect this conversation."

"And this brings me to Foss Unitarians as a group. We have trust funds for this county based on historical developments and associations, so we have money for a part time minister in addition to me. This person would travel about, supporting the other small churches, and you could do that Linda as well as be here. I'm under pressure by the denomination and by locals to have a colleague, and I want to recommend you - and you have been seen in Wytham. They like you. You can do support us now, of course, but so much better if you have Ministry status on the Roll."

I said I'd want this place to pay for itself, primarily, if it could, but Georgie said it was highly unlikely given the condition of organised religion these days.

Then Charley said, "Would you allow me to make enquiries, whether they'd be interested in using funds to extend training to you? The thing is, they want to interview very soon, and they do need candidates. There'd have to be a quick Executive Meeting decision, probably, and then the Ministry Committee decide to invite you for interview. It might be exploratory only, or they might just go for it full on."

I told him to make enquiries but, obviously, I'd have to agree to anything - and I might not.

Then Charley and Georgie said they would like to try one of my naturist gigs, but preferably in a closed meeting where people don't gossip and don't look in. Removal of breasts and a visible vagina might shock some, he thought aloud. Dominic tried to avoid reacting. I said I thought we could have a meal in a house - something like that - but we did not know where.

Charley and Georgie left us, for Charley to return to Wytham, but Dominic and I discussed denominational matters, of which there were very few except some enquiries about gay marriages and some pastoral work, which were local to the north east.

Narrator: Allie *The Goose with Annie* (Friday 28th February)

Annie had suggested we meet at The Goose, and I found her propping up the bar. The place was getting very busy.

Megan, in black top and trousers, with a bare middle, was behind the bar. She said to me, "I work in a number of pubs, Like The ConSern. What do you want now?"

Annie said to her, "Come on Megan, you'd be a great guest, and money to share."

"So you say. I went to that naturist meeting and you weren't there. You are dragging me down."

Annie said, "Be my guest, Meg, and you decide what you do. Just watch me. If Christine Vine gets Sexedcam, also local, which she will, she'll have all but a local monopoly. She still might set up All Supporters, or similar. Some are on Masturtalk -

it's international and huge."

I said, "You've had me as your guest. Can you have another?"

"It's February," said Annie. "New month, new guest. Come on Meg. How many were naked in your company?"

Megan replied, placing glasses for three middle-aged male customers alongside me, "About twenty or so."

One of them said, "I'd like to have been there."

"It was in a church," Megan told him. It seemed to silence him. "Why did you guest on Goosechat, Allie?"

"I went to see her work," I replied. "No blood, no urine, yet you can piss in the air if it's disguised as an orgasm."

Annie said, "Allie should have her own account and earn some money."

"Three quid," Megan told me. "Sorry. It's expensive. All those men, wanking, paying."

"Higher than your wages here," Annie commented.

"No wonder I prefer dogs to people," Megan said.

I decided to say nothing to that innocent remark.

Annie said, "Your Adam Magellan gives me a lot of money. Got to stick a specy in and show him my cervix, stuff like that. He likes it when I do a squirt."

Megan lining pints up said, "I don't know how you do it. It took me all my effort to go to that church. Ten eighty, Dougie!"

"You get used to it," said Annie. "And I tell stories about my past. It's a good income, and, actually, you're safe."

I said, "I do need some money with the research finishing, with married life coming."

Annie said, "What about some sort of porn shoot? They come to town on Tuesday or you might have to travel. We have a ready labour force here."

Busy Megan asked, "Does this Adam watch that stuff as well?"

"Apparently not," I replied. "He likes either the longer cultured stuff, with a story, or plain and simple like Goosechat. We've found him wanking in the past."

"You just need stamina for a porn shoot," said Annie. "One I did was in a glory hole booth: one bloke after the next and the pay you get reflects that."

"Ah, Linda had some direct experience like that."

Megan asked, "So Linda has even done a porn shoot? Just who are you people?"

"I don't think she realised what it was."

"Hey?" asked Megan. "I think I'd know."

Annie said, "It is fucking lonely, Serninsea. Anyway, Adam should be wanking to me later."

Megan asked, "Is this your whole life? Webcams and porn shoots?"

We let Annie go to work. I waved to busy Megan with my juice finished.

Narrator: Linda *Meeting an Old Friend* (Tuesday 11th February)

I asked Allie, when we had got up and washed, and the rest, if she would check my arse.

"What for? I did it the other day."

"Do it today. I've had a shit and I want to know it is clean."

"Why?"

"Because, from time to time, I like to know."

I bent over and she separated my arse cheeks and then pulled my bumhole wide.

"Let me get the light. If you must know, it isn't."

"Well, let's get it clean then. Shower some water in and use some toilet paper."

I pointed my bum at the shower cubicle, and she made the area wet and wiped my arse with paper disposed down the toilet.

"My turn then," said Allie.

"Why?"

"Same non-reason as you."

So I turned Allie to catch the light and did the harder job of opening her up for inspection.

I said, "You need cleaning up."

So Allie got the same treatment, and then at twenty past twelve said she was off out with Annie.

I asked her, "Is that why you needed your arse doing?"

"She's not doing the webcam this afternoon."

"Oh. Okay. When are you back?"

"Five? Dunno. When the shops shut."

So she went out and I hung around. I thought I'd wear the thinnest top for my one-time naturist friend.

At precisely 2 pm Daniel Beeching came alone through the double doors.

"Ah, this is it," he said. "Arrived yesterday; shit weather. Linda! Linda, Linda."

We hugged and I kissed his left cheek.

"It's so good to see you, Dan, and let me give you a tour. Twenty-five years on and you still look fine."

"So do you," he said.

"You're the one no one knows about," I said. "And with my partner out with her friend, it might stay like that."

First thing I did was give him a tour of the property downstairs. I discovered that the wife and kids - Tina Dee with Thomas and Theresa - were walking down the beach and would return to their friends Jim and Harriet. After Storm Ciara, more bad weather was forecast for this weekend with Storm Dennis expected on Sunday.

I asked Dan about his naturism. He met Tina Dee at a naturist club. "It's on the other side of Congleton. We are now one of the highly valued families."

"I'll show you my room that I share now with my female partner, called Alfia."

Up at the top floor we did a left turn from the stairs to show the lounge and the study furthest back, and then we went the other direction into our bedroom.

I said, "I'd love to see you again as I remembered you." This meant that we removed our clothes and faced each other across the foot of the bed. "What I tell people is that familiarity at Saxiclite led to lack of activity, and that I was unsure."

"I kissed your nipples and your vagina - I recall your clitoris."

"It was my vagina that worried me then."

"You froze on me. I needed to be gentle with you. Some other lass later did

the business with me."

"You kissed me nicely, Dan, but I was surprised. I just wondered why or how anyone would put that gone rigid in their mouths. It wasn't long before I found out."

"I remember you declined. Who showed you?"

"Do you mind if I don't say?"

"Sure."

"Where's your pubic hair?"

"Now?"

"Yes."

"Hmm. Tina Dee doesn't like pubic hair. She removes what you've never had."

"It gets in her teeth?"

"Think so. You always were the enquiring sort without blushes."

"Talk and no action."

"Some action. I stroked you," he said. "And you did touch me; you did give me a wank, just to see."

"You were the first person where I saw a completely erect penis, other than on my dad. Even then he was semi-erect, usually."

"I saw him erect with your so similar sister."

"Hmm. She excited him, let's say."

"I recall trying to say carefully that your dad was a bit odd."

"In fact, I was envious of her, because he was giving her emotional attention and support."

"But about you. I wanted to take your virginity. Someone else had the pleasure."

"Yes. I didn't want it, Dan. Again, I won't say who. Same person."

"You yourself were just an attractive lass with an incredible head of hair and then, close up, such smooth skin. You used to sit legs wide and everything was on show. It was lovely. But you confided more and more in me. You said about your dad feeling guilty about his contributions to making two 'defective' daughters."

"Funnily enough, it's my mother who carried the androgen insensitive x gene - her x, his y."

He said, "You look remarkably good twenty five years later. I remember you as a bit thin, and you still don't have the width of thighs of many women."

"I won't go through a menopause. The doctors still want to remove my gonads. My sister has been on Hormone Replacement Therapy, because they removed hers. Show me your penis erect, Dan. I'd love to see it again. It became rock hard, like a copper pipe - it fascinated me. I remembered again and again the white stuff coming out."

"Would you like to do as once you didn't?"

"I was frightened. If that went in my mouth, I could bite you. It couldn't fit in my vagina. I can do everything so much better now."

I got close and dropped to my knees to use hand and mouth.

"Wow!" He said, "I don't ejaculate like I once did but you might just change things."

I got on to the bed and on to my knees and stuck my bum out at Dan.

I said, "Look, this can take a whole length."

"I can see immediately. When we had our moments together, your arse was a pin prick in some reddish rippled skin. Now there is a rubber ring appearance."

"You can go in there if you want and go all the way in. It is clean."

"No. Go back on your back. I'd rather do what I was unable to do and wanted to do at the time."

So I lay on the bed face up. In the missionary position he penetrated my improved pouch.

I said, "You are still kind: how you are doing this. I would have had a vaginaplasty for you. I'd have told mum I wanted it. The risk was losing my gonads. But then you left."

"I wasn't old enough other than to follow my family. I thought about finding you, but there were new distractions at Crewe."

After some silence I said, "You're finding angles and doing it sweetly. This is one of the best fucks I've had in many years."

"It's not just how you do it, but why you do it."

There was a lot of kissing involved too.

He ejaculated into me, something I'd imagined from him, not having to wash my arm, and like a gent he found some tissue in his discarded trousers and cleaned up what was running out.

Also like a gent he lay alongside me, working my clitoris area with his fingers and then his tongue, and did so until I orgasmed.

I said to him, "If your family hadn't left the area, my life could have been so different."

"You say if the doctors had done a vaginaplasty for you and me, they'd have removed the gonads?"

"It was a risk. Mummy was adamant."

"Yes, your dad was always touching Lucinda's back, stroking her bottom, standing closer to her than to your mother."

"Round here everyone thought we were weirdos. But even our fellow naturists?"

"We did think your family was slightly strange."

"I never realised that, even at Saxiclite."

"I almost took pity on you. You could be distant."

"What about my brother?"

"Well, he wasn't close to anyone. He seemed to have a violence about him from his father's authority. But there were three daughters of interest to me when sixteen. Beyond 'daddy's girl', Leila was a bit young and your mother kept her close. Leila had smaller breasts and wider thighs, and she had the beginnings of pubic hair. You were so intriguing."

It wasn't long before we were dressed again.

"You work in Crewe as well?"

"I do, still."

"Any chance of a transfer to Doncaster?"

"Not really. This area is quite foreign to Tina Dee."

"So are your hosts here naturists then? Janet Jenkins remembered you in a recent gymnology meeting. We met here all naked. Fantastic."

"No, no. Just two people who came here. Janet Jenkins was our age now back then. She was a good looker. Do you know where..."

"I'm not allowed to hand out contact details. Sorry."

"Sure. We shall probably lose contact with Jim and Harriet, in the end. But we

made the effort, and I followed up the leads when you were in the media. I found you easily."

And then he was gone - an encounter to be forgotten. I had a shower, to remove the evidence, before Allie was due to return.

When she returned Allie looked drawn and knackered and said she was tired from moving about with Annie. Allie had a shower and crashed out on the bed, so I just thought of Daniel and masturbated.

Chapter 31 Norfolk

Narrator: *Allie Back at the Rogers'* (Wednesday 12th February)

Adam had suggested we get on with it regarding a wedding, given the Novel Covid landing in a number of countries. It could happen here, causing all kinds of disruption, he'd said.

Perhaps the same idea was in mind, with a message from Georgie Smith of all people to Linda to hold a fireside naturist meeting in *her* house, with Charley attending, on Friday 21st February. This surprised Linda, who said this was the last place she'd have expected it - but it meant Georgie adopting natural religion!

The night before the wedding was unacceptable but a message returned that it could be on Wednesday 19th at 7 pm. Yes, good. Her house was at 17 Gaillac Road, the large detached house obtained from Ann and Labhaoise. (Yes, another one!)

Jenny wandered in and I gave her the list of attendees, to add Charley and Georgie, with the date, time and address. She could distribute or ask Roger.

With all our intentions, it was time for us to reconnect with my family. I might be ovulating soon; my period was due later. We travelled in Linda's SUV and I took a couple of my completed canvases from 135 Toulouse Road.

We did a diversion. Instead of heading to Fakenham, we went to Docking and Burrenham Market via lesser roads. We passed the south side of Holkham Hall's grounds - the place of much agricultural innovation. Perhaps the strips based names of our farms indicated early resistance or identity. I used my mobile phone to alert my families, soon to be Linda's too, and a return message told us to come in the front way at Columns Farm.

East of North Creake, going south down Wells Road, we entered Little Walsingham where one finds the tourist railway. Saint Peter's Road and Westgate took us to the smaller Great Walsingham. Going east from Great Walsingham and turning into another road we found Columns Farm on the left to see Selions Farm further down on the right.

We turned into the farmyard behind, her SUV joining a couple of cars, tractors and wagons. We parked by the garden, for less mud on our boots. We walked around to the front door where I opened the door and we went in.

In the hallway already were my mother Alicia, father Alfred, Aunt Sally (as I called her), Jonathan and Uncle Paul (as I called him). Four said, "Hello Alice, hello Linda," in turn but then Paul said, "Hello lass, hello kid," for some unknown reason.

I kissed them all in turn, first with a finger up to pass by Jonnie, and finally kissed Jonnie fully on his lips. Linda remarked that she'd soon be changing her name to Shrimpton. That went down well - not.

So I said, as we went into the front lounge, "Shrimpton's a more ancestral family name."

Linda said, "I could have become a Mrs. Rogers, or even a Mrs. Jenner at our wedding."

My father said, "Aye indeed: Bishop Rogers, why not?"

"Whatever, I want rid of Jupitas. If I was not marrying your daughter, I would

have gone back to Bode. I thought I'd leave it be, but once I saw my ex-husband again I wanted a change. I like Shrimpton."

Uncle Paul said, "Ancestral or otherwise, you'd be surprised what does appear in our family trees. I've been doing some research."

"On which point," I said, "I met my sixth cousin, a five year old girl called Akemi Tamuuz; her father was a Shrimpton."

"You said before about her. Sixth cousin requires going a very long way up, but it's what you have to do."

Linda said, "Allie is so knowledgeable about her family trees. You're all so intertwined."

"You tell her, uncle."

"I'll take you one higher still at Raymond Jenner born all the way back in 1832. He died in 1894, aged sixty-two. He was born in Binham, and died in Walsingham. He was five times great grandfather of Alice, and three times great grandfather of Jonathan."

"Gosh - but one removed," Linda said.

"Doesn't work like that, kid. That was two different. I'm an old father myself, making the generations uneven. Raymond married Jennifer Rogers, indeed one of our Rogers. And of their four offspring, Janet Jenner was our young ones' here common ancestor, born in 1850 and died in 1880 and lived in Walsingham throughout her life - in the house that was here before this one replaced it. Janet was four times great grandmother of Alice and three times great grandmother of Jonnie."

"By 'common' you mean direct to both. Not an uncle or aunt."

"Quite. But Janet's brother, Peter Jenner, was the two times great grandfather of Jonnie. Janet married John Grant and they had Peter Grant in 1872 and Sarah in 1880. She died giving birth and husband John Grant killed himself soon after. Sarah was three times great grandmother of Alice, but three times great aunt of Jonnie, and Peter was two times great grandfather of Jonnie and four times great uncle of Alice."

"How do you remember...?"

"Because we know how we all link up. So Alfred Rogers here was three times great grandson of Janet Jenner, and Alicia was herself three times great granddaughter of Janet Jenner. So they are themselves directly related before their marriage happened. But it gets better. My wife Sally, Jonnie's mum, born in 1961, was two times great granddaughter of Janet Jenner, and I am, in my own right, born 1945, the great great nephew of Janet Jenner. So my wife and I were related also before marriage."

Jonathan spoke for the first time, quite softly. "So the pattern was established before now."

"Wow!" Linda said. "I could not possibly remember all these names and dates, and not from our previous chat, but thank you Paul."

"I do," I said. "Most of them at least."

"Yes, lass," he said. "And, Linda: by marrying you will be my third cousin four times removed. I will have more to say tomorrow."

Before tea, my mother asked Linda a pertinent question: "What does it mean being a dedicated naturist? We are not but we often relax in states of undress - nightwear and flimsy materials. The whole family is staying over here this evening and tonight. So shall we do this? Otherwise we'd be respectable for you."

"In my eyes respectable *is* undressed. If you're comfortable with this, then I

would be delighted," Linda said. "I'm ideologically naturist. I'm not just a beach naturist or water or wood naturist. I have a club - that's important - and I believe in it. Allie can be as she would be here."

I said to Jonnie, "Let's go the whole hog." Thus Jonnie and I both stripped off as did Linda; however, I had an action to make. I asked Jonnie to come with me, and we headed for my old bedroom.

He said, "So you present Linda as your fiancé, definitely. It's a disappointment to me."

"Jonnie. Once again, you're very special to me, but I fancy women and only women. I can fuck men and it has a passing enjoyment..."

"You've fucked other men?"

"So? But I've had only girlfriends. You'll find Linda is generous. I have to be with someone I connect with as a passion as well as someone who is deep and reliable."

"I cannot forget and neither can any of us that you have a family responsibility," he said to me. "My father laid it out; you know the importance of our families."

"The responsibility became oppressive. Am I to live like Alice Shrimpton, who was married to a man but whose real love was another woman, all the way to a nursing home?"

"We could have an open marriage."

"Linda thought she was loyal to one man, but he betrayed her. Then she tried a more open relationship and it died before it got going. There *is* a you and me, Jonnie, because we have a history, but there is no you and me getting married. I am marrying *her*. I want to ask you something. I want you, as my cousin, as my brother, as my sexual partner in my life, to give me away. I want you to give me to her."

"I want someone to give you away to me."

"But I've been with you all my life!

"You ran away."

"I did. Now I'm confident with her, and you should support me. Give me away at my wedding. Our parents will understand this. Come on, they're preparing tea and Linda is rattling around naked on her own."

"You ask too much," he said.

"I also thought about asking for your sperm to have a baby for Linda and me. I decided that would indeed be too much. You'd want to be the father."

"Too right."

"Then let's go back."

I soon took Linda, bare, into the farmyard briefly. (She wore flip-flops and had spares for me.) It wasn't weather for nudity. Also, there was a public footpath across at the back of the yard.

"Your cousin is upset," Linda said to me.

"Because I neglected him in carving out my new life."

"Surely we can take the risk of bringing him back in. He can continue the family line by providing the genetic material."

"But, Linda, that makes three in the marriage and I want two in this marriage. If he'd said yes he'd want to be involved - he will need to be marked on the family tree. He said an effective no."

"Then we lay out terms!"

"You don't know him."

"No, I don't. Get him in our bed again tonight, and see if he can accept our marriage and can agree to a role and be disinterested."

"You might think you can find some angle of approach. You often do. But this time you really could be playing with fire. Curb your enthusiasm. Don't encourage misunderstandings."

"To get somewhere on this, Allie, we have to take risks."

"Roger Humphrey is a safer bet."

"But that denies so much. I'd like Jonnie to be involved."

So tea was eaten in states of undress. Linda spent some time describing her family tales from the Nottinghamshire to Foss border and own memories north of Serninsea.

Paul, Jonathan's dad, wasn't too interested in the offering on television. He started up a conversation.

"Looking at you, kid, it's difficult to understand. This intersex thing..."

"It is the reason why, in wanting a child, Allie has to have the baby. I can't. I am genetically male, but formed female, without the reproductive plumbing. My maternal feelings have to go through Allie."

Alicia said, "You look like a strong Amazonian female to me, and those big hands, and Alice acts like one."

Bedtime came along, which for farmers, unlike ministers of religion, comes earlier not later. Indeed my parents said that since the General Election they'd stopped watching late news analysis on television whereas before it they'd been hooked on all the intrigue.

I said, "Jonnie. Would you join us tonight? Join us this time knowing Linda and I really are an item and we will become wives."

"Both?"

"Yes, both of us."

Sally, his mum, nodded at this; I think she was appreciating that we were accommodating him and helping him understand the new situation. He looked a little unsure, however.

Narrator: Linda *Bed* (Wednesday 12th February to beyond Midnight)

"What'll be the arrangement this time?" Jonathan asked. "Allie in the middle, then Linda next to her and I be other side of Allie?"

"No," I said, "not this time. You're in the middle. I want to experience you and I want to talk to you. Directly."

So we squeezed in, but actually, when in, we were stable. I didn't feel like I was about to fall out. Then he turned his back to me, and started to touch Allie between her legs and around her chest.

She said, "Jonnie, you're being rude to Linda. Lie on your back. By the way, you never came to see us in Serninsea."

He said, "No, I wanted space myself."

Allie said, "If you found another woman, I'd be delighted."

"I've something to tell you. At the beginning of your second year, I took a trip

to Glastonbury. I asked questions of people I met."

"Ah. I was told someone was asking questions about me. We had some enemies then. You bastard, following me!"

"You'd not been back home."

"I thought the questions might be linked with Rhiannon Fleetwood and her ilk."

"I didn't know her, there."

"What do you mean, you didn't know her 'there', Jonnie? Oh, well, she did go off to Kent."

"Let me explain, my way. I dodged about in Glastonbury and Taunton. I saw you in both towns and you didn't see me. I assumed you hadn't."

"I hadn't. This is news indeed."

"I found out about you and your tutor, because there were rumours. You'd been having a sexual relationship with this woman tutor of your Folkways class - Abigail. I asked about her, and even saw her. I learned she was in a coven, and that she had other associations. So I followed her around, and you and her were definitely together."

"You know, in the Taunton Tantria we were supposed to gain awareness. We did know someone was around, but not that it was you. First year and summer, Rhiannon Fleetwood didn't just picket us, and confront us, but she was following us around. How long were you in Glastonbury, following Abby and me around?"

"Four weeks."

"Four weeks? It must have cost you a fortune!"

"Six, because I had two more in the next year, to update the situation. Rhiannon was gone."

"You neglected the farms?"

"They did without me, as well as without you at summer. After a bed and breakfast, I asked about for places to stay. This the unpaid Reverend Andrea I met by looking into local religion and she took me in, first time, but on really good terms. Gave me a room."

"You found your way to *her*? She was my GP, like for many students. It proves she kept her eye on me. She connected with Rhiannon Fleetwood, despite being different in outlook."

Jonnie said, "Andrea said she was a doctor, Christian priest too but broad regarding natural powers and women's sensitivities."

"Spying on me!" Allie deliberately turned so that her back and bum faced Jonnie. "Bastard, Jonnie. People Rhiannon encouraged were opposed to Abigail's and Roland's coven, and the Taunton Tantria. They were targetting tutors and some students - like me."

I said, "We are talking about Andrea Lindsey."

"Keep up," said Allie. "Married the Suffragan of Sumorsæte for advantage. Andrea always worked it both ways, so she herself clearly used you, Jonnie, to know more about me and Abigail's activities. For some, it was religious, for others it was staff behaviour, for others it was envy."

"For Andrea?" I asked Allie.

"Rhiannon got down and dirty, crashed about. Andrea kept her distance but smelt the results."

Jonnie said, "If you keep your back to me I'll fuck your arse. Some said next year your School's secretary was interested in you and not for folk languages."

Allie turned towards him. "Jonnie, this is like betrayal. Abigail was breaking boundaries, so loosened me and Beathag got her opportunity. I'm surprised you didn't come to Serninsea recently."

"I did. Followed a telephone lead from Glastonbury."

"Jonnie! Since Linda's visit here?"

"Before. No one knew you - except two, one of them in a pub."

"Calm down both of you," I said. "Can I play with him?"

"Be my guest," Allie replied. "Annie Fenwick?"

He said, "No. A barmaid called Megan. But I met Rhiannon Fleetwood, new to Serninsea itself. I went to the Anglican priest or minister and discovered it was her! She said there's an independent church owned by some investigator, a rebuilt place set up, and you were a researcher there, so I thought I'd better keep my distance from him."

I then said, "I wonder if Adam knew?" as I grabbed Jonnie's penis.

"Magellan? About me?" he asked me.

"Yes," I answered. "How long were you in town?" I asked him.

"Five nights. I first stayed in a pub called the ConSern. And I saw Alice and dodged away when it was very busy. Second time, next night, you seemed to be chatting up a woman, getting pissed."

"Chatting - not 'chatting up'."

"In Glastonbury and Taunton you'd been drinking again and stopped. Here, Megan, the barmaid with the big tits - and she has a rose and thorns flower tattoo on her leg - told me all about you. You sometimes drank with a Jenny, and more often with an Annie. Having seen you, I checked out of the pub, and stayed three nights... at the vicarage. I was invited to stay there. The reverend woman was fascinated by the priest who'd gone independent and became a bishop - you, Linda."

"You've got a grower there, Jonnie," I said, working on him.

"Megan thought you were coming on to her as well as on to these other women, like you were looking to get laid."

"Not me," I said. "When?" I asked, running my thumbnail over the eye of his penis.

"Wednesday 27th November, and on the Thursday you were with this woman, Alice, and both of you hammering the ale."

"Jenny," I said. "That was Jenny."

"Jenny," said Allie. "She was slipping somewhat, mentally. It's not funny, Jonnie."

Jonnie asked, "*Were* you more intimate with Jenny, Allie?"

"No fear."

"Hmm," I said. "Annie?"

"I'm not lying. Jenny was bad news, unfortunately for her."

Jonnie said, "I left on the Sunday, when Rhiannon said that you, Allie, were preaching in the independent place. It meant to me that you were involved in a big way, so I came home - after hearing Rhiannon preach."

Allie asked, "Jonnie, did you have sex with Rhiannon?"

"Er..."

"I'll take it as a yes," she said.

"How many women have you slept with?" I asked Jonnie.

"Four, it will be."

"Allie, Rhiannon? Two left. Allie is here and would love to know."

"Arseholes," Allie reacted.

I asked Jonnie: "Tell me what she preached - Rhiannon Fleetwood."

"I was surprised. She preached about sin. Very harsh. Hardly about what she did. But I wanted to be faithful. Yet I'd seen you and heard enough. I'd seen you in Glastonbury and Taunton twice and I'd seen you in Serninsea. So, in the end, what if this vicar did come on to me?"

"She's not a vicar," I said. "She's a priest-in-charge. She's a complete fraud and the good people of Serninsea, even the evangelical ones, took very little time to see right through her."

"I've counted three. Who's the other one?" Allie asked Jonnie.

I asked, "Who's the third woman?"

"You, you nelly. I'll find my zither."

"Anton Karas."

He corrected us: "You're the fourth. Mel. Glastonbury. She wanted to do a further degree. She was a year below you. She recognised my accent; I couldn't disguise it down there."

"From Fakenham, by any chance?" Allie asked.

"Er, yeah."

"Windley," said Allie. "I didn't know her before."

I said, "Jonnie, we met her on a recent visit. I went with Allie to see her professor and there was a dance."

"Blimey," said Allie. "You fucked my enemy and, before her, my admirer. You don't half pick 'em, Jonathan Jenner."

He responded, "I got home from Serninsea disappointed. Rhiannon was really good in bed, but I didn't go for that. Megan prefers dogs to people. She didn't know me. I went to find out what you weren't telling anyone here. When I got back I told mine and yours and they kept quiet when you two turned up."

"Sounds like success," I said. "You'd found Allie in Serninsea."

"It confirmed my worst fears."

"My best hopes," said Allie.

"Right, Jonnie," I said, "I want to ask you something sincerely that will bind us three together. Clearly we are here, in bed, comfortable, able to converse, and we have a request. And given that beautiful thing in my hand, we can do it now."

"What?"

"Allie is going to get pregnant. The best person to be a sperm donor is you, you because of the genetic line."

"He'll have a job," said Allie. "The coil is in!"

"Allie! You know he is at least an option!"

"Would I be down as the father?" asked Jonnie.

"Biologically, genetically," I said. "But the family tree would have to have Allie and me as parents."

"Then you wouldn't have united the family in our child, in the public sense. Not doing it."

I said, "It is possible to do what was done with Alice Shrimpton."

"That's not the case between us two. Her marriage was a sham, a marriage for offspring. Times have changed."

"Can't we note the biological father?" I asked as a suggestion.

"I'm going to come," he said. "Where am I putting it."

"Me then," I said. "Come on, on top, Jonnie."

"Slag!" said Allie.

"You have to push a bit, Jonnie."

"I already know you are tight."

"Of course."

He ejaculated, and it ran out; Allie put out her hand, to stop the spillage to the bed, and she subsequently licked her own hand. She positioned herself to suck him off.

I said, "You're very nice, Jonnie. Very nice."

"Allie and I agree," he said. "I have to accept that you're lovers, that she settled on you, but I can't father your child."

To support Allie I said, "And I love her, Jonnie. We want a man who donates his sperm in a loving context."

"A child from me has to be a Jenner with the Rogers. Alice has to be mother, and me the father, officially. There *are* other cousins in this family."

This seemed to kill the conversation. But after I went in the night to have a pee, and had it, a certain intended was stood facing me.

Allie said, "I told you, Linda. You haven't listened to me. You've made it worse."

"I did listen to you and I haven't made it worse and I think it's a shame he's said no."

Allie said, "He snooped on me, in Somerset and in Serninsea. I wanted him to give me away, and now it is more difficult. Spying on me is creepy. Anyway, I need the loo as well. Go back to bed, I'll want to sleep."

"He loves you and you abandoned him. Who's taking the dictatorial high-handed approach now?" I asked.

"You should know it when you hear it," she replied. "Fuck off: I need a shit, actually."

Full Day Around Norfolk (Thursday 13th February)

Having all of us slept, and woken, Allie said to Jonnie, "Go on then," almost in a resigned manner. So I lay there as she put her arms completely around him and the thirty year olds connected at their genitals.

I said, "I spy with my little eye something beginning with cock." I leant on my left side and watched them. "Do you play 'I Spy' Jonathan?" I asked.

"Alice should eat more fruit. When she did, when she was here, her cunt juices were really sweet and her arse stink was more pleasant."

I said, "I *know*. Sometimes I think this girl likes lots of pork sausages with herbs."

Allie started to giggle.

So Jonathan's mess at the end was mine to lick.

Breakfast followed with us three eating, with Alicia being the only other person in the house. All the rest were out farming, including looking at wind damage and preventing more. After his cup of tea, Jonnie put on his overall too, in a dull orange

like some prisoner, and he went out to join the others across both farms.

Alfia, or was it Alice, took me into Little Walsingham, both of us buffeted about in the wind, where I had once honeymooned with Anglican Keith. And she took me to the very shop where Keith and I had bought one of her paintings. There was one left of hers in the shop, and I stood back as Allie showed the middle aged male collectibles shopkeeper some more on her phone. She said two suitable were available now, if he wanted, and he did, so I took the two of her *Madonna and Child* paintings brought along from the boot of the SUV, ready-framed, and we thus had more money in pocket than when we had arrived!

"Will you be the Madonna and Child?" I asked her.

"No, I definitely need a man. Roger Humphrey is the man to ask."

"Getting rough. All right, Jonnie is off the agenda. What I really think is genealogy is full of lies. They are no more than social statements."

"But not with my lot."

We visited shop windows full of trinket trash, leaning into or away from the wind.

I said, "I prefer your Glastonbury to your Walsingham. Roman Catholicism encourages superstition."

At the Anglican shrine I said to Allie in the wind how this stuff matters to Christine, but doesn't matter to me. And we looked at the Roman Catholic variant shrine as well. There I said how Christine would not be attracted to Roman Catholicism, not with its Thomist legacy. Thomism was probably more important to me, I claimed, bringing an Aristotelian wordly realism into theology. So Allie said that on that basis, she was more on my lines.

"Christine didn't take up my brief interest in the Philokalia either."

"The body is important to me. Haven't you noticed?"

"I haven't had a lot to go on until recently," I replied.

Then, for variety, we left Little Walsingham and went to Holkham Hall, now open for visitors, to take in not just the windswept grounds and house, but the local history regarding farming.

Allie made the point that we both had been farm labourers, but never made anything of it. I responded that this was because we had both rejected it for other more inner mindful concerns.

So we went to Wells-next-the-Sea, encountering the sea chucking itself about, because Allie wanted me to view the residential home where her ancestor had ended her days with her lesbian lover. Allie herself wanted to find out more.

We rang on the bell and asked to go in. The Deputy Manager, Mrs. Michaela Forbes, was happy to get us inside out of the wind and show us around, and she went to find a leather bound book held in the office safe to show to Allie.

"Our entry with notes. Alice Shrimpton, born 1865 and died here in 1966. She was born in Stiffkey. She just made it to a hundred and one years old. Elizabeth Ford was here, who was born only two days before Alice. Elizabeth died here in 1964."

Allie took over: "Alice was married to Brian Rogers, but he died in 1932. She had children with him, who visited her here, but she had a sexual relationship with Elizabeth far more than with him even during his lifetime. She loved Elizabeth. She is my heroine."

"Yes," said Mrs. Clara Bellow, the Manager, entering. "In those days this place was a council owned residential home. My husband and I bought it from the

previous owners, so it continues as a private business residential home."

I said, "We think it looks well-kept. I'm sure if there is a National Social Services, private businesses like this will be providers."

"That'll be the day," said Mrs. Bellow, "for that sort of State organising. As for this ancestor, there were stories about Mrs Shrimpton and Miss Ford, and the fact that one of their rooms was often empty at night."

"Remind me," I said. "Alice was your..."

"Four times great grandmother. You *might* say that Elizabeth Ford is my step four times great grandmother."

"That's a wonderful thought," I said. "Perhaps you and I might end up in this place."

"We'd be very happy to receive you, wouldn't we Michaela! Except we won't - you two seem much younger than us."

"That would be my plan," said Allie. "You and me finishing here would make my life complete."

We thanked the Manager and Deputy Manager. We nodded and smiled at present day residents in one of the lounges as we left - those that were not asleep - and shook hands with John Bellow in a chef's uniform.

We looked at the coast, from inside the SUV to avoid being blown away, and turned at an angle to look towards Serninsea (too far to see).

I said, "Hopefully, we will have an interesting honeymoon. I hope Diana doesn't think she's a gooseberry, in the modern sense."

"What sense?" Allie asked.

"Originally the person playing gooseberry was a chaperone to a couple, but she later became unwanted. So she was at first like a gooseberry picker, giving a pretext for a couple to go out together. Jolly decent all round, don't you know."

"Diana is your Jonnie. You *want* her to be there."

"No, not at all. All unrequited. She is giving us somewhere to go, visiting locations for *The Jacobite Gap Years* and for that she is wanted. It'll be an interest in the daytime and then we can have fun after dark."

Allie said, "You'll want sex with her on our honeymoon."

"I've just said I don't have sex with her."

"Really? Start remembering! Consider a certain nightclub."

"I hate you Allie Shrimpton. I suppose you spoke to Kathleen and Winnie. It's the inequality of it all. It's why I sympathise with Jonnie. He knew nothing either and had to find out for himself. Good on him."

"Well, he knows now. I didn't contradict him."

"Does he sleep with us again tonight, Allie?"

"I did used to sleep alone sometimes, you know . So he should leave us two to be together. I'll ask him nicely to leave us alone."

"Welcome to the weird world of Alfia Shrimpton," I said. "Oh, Annie!" I sang.

"Phuh. Welcome to the weird world of Linda Jupitas," she said.

"Try a different surname," I suggested.

"Welcome to the weird world of Linda Bode."

"That's better. Shrimpton? I'll like that, *Alice*."

"I am not, actually, Alice Shrimpton. I wouldn't presume so much. Look, the weather is shit out here so let's go back to my home."

"Your home?"

"It is still that, I suppose."

"Won't be your primary home for long," I suggested. "You'll be my wife."

"You'll be my wife - my domineering, mawtherly, overly presumptuous, overly permissive, wife."

"Yeah, and just what you want," I asserted.

"Rubbish."

"Correction: what you *need*."

"Fuck off."

I said, "I'll accept: 'decisive, efficient, investigative, latitudinarian.' I am good for you."

"You're *insufferable* - but I like you."

"Hey, Dick Emery rides again," I said with a smile.

Allie asserted: "You're a dustbin of clapped out media. Mrs. Trope."

At the Jenners'

In fact, as the SUV was buffeted about, the instruction was to return to the Jenners' house: Selions Farm. Everyone expected flooded fields and damage.

"So," said Sally, "this house is similar to theirs, but we have a different arrangement of rooms. Our kitchen faces the road, theirs the farmyard, so that our living rooms face west and south. And we have a conservatory."

I said that I like a conservatory. Both houses struck me as more similar than different. Again we had a bedroom with a double bed, but in this house.

At the meal table, where all four parental adults had prepared the meal, I said about the wedding we were seeking. I wanted a naturist or as near to naturist wedding as possible. "We already do naturist things in the bethel now. We relax and we have a gymnology debating group. Yes, we do it nude."

"Guests only?" Alfred asked.

"We put a notice out at the front doors. We had to move into the main seating area as there were too many for our small meeting room. Next up is a meal in a house of a retired UPCC minister."

Paul said, "Strip off if you want."

"I always want to but we'll eat as we are," I replied.

"And this wedding ceremony?" Alfred asked.

"Three couples will marry in the same joined-together ceremony. There'll be invitations of course but then open to the public if they understand what they might see: some nudity, a mainly naked Eucharist, and the use of our mikveh, where people submerge naked to emerge into a new life."

"Must we take our clothes off if we are there?" asked Alfred.

"Oh I hope you will be there, but it is like one of those beach signs: 'Clothes optional'. Some will, and some won't. Maybe most won't, except for the more confident naturists. But this is what we want to do."

Fortunately Allie nodded. I had not really consulted her, nor the others marrying at the same time.

Alicia asked, "And what about the honeymoon? I assume there is one."

"We're combining it with a friend's holiday, giving places to go. Allie can see

where the Gaelic she learnt still operates."

She said, "I've only ever suggested Crianlarich and Gaelic has retreated from there. In fact I know it was ten to fifteen percent at the very most at the turn of the millennium."

There was some silence over tea, and then I decided to give a speech. Allie had no idea I was going to say this either.

"Look, everyone, this is an unusual situation. Allie - or Alice - was brought up with Jonnie, to be very close in a family structure across these two farms. I accept that Jonnie cannot be a male donor for us, because you'd want him on the family tree. But, look at it this way..."

"Linda!" said Allie, thinking I was about to flog a dead horse again.

"No, I'm saying Allie is coming to a new home, a new life. So I will have a supporter, like a best person, my friend Diana, but I would like Allie given away, and Jonnie could give her away. What do you say, Jonnie?"

"Don't know."

"Let me put it this way: there are few families where even *fourth* cousins once removed of the same age have double beds in their bedrooms, where the children who knew each other so intimately transition into teenage years and, you know, all that such change brings about."

"Are you criticising us as parents?" Alicia asked.

"I'm the first to say relationships are complex. And you have such a fascinating families structure. In a way Allie is part of that but is entering a new life in a new direction. Allie has a suggestion for a sperm donor."

Allie looked to the ceiling.

Jonnie said, "This is getting embarrassing. We have protected ourselves from outsiders."

"We're letting Linda in," said Sally to her son. "And we don't want Alice to run away again."

"Well, Jonnie makes my point," I said. "You've got this strong, inside, self-defining ethic, and those who don't understand it are outsiders. Look, I love your daughter and your cousin, and that 'cousin' tag refers to three of you here. But here's the rub: I would be prepared to be her lover and watch her marry Jonnie..."

"No," said Allie.

Alfred asked, "Linda! Are you trying hard to be a woolly all-accepting liberal? Alice said you are a liberal."

"No. Situations are as situations are. These two have no taboos - and that's good. But, instead, treat what we'll do a bit like 'open not closed'. There were divergences or dispersals, were there not, in your double family?"

"Yes, dispersals," said Paul. "But strands often came back. There are other Rogers and Jenners around here; just look in the old fashioned phone book. And, em..."

I said, "It would pain me, and be a real sacrifice, but I concede that there could be an Alice Shrimpton and Elizabeth Ford relationship, where I'd be like Elizabeth while Allie here is married formally to a Jenner."

"It will not happen," said Allie. "Pack it in. Once minute you're describing a naturist wedding with me, and next minute you throw away the towel."

Allie's Uncle Paul said, "There wouldn't be a towel to throw, lass."

"Actually," I said, "Naturists do carry towels."

"What I don't get," said Alfred, "is if Alice Shrimpton is Alice's heroine, why *can't* she replicate this by marrying Jonathan - and why change your first name, Alice? Alfia is daft."

"That's your opinion," said Allie. "I am marrying her and that is that. We are doing it nude because naturism is so important to her. Understand this now, everyone. If you don't want to give me away, Jonnie, don't; if you don't want to get your clothes off, you don't do it, if you don't want to come..."

Paul said, "Let us calm down, and change the room regarding the elephant. It is time to sit down in the lounge and view the elephant from a very different point of view."

Allie said to me only, in transition, "When are you going to stop putting your bloody great foot in it; when are you going to consult me and even listen to *anything* I say?"

"I'm just teasing out the possibilities and the boundaries."

"You're a verbose bull in a dictionary shop. Self-centred to the extreme."

We went in to the main lounge, leaving the dishes until later.

I said, "Look everyone, we are now allowed to marry, and surely, if they could have married, Alice and Elizabeth would have."

"Your Church doesn't recognise it," said Sally.

"No, my *old* Church doesn't. Mine definitely does. The Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia I joined did allow it, and the Free Liberal Ecclesia we are in now definitely does, as I say. And we offer this service to the public. We are licenced."

"Bode," said Paul.

"Oh, do call me Linda."

"I mean, kid. Just here's looking at you."

I said, "You have done some genealogy on 'Bode'. Go on."

"Yes, so, let me address the elephant in a way that might satisfy us all. 'Bode' means 'messenger' and you've got some famous or significant people called Bode, like an American academic and philosopher, a German classical philologist and translator, a German astronomer, an English priest, and the German Bode Museum's one time art historian and curator."

I said, "You know more than I do, although *O Jesus, I Have Promised* is one of John Ernest Bode's hymns. He was rector in Cambridgeshire from 1860."

"He is not one of your Bodes," said Paul.

"No," I replied.

He began. "This is the result of my researches, starting with your prompts the last time you were here. The Bodes: your dad is sixty-four, born in Dunham-on-Trent, just into Nottinghamshire from Foss. Your paternal grandfather, born as early as 1902, in Gainasburgh, and died in Dunham-on-Trent."

"Thus the paternal side and maternal side went to Saxiclite too, off the B1190. My family moved to Syerston for a period before getting a better offer, cheaper land, after my eldest brother was born in Syerston."

Paul said, "So, Grandfather Robert Bode married Felicity Don." Paul picked up a notebook that had been left on the settee arm. "Born 1926, she died aged 56 only."

"A younger generation," I said.

"So let's go up from her. Alan Don, himself born in 1901. He married Rosemary Otter, another younger one; 1919 she was born and in Saxfosdyke in

your county. She dies aged sixty. So there's a geographical movement from the east there. So let's go up from her."

"Right," I said.

"I looked at them all, and as you go up of course the numbers double each time. So I am selecting after the fact."

Allie said, "Uncle Paul is very good at this stuff."

"Yes, lass. Joseph Otter, born 1898 - so many born around the same time - died in Saxfosdyke aged 96, but he was born in Wilfredham. Now we move up to Charles Otter, and at last we are away from the early 1900s; he was born in 1870, but in Saxfosdyke, dying in Wilfredham at sixty-eight. He married Helen Terry, with an aitch, born a dyke off the coast in Wulfstan, much further east."

"Born a dyke?" I asked.

"No, a dyke as in water course, kid," he said. "She was the daughter of Cornelius Terry and Mary Helen Wood, and Mary died after childbirth when fifteen years old. She's of interest because of her own complicated very important parents."

"We specialise in them," I suggested.

"James Wood, 1845 to 1911, was from Sutterkirk, still in your county but much to the south, and he married Janet Walker in 1863, and she was alive 1845 to 1933; but Mary Helen, born in Sutterkirk in 1865, was not Janet's daughter but Claire Jenner's. Claire was born in Binham but died aged 16 the day after Mary Helen was born."

"Many died giving birth, back in the day," I noted.

"Claire Jenner is your ancestor, but as Mary Helen's actual mother she is often overlooked. Claire was Raymond Jenner's first child, and that makes you, Linda, part of the Jenner-Rogers family."

"Oh wow!" said Allie. "We are *related*, Linda."

"Welcome to the family, kid," said Paul.

"Why do you keep calling me 'kid'?" I asked him. "Do you think I'm a bloke?"

Allie said, "Uncle Paul fancies having a goat."

"I've told him to stop his forced familiarity," said Sally. "Kid? She's not exactly long 'til her menopause."

"I won't have one of those," I told them, to surprised faces. "My testicles, such as they are, keep pumping out oestrogen." They still looked wide-eyed.

Paul said, "It was only that I'm of an age where Alice is a lass and so you're a kid."

"Surely Jonnie?" I asserted.

"He's my son. My 'kidder' would be my brother. Jonathan is my kid but I don't *call* him that."

"Stop digging," said Sally. "And stop being so proletarian. She's told you she's got high up bollocks so doesn't want to be called 'kid'."

"We are related. How?" I asked.

"Let me complete. Claire was born in Binham, like her father. He was born in 1832, and Jennifer Rogers, her mother, was born in 1834 in Wigton - but the point is that these parents died in Walsingham, and not just Walsingham but at the site on which this newer house stands. This is why I wanted you to come here."

Alfred said, "You told us you had something special to reveal, cuzzy."

Alicia said, "Cuzzy's a new one."

"I'm so excited!" said Allie.

Paul continued: "The time has come to weigh those things. Claire Jenner is the five times great grandmother of you, Linda; Claire Jenner is the five times great aunt of Alice here. So Raymond Jenner is the common ancestor: oddly, he is the six times great grandfather of you, Linda, and Raymond Jenner is the five times great grandfather of Alice. So, in a sense, you are re-uniting our family by marriage, or at least tying another string."

"Gosh," I said. "And look at you, Allie, being delighted by it!"

Paul said, "So, although not biological in your case, your child will be of the family line down both parents, you and Alice. So often Raymond Jenner is discovered as the kingpin of the family trees, and we run up several routes to him and to the Jennifer Rogers he married."

Allie said, "Two generations further up and we touch Crianlarich, in Scotland, thanks to the brief marriage of James Rogers with Margaret Urchardan, born 1790, another one dying during childbirth - so far from home - and she was seventeen. Her son Cornelius survived. Jennifer Rogers is the daughter of Cornelius. James Rogers, Jennifer's paternal grandfather, is the furthest back we go, though we know Mairead or Margaret's parents Dòmhnall Urchardan and Fionnghal Caimbeul."

"A place for our honeymoon indeed," I said to Allie. "And, Jonathan, knowing what we now know, that I am connected after all, will you now be the biological father of our child?"

Allie said, "You do know how to ruin a party."

"No, because we can know the biological source; it keeps it within the family," I suggested.

Alfred said, "You're applying a bit of undue pressure, Linda, on the back of actual news from Paul's knowledge and work."

Jonnie asked, "Does it change anything? As Allie has said to you, 'Pack it in,' Linda."

I had to back down. I thought I was trying to help. "Sure. I am quite amiss. I'm sorry. I'm lacking in some direction."

"I'll speak to you two later," said Jonathan. Here the conversation ended, with me going over and looking at Paul's notes.

We went to a computer, where Paul had already added this information into a dynamic family tree, and Allie sat down with retrieved notes to put in a line down to Akemi Tamuuz. Thus Allie was able to discover that I was the step sixth cousin once removed of Akemi.

Later on, I said to Allie alone, "This is a three-way relationship now, in terms of the family tree. I just so want to love him too sexually and work him towards a point where you can take over and then he can give you his life-force. Don't you see it? No, I'll stop it."

"Thing is, I do now. Of course you must be involved," Allie said. "Things are different now. Oh shit. Jonnie is one of those in the family who can keep the lines going."

A little later on, Allie took me into this main bathroom. A wetroom, it had a large central bath in it, with a rounded back and side taps. We shared it, getting a good soak and playing with each other, and there was a knock on the door. It was her mother, Alicia, with a camera, and she took several photographs of us from both ends and both sides.

Allie gave a nod, and so Jonathan came into the bathroom, and carried out

the Archimedes measuring principle as water slopped over. Allie's mother now took more photos, and in came his mother, Sally, to take her own threesomes of us. I was now a member of their family.

"They can come in," said Allie.

So in came Alfred and Paul to join the two women.

Paul said, "Linda, the sixth cousin once removed of Alice, and more remarkably you are my first cousin six removed. Here's looking at you, kid."

Sally groaned, saying, "Don't play *that* again."

I just started laughing.

(I was also the fourth cousin thrice removed of Sally, the fifth cousin twice removed of Alicia, the fifth cousin twice removed of Alfred and the fourth cousin thrice removed of Jonathan Jenner.)

Bed (Thursday 13th to Friday 14th February)

After drying, Jonathan and I only went into the bedroom we were using for this second night, now at his house, and he lay alongside me. Then Allie reappeared with two hefty photograph albums, the sort that people used to have before the digital age.

Allie (still dripping a little) announced that she'd leave us two together with the albums and return after talking to all four parents. She was arranging wedding details, like them staying at her Toulouse Road house and other places.

"Jonnie, cousin. You wanted to say something to us. Before you do, I just want to say, this baby is to be conceived in love. This involves the love between Allie and me but it can involve the love we have in the family. We'd like your love."

"I have told her I have one condition," he said. "Any conceiving by me is done here or at Collums. I'll come to the wedding, as they're arranging it now, but I am not coming up to Serninsea to do more attempted conceptions. The baby is conceived by me here or in the other house."

"She's been on the pill and has a device in her now"

"Why was she on the pill when she was getting on with you?"

"Well, she wasn't getting on with me until fairly recently. So there was a sexual risk."

"She's supposed to be a lesbian."

"People were organising sexual activities and there was a risk through her research. For example, I knew a randy rabbi."

"She didn't keep to women? She did in Somerset."

"It was a risk. It was a risk."

The albums showed photos of him alone, then Allie alone and then both together as new born babies.

"We were both born at King's Lynn hospital, 12th February me, 20th April Alice, 1989, but home is Walsingham from the beginning."

As Jonathan turned the pages, the babies turned into toddlers. They were shown together in this very location, including asleep on a bed. From the very beginning, they often but not always slept in the same place.

I said, "You don't have red hair but Allie does, and her hair is long quite soon

in life."

"Her grandfather had red hair, although a lot of the colour went. Some Rogers and some Jenners have it."

"Red hair frequency and intersex frequency are said to be the same."

"When she first said you were 'intersex' I thought she meant enthusiasm."

"Aha. I notice something here, with Allie."

"Her breasts. I noticed them before anyone her age - obviously. Eleven, she was, when they were noticed."

"And her first period?"

"She showed me. Soon as it happened. She bled more heavily later. I've always known when she was having her period, usually directly. Boys at school talking about tampons and so on - 'Have you got your towel? - were just silly. I told them so and it raised suspicions. We tried not to raise suspicions. One suspicion was Alice kept beating up these kids; I was a bit of a 'poof' - as in effeminate. Me, like, who did heavy work in the farm. So did she."

"She protected you."

"Has she protected you at all, Linda?"

"Yes, actually. One of those sexual risks. He came on to me and she threatened him. He knew that he had to back off, and he did."

"Were you grateful?"

"I was afterwards. She was very wise and I was foolish. I see more body shape, both of you."

Jonathan gave an obvious commentary on the photographs: these two got taller and filled out a bit and became distinctively shapely. Holidays were taken staggered, but the kids went together and often had twice the number of holidays of the parents. (The farms had to keep running.)

The photos tracked them into their twenties, with later photos having been printed out from digital originals. There were CDs and then USB drives in the back pockets of the second album. Jonnie said that he hoped Allie would supply some pictures from Somerset.

"As for Serninsea," I said, "I cannot recall a single family photograph being taken. I'm in loads taken by other people at Saxiclite and Beaver Wood clubs and elsewhere. And I was a model."

Then Jonathan went to a drawer in the bedroom, and produced a third photograph album. Ah. This was much more personal. Spanning from later childhood into early adulthood, and including their parents, the photographed were rather lacking in textile attire. They were both domestic and holiday, some out in the fields, but some had them in the bath, like we had been. Alfred kept with Alicia, Paul kept with Sally. The latest pictures lacked Allie. Today's photos would be added, and now I was in them.

The three photo albums were closed, and put down on the floor by the bed.

I looked at him, and so I said, "I think I want to kiss you Jonnie, and let's begin. Put your hand on my right breast and don't forget the left one. I like a bit of foreplay, Jonnie, so do you like going down on Allie?"

"Do bears shit in the woods? I love it."

"OK, then I'll kill two birds with one stone. Get into position." He did. I then opened myself up. "That's my clitoris, above, and you should see my pee hole, yeah, but look. There's a sort of depression where the vagina is, so it is sort of there, but

there is no cervix, no hole to reach. I've dilated using... They look like vibrators... It's still shallow, you see. Use your tongue, Jonnie. The usual way."

He was good at it too. I wondered what he had learnt from Melanie Windley and Rhiannon Fleetwood; otherwise his only teacher was Allie.

It was like telling a grandmother to suck eggs. So to sixty-nine: the best way with the female on top, his hands separating me as before for his tongue to apply pressure.

He signalled that he was on his way, and so we both shouted out for Allie, who arrived naked a couple of minutes later - it seemed a long time. The coil was in her hand.

"Mum removed it."

Having put some loose photos on top of a chest of drawers, she got into position on her back. I got off him and he got on to her and inserted, for him to pump quickly and rapidly. He sent a good amount of his sperm into Allie. After he'd finished and withdrew, we grabbed a leg each and held her bottom up.

"I'm like a fucking farm animal," she said.

And, once she was back down, she went to the loose photographs with almost clamped together legs and added them into the third album.

Next morning our horny male cousin was at her in a more conventional way, giving her more sperm again.

And so it was that breakfast followed, and we said goodbye to the other adults, and gathered our stuff from this house and the Rogers' house, to drive back north and west into the next county and up the coast to our own town and our shared living quarters.

Near arrival I said to Allie, "You criticised me constantly but I was right to press Jonathan to be the donor."

"Only when the circumstances had changed, cousin," Allie replied.

"That's right, lass."

"I won't call you 'kid' and you don't call me 'lass', right? He's the old goat, is Uncle Paul, and we make excuses for him - and 'cause he be good at family trees."

Chapter 32 Wedding

Narrator: Linda *Fireside Gymnology* (Wednesday 19th February)

Allie and I showered in preparation and checked out our bum holes. Georgie might not know the naturist ethos, so we took a stack of towels with us and not just one each. The bethel had plenty of towels.

We went out in a minimum of clothing to dispose at the destination, and picked up Kathryn, Kathleen and Winnie meeting together at Adam's.

We five were the first to arrive, at before 7 pm - I thought I'd help Georgie if necessary. My passengers carried in towels and we found clothed Georgie in the kitchen. Then unclothed Charley appeared to offer wine and glasses - to soon prodeed to the dining room. There was a double-take because his breasts had gone, bandaging was still across and there was of course his vulva, shaven.

"Is it shocking?" Georgie asked.

"No," I said. "And what about you?"

"I don't want to get splashed."

"You can wear an apron over nothing," I suggested.

"Why all the towels?" asked Charley.

"Because of sweaty bums and shitty arseholes. You'd be surprised. Do you have a room to remove and fold clothes?"

Such was also advice. So we were offered a room to remove and store clothes, which we did once we put the towels into this roomy dining area with cloth covered trestle tables. Then we had some wine - I and my accompaniment chose red.

Louise Saraga with James Saraga, Sally Torrance and Paula Campbell arrived. They knew the drill for undressing and using a towel each.

Next in were a gay couple, David McCormack and John Jackson, with their tattoos. Belinda Jack brought along her mother, Madge, and Flòraidh MacLean too. Most naturist gatherings these days were of older people; we had a wider age distribution expected.

Diana came in and the woman behind her was really puzzling. I'm not sure how these invitations went out, or what happened to them, because Andrea Plimpton (Lindsey) arrived, on her own.

"Just trying one of the local attractions," she said, with Allie excited to see her.

Also welcomed was Megan, the barmaid, adding some youth, saying, "Thanks for the invite. I'm trying again." She seemed hairier than ever, and of course also had all those tattoos.

Just before 7:30 pm a double line of people turned up: Carol Wood and Gilly Wallace (lesbians in their thirties), Gerald Hindley (brother of the MP) and Janet Gibson (in their fifties, married with different surnames), Andrea Carrithers and husband John Carrithers (forties), Aadesh Easwaren (fifties) and boyfriend Adrian Wigmore (sixties)

Then we had three singles: Evelyn Johnston (sixty), Janet Jenkins (of the Saxiclite Club), and Celia Haddon (thirties).

First of all Georgie called out from afar for us to sit down using towels! Then

Charley came in.

He said, "We don't want to frighten the horses, especially the naturist foals among us. So I am still bandaged for a while longer, having had my breasts removed. This is my first time at a naturist gathering. Our meeting here is at the retired minister's house, Georgie Smith, and it is her first time too. But she will be naked and will be something of a surprise to you. Please be tolerant."

Georgie came in. She had breasts that were small but seemingly natural, enough of a female body shape, but the huge surprise was that she had a penis and testicles. There were gasps and my eyes were wide open.

"Yes. I am and always have been a transgender, male to female. I started changing, with hormones, when I began at university. I dressed as a female. As everyone seems to know, I've always worn a skirt. What you don't know is I stopped wearing male underpants, so I've been like the archetypal Scotsman. I went into theological college as a female, and the tutors agreed to say nothing, so long as I said nothing. The principal was comparatively radical and sympathetic in the 1980s, but even he advised I ministered somewhere out of the way. For two less than forty years I've been here and never had a relationship. In Serninsea I could be convincing as a female and indeed I said nothing."

I had to say, "Well, you are very welcome in this naturist community, to reveal all among this company."

"I have to thank *you*, in a way. There's been a little chatter from Anglican directions locally about you, Linda, being a fountain of excitement and a sponge of active toleration. It was suggested I did my retirement lecture at your building because you are up for all kinds of things, and of course you are known for your naturism and I remember your family at Buzzard Farm."

"Ah," said Allie. Just before Christmas."

"Oh. Just after Christmas actually, when local stalwart Gertrude Carter suggested Linda and her Bethel as the place to go - although I chickened out of the recent gymnology meeting."

"And Roger," said Allie, quietly.

I looked at her with a stare.

Georgie continued, "So I'd like our gathering now to be on the private side, please, though I don't care any longer about rumours among my former colleagues in Foss. I am being the real me. Now people can understand why I have been friendly with Charley, who is transitioning the other way, but whereas he wants to gain a penis, I didn't want to lose mine."

Andrea Carrithers said, "You could always swap."

"What a good idea!" said Charley, whose response allowed laughter.

"A razor blade and some superglue," said David McCormack, to some more laughter.

"We do have circular spoons," said Charley, "and you can now choose oxtail or vegetable soup."

With our hosts gone to the kitchen, I had to speak. "Everyone, can I just say that coming into the naturist scene involves bravery but this is exceptional. A number of you are first timers, or near enough. Part of the naturist ethos is to accept variation in bodies and not to stare. I am myself intersex but, for me, it's easy because I am all woman on the outside. The trans person is like a cousin to me, because, just as my phenotype emerges as different from my genetics, so the trans person arranges their

appearance to be different from their genetics in accordance with their self-knowledge. Well done, I say to those two, for 'coming out' like this."

Georgie came back in. "I heard that and I want to say more. Let me speak. I went into university and theological college already in transition. Some church folk from way back knew, but everyone who did has kept quiet. Let me tell another secret. For the most part, I have never worn underpants or knickers and no one has ever seen me not wear a skirt. My breasts were emphasised via a bra, and the oestrogen grew my breasts. Charley's testosterone will make him more male. In my time here my libido reduced and my body fat redistributed. As my changes happened I had no need to remove my penis."

"Wonderful," I said.

"Oh, by the way, these tables to fit us in are from the UPCC chapel - my last interaction with the building. They cost about ninety pounds new each, so the retiring treasurer sold them off to me, without knowing why I wanted them. Back to the soup."

"Pity we got ours earlier on," I said.

Allie stood, "So we are having a big three couples marriage on Saturday. We will likely have different stages of undress, so it will be naked optional. The doors have to be open to the public, by the way. Just want to say, on the bravery front, well done for Andrea coming along, and also Megan again. I thought Megan wouldn't come but she has."

"I might sign up for Goosechat but not Supporters All."

"Oh, so you're making sure by coming here?"

"Again in your company."

Andrea said, "I'd like to repeat Georgie's request for relative privacy."

"Talking of relatives," I said, "someone did some remarkable genealogical work and we've been told that I am the sixth cousin once removed of Allie. How about that? I'm marrying my distant cousin."

Soup arrived and was consumed. Lamb, chicken and a nut roast were the choices afterwards. Ice cream and fruit was to complete.

After much chat and distribution of the ice cream and fruit, we arrived at the scheduled high brow Gymnology conversation, with Kathryn and Kathleen talking about the resumed local archaeology.

We learnt and discussed that the Celts under the Romans in these parts towards and around Wytham carried out metalwork repairs, as labour was cheap and materials being traded were expensive. When the Romans left there was no evidence for subsequent economic decline. Trade continued across the North Sea, from textiles to metalwork to jewellery, with some repairs and intermediate adaptations. Agriculture continued pretty much as before and there wasn't neglect. Beyond the Vikings coming, as they did, the standard view has become people spreading Anglo-Saxon culture. Therefore violent attacks were small and in the longer run insignificant. Each area retained its identity based on its topography and how folk exercised their rights to farm, but some decline in the climate meant less arable farming and more pasture.

The question arose of where to put some skeletons being dug up and analysed. A possibility was one of the underused Serninsea Marshes churches could become a store for listed skeletons. A coastal church had heritage oversight, but the air might not be the best.

"It's how they manage the inside space and air quality," said Kathleen.

Kathryn told us that calling the post-Roman period 'Anglo-Saxon' might even be misleading. Immigrants would have been more diverse in origin for some time. Arguably there was no rapid takeover by strangers and political change evolved. Trends suggest dividing the time between the Romans and the Normans into three: 400 - 650 CE, 650 - 850 CE and 850 - 1100 CE. A name to read on this is Susan Oosthuizen. Bede said that in the 700s people could speak Old English, Brythonic, Irish, Pictish, classical Church Latin, and especially vernacular spoken Latin, but nevertheless the dominance of English needs some additional explanation and perhaps migration increased over time - Old English itself was extremely close to Old Frisian and Old Saxon.

Our archaeologists further explained that German Saxons and the like were not in Britain during Roman times, and Brythonic definitely moved away from the east with the Romans gone. We do know that to the west the Celts and the Anglo-Saxons did have fights and thus you get Offa's Dyke.

We all thanked our archaeologists.

Of course we also thanked and Georgie and Charley as hosts. I also said that we did not always have to discuss theology.

The meeting wound down. There were some smaller group conversations (like Allie and Andrea, before Allie returned to me) and people drifted away.

"I still say we are not servants of the servants of God when ministers," the woman with a penis said. "But Charley doesn't even say that."

"No," he said. "I don't like the language."

"What else are we supposed to be?" I asked.

"Ministers of the Gospel," she said. "I still have no other language."

Then Allie came from behind me, the others near. She said, "I have a request for your consideration, Georgie, given your revelations."

"What, being a retired minister of the gospel or having a penis?"

"Both, really, as I see it."

"Which is?"

"We want a baby and you have sperm."

"I don't think so."

"Why not?"

"Nothing personal. I'm sorry but studies suggest that eighty per cent of transgender women have germ cells present in the testicles and spermatogenesis. Making sperm to do the job you want is preserved in approximately forty per cent of these individuals. After all my time with no sex and oestrogen, I'd be surprised if anything comes of there of any use to anybody."

I said, "To get a baby from you is like getting one from someone like me, even if transgender isn't being intersex."

"What does this involve, exactly?" Georgie asked. "*Indicate precisely what you mean to say.*"

Allie said, "Having sex with me, probably several times, in a loving setting, involving Linda."

Charley said, "Wow. And I thought naturism was only about removing clothes."

I said, "It's not naturism but reproduction. Mothers Shrimpton, we want to be.

"On top of this, I am sixty-four. This is more than *sending me a Valentine*. I

could be handy, mending a fuse, but not entering Allie, thus to reproduce."

"Oh very good," I said. "So no further *postcard*, stating our *point of view*?"

"Sorry," Georgie said, "but I think you need someone reliably rich in content. A minute ago I was an isolated worker for the Gospel, doing what was expected, surveying the barren land, and now, the moment I release myself to a select few, discretion assured, you want me to behave outside every expectation and experience of my life. But - hang on - I appreciate the good reason for asking me to fornicate."

We all smiled, and it wasn't long before we two had left.

Allie said to me only, later, "So Roger fucked Mrs. Carter in this bethel! Why? He donates sperm and she's past the menopause."

"She wanted a Christmas gift. It was about memories revived."

"Georgie Smith might want the same."

"Gertrude Carter has expressed her reaction of delight without saying what precisely happened."

"And what was your role?"

"I just facilitated the get-together. I'm not like you."

Narrator: Allie *Before the Wedding* (Friday 21st February)

I was not pregnant, I told Klärchen, whom I'd met alone with her dog, and now having a shower with the dog. Klärchen was doing my body and hair and the dog's. Some of my residual blood attracted the dog's attention, but Klärchen didn't mind. Clearly the dog was used to hers. Well, Klärchen was a dab hand with the hairdryer for both me and the dog. The dog started jumping around and it was time for me to go.

I returned to the bethel with the cleaners in. Linda gave me a long stare.

"Perhaps I should go next door and get my hair done. You could have invited me but you don't."

"You're right. I don't. You've offended her."

Jonnie was coming to Serninsea with his parents for the wedding. Linda's parents would be around later in the afternoon

Linda said, "Before Jonathan gives you away, when it is bad luck for me to see you, sleep with him and take his sperm."

"I'm not going to be deceptive," I told her.

"I need to see my best woman, and my family. I need to finalise last minute arrangements."

I asked, "Will Diana be naked or not?"

"I think she stays clothed when they watch *The Jacobite Gap Years*. She watches it again on a Friday, the first one - it's episode two of season three on Monday. "

"Ha ha. You know what I mean," I said to Linda.

"I wonder if Andrea will be nude? I doubt it, open to the public. Jenny isn't well. She is slipping mentally again," Linda told me.

"So what happened at the fireside stays there?"

"Unless it's in your research."

"I stopped. Don't you listen to anything I say?"

"Adam is going on about this virus again. He said about 11th February, when World Health Action for Treatment (WHAT) called the disease Novel Covid and the virus Severe Novel Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SNARS."

"It gives a label," I said. "Labelling is a key moment, say social scientists."

"Yes, it's given the virus its taxonomy, although the SNARS name isn't used much because 'the Novel Covid Virus' is more descriptive, or NC."

"Before I go: we do have the format finalised for the wedding?"

"There'll be three sets of vows but Christine is merging a number of texts."

"Put up a warning notice for entrants; don't let anyone in without them knowing what is inside."

"And after the ceremony?"

"You've said in the past that you would willingly walk down the street naked; you've said when you were a photographic model that they'd only do it for money whereas you'd have done it anyway. So this is what we should do. So long as we are clean, and neat, our hair is done..."

"Yours is already. Mind how you sleep on it. Don't let Jonathan pull on it when he fucks you."

"Linda, honestly! Jonnie *doesn't* pull my hair. The guests should not bat an eyelid once they've seen us once. So afterwards we are the same."

"I'm beginning to think you're a libertine."

"Beginning? You've called me much worse. I'll see you tomorrow. It's the beginning of the rest of our lives, Linda. Don't do anything I wouldn't do - you have one night to behave yourself."

"Surely that should be 'misbehave'?"

"However you feel comfortable," I responded.

"I'm going to see my family," Linda said, "staying at Yojana's and I've told Diana to meet me there."

I went to my house at 135 Toulouse Road, with a bag of borrowed crockery and cutlery, and spent time there packing my honeymoon suitcase as two cars found parking spaces nearby. All five blood relatives came over, and I pointed out that the parking of other vehicles probably suggested prostitutes' clients visiting.

So at last these adults saw inside my house. I told them that Christine let me have one all to myself and for my art.

My parents and others had double height airbeds to pump up I'd taken from the church before. Two (one per person) would be downstairs among the artworks downstairs and two in the unused bedroom upstairs. Jonathan, however, would sleep with me, partly because we had issues to discuss.

We went out for a meal, all six of us. I stressed that any participation in the nude was voluntary, though I wanted Johnnie to be in his birthday suit.

Aunt Sally said, "You shouldn't have changed your name. We were all disturbed by that and now it will show an anomaly on the certificate."

"I wanted a change of life. And now I am changing again. I'm marrying and Linda is taking my surname. I saw Linda at Margate and I knew she was right for me. After Abigail and after Beathag, she is the right person."

"You think she is faultless?" asked Sally.

"Oh, she is far from faultless. She has a sense of superiority over me, constantly undermined by her arrogance, stupidity, duplicitous..."

"We didn't even know you had lesbian tendencies," said my mother. "We brought you up to be open and unashamed, yet you gave us no idea, no indication."

"How could I do when in bed with Jonnie all the time? That was the point of leaving: I had no room to breathe."

Meanwhile, I had a request regarding my Uncle Paul. "Genealogy, uncle! Not us, this time, but someone who is coming here called Andrea Plimpton, and who was Andrea Lindsey of Somerset. Does she have any historical links to anyone famous? I'll leave you the details via an email so you've got them printed, though some you may need to find out."

"Fine, lass," he said. "I like a mystery."

Narrator: Linda *Diana Recalls Mr. Bode* (Friday 21st February)

So I drove to Diana's but she wanted to leave quickly with an overnight bag. This was unexpected, that Diana had previously slept in my bed when I was ill!

Aardse and the kids were behind her and sort of in the gloom, from my outdoors perspective. I'd expected to chat in her house, so instead I returned to the bethel.

There I said to her in the conference room that I hadn't got long as I was soon going to meet the family, as my daddy would try and reconcile deep family disputes. "This all goes back a long way, some deep rooted disputes and cuddle time matters between my dad and Lucinda."

"Then you need to know what happened to me."

"You?"

"Background information. Your father."

"Go on," I said.

"It was Sunday May 7th 1995, and it was really warm out, perfect for my second visit."

"Second visit."

"Roman Numerals had it as VII • V • MCMXCV and I knew this because it was the fiftieth year since Victory in Europe Day. We'd had a sixth form assembly on Rabindranath Tagore, a Hindu, on the Friday. *Some Might Say* by Oasis was top of the pops and Norway had won the Eurovision Song Contest with the song *Nocturne* by Secret Garden."

"It is really etched in your memory."

"Quite. As still a new friend I was coming along to be involved in Sunday's farm work. My mother said they were a dodgy lot at Buzzard Farm, and best to keep out of your shop. I noticed a little bit of tension then between mother and father; they'd had some sort of disagreement on the Friday when away from the farm.

"When I arrived you had nothing on, and it made me jump a bit. But to go in the shop you put a long blouse on, like, to cover your bits. 'Plimsolls'll do,' you said. So then there was another kind of thrill, really, when I had to do the undressing like you said to go with your father while you helped in the shop. You saw me naked for the first time."

"Yes. I remember it was during the second visit."

"You were dressed! I could see your mother's mammaries as she walked

through the corridor."

"I've not got long."

"Your father would show me the farm. You'd said, 'I'm having to help mummy. Put stuff on for inside the shop when back.' You gave a kind of 'mmm' sound at my appearance.

"Your father was pleased I'd walk with him. There was a barn he wanted to visit out in the fields to pick up some tools. Along the way he just pissed, without touching his cock."

"I should have warned you."

"So, I thought, as a seventeen year old, I'd show I was mature and adult by squatting and pissing - and that was because I needed to go.

"He nodded and I was pleased. 'Hey, I think you're one of us,' he said.

"We went in the distant barn and he told me that Luce was coming for what he called 'cuddle time' and it meant naturism inside as well as outside the body."

"Not heard it like that," I said.

"He said that you were not as mature as your sister. He thought I was mature.

"Lucinda came into the barn, completely naked of course, and she looked at me as she pushed her body into her father's, squashing her breasts on him, and he ran his hands down her back and over her bottom.

"He asked, 'How's it going out there?'

"She said there was progress and the tates were in well."

"First early potatoes," I said.

"Then he said to Lucinda, 'Go and do some more,' and then he started chatting to me about American television. Back in 1973 on 4th May American television showed female nudity for the first time. 'The Americans love their violence but are squeamish on sex,' he said, and that this was all wrong!"

"*Steambath* on their Public Broadcasting System. It's about a gateway to the afterlife."

"That's it," said Diana to me.

I said, "She was the sexy Valerie Perrine. Bill Bixby was on it, the green skin bloke ha ha."

"Right! Your father told me that this woman did some modelling and it would be great if his daughters could become famous models, posing and that."

"He never said that to us; my modelling was my doing."

"He then said Luce - he called her that - had changed and asked me if I'd changed? I said I thought so, if puzzled, because puberty was now obvious. He said we naturists folk don't worry about looking at these things that textile folk cover up - things that go redder, pinker, spongier. So I commented that they don't tell us this at school and he said this is why Lucinda was more advanced than you, Linda, because he'd made her more mature and he thought I was."

"This sounds like rubbish to me," I said

"I asked what to do, so he told me to sit on the bale and catch where that light is coming in. I had to open myself. I wasn't doing it enough, and he wanted me to get my fingers in and really pull. He asked about my cervix."

"Aha."

"I asked if that was the opening to the tubes and he joked that it was like going in the London Underground to the escalators. He said he could use a man's

strength to open me up."

"Sounds like Keith - later. I've got a few minutes before I must go."

"As he did this, and manoeuvred me to get the shaft of light in. I said to your dad, Mr. Bode, that his thing was growing. He said it was normal. He asked me then if boys were chasing me and I mentioned then upper sixth Keith Jupitas - they're a respectable family and that my mam liked him - and Adam Magellan in our year. Others were nothing.

"This was when he said I needed experience and he could do with what he does with Lucinda, and that was the reason I should tell you nothing. Your time would come, soon, but not yet. So I agreed. He told me naturists are freer than others, and do not brag about it, and that he'd been cleared medically, and thus I nodded when he pulled his todger and indicated he wanted to go in. One nod and so he did, Linda."

"Never did you tell me!"

"He told me to widen and then narrow my thighs as he thrust his penis in my vagina. I said, 'I'm getting sensations, Mr. Bode,' and he said this was proof I had been growing up. We were two natural people doing natural motions. He said my breasts were well developed and he felt them. I must have developed quickly."

"I don't know what to say."

"He asked me to describe what I felt. I said it was different from my finger. I described something extra happening but couldn't quite tell - a bit warm. He withdrew and said, 'Oh look, we've produced some white liquid,' and when he said he'd clean it I thought it odd that he cleaned it by getting his head down and using his tongue - on his own stuff in there."

"A mixture," I said.

"Yes, I know that now!"

"Sorry. I'm shocked."

"In fact he said chemicals in the mouth and vagina work together. So he kissed me and said I should get the taste."

"It should not have happened," I said. "I loved my dad like crazy and yet he stayed off me - until recently."

"Recently?"

"Yeah. I finally got to experience what Lucinda had for so long."

"Forty years old?"

"Yes. He should have left you alone but he's my daddy."

"Honestly, Linda! Talking of Lucinda, she came back in and your father added that she knows Keith Jupitas. She implied having had sex with him - fancy telling her father! They were in the same year, of course. She said he's a bit 'animal' and his family are stuck up. And this point I had to go. He told me not to go in the shop naked because the locals don't get it. If I wanted to stay unclothed I had to call you from the back. And I had to remember that people don't understand until they've grown up and you hadn't."

"Perhaps he believed this."

"You've one hell of a blind spot, Linda."

"I must go," I said again, and this time I did, leaving the conference room for the back door.

But as I did she ran to just behind me, saying, "It was Adam Magellan and not your dad or Keith that meant I had to stay at Rasa Market."

Narrator: Linda *Family Attempts to Reconcile* (Friday 21st February)

I'd expected a chat with Diana at her house about last minute wedding preparations. Instead I motored to the Maa Skelter Guest House to arrive a few minutes late.

Yojana was at the reception.

"Saltmarsh Room, ground floor. Naturist rules. Strip off here if you like and I'll keep your clothes."

That's what I did.

I met my father, Lucinda, mother, Leila, and even Larry. Dyfed wasn't present.

"You're late," daddy said.

Leila was close to mummy on one side of the room from the other three. Daddy then took Lucinda's right arm with his left hand and spoke.

"This family has become divided, fractured: all from events in the past between us. As Linda marries Allie Shrimpton, it's time matters were put right like I said. Yes?"

"Yes," said Lucinda held by his grip.

"Yes," said Larry, looking at them. I wasn't sure how daddy persuaded him to come, and I wasn't exactly sure I wanted his presence.

Daddy looked at me. "Yes," I said.

Daddy then said, "Leila has laughed at us all. Your mother has been upset. So everyone is involved. At the heart of this is the intimacy of this family, when intimacy is good. It doesn't matter what the world thinks and I am the head of this household. Isn't that right, Linda?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"You suppose so. You are at the centre of matters, like it or not. On your side of things, you should have welcomed your brother. He could have obtained experience from his sister and you could have offered it. But on his side, he should have been more persuading."

Larry started masturbating in preparation for something. I looked at mummy who seemed stony-faced, and Leila was wide-eyed with her mother's arm going around her shoulder and pulling her in.

"Come here," daddy said to me, "and touch your brother. You know exactly how. Your brother is going to respond to you, fully and properly."

"Daddy?" I asked.

"If you love me you love your own brother as well."

It sounded religious, that, but I said, "No daddy, I won't."

Larry said, "You wanted to know, you wanted to find out."

I replied, "I'm not going through all that again."

"Luce, show her what she's missing."

"Er... I'd rather Dyfed was here. I've my own repairs to make."

Daddy said, "Mr. Cadwaladr is not part of this long running problem."

"I am Mrs. Cadwaladr, please daddy."

"What daughters! right, well, Leila..."

"Oh no," said mummy, "you don't touch Leila."

"I was about to exclude Leila - it's about these two and him."

Then I said, "Daddy, I have heard what happened with Diana my friend when she was seventeen. You exploited her. You'd started doing cuddle time with Lucinda and you spun a tale of Diana's maturity and she thought naturists fucked each other. That's what you did."

"We do."

Lucinda said, then, "I'm going to find Dyfed, to be in time for him."

Daddy said, "That solves nothing."

"I'll try and get on with Linda better."

"Stay here while Linda does what this head of this household says."

Mummy then said, "Leonard, they have spoken their removal of consent."

"They are as my slaves in my household, something Linda herself once told me about - whole families being baptised and all that?"

"I was talking about then, a different kind of family from today's."

"But not here, not this one."

At this point a clothed Dyfed walked in, with Yojana behind him but the door was shut against her.

Dyfed said, "I'd appreciate it if you'd leave my wife alone. What you used to do is not starting up again."

He said, "It already has."

"Leonard!" called out mummy.

Dyfed said, "Lucinda: come out and get dressed."

"She stays here until matters are resolved my way, that this family connects intimately again."

Lucinda looked at daddy, and looked at Dyfed.

"Sorry daddy."

The two of them left.

I said, "I'm leaving too."

Daddy said, "You get against that wall, so Larry can do you properly and restore matters and then I will put the seal on it."

"No daddy," I said. "It stops now."

Mummy said, "You heard her."

I then took courage to leave the room, to hear raised voices as I dressed with the clothes handed back by a frowning Yojana.

As I was ready to leave the guest house, daddy came out and said, "Right. That farm is mine so until you come under my authority again everyone can stay away. That includes your mother and your sister."

"Ignore him!" mummy called out.

He said, "I'm going straight to Wales."

With his need to dress, I left directly for my SUV and drove to the Bethel. I'd no idea, then, if any in my family would attend the wedding.

Narrator: *Allie Night and Morning* (Friday to Saturday 22nd February)

My mother and father used the upstairs bathroom and downstairs toilet, and upstairs my aunt and uncle used that bathroom and toilet, as did Jonnie and me. He went in the bathroom before me and found my bedroom as I went in.

"I said to the adults, shouting down the stairs, "Jonnie and I are turning in now."

"Have a nice night," said my mother, who sounded sad.

He was already in bed as I undressed and got in. "You're happy to still sleep with me the night before," he said to me.

"Crumbs, Jonnie. There is no taboo between us, or shouldn't be. It wasn't you I ran from, but the pressure all four of them were applying."

"And me. I wanted you."

"All all my time in Somerset I was never tempted to go with another man personally."

"Do you still love me?" he asked me.

"I've always loved you. You're in my bed, aren't you? Let me have your knob. But I don't love you like having passion. When I'm with Linda, it's like an edge, it's passion. When we fight, it's because there is passion. I never fight you, Jonnie. I fight others over you."

"I want to fuck you, even if it is one last time."

"You can and there will be other times! You know I accept you. But where are you going to put your sperm? Don't start wearing a johnny, Jonnie."

"On your leg. I'd have had a marriage of convenience: you could have gone off with others, like Linda."

"I have to marry her. Don't you see? I need that bond, that union. Go inside me. I like you inside me, if it comforts you."

"Don't you get any sexual satisfaction from me inside you?" He entered me.

"Of course I do. I do like you in me, but I've never longed for any other man inside me, even if I've had one or five or forty-five. Yes, that's nice. I'm used to you."

I held him while he built himself into a strong rhythm, and then he withdrew and his sperm went all around my slightly hairy vulva, on the outside.

"Yes," I said, looking at the fact that, here, on my body surface, every sperm was not sacred. "Linda and I want a child. She cannot have children, so it is up to me. And I need another male donor. And now I need to ask you something more."

"What?"

"We'll be marrying naked. Will you be naked, giving me away?"

"I'd rather not. Not in front of everyone."

"That's the general idea."

"Is it compulsory?"

"No."

"I mean, is it compulsory for me?"

"I'd prefer it. I'd rather you were, but most important is you give me away."

"Probably no, then - being naked."

"Will you think about it?"

"I'll think about it."

"I want some sleep."

"By the way," he said, "I noticed you've lost even more of your accent. I know we once tried to be more cosmopolitan - you called it - but you seemed to have succeeded."

"And it wasn't easy in Somerset, either, with their local accents. Go to sleep my cousin."

In the morning I reminded my parents at breakfast (using crockery and cutlery

from the bethel) that they'd have to decide what to do regarding our naturist wedding segment. We six behaved loosely in the evenings at Walsingham, but they were reserving their positions here. Jonnie hadn't yet agreed to be naked as such.

Father said, "Jonnie should give you away with his togs off, lad."

Jonnie suddenly responded, "I don't want to give you away. I'm not giving Allie away to anyone."

This led me to say, "Jonnie! You agreed!"

"It's too much," he said.

"For once and for all, I need an emotional connection in a full way with Linda. It doesn't take away the closeness of you and me. But I have one life, and I want it with her, a partner in a new way, here, now, and forever, and you said 'yes' only last night. You don't need to take your clothes off - my nakedness is for Linda."

"Running away," Jonnie said.

"You are like a brother to me. With Linda I want the passion, the attraction, the wanting: her family is in town and they'll be naked."

"What *you* want. But what about family duty?" Jonnie asked.

"She's already a cousin, like you."

"That argument is over, Jonnie lad," said Paul.

"Jonnie, you are heterosexual. You'd get everything from a marriage with me. I wouldn't. I'm sorry that I am our only daughter for you."

"Don't blame us," said Sally. Both families had still-borns. You two at the same time were like miracles. We all protected you two, nurtured you two, brought you up together."

"I'm marrying out. I am being made to look like the black sheep of the family."

"We don't have any sheep," my father said.

"Nor do we," said my higher generation male cousin Paul.

"I'm going to shower and use some strips to match her natural pubic appearance in public. My hair was done yesterday. Yes, *she* could give me away. Klärchen can give me away."

"I did promise," said Jonnie.

I said, "I give up."

I had a shit and shower and invited Jonnie to bring up a one minute microwaved sugar solution in a jar. I showed him how the strips have to be used in the direction of the hair. He had a go, and then he did my inner arse a lot easier than I could have. That's when he checked it was clean.

Once we had finished it happened that Kathryn and Kathleen visited, to say they were getting the flowers from the florist.

Diana arrived a little later, with her hair done, the latter asking to be sure that Jonnie would give me away.

Diana told me, outside the back door, "The family reconciliation was a bit of a disaster, apparently. Her father has gone back to Wales - she thinks - as Linda said no more incest."

"Incest?" I asked. "Linda?"

"Her sister too. Oh crumbs, I didn't know you didn't know. Well, I didn't either. All I know is I lost my virginity to her father."

"You did?"

"I was seventeen. Keep it to yourself. It's not relevant to your research. oh shit: your research."

"No it is not."

So we two and Jonnie went to the bethel with the family following. Linda would stay over the way in the vestry, so we three were in the dining and seating area.

People started arriving. One was my professor, Roland Mitton, my one-time lover and tutor, Dr. Abigail Randall, and the Gaelic speaking secretary Ms Beathag NicAmhlaigh.

"We couldn't miss this for the world," said the professor.

"We'll be togs off," I said. "Naturism, religion, us: Diana here the same, as Linda's supporter or best woman, and Jonnie will be giving me away clothed or possibly unclothed."

Roland said, "I think we can manage that. Abby?"

"Yeah."

Diana said, "Then change nearer the start in the cloaks area next to the wet room, where Allie will hang around. There'll be flip-flops for your feet, but we four should be completely bare. Notices will be up; a wedding must be public but we don't want to frighten the horses."

For their wedding, Kathleen and Winnie would dress like the Vestal Virgins and Kathryn with Peter more traditionally. Diana asked me, "Are your colleagues naturists?"

"No."

"So they'll just take everything off?"

"Yeah."

"Why?"

"You ask me? I'm only the student."

"I need to get over to Linda. So you go to the cloaks on arrival."

Narrator: Linda *Weddings Immediately Before* (Saturday 22nd February)

From my bed and our breakfast, and some telephone calls, Diana had gone to her house and to bring back Allie. I went immediately next door. Klärchen Sisse answered partly hiding behind her door with her dog by her feet.

"I thought you were someone else, early."

I said, "I don't want to be presumptuous, but Allie had her hair done yesterday with you and our hair no longer matches. Can you do my hair, please? Please come to the wedding afterwards."

"You won't let my dog in your church."

"It's the public food regulations - but we could say it is a guide dog."

"Come in. You're fortunate. Hendrik is expected very soon."

"Yes, your friend is invited too. Salome Lichtblau."

"The dog is coming in, not Salome. We've had an argument. Our plans for a civil partnership have collapsed you know. She drops Hendrik off to see Dieter. Salome will only let me talk to her to talk about the dogs' welfare. Allie would have to invite her separately and then I'd have to arrange to take Dieter and come back for your wedding."

"I'm sorry to hear all this. Nothing to do with Allie coming here?"

"No. Get your clothes off in there and we'll all shower and I've got some nice hair shampoo I used on Allie yesterday."

"That would be lovely."

I sent Diana a message that my hair was being done by Klärchen Sisse. Soon after, a silent Salome dropped off Hendrik. It was all too complicated to invite them both to the wedding.

Thus it was that I had another woman's hands over my body on my wedding day, and I offered to scrub the dogs with their exclusive dog shampoo. But Klärchen said no, because it would give Dieter and Hendrik "the wrong signals," and only she (and beforehand Salome) could scrub the dogs.

I had to admit after the washing and drying that my hair looked fantastic, and so did the dogs' for that matter.

I just thought, returning to the bethel, that Allie's paintings throughout were such suitable celebrations of the body on this day. Sisters Kathryn and Kathleen were placing flowers all over the place. They each remarked that my hair was full-bodied, flowing and natural. Soon they left the building.

I was packing suitcases, including some of Allie's items, as we would go directly from the wedding to our honeymoon. Allie, I understood, would do some packing at Toulouse Road.

Diana messaged me that she didn't go home. She went to a salon and she had on a minimum of make up. Diana would appear like us two at the wedding.

Winnie was at the investigations premises with Adam Magellan, Peter Marshall, his father Cyprian Marshall, and Winnie's mother, Kimona Lott.

So Diana returned with Allie and Jonnie with an hour to go. She confirmed that Allie would indeed be given away by her cousin. She had news too. "Her professor is in town, along with two other women. Two of them will go naked, so the cloaks area will be used by them - not you and me."

"I could have had a naked meeting with her professor in Glastonbury."

"They're not naturists. Allie wouldn't say why they'll strip off."

"Par for the course with Allie. She *has* improved lately."

Diana said no flip-flops for us: we would be completely bare. We would have a variation to the mikveh: rings would stay on, because we'd have rings from the marriage service as symbols of continuous eternal love. "Circles," said Diana. "Sacred symbols of eternal love, and yet even death - think of the hangman's noose."

"Why consider that?" I asked.

"I got it from a certain drama. Hope I can catch part two on Monday."

"So how are the other two couples presenting themselves?" I asked Diana.

Diana replied, "So we'll have nothing on; Kathleen and Winnie will be in translucent gear, with some of the Serninsea Vestal Virgins present; and Peter and Kathryn will be in standard wedding gear despite their naturist presence at the mission. I suspect it's Adam's influence as his best man."

As the clock ticked on, Bishops Bill Masters and Pauline Junor came in. I waved across.

When, in a big surprise, Bishop Derek and Mrs. Louise Imperial came in and even started looking around, I had to go out and say hello. They understood I needed to retreat away again.

Also arriving were Bishop Sarah, the Reverend Louise and the Reverend

Duncan Deimos with Bishop Margaret Lindbeck from the north.

Bishop Christine Vine arrived and joined Diana and me in the vestry. The Reverend Charley Darley came in the building with the Reverend Georgie Smith to sit down.

"Thing is, Linda," said Margaret, "if you are going to be naked, you've got a problem because the doors must be open. The wedding is public."

"We've considered this; we have warning notices. I'm not compromising on this. I am proud of my body. I'm saying to everyone, alongside Allie, 'This is who I am.'"

Missing among the gathering were members of my own family. I'd have to see the effect of the disastrous 'reconciliation'.

Diana went out to meet Allie's other family members. I had to stay in the vestry, and I undressed. Allie disappeared back into the cloaks area.

Diana rejoined me and undressed. She was well-scrubbed, like me. The various bishops left.

Then music began from the CDs, being selected and played by Jenny from the seating and dining area.

Therefore Diana and I, completely naked, on our bare feet, walked over to the chapel, she to my left. We passed Derek and Louise Imperial sat well back; it was the first time he'd seen me like this. I passed by a smiling Gertrude Carter, sat next to clothed Georgie Smith and Charley Darley. There were a more gasps as we went into the chapel.

One person who didn't gasp was Annie, with equally clothed Megan alongside.

Lindy Peacock and Jeremy Symes were naked. Some of the gymnology crowd were present and naked. Roger Humphrey, Marie Enfield, Belinda Jack and Madge Jack were sat waiting (and clothed - despite their participation in naturism).

Worryingly, only my mother and Leila were together, both without clothes, in the forward seats. Mummy looked stoney faced. Lucinda and Dyfed were elsewhere and clothed! My very own sister was denying that for which my family stood.

There were still a number of unoccupied reserved seats regarding the supporters and families of the six getting married.

The altar table was along the long wall. Therefore, our bare backs and bottoms faced out into the seating space.

Professor Roland Mitton and Abigail Randall were completely naked, but Beathag NicAmhlaigh was clothed. The flesh-displaying pair were sat by the created aisle.

Friends like Patricia, Arthur and Aardsee were now seated, and the de Groot children, all clothed of course, just as were all others present. (They were used to the odd occasion when mother had nothing on. Patricia's children were not.)

Diana to my left and I stood up and waited, to then be joined by Winnie to my right in a body-revealing white translucent gown, although her mother, Kimona Lott, by her right hand side, was in a white suit. Looking back I saw Carrie Chopin, Gloria Mabaso, Paige Tuck, Bethany Gorge, and Hattie Schepsutte, each wearing translucent gear.

Suited Peter arrived and was accompanied by Adam Magallen on his left. Peter's father, Cyprian Marshall, also suited, came in and sat down.

Thus six of us were stood waiting. From right to left were Kimona, Winnie,

Peter, Adam, myself and Diana.

At the service front behind the altar table we had Bishops Christine Vine and Margaret Lindbeck also now stood waiting. Bishops Bill Masters and Pauline Junor came and sat near the altar table, looking at the increasingly large congregation. I could hear but not see late arrivals behind me.

The Weddings

The music faded to bring on the principal tune, *Here Comes the Bride*, and the three brides arrived with those giving them away. There was Kathryn in a flowing white wedding dress over her increasing bump and Kathleen with a see through-translucent gown. In between them was their uncle George Wickenby. Kathryn found Peter and Adam, and Kathleen found Winnie and Kimona. If Kathleen received a few gasps, Allie and Jonathan raised the human volume level as both were completely starkers, including bared pubes and bare feet like Diana and me. Allie reminded me of Crystal Tipps and Alistair (though her hair was purple).

Oddly, before complete arrival, Jonnie and Allie paused, and her naked professor and dazzling female colleague stood up, faced her, and they each placed their hands on Allie's head, and the three in contact nodded. Professor Mitton and Dr. Randall then sat down. I'd have said that was a blessing.

It was busy along the front as Allie and her supporter finally lined up: right to left was Kimona, Winnie, Kathleen, George, Kathryn, Peter, Adam, Jonathan, Allie, me, Diana.

I smiled at Allie, who beamed back, and I then looked around. My mother and younger sister smiled, and Allie's dressed ones seemed to be taking in Allie's and Jonnie's nudity very easily.

Bishop Margaret then said, "Welcome one and all to Serninsea Liberal Bethel, for the celebration of the marriages between Peter and Kathryn, Winnie and Kathleen, and Alfia and Linda. We will have a Communion service during the service, with a Body Eucharist element for our marriage partners. We begin with a hymn: the original is *I Would Be True*, by Howard Arnold Walter, but we've changed the 'I' to 'We' and 'me' to 'us'."

Once the two verses were sung, Margaret asked, "Winnie and Kathleen, who gives Kathleen away?"

Kathleen said, "This is my Uncle George Wickenby."

Then she asked, "Peter and Kathryn, who gives Kathryn away?"

Kathryn said, "My Uncle George as well."

Then Christine said, "Alfia and Linda. Who gives Alfia away?"

Allie said, "My fourth cousin once removed, Jonathan Jenner."

Christine asked, "Peter and Kathryn, who is Peter's supporter?"

"He is my employer and friend, Adam Magellan."

"Winnie, who is your supporter?"

"My mother, Kimona Lott."

Now Margaret asked Allie and me, "Linda, who is your supporter?"

I said, "My good friend, Diana de Groot."

Margaret said, "Thank you all. *Those of you who are giving away, you are*

releasing them now. You have each given away the one you love into this ceremony, during which they will join their partners in holy matrimony. Would these named supporters please sit down?"

They did.

Christine said, "The supporters here we shall call upon soon, but in the meantime also please sit down. We have our three couples standing."

Now Margaret said, "*Grace to you all; let us rejoice and be glad.*"

Christine took over. "*We have come together under the presence of God to witness the marriage of these couples, to rejoice with them and to ask God to bless each of them.*"

Margaret said, "*Marriage is a commitment between two people before witnesses. As friends, all six here have decided to undertake a joint ceremony. In marriage, Winnie and Kathleen, Peter and Kathryn, and Linda and Alfia, make their solemn covenants before God. In their new lives of faithfulness and loyalty, they will in marriage also enrich society, strengthen community and share their possessions with each other and with those in need. This broader commitment is evident from the beginning in this shared ceremony.*

"*Marriage is to be entered into reverently and responsibly. This is the way of life that Winnie and Kathleen, Peter and Kathryn, and Linda and Alfia have chosen. These couples have come to accept each other freely, to give their consent to each other in solemn promises.*"

Now Christine said, "*God gives love to all here this day: your love is both agape and eros and the way of forgiveness and peace; loneliness is banished and community is enhanced.*

"*God's love into the creation and recreation is already here. This renewal of love will come through Winnie and Kathleen, Peter and Kathryn, and Linda and Alfia, continually, shown in affection and faithfulness in their future lives. Amen.*"

Margaret read from the Song of Songs 2 verses 10 to 13, Matthew 5 verses 1 to 9; and Christine read from 1 Corinthians 13:1 to 8a plus 13 and 1 John 4 verses 7 to 19.

Then Margaret had some words for us, as a homily using some basic notes. "I'm very pleased to be here again, representing the denomination, with the Reverend Duncan Deimos in the congregation, perhaps, giving a Free Catholic - sometimes, if confusingly, also called High Protestant - liturgical approach to a marriage ceremony, assisted by Bishop Christine here with her Liberal Catholic hue. In addition we have post-Buddhist, neo-Pagan, and humanist elements. This is quite unusual in itself, and so is having three couples at once. A service for two couples has been known. The 1995 television version of *Pride and Prejudice* put two couples together: not so in the book. We have to make it very clear who is marrying whom - and so long as each couple does the legal bits, we can combine the rest. Much more efficient.

"In principle and personally, we affirm the body. We affirm sexuality: all these couples will be sexually active this evening!

"Indeed, two of our brides are pregnant: Kathryn is visibly well on her way, and Kathleen will show a bump soon enough. I am told that Allie intends to have a child. So very soon these three will have similarly aged children. It will change this place as four of them are residents.

"Normally the doors are locked for naked or near-naked including events, but

for a wedding they must be open. The fact that the doors are open indicates that this is a communal and even community event. Marriage, we say, strengthens social bonds, and certainly this tiny denomination of ours favours complete inclusion in marriage. Yes, sir, you may take photographs. It is public recognition. Our mission includes social solidarity; it includes personal solidarity too, and this comes through intimate association.

"Intimacy is biological, cultural and religious. Theologically, we believe that grace comes through the body, and is in the bodily life. And our theology of this, then, is about incarnation. Free Catholics, if not Liberal Catholics, tend to believe in a more broadly universal or, even, subjective incarnation, assisted by liturgy; Liberal Catholics tend towards a more mystical Christ embedded through his Church. I see that Bishop Christine is nodding. So via the mystical or via a collectivised subjectivity, we do give breadth and ease to any specific belief.

"Nevertheless, whatever the metaphor you may use - depth, height (and I prefer height myself) - and whether you consider God as absorbed or distinct (I try to go for distinct myself) we do use the word 'God' as a kind of shorthand for however you envisage this source of connectivity. We think God affirms sex, and strengthens the commitment of marriage.

"The body element is emphasised at the mikveh ceremony that concludes these weddings. Here they will all be naked and will completely submerge, each couple together. A mikveh ceremony is not baptism; nevertheless, looking at this mikveh, I am reminded that a baptismal bath best resembles a tomb. Because, in such a whole body font, one dies and rises with Christ. Here we do something similar. We submerge the old life and we emerge into the new direction. The mikveh symbolises intention. So there is a connection with regeneration and recreation. Water both kills and gives life. New trials will come, and the human struggle continues, but we set our sights ahead. And marriage is like this. It is a gathering, a moment to reflect, and a moment of recreation together if not the focus of actual new creation in reproduction through the basis of parenting.

"Marriage was once a private and not a Church concern. It became part of the Church's universe. Unless we are polyandrous, we pair up, and the Church affirms pairing, and we give recognition to birth and upbringing, sorting out inheritance and continuing the family line. So this is what we are doing, under God. Amen."

I noticed at this point Allie looked over to her family; thus Allie and I were continuing her family lines.

Now Christine spoke. "Before our God and this gathering, I will ask each couple to declare your readiness in a condition of freedom to enter into the covenant of marriage. I will also ask your families and this gathering to affirm and support these marriages."

(It seemed to me that my parents might have to reaffirm their own marriage.)

"We have promises in the negative, knowing no reasons why not, and then we affirm for ourselves and then give the positive legal commitment that does the job.

"I ask the congregation: If you know of any reason in law why Peter Marshall and Kathryn Wickenby may not be joined in marriage, please declare it now."

There was a pause.

"So, I must ask you, Peter and Kathryn, to declare that you know of no reason in law that you may not be married."

Peter and Kathryn each gave their declaring facilitating legal messages as

required.

The congregation kept quiet for the next couple and Winnie and Kathleen said as the first had done.

The congregation then was asked in our case why we should not be joined in marriage.

Someone said, "Yes. Her real name is Alice Rogers."

It was like I had a brick in my chest that dropped to my stomach.

"No it is not," said Allie.

Rhiannon Fleetwood had stood up and spoken. The congregation hissed at her, and she left the building, saying, "Neither of them are faithful to each other."

Bishop Christine said, "We've gone into this. Her name was changed legally. Allie is definitely Alfia Shrimpton. Now we come to your own knowledge and understanding. Sorry about that.

"Say, after me, if it is true, 'I declare that I know of no legal reason why I, Linda Jupitas, may not be joined in marriage to Alfia Shrimpton.'"

I said, "I declare that I know of no legal reason why I, Linda Jupitas, may not be joined in marriage to Alfia Shrimpton."

Now Christine turned to Allie. "Allie: *Say, after me, if it is true, 'I declare that I know of no legal reason why I, Alfia Shrimpton, may not be joined in marriage to Linda Jupitas.'"*

Allie said, looking over to her family, and then to me, "I declare that I know of no legal reason why I, Alfia Shrimpton, may not be joined in marriage to Linda Jupitas."

Margaret took over again. She declared: *"O God of all faithfulness, we pray for those who will make their positive promises today: bless them with sincerity and give them your grace. May Peter and Kathryn, Winnie and Kathleen, and Linda and Allie, know that their love for each other draws upon the will and pleasure of God. May these promises set their lives ahead. Amen."*

Margaret then moved the service on, to the declarations. "I come now to some general statements of commitment, and go along the three couples again.

Peter Marshall and Kathryn Wickenby, and then Winnie Lott and Kathleen Wickenby, affirmed marrying each other.

Margaret asked us the same: *"Linda Jupitas and Alfia Shrimpton, will you share in the bond of marriage? Will you love, comfort, honour and protect each other, in times of prosperity and poverty and in health and sickness? Will you be faithful to one another for as long as you both shall live? Will you raise any forthcoming children as faithful and loving parents? Say..."*

We said together, "We will."

"I must ask the families first, regarding the families of Peter and Kathryn, Winnie and Kathleen, and Allie and Linda: *Will you, of their respective families, bless, support and encourage them in their marriages?"*

"We will." Mine said it from their distanced positions.

"And those who also know them - or are likely to know them, as friends and associates, gathered here today - will you support the couples you know?"

"We will," said various people in the chapel and seating area.

Christine, also as an authorised person for marriage, came to more of the legal stuff. "Listen. As required by law in England and Wales each person declares in the presence of the Authorised Person and two witnesses the statement that fixes

the marriage. Be ready all three couples! Each person face their partner and hold hands.

Regarding the first couple, Peter went first to take Kathryn as his wife, and then Kathryn went second, to take Peter as her husband; regarding the second couple, Winnie went first to take Kathleen as her wife, and Kathleen went second to take Winnie as her wife.

Then came our turn.

"Now to this couple, to say the vital legal words. Linda: *Say, 'I call upon these persons, here present, to witness that I, Linda Jupitas, do take you, Alfia Shrimpton, to be my lawful wedded wife.'*"

I thus said, eagerly, "I call upon these persons, here present, to witness that I, Linda Jupitas, do take you, Alfia Shrimpton, to be my lawful wedded wife."

"Allie: *Say, 'I call upon these persons, here present, to witness that I, Alfia Shrimpton, do take you, Linda Jupitas, to be my lawful wedded wife.'*"

Allie said, "I call upon these persons, here present, to witness that I, Alfia Shrimpton, do take you, Linda Jupitas, to be my lawful wedded wife."

Margaret now said, "*We have witnessed these three couples making their legal declarations, and they were given in accordance with God's holy will: to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death them do part.*"

"Can supporter Adam Magellan please come forward with the rings, and give them to me. Thank you, Adam. Please be seated.

"*O God, whose love encircles us all, bless the giving and receiving of these rings. Love never ends. Love is received with bodily presence.*"

Margaret gave a ring to Peter, who placed it on Kathryn's given finger. Then she gave Kathryn a ring, that she placed on Peter's given finger.

"Can supporter Kimona Lott come forward please, with new discs for Winnie and Kathleen and give them to me. Thank you and please be seated. Carrie Chopin: please come forward and give a prayer."

Carrie said, from near the front, "Magdalene! Come down, bless these new discs; bless their wearers, that they may come together, in deep and sensual love, not forgetting their love for their fellowship members."

Margaret said, holding the discs, "*O God, whose love encircles us all, bless the giving and receiving of these circular discs. Love infills and strikes like the silver moon. Love is received with bodily presence.*"

"Everyone, receiving these discs involves a little delicate manipulation, for the Serninsea Vestal Virgins wear rings on a loop and then another loop through the clitoral hood."

Releasing her hands from Kathleen, Winnie got on her knees, and removed Kathleen's disc, and gave it to the minister; she received the new one from the minister, and Winnie attached the new one to the lower loop hanging down from Kathleen. Winnie kissed the disc and kissed Kathleen's clitoral area. Winnie stood up.

Then Kathleen got on her knees, and removed Winnie's disc, and gave it to the minister; she received the new one from the minister, and Kathleen fumbled a little as she attached the new one to the lower loop hanging down from Winnie. Kathleen kissed the disc and kissed Winnie's clitoral area. Kathleen stood up.

Then Carrie Chopin and Gloria Mabaso came forward and separating their

respective velcro strips opened their own translucent gowns to reveal their breasts, tummies and pubic areas; Carrie dropped to the ground and kissed the discs of each wedded woman. Standing, each marrying woman sucked on each of Gloria's nipples, resulting in actual breast feeding and milk consumption. I could have done with a drink at that point, with my mouth somewhat dry. Both covered themselves again (joining each velcro), moving back to their seats.

"Can supporter Diana de Groot come forward please, with the strings of beads for Linda and Allie?"

Margaret took the two strings of beads from Diana, displaying her gorgeous naked body, and Diana went and sat down again.

"O God, whose love encircles us all, bless the giving and receiving of these beads of amber. Love is ancient, present and encircling. Love is received with a bodily touch."

Margaret handed Allie and me our strings of beads, kissing each string of them. Allie stretched a little and put the beads over my head, and put my hair over them. I then took the beads in my hands, raised my arms high and placed them around her head, and moved her red hair over them.

Christine said, "Each couple. Hold one another with willingness and give each other a long, loving kiss."

I did not know what the others did. All I know is that I held Allie, and she held me, close and pressing, and we snogged for some ten seconds or so, and I placed my hand between her legs, and her hand touched my yoni area too, and the gathering in the chapel and seating area burst into applause.

Christine said, *"Our God, the source of all true love, we give you thanks that Peter and Kathryn, Winnie and Kathleen, and Linda and Allie, have given each to the other in the covenant of marriage. Bless them, lead them, give them your grace to forgive when disagreement comes, and give them strength to endure with them able to call upon mutual support. May they be thankful; may they joyfully embrace this new life into its future time. Bless their families and friends, that they may also give these couples support, and bless their homes. The people: let us be of practical support as we can, as begun today with those that gave away and those that supported. Amen."*

"Peter and Kathryn, Winnie and Kathleen, and Linda and Allie, have declared before God and before you the gathered people that as couples they will live together in the bond of marriage. They facilitated, promised, made vows, and exchanged symbols of their new lives together."

Margaret then said, with Christine, *"We, the ministers of this ceremony, therefore declare them to be married, under the Creator of all, the mystical Christ and the active Spirit. Those whom God has joined together, let no one separate."*

Margaret then said alone, as Christine approached a long table in the seating area, "We now have registration papers to sign, so we shall sing a hymn and listen to some music. The hymn is *Break Not the Circle* by Fred Kaan.

The congregation sang as we had three papers on a long desk to sign, each couple and representatives doing this alongside each other.

Naked Professor Roland Mitton was a witness for us, and so was Patricia Rhymes. Two of the Serninsea Vestal Virgins, Hattie Schepsutte and Paige Tuck, were witnesses for Winnie and Kathleen. Roger Humphrey and Belinda Jack were witnesses for Peter and Kathryn.

Bishop Margaret sat down near Bishops Bill and Pauline. Bishop Christine returned to the altar table.

Wedding Eucharist

Next came a Communion Service, to be in two connected parts, a more intimate Body Eucharist for the married couples with a Eucharist for everyone else.

Bread discs, some being large, and wine in goblets, were placed on the altar by Bishop Bill Masters and Bishop Pauline Junor, and Pauline began with the words:

"God be with you."

We all said, *"And also with you."*

"Lift up your hearts."

"We lift them high."

"Let us give thanks to God."

"It is right to give thanks and praise," we all said.

"God whose power is compassionate: you invite us to share your own life-giving Spirit, for love is your nature. We offer our praise to your unending glory: Holy, holy, holy God of power and might. Heaven and earth are filled with your glory."

Now Bill said, *"Jesus of Nazareth lived his life for others, and was the model for reconciliation. Towards the night when he was to die, he showed his compassion for all."*

"At supper this man with his disciples took bread and offered thanks to God. He broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples, saying: 'Take, eat. This is my Body: it is broken for you.'

"After supper, he took the cup and offered thanks to God. He gave the cup to the disciples, saying: 'Drink this, all of you. This is my Blood of the new covenant poured out for you and all others to consume."

"Love is unending in communion with Jesus Christ."

Pauline said, *"We do as he says, and reflect upon his passion, death, resurrection and ascension ahead of the coming of his Kingdom. This sacrifice is one: it is of then and now, a living sacrifice."*

"We minister using these tokens for our eating and drinking, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that they may be Christ's Body and Blood, and generate love between our newly married couples and indeed among the gathered."

Christine came to the fore, and Bill and Pauline stepped back. Christine said, *"For the Body Eucharist section, the couples should now face me and each person make good contact with a hand on their married partner's flesh. Find somewhere unapologetically intimate, if possible. For two of our couples this is quite easy, Peter and Kathryn might struggle a bit! Holding a waist under the clothing is all right."*

My hand rested on Allie's pubic area and so she did the same back, all six of us facing Christine.

"Each one of you six will take the larger disc from my mouth by getting close to my face and gently biting it away, taking it all into your mouth."

Thus Christine received from Bill a disc, and Christine placed one between her teeth. Still making contact with Kathryn, Peter came close to her face, but some laughter arose as he bit into the disc and took only part of it in his mouth. She offered

the rest, sticking out her tongue, and he took it from her tongue with his lips.

Christine said, "*You have received the body, the holy substance.*"

Then Bill placed another a disc in between Christine's teeth, so that Kathryn could receive it, which she did whole, and Christine spoke as she had to Peter.

The same happened for Winnie, Kathleen, Allie and me, holding on to our partners.

"Now the tricky bit," Christine said. "I will receive a swig of wine, and have it in my mouth. Each of you are then to come close - keep hold of your partner - and get your mouth open and under mine. I will see that the wine goes into your mouth. Be ready for it because I'd rather you did not cough. I have been practising! Peter, you go first again. Open wide, get close and under me. Hold on to each other's flesh."

Pauline lifted the cup, and Christine drank wine to hold it in her mouth. Peter touching Kathryn again opened his mouth. Christine seemed to close her lips, as if to kiss, from which a steady stream of wine went into Peter's mouth. He did not cough, and then he swallowed. His suit was untouched.

Mainly emptied of the wine, Christine said, "*You have received the blood, the holy life force.*"

The same process continued with the rest of us, and I took mine confidently, knowing that I did not usually gag, with my finger slightly circling up into Allie's vagina. I swallowed.

This was interesting. It was less explicit than the Body Eucharist at the Titansea Grand that I had experienced, and considerably less explicit than the Body Eucharist Allie had experienced above the casino. Also, none of the bishops wore open ritual clothing, as they had before. It was noticeable that the holy act was carried out exclusively by Christine and her bishops assisting in a non-erotic manner.

With us done, we were invited at last to sit down, and we did as respective couples.

As music played, including a choir singing the hymn *Bread and Wine are of the Earth*, by Peter Sampson, the Eucharist - in a rather more standard form, a smaller disc and a swig of wine - was offered for everyone else on the declared Open Table basis. Margaret, Bill, Pauline and Christine all distributed. Bishop Christine regarded Bishop Margaret as a fully accredited apostolic bishop, but in an irregular Communion, but here we had been in Christine's ministry under her Church offering.

Thus I could see people who came to the table. Each of parents did not, but my pretty white flesh sister Leila did. Professor Mitton did, and so did his two female associates. Diana did, who shook her bottom at Allie and me; Adam did; Allie's parents and relatives did, including the naked cousin; and naturist couple Jeremy Symes and Lindy Peacock did. So did Carrie, and Hattie, in their translucent gear. I was pleased that Gertrude Carter was partaking too but Georgie and Charley didn't. The Reverend Duncan Deimos received. Ah, some of the folk from the Gymnology Class were naked as they came to receive. Roger with his sister Marie and Belinda with mother Madge all partook.

Unseen until now, Andrew Walter and Laura Kingswood also consumed the host and wine. It was good to see Ann Dromeghda and Labhaoise Vlahos partake too, given their crucial support for the Bethel. And I was delighted to see Megan consume too.

The liturgical lines for what people received were the same as for the Body

Eucharist.

Bishop Bill said, "God transcendent, as you have joined Peter and Kathryn, Winnie and Kathleen, and Allie and Linda, so: *We have been together in your love receiving your body and blood, and we thank you for feeding us.*"

Bishop Pauline then said, "*Christ go before us, Christ be within us, Christ shine from us.*"

"Now our service has one final feature. Please, the married couples stand and follow Bishop Christine over to the mikveh. And while we do this, please sing the hymn, *The Human Touch* by John Andrew Storey.

Weddings Mikveh

Bill, Pauline and now Margaret too went and sat to the north end of the chapel. At the other end, the mikveh end, we couples faced Christine.

What was happening here was Allie and I stood as we were, our backs to the gathering. We helped Winnie and Kathleen remove their translucent gowns. Then the four of us helped remove much more clothing from Peter and Kathryn.

As we did this, Christine addressed the congregation. "This is our mikveh, a symbolism of taking on a new direction. Often couples immerse in here before the wedding day in anticipation of the future. Here we are doing this on the wedding day, and they enter with decisions made as newly married couples, and consider the life they will now lead. The couples will go in, submerge completely, and kiss below water and then emerge to kiss above water, and then will come out of that space as couples holding hands. We are making a change from previous practice: because this is about a wedding and a new life in marriage, Winnie and Kathleen will keep their discs on, Peter and Kathryn will leave on their rings, and Linda and Allie will submerge and emerge wearing their beads. We usually insist that all such additions are removed and all orifices are open. Not today. The orifices concern the couples; jewellery is about their togetherness.

I thought Kathryn had courage; I suppose she was a model and did still do massages for customers, but here she was with a large bottom, thicker legs, her bump and darker larger nipples. Kathleen had yet to develop in this manner.

Our backs and sides were facing the congregation as we waited.

Christine said, "*O God, you created the universe from a womb of water. You made us all in your image, pure and holy, according to your divine will. Each body of beauty has rhythms like the sun and moon, and the seasons, and the Holy Days. We bless God's sacred name and ask for a blessing on these couples.*"

"First to enter are Mr. Peter and Mrs. Kathryn Marshall."

Everyone saw them go in and down the steps, and could not see the kiss below water but did see them come up above the water line and kiss again. They emerged coming up the steps on the other side in the same direction as they'd entered with their backs to us, but then there were gasps as they turned along the side because Kathryn was indeed large breasted, dark in her nipples and areole, with her visible bump and quite hairy between her thighs. Peter was a model of being average. Christine held up towels which did then somewhat obscure the view.

"Next to enter are Mrs. Winnie Lott and Mrs. Kathleen Lott."

As Peter and Kathryn wrapped themselves in their towels, everyone could see the second couple descend, and kiss again once they had come above the water line, to then have Winnie and Kathleen emerge further up the other steps and reveal more coming around to walk out. They were fairly hairy around their pubic areas and towels were raised up.

Now it was our turn. "And now to enter are Bishop Mrs. Linda Shrimpton and Mrs. Alfia Shrimpton."

Allie went in front of me, down the six steps to the mikveh base, and we turned to submerge. Our hair floated about in the water. We held each other to kiss within the water, and then we rose up out of the water to kiss again. We then continued out and around to come up the steps on the other side in the same direction as we'd entered, to then come on the perimeter walkway to go around and give everyone a full frontal view of our dripping bodies and being hairless around our genitals.

Christine stated, "*Let us give praise to God that these couples submerged and emerged into a new hope.*"

Then an invitation went out to anyone who wanted to submerge and some did, notably shaven Jonathan, Professor Mitton, Dr. Randall and shaven Diana.

I was surprised about Diana. What new was happening in her life? I had no idea.

When all these four were done, Christine said, "*Let us give praise to God that these individuals submerged and emerged into a new hope.*"

Christine concluded this ritual by saying: "*O worship in the beauty of the body's holiness.*"

Bishop Margaret finished the service by announcing a final hymn, *Love Knocks and Waits for Us to Hear*, by Daniel Charles Damon, with its message of love, singing and dancing for new life beginning.

Bishop Christine ended the service by saying, "The blessing of God: Creator, Christ and Spirit, be with you all, now and until the Kingdom comes."

As the exit music began, we went out, two by two, past the people in the seating area, and continued into the cloaks area for more drying and a quick wipe over dirty feet. The recently submerged were invited over too. The upshot was that Roland, Abigail and Jonathan were back in their clothes. Peter and Kathryn took a little longer but also put back on their wedding clothes.

Still naked were Jeremy, Lindy, my parents and Leila, Diana, Allie and me, and the Seragas.

Jonathan, relieved to be dressed, told us, "I went into the pool because my new life will be without Alice."

The other three 'guests' into the mikveh did not tell us why they had submerged, but Diana did say, "It was very definitely about me, and not about you two."

"Something new?" I asked her, trying to probe.

"Isn't that what that ceremony is for? I thought you encouraged its use."

"Definitely. You don't need to tell anyone. I mean, secrets abound in Serninsea, don't they Allie?"

"Fewer," she replied.

Diana added, "Nothing to concern you two."

Weddings Immediately After

I wanted to talk to my mother but the first person Allie and I saw back in the seating area - now having food placed upon tables - was Mrs. Carter, because now alongside her and unnoticed before was Colin Cromer, with Georgie Smith, Charley Darley and also Mohammad McArden.

Only Mo was open-eyed.

Getrude said, as Allie approached, "Colin: when she was a teenager I was crossing a field and there she was, driving a tractor, and not a stitch on. Linda, do you remember?"

"I might have been fifteen. Allie would have been five then, elsewhere."

"In Norfolk," Allie said, "growing up with Jonathan, who's coming over directly no longer in his birthday suit."

Gertrude addressed me some more. "You had no embarrassment then, either. It was a public footpath we were on, Edith and me. And I knew the Seraga family but not like that."

Georgie, alongside Charley, said, "I soon heard about the unchurched naturists at Buzzard Farm when I came here."

"Edith died of illness," said Colin. "I hope you don't mind me not coming up for Communion. It was too strange for me. I've come to Serninsea perhaps for the final time and have stayed an extra couple of days to take in your wedding."

"Thank you very much."

"I've learnt with you to expect the unexpected. I am going to marry, as it happens, a lady in Kendal. Standard Anglican wedding, of course."

"Congratulations," I said. "And it is very good to see you, Mo."

"I'm seeing a lot more of you."

Colin continued: "I've had a few words with the bishop. He and Louise here are a surprise."

"Yes."

"Louise joined another Church."

"We are now in the same Church."

Allie said, "This is Jonnie Jenner. The Jenners and Rogers are almost like one family."

Mo said, "I'm just taking everything in."

Diana came to us, making a nude three, and said, "Jonathan dressing has left me upholding the cause."

He said, "I've given her away so I am as I want to be."

I said, "Jeremy, Lindy, my mother and Leila, and the Seragas, are still like us, Diana."

"Yes, your father and brother are absent."

Allie answered, "Embarrassment is relative."

Mo then indicated he'd leave before the reception proper and wished us a very happy married life. I gave Mo kisses to the cheeks and Allie followed on. Mo wasn't sure how to receive nude women bending forward to him.

Colin indicated that he would stay for some food before leaving, and indeed leaving Serninsea for good.

Allie said, "Fare ye well," to Mo and the others as we four left them to mingle.

Mummy said, "We've much to sort out. Either we save this marriage or, after all this time and all I have known, we go our separate ways."

"Our lifestyle is at stake," said Leila, in one of her more sensible utterances.

As people had started eating and drinking the food put out by students, we decided to gather for speeches. Diana, Allie, (clothed) Jonathan and me joined the other couples, supporters and givers away on a kind of top table, in the dining area.

To keep things efficient, we'd decided on just one supporter's speech, and that was from Adam. He said that at this stage in his life he'd come to know a great bunch of people: the ever-talented Peter, the nieces of his one-time rival, George, and his school and intimate friend, me - Linda. Winnie was absolutely right for Kathleen, he thought, and Allie's intelligence and fiesty nature could only do well for me. Kathryn and Peter would soon be mother and father, and he had realised there was never any rivalry between the Kathys for Peter's attention. I thought it was a daft comment.

He also asked us to thank Jenny, who'd had a hard time and had been out of the way helping us recording everything.

One partner of each couple married chose to speak.

Kathryn joked that she had intended to get to Peter first, as, incredible as it might sound, and despite being identical, her sister and her had never discussed their marked difference in sexuality. They had joined Peter on a prospect of a magic career, but it turned out to be a crowded and tough field to be noticed. She'd always presented unity with her sister, but most recently they had relaxed this sameness of behaviour. "On that, given my bump, over to my now not quite so identical twin!"

We raised a toast to the couple.

Kathleen said meeting Winnie was a pure chance event, thanks to an approach to me from the Serninsea Vestal Virgins. She loved her so deeply. It was true that despite being genetically identical, and indeed enjoying their confusing everyone, her sister had a capacity for loving men that she did not have, and indeed the way was always open for Kathryn and Peter.

This implied that Kathryn might have bicuriosity, at least, and I recalled how they did a switch on me, but I could tell one female's vaginal odours from another, even if they were twins.

We toasted them. Allie stood and spoke.

"I first met Linda at a seaside theology and economics conference in Margate, and I desired her from the very beginning. I detected what seemed to be a friendship with some bishop."

Thanks, Allie, I thought.

"This bishop, though, tried it on with me at Margate, and by that incident I knew that he was not good for her. Anyway, later on when he was angling after Linda again, I threatened him, and he backed off from me at least. Originally, I knew nothing about Linda and her sexuality, and had no effective gaydar at work. I remember seeing her on the platform for our train, and wondering about her..."

"So did I about you," I interjected.

"Well, why didn't you do anything about it?"

"Because everything had become muddled. Conferences, eh? Who'd have them!"

"When Professor Roland heard from his two bishop friends in Bristol about a

new church starting, and it was Linda doing it, I just had to come up to Serninsea. He said it could be a study on a new church getting started - see if it succeeds or fails. The rules for me were to kind of join in, and keep the important stuff confidential. Once here, Christine gave me extra information, but my main task was to follow Linda around more than most. It was a perfect opportunity. As well as carrying out a research ethic, I'd put out a fishing line, and I wanted a catch. And I got more and more of her on my hook, so that I could annoy her and captivate her at the same time. And now she is mine, and I am hers, and I tell you that I will defend her against all comers.

"In terms of my desire, I will never let you out of my sight. Linda, and everyone: know it that I am a jealous lover, and, whatever I may have done in the past, it does not matter, because I have arrived at a good place."

I thought about Diana, and it sounded threatening. Wiping some crumbs off her breasts, she was eating a pastry seemingly unconcerned.

"I think, also, that we have a wonderful community here. I thank my family for coming here, including Jonnie for giving me away as he did, and Linda's family pair being bravely naturist throughout. I thank my professor and ex-tutor joining in shedded of their clothes. Know that I am very happy here. Soon there will be children too with, I hope, five mothers and one father available to look after them. So, yes, I tell you now, I want to get pregnant very soon. It doesn't matter to me that Linda cannot get pregnant. I know her challenges around identity and the issues it brings. And, in response, I will happily get pregnant many times, if we want, because we two are going to be good mothers. The child or children I grow will be as much hers as mine. So we can inform the world now that we are looking for good quality sperm, and very soon."

I thought I might want to cringe.

"As the others have done, can we raise a toast to my darling wife, and please all of you toast our marriage."

All three toasts done, people were able to mingle freely.

Gloria Mabaso, Paige Tuck, Carrie Chopin, Beth Gorge, and Hattie Schepsutte, still showing more than most through their gowns, were well tucking in. Moving to their table, I thanked them for their attendance and contribution.

Hattie said they were wearing these gowns because the wedding had the status of a gathering of theirs, given Carrie's words in the ceremony. I noticed Allie stand back a little, and she kept quiet. As a result we moved on as others were getting up and strolling around.

Megan Furley enjoyed being with Annie at our event. Annie said she knew a young (yet another) transgender woman, Marie Healand, who might provide some sperm.

Allie said, "Does she ejaculate on camera?"

"She does."

Megan commented, "It's not exactly, 'Chuck in some tokens,' is it? There'd be a child involved."

"But for Linda and me," said Allie.

"I'll put it to her," said Annie. "She'll contact you if interested."

Roger Humphrey and his sister Marie Enfield approached us all together. "Overheard that," she said.

"Hello our invisible residents," I said.

Marie said, "We don't attract attention. Well, on the lines of Gertrude Carter, and donating at the clinic, Roger can provide his services."

"Not sure I know her," said Annie.

"Best not then," I said. "We were thinking of approaching Roger - or both of you."

Diana close said, "Wedding present. One of the most practical."

Marie said, "There might be a small fee. It would be like his regular donations to the clinic. There's plenty left but we monetise his spunk."

Allie said, "You wouldn't be out of pocket, if we asked you."

Megan smiled - "Not his pocket but you'd empty his balls," she said.

Roger now said, "There are no expenses involved. I just produce sperm."

Marie added, "We couldn't have anything to do with the child; let's face it; via the clinic, Roger's sperm must be father to hundreds."

Roger said, "I did do theological theory and ethics on sperm donation for my MA dissertation, so there is a giving dimension."

"I didn't know this," I said.

Roger responded. "We only talked once about theologians in general. Some say that sperm donation via masturbating involves a violation of the sixth commandment and they refer to Matthew 5:28, Colossians 3:5 and Exodus 20:14."

"Fucking hell," said Annie. "I do it for the viewers."

"And I thought wanking was wanking," said Diana. "I can't see Adam or Jenny now - have they gone?"

"You could lecture the Gymnology Meeting," I said to Roger.

Jonathan in his textiles decided to retreat, probably disconnected from the conversation.

Roger, urged by Marie, also moved away before we went intellectual. Annie and Megan decided to say bye to us. So did Patricia and company.

Then the two nude and one clothed from present-day academia approached Allie and me, and I introduced Diana. Beathag NicAmhlaigh said some words in Gaelic, corresponding, Allie said to me, to 'Well done,' although that seemed short for so many words. Beathag touched Allie's right face cheek, and Allie almost took a step back.

"I taught Allie Folkways," Abigail told me. Abigail also revealed that she and Roland shared the same coven, and Abigail like Allie was in Taunton Tantria, and thus their basis of their nudity that they would now go and cover up.

"Ah! So that's why you gave Allie a touch on her procession," I responded.

"I wasn't able to join them here," said Allie. "And now I am inactive. I'm no longer a Fighter of Concern."

I asked Abigail, "And how many of these sorts of groups are there?"

"There's a number of them now. A score? Their origin is up in Middlesbrough, I gather. It was a breakaway from a Buddhist group, but became more to do with the New Age."

The professor spoke: "But the different post-Buddhist neo-Pagan groups vary their rituals, I understand."

"Professor Roland," I said, "I bet you haven't seen Allie as a student quite like this before - nor she you!"

"Er... Actually, yes."

"Yes?"

Diana smiled.

Allie said, "I went to the coven - you know that I'm curious by nature. I like to know first hand. They were sky clad, and so was I. So I could have researched the coven; I could have researched the Taunton Tantria or even the Vestal Virgins; I researched the new church here."

Diana was smiling some more and then said, "If you'd had researched the Serninsea Vestal Virgins, you could have got off with Linda straight away."

Allie replied, "No I couldn't because there is a group interest in relationships and I, as a member, would have been one focus of attention. My relationship with Abigail, known here, would have caused complications. I had to be neutral, as a researcher, not the focus."

The professor added. "And you've chosen to finish your observations here, in this bethel, Allie, for recording purposes."

Allie said, "I decided so when Bishop Margaret came along to do a service and sermon, but there was a bit more. There is well enough of a story to tell now."

"Including your own - with your wife," said Roland. "All three of us are staying at the Titansea Grand. I notice that it gets a mention in your research."

"Background," said Allie. "Clearly the Body Eucharist Christine and Linda had there was not as restrained as this one today, and definitely not as the one I did experience above the casino."

Diana was smiling even more. "Aardse might think I'm leaving him; I'd better go. See you later."

The professor said, "I'm sure there is plenty to discuss later about all your experiences."

Abigail said, "And now, as your research comes to an end, you might consider your past in the groups."

"Yeah, I remember them," said Allie.

"I mean, activate them."

I couldn't quite follow this, but as I puzzled my still naked remaining relatives - mother and Leila - came along to meet us, to say they'd dress and go. They were still at Yojana's. Dyfed approached to greet me with a very neutral handshake with Lucinda standing back and nodding. I said nothing to her, never mind about her lack of nudity.

So Mother and Leila, and Roland and Abigail, went to dress and leave, whereas Dyfed and Lucinda left directly.

Along came Adam, obviously not missing, with Ann Dromeghda and Labhaoise Vlahos.

Ann said, "You two make a charming pair. You just suit each other. Just to say, and to check with you, that we are offering your mother and her daughter a house to rent."

I said, "She didn't even mention it."

"I thought you should know," said Ann, "but your mother really wants this to be very temporary. The possibility is a return to Dunham-on-Trent, but the two of them might return to Wales."

Ann seemed very well informed. I just nodded.

Then Labhaoise said to Allie, "I think Adam might agree that you two do show so much passionate togetherness."

"She is just what I want," said Allie.

But Adam said, "Jenny has gone for a lie down in Roger and Marie's room. I've checked on her. She'll make her own way back to ours."

Adam, Ann and Labhaoise said bye and wished us a good honeymoon.

I asked Allie if I should go and talk to my mother.

"She'd have mentioned it if she wanted a conversation. I'd wait and see what has happened after the honeymoon."

"Yeah. Give it some days."

With more going, it was time to depart ourselves. We too went over to the cloaks area to dress. Dressed in leathers, me included, Allie and I went upstairs and then back down into the Consulting Room to get our pre-packed suitcases. Allie grabbed a couple of apples as extra for the journey.

Diana had gone home in parallel with her family, temporarily, and my first stop in the SUV was at Allie's in Toulouse Road for her other suitcase and then we proceeded to Diana's.

Diana had three hefty suitcases. "It's related to the competition," she said. "You'll see."

She said goodbye to them with kisses and strong hugs to Aardse and the children.

Chapter 33 Honeymoon

Narrator: Linda *Honeymoon Begins* (Saturday 22nd February)

Allie suggested that Diana was missing out: "You could have had a second honeymoon."

"Aardse's too busy and *The Jacobite Gap Years Seumasach* story isn't his passion. Pity. I'd loved to have shared the tour with him."

The oddity of Diana being in the back, as we sped beyond Wytham in the rain, came to me when Allie tried to get her hand into my pubic mound via lowering my trouser zip.

"You cannot do that," I said. "We won't be insured if this causes an accident. Can't you wait?"

"Don't mind me," said Diana from behind. "Seriously: don't mind me. Very wet."

"I'm very wet," said Allie.

"Allie. I think I am very responsive at the moment and I am trying to drive and there is indeed rain."

Diana sniggered. "I meant this month so far."

"Me too," said Allie.

"Allie, I will pull in if you are going to do this."

"Okay. Let's compromise like married couples do. I'll leave my hand there but I won't do anything."

"You cunt, Allie. I have to reach Bowland and then Ayrshire. Meanwhile, I still don't know why I can't call you Alice. They all prefer Alice, your relatives."

Diana asked, "Why on earth would anyone name themselves after The Grateful Dead?"

I asked, "Was it from *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*?"

Allie gave her fullest explanation yet. "It is in there but no. *The Funk and Wagnalls New Practical Standard Dictionary*, Britannica World Language Edition, 1955. Maria Leach, died in 1977, right, worked for Funk and Wagnalls and made entries regarding folklore, mythology and legend, the same material that I used at Glastonbury in Abigail's class. Jerry Garcia used that dictionary and he picked up the term for the group's name, so the name came about after the 'Warlocks'. 'Grateful Dead' means a man gives his last money to pay debts or give a decent burial to a corpse to stop it being ill-treated. Afterwards a man meets the donor and gives him assistance leading towards some sort of considerable benefit and it turns out this man is the spirit of the grateful corpse."

"To be an intellectual," said Diana from behind. "No thank you."

"I see," I said. "And then you got Althea wrong," I added, to repeat a point made a number of times.

"I *could* say that I chose Alfia after a rhythmic gymnast winner, Alfia Bilyalovna Nazmutdinova, where the physical side of the sport needs: agility, dexterity, endurance, flexibility, hand to eye coordination, power and strength. And I can tell people this rehearsed story, because I have personal agility, dexterity, endurance, flexibility, hand-eye coordination, power and strength."

"You're such a rehearsed bullshitter," I said to Allie.

"Is that your desired reputation?" asked Diana.

"Aye."

"'Honest to the point of recklessness' are you?" Diana asked.

I said, "That joke's been made. She never got near."

So Allie asked, "What about: concealing for stability? I have been a researcher. Alfia was also a rare name."

I asked, "What's wrong with *Althea*? You could have corrected your mistake."

"Because I don't play tennis, I don't play golf, and I'm not black. Anyway, I was always singing it wrong so I may as well take the name of my mistake."

"More rehearsed lines," I said.

Diana had a chuckle and said, "Play it once, Linda. For old times' sake."

I said, "Of all the gin joints..."

"Those references have been made," said Allie.

So we played *Althea* on our way north of Wytham. No doubt that the dead were grateful for that.

Here was a drive that first took us to Bowland, and Dunnow Hall was approached from the Clitheroe direction. In *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Seumasach*, television version, this is the outside of the lesser laird's house, but obviously it isn't even in Scotland. Diana said that the hall is also the model for Cotes Hall in *Missing Joseph* by Elizabeth George. We also saw a hanging footbridge over the River Hodder - and it was dark when we returned to the SUV.

Viewing the bridge and surrounds I asked Diana to outline the story: "I didn't read on. So what is it about?"

"It's about a self-assured global charity nurse, and writer of cultural healing around the world, Mary Douglas, who holidays in back in Scotland. A speaker also of French, Spanish and German, she meets one of the lesser lairds, heroic and daring Malcolm MacKenzie or Maol Choluim MacCoinnich, leading the conflict with other clan groups, crossing boundaries from Kintail and Ross-shire. Mary Douglas has a Scottish accent, but strange to them, and her child-based ability to revert to Scots is not relevant as they are Gaelic speakers and therefore did speak good English, when they did. You might want to know that she was also of the Scottish Episcopal Church, meaning liberal Catholic, modern. It doesn't match their Protestant with bishops biblical Church."

"It wouldn't, given as it was when it came about in 1660."

"By contacts, twists and turns, geographical distance then, and mutual admiration, she ends up trapped and fascinated in equal measure, and her sense of adventure and modern sexual mores lets her get close to the laird, as mistress and then bride - because she knows she can get away - and he sees her as a vital and valuable partner. It all comes together, despite all she does not know. She's a clan asset. It's because she uses her healing folk knowledge from around the world (as well as her modern expertise) that he thinks that, as a Douglas, Màiri has useful lowland contacts. He never knows she's from the future but wonders if she's magical. The laird visits France, with her, and she translates for him as much as she can, supporting the Jacobites, but he is ambiguous about the coming conflict. He is, though, different from the Clan Chief, who supports the British-Hanoverian Government. The story about the couple divides as we see Malcolm alone for a while protecting the Bonnie Prince after Culloden. One man loses his head and his

head is sent to the British government to say Charles was dead and allows him more time to escape."

"All sounds very laboured. I didn't like the writing."

"No. Critics say it's about applying feminism into a different setting. The modern and past differences come together as non-parallel parallels. The first book reaches Culloden before the end and then the story splits because as Prince Charlie gets away, the laird is imprisoned, to lose his land and assets, and our heroine Mary is elsewhere held among other women, like Lady Ogilvy, Lady Kinloch, and Lady Gordon - real historical captives, by the way. But she escapes and vanishes back through a burial chamber. When back in our time, she's been away just over a year, half the time away. She thinks the laird will be hanged, and already knew that Cumberland, Lockhart and Sackville were particularly nasty in revenge after Culloden, and so she resumes a modern life. But she is pregnant. The book ends as she tells stories to the new born child. Thus ends *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Seumasach*."

"Gabrijela Daffron did write a school history book for the Scottish curriculum."

"Book two *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Nighean* is really in two parts. Mary Douglas resumes her medical career in St. Andrews. She has child care for the infant. Having spent over two years in the past, she reads up about the period and realises that she has to write and challenge what is standard academic knowledge of sources and uses. She meets a historian called Jack Smith of the University of St. Andrews. He is impressed, and they start an affair, and he could be a good dad. But he tells her she has a problem: she cannot quote sources. So she turns to fiction, the joke being that the fiction is truer than the work of historians. Her author name is Màiri Douglas. She tells Jack she went back in time, but he regards it as daft, but what stops her demonstrating it is the time differences each side - what if she returns earlier than she left? After a while, as he doubts her story, the two break up. Her daughter Maggie Douglas does believe the truth of her mother's vivid knowledge of that past, perhaps because her mother's stories to her as an infant were of Scotland in the past. She's wired up to believe."

"Like children of religious believers versus children of practical agnostics."

"Oh, and Maggie is sure she's a lesbian. Mary doesn't want to go back. She'd had her adventure. It is the daughter who, many years on, lacking a desired and imaginative future at nineteen, yet a practical person with some plumbing and building skills, goes back in time landing years later than parallel time with her mother but not double. She has her own adventures as she finds and attaches to the new laird turning capitalist, experiencing the cultural losses - except adaptations of Gaelic symbols into the military."

"And royalty and British aristocracy in Scotland," said Allie.

"The daughter, calling herself Mairead, proves herself with practical solutions as learnt from her education and training, and raises suspicions as to her origins, and references to her mother propels her to the upper echelons of the clan. We learn how key people fathom out she is the daughter. This daughter takes emotional risks with local women. Her danger isn't just from British soldiers. The clan has stories of Maggie's mother and some clan leaders fancy Maggie. Recovery in the land takes place and the lairds manage the land and people, having first tried to keep them from leaving, but now getting rid of them off the land. The daughter fetches the mother, making her mother comparatively younger than the age she should be. So to return,

they tie themselves together at Clava Cairns, and the mother not the daughter determines the time variation. Mother returns to be reunited with the clan she knew and hopes to write more from it. End of book two."

Book three?"

"Book three *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Sgioba* has mother and daughter working as a team. Mother soon, now said to have magical qualities, becomes attached to a new clan leader, Alasdair, as a mistress, and daughter is betrothed reluctantly to marry a brother, Diarmad. She carries on with various women, themselves in difficult male attachments. We see sheep replace people, but eventually these leading men are also superfluous. These two and their attached travel to America, where there is an adventure of settling in on available land and perversely find themselves becoming on the wrong side of history again. Thus they go to Canada and set a trend. The new location doesn't work, and so there is an adventure of the mother and pregnant daughter going the slow way across the sea back to Scotland. You see, stone circles and specific barrows are a phenomenon of the British Isles and Brittany only, so to return back in time meant returning here. The story ends with the mother, daughter and daughter's child back in modern times, with mother as Mary Douglas returning to medical work and writing more fiction under her pen name, aided now by Maggie who is project managing and building a modern house. The aspects of the past and present come together. It all ends in a flash forward where the daughter of the daughter, Julia Douglas, is seen herself to go back. Maybe there'll be another book. The time frame is 1990 to nearly 2020, and 1743 onward to 1790."

"Three books, then, and a sophisticated fantasy. I just can't read it. I should but it's not my thing."

"And made into television. You won't watch that?"

"No. Well, we don't have the extra channels."

"She's a woman in control, and has good sex, and creates spaces and adventures for herself through risky scenarios. She networked in the present and the past. The daughter is much the same and they make a great team. The blokes are forced to consider more than tradition, and are heroes in their own terms, but we women like the women applying themselves in such different settings. The television version has different angles, but gets the non-parallel parallels, is sexy and is even more female-centred. It doesn't go down the fantasy angle so popular these days."

"Well, time to go from here. I still don't know what grabs you about this fiction."

"I don't know what grabs you about your religion," said Diana in return.

The temperatures were mild enough, but this had been a very wet February, as noted, and we'd had storms Ciara in early February and Dennis in mid-February.

From there it was off to Ayrshire, and Bargrennan is where we stayed. This was north north west of Newton Stewart by the River Cree and on the A714 road to Girvan. Diana had arranged it - and when we arrived there was nothing for it but sleep and I apologised to Allie. The others married might well have been sexually active this night, but I was shagged out in a different way.

Narrator: Allie *Some Honeymoon Locations* (Sunday 23rd February)

In the morning I wanted sex but, in the limited duration of daylight, there was no time to waste according to Diana's planning. Indeed Diana came in to our room to tell us to breakfast and get going.

Thus in the morning we headed for the Bargrennan Cairn, a passage grave. Later on in the literature and television series, *The Jacobite Gap Years*'s child Maggie used this location to go and fetch her mother. Diana informed us in the car that it's about genetics and the link to ancestors as the cause of disappearances. Mary Douglas's initial drop back in time to launch the whole adventure was around Inverness; with about fifty Clava type cairns in the larger area.

"I see," said Linda with detachment.

So I decided to make my point, facing the passage grave. "The serious stuff on this matter starts from the Orkneys as the origin and centre of the practice of recognising the ancestors using astronomy. This ritual observance travelled south - we're talking about 5000 years ago. Those bluestones to the dead at Waun Mawn in the Preseli Hills were allied to the sun at the winter equinox; they were moved to Stonehenge down in Wiltshire to be arranged similarly; starting at Durrington Walls. Woodhenge and Stonehenge represented the living and the dead respectively, where those glacial pathways line up with the rising sun also at winter equinox. Your big sarsen stones were added later."

"Thank you Allie for your indigestible words," Linda reacted.

"Gabrijela Daffron tells of some of this in her books," said Diana.

So I responded: "She can't have said much about this because Mike Parker Pearson has only just discovered it in the last few years."

We headed for Drumlanrig Castle, off the River Nith, about fifty miles away, where, Diana told us, a laird of the Munro clan was murdered in revenge by the clan, set much further north east. Diana said it was called Bellhurst Manor. Linda and I did at least get to see Rembrandt's *Old Woman Reading* there. We headed northwards to New Lanark, of the television studios, but also the nearby River Clyde for the wooded location for filming from those studios.

We headed for Beecraigs Country Park, West Lothian, which apparently featured for several outdoor locations but particularly ending up in North America. Although nearly eighty miles away, it took about the same time as our previous drive - some one and a half hours. Diana explained that it was the filming location for when they had emigrated to the North Carolina wilderness and then moved to Canada.

It all meant very little to Linda and me. Indeed much of the honeymoon would not, except it was providing a tour for Linda and me to be together. All I was learning was that in Scotland 'B' was a long way from 'A'. Distances on a map were mentally shrunk in error.

As a non-driver I asked Linda, "Do you like driving long distances?"

"If I didn't we would not be doing this. We're hardly doing the most efficient route. I tell you what, that first book - as much as I read it - must have had horses powered by rocket fuel."

"Just that I might buy some driving lessons."

"Where would you get the money from?" she asked me.

"Annie has some ideas."

"Er..."

"You could teach me."

"Not a good idea when married," she said.

We three headed beyond Falkirk to Glasgow itself along the M9 and M80. In this locality Diana had several rooms she also wanted to see. One was the Joseph Black Building, a chemistry room, where Mary did some student work as if at St. Andrews where the lecturer tells how bias and mythology easily creeps into history because of sources. Use was also made of the Melville Room in the Chaplaincy of the University of Glasgow. They sent a filming unit to St. Andrews for general location shots.

All this meant so much to the woman with books and DVDs, but for us two it was simply a tour of parts of the University of Glasgow.

But the fictional professor had made a resonating point: who writes reliably? Linda indeed wondered about Glasgow and its economic history (it had played down its part in the slave trade), as well as Glasgow and its theology (the Reformation and then division with restored Catholicism).

From there we looked at Kelvingrove Park, west-central Glasgow, close to the M8, where, we were told, a growing baby Maggie was being pushed in a pram by Mary. Pollock Park was used for a gathering in Canada. These locations were now in the tourists' imaginative world.

We had our own day and night aspect at this time of year because street lights were on when we arrived at the northern end of Dowanhill Street, west Glasgow, a one way street (northwards) towards Victoria Crescent Road. It is where, Diana said, the Smiths lived in St. Andrews - in Glasgow! These were university area properties, so it sort of suited.

"Why not film in St. Andrews itself?" I asked Diana.

"Glasgow did a good deal, it's nearer New Lanark Mills too, and they edited in the outside shots like they did for the river in Inverness."

At the Helensburgh guest house lounge, Diana put on a number of relevant DVDs to show us where we'd been, converted into televisual fictional representation. We had an evening meal and retired to our guest house bedrooms.

However, and never quite accurate about doors, I went naked into the wrong one, saying for Linda, "Too many places to visit crammed in."

"Sorry about that, Allie," said Diana.

"Oops!" Diana was in a nightie.

"What are you doing in a nightie?"

"What are you doing in my room?" she asked back.

"I thought you were a dedicated naturist."

"I am but they put the heating off overnight. I'd like an extra layer on. I think you might be neglecting your wife."

"I think you are neglecting your true love. Time to admit it."

"I think you are wrong, Mrs. Shrimpton, on a number of fronts."

"Linda has long been your true love."

"I was invited along to give you folks places to see; I'm not here for any other reason concerning either of you."

"Just be on the level with me."

"Duplicity must be your middle name."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You going to your next door fancy woman and her dog. Showering with Ms Sisse and all that."

"What's Linda been saying?"

"She said nothing, Allie dear. Salome Lichtbau, she's the one: she told me that they've separated and make arrangements so the dogs can still see each other. And Megan has a dog now, ready to join in."

"That's nothing to do with me. "

"Salome mentioned you: showering, hair done - I doubt that's all; and how often, eh?"

"Klärchen gives me a shower because the shower gel and shampoo she gets delivered for dogs and humans is so fucking expensive."

"You always were weird, Alfia Shrimpton. Most people shower themselves."

"She does it much better. Fight me. Fight me for her."

"Who? Klärchen or Linda? Or maybe, definitely, Annie Fenwick. You've done your bit for that wanker, Adam. Yeah?"

"What?"

"She fancies the pants off you, I'm reliably told, and I'm sure you oblige."

"You get that off and grapple me."

"You always were immature: clever but immature. You need dominant females. I'm not fighting you, hurting myself on the floor."

"I'll throw you on the bed."

"You're weird."

"You keep away from Linda."

So Diana removed her nightie. She said, "All right. Lift me if you can. One grasp, one throw of me, clean on to the bed. Bet you can't. I'm not the skinniest of women around. Do it and I'll leave Linda alone."

I walked up to her, prepared and tensed, and grabbed her firmly with my right hand on her crotch.

"Ah ha," she said.

Then I unbalanced her body over mine, so that indeed I could lift and turn her swiftly, and threw her enough on to the bed.

She asked, lying down and looking across, "Are you finished?"

"No more Caramel Club dances; no more bedtime intimacies."

"You're a fool. I've got my own focus, if you must know, and it's not Linda."

"Literary fantasising, as if you can do feminist heroics in another time. Utter codswallop. Anyway, point made: see you tomorrow," I said, and I darted across to our actual room, although Linda was not there. I got my postcard, and wrote a quick message for Annie about enjoying my honeymoon touring Scotland, and put a first class stamp on it. Linda *would* see it.

However, I decided to look at my tablet to see what Annie was doing. I had to do a search because she wasn't listed under 'Women' but under 'Couples' and 'Trans'. Marie Healand was with Annie Fenwick, or 'Transitory' with 'Headgirl'.

I observed Transitory finishing a fuck of Headgirl on her knees, sperm jumping on to Headgirl's back, and for the two to sit down, with Transitory's penis softening. Headgirl started telling Transitory some tales as Transitory took some sperm from Headgirl's back and offered her fingers to Headgirl's tongue.

"I get bites from midges - midges not midgets. I think these, whatever they are, must like the taste of me. I like the taste of that. My friend Gael is in Scotland, so I'll tell about midges in Scotland. I remember I got off the train at Lonely Corrou station on the West Highland Line and just enjoyed the wide open space. I found a

spot and lowered my trousers and masturbated, rubbing some pulled vegetation on my fanny, and with my fingers, only to be invaded on my flesh by these midges. Mmm. I got red bites everywhere. You know Gael. She's actually on her honeymoon. She married another woman. I've missed out."

"You'll find someone," Transitory said to everyone, offering more glob on her finger ends.

Adam: There's a third woman on their honeymoon. Could be exciting. I've fucked two of them.

Adam gave a tip of 50 tokens.

RobRoy gave a tip of twenty tokens.

"You're a lucky man, Adam. Adam knows because he lives near to where we are broadcasting."

"Don't know."

"He won't have fucked Gael," said Headgirl.

Adam: Gael has wanked me off. But you're right.

At this point I put the tablet off and waited for Linda. I wondered if Marie Healand could fuck me with some of her sperm for our child.

Narrator: Linda *Honeymoon Reassurance* (Sunday 23rd February)

I wanted more time with Allie alone, in bed, but from taking a closer look at the garden I needed to speak to Diana to reassure her of her place in my life now that I was married.

Her door was open, so I just let myself in. As I went in further, I said, "Oh sorry," because I could see her naked in the ensuite clothesless doing her evacuation business, and hearing her defecating. "Your toilet door is open."

I looked away as she said, "I don't have a tiny hand and it isn't frozen."

"What? Oh, as in *La Bohème*! I'd said..."

"Face me to talk to me."

As instructed, I could see her leaning forward, bare feet flat, trying to get one out I supposed, crotch in the gloom still bare.

"In darkness all is hidden," I said.

"I hardly need to close the door against nothing or no one."

"I'm intruding."

"No you're not."

The water flushed and first she stood, twisted, attending to her arse with paper from several pulls at the toilet roll and then washing her hands in the sink.

Diana said, "Very natural."

"Sure."

She came much closer to me than usual and looked up to my eyes. I was clothed, she was naked. "Wiping my arse turns you on, Linda?"

"What? I don't think naturists do shitting together. Perhaps we should, like the Romans did."

"Allie's the expert on the past."

"The Wickenby twins, more like."

"Have you not seen Allie? She was, let's say, about."

"No, I was in the garden. They look after the grounds here with real detail and light them up really well. I came here direct."

"What do you want, Linda?"

"Actually, I'd like a hug."

"A hug? Why?"

"Because, I've got married, and I really love her, and she is my future, and we will get someone to get her pregnant, but I want to include you as my friend, a loving friend."

"Allie might be very jealous about what she now possesses."

"Well, yes, but I want to know that you will keep a look-out for me. I'm not expecting anything to happen, but just keep a look-out."

"Of course. From wherever I shall be. I'll give you a hug."

I was surprised, really, at her willingness to pull me in and squeeze. She then made a kiss to the right side of my face. When she released me, she looked at me directly.

She said, "Does that reassure you? We should all keep a look-out for each other: me for you, you for Aardse. Allie: she's a force, a whirlwind. Of course, you will always be in my thoughts. Perhaps you don't tell her you asked for this reassurance. She rightly expects to seduce you, and you should join in enthusiastically. You are going to do that, aren't you?"

"Of course. We argue from passion and the sex is like that, Diana."

"I'd go to her now. Don't tell her you talked to me. She wants *you*, remember."

"I asked, "From how you are talking, something else is happening, isn't it? Has Allie warned..."

"Go to Allie, and don't mother her."

"No: right. She accesses all my areas. No mothering. I'd better go now and undress. See you tomorrow."

Allie's Possession

"Where've you been?" Allie asked me as I rejoined her.

"I was looking in the garden. It's so well-presented, lit up, and neat. Something we could do in narrow strips back at the bethel. I see a postcard for Annie. You could go online and send a message from 'Gael'."

"The garden spaces were sacrificed for more space indoors. You could ask to buy some of the long sea front property back gardens."

"They don't align with our property. One back garden overlaps with your friend's property."

"Klärchen's?"

"Yes, of course."

"Strand in front of me," Allie commanded. "Get them off first."

Here came my second hug within minutes.

She asked, "Why did you marry me? You criticise me so much."

"Because you are attractive, intelligent, intellectual, artistic, and you captured something of me at Margate, and I perceive that my love for you meets your need for my love and wisdom. And I need your love too, your energy and vitality, even your protection."

Differently from Diana, Allie smacked her open mouth against mine. She grabbed my bare crotch. Before I could respond the same way, Allie pushed her fingers inwards and wide, and used them painfully to throw me on to the bed, her fingers removing themselves as I flew. Flat on my back, she resumed entry with those fingers into my restricted space, and my breathing intensified. She twisted her body around and plonked her arse on my face. Allie was nothing if not forceful.

Administering my tongue upwards, when arkness all is hidden, I was able still to wonder how she might be in ten years time. Would she fill out and become fat? She was a fit woman, walking everywhere, and a fighter after all to anyone who threatened her. She had spiritual discipline too. There was also her mystery, if less of it now. She knew what she wanted, and this future intention included me.

"I'm a jealous woman, Linda," she said, as my tongue reached up. It seemed to me that on our honeymoon Allie wanted Diana close: like an enemy is best kept close, and that wasn't right.

Here she released the hounds of her own desire, with tongue and fingers, and I generated a goo that came running out.

When I was detached finally from her, my legs were like jelly, and in the ensuite my eyes were red and my mouth had gone dry. She seemed completely confident.

She brushed past me to sit on the loo and piss away. "Mine," she said, letting out a huge fart, looking at me directly.

Nevertheless I decided to let her develop that fart in private.

Narrator: *Allie More Honeymoon Locations* (Monday 24th February)

The landlady of the Helensburgh guest house, Mrs. Ivy Green, which she ran with her in-and-out husband, George, said to Linda alone that she overheard we are naturists and gave us the option. Linda took an executive decision and advised that she could put towels on to the seats. We agreed.

There were two men, local workers, staying in the same guest house. Would they be bothered? We thought not. So this is how we went into the dining room to our table. The two men's eyes popped out, momentarily, and then behaved themselves as if nothing was different.

We discussed our journey for the day, and meant going well east for the next filming location of interest mainly for Diana.

Clothes on, we went well east beyond Edinburgh to Preston Mill, a watermill on the River Tyne at the eastern edge of East Linton on the B1407 Preston Road. There had been a mill on the site since the 16th century, though this one came from the 18th century and was commercial until 1959, producing oatmeal. We had a guided tour of a kiln, a mill, and the miller's house, led by a middle aged woman.

After that we had a look at Prestonpans, a victory for the Jacobites fictionalised in *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Seumasach*. It was while there that we had a more detailed conversation about the role of fiction in historical consciousness. I said it was Scottish to be either pro-Jacobite or pro-Hanoverian. Linda wondered out aloud just how many opposition were Episcopalian Anglican or Presbyterian. In *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Seumasach*, Catholicism was reduced to private observance among about two and a half per cent of the actual population.

Linda said, "Diana. Two hundred years of the Reformation in Scotland first reduced the number of observed saints and eventually rooted them out. The social and belief structures of Catholicism shrank into mainly isolated private corners and geographical extremities, and even then limited to those in the know."

Diana said, "I know all that. What about Barra?"

"Even Barra had no Catholic parishes until about ten years before legalisation."

"I'm more interested in the evocative scenes around and at Caisteal Tàirneanach. We're going there later."

I said to them, more positively, on our way back to Edinburgh itself, "The imaginative transportation of the viewer into a landscape and setting can do anthropological work. History is contestable, but the use of the imagination is important for empathy."

Linda referred to the television series *Wolf Hall*, adapted by Peter Straughan and based on two highly-praised novels by Hilary Mantel - *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*. The series (like the books) was self-constrained in what Thomas Cromwell said and did, and showed him as watching, reflective and as silent as necessary. Not beyond scheming, he showed lingering personal loyalty towards Cardinal Wolsey both alive and dead. He let others use their own words to box themselves into their corners. He was well able to act and trap, and get results, avoiding the worst of torture (if not its threat). In a despotic setting where a fall from power could indeed be dramatic, Cromwell as imagined was able to use conversation to achieve his ends. It was character-based. *The Jacobite Gap Years* tried to focus on the inner mind of the principal character Mary. Then Linda referred to the more radical *The Tudors*, in which events were reordered and it was all made more fanciful and sexy. She distrusted such historical fiction.

So I decided to mention Ann Oakley, the feminist sociologist, who included fiction as an imaginative contribution to the deadhand of masculine established sociology. Charles Wright Mills had referred to the 'Sociological Imagination', but much had been unimagined.

"He related biography and structures, but she picked up more on his polemic style," I said. "And one of her fictional characters is Trent Lovett, who is also a sociologist. So I think fiction can offer theology and sociology and the like insight - why not theology? - but it does have to pay attention to the situation on the ground."

Into Edinburgh we had another academic encounter. We went to the historic Summerhall Building old anatomy lecture room. It became an arts venue at the Summerhall building in Edinburgh. Diana wanted to go into what was known as Whitby Close in the series. She wasn't the only one there for the same purpose, with many taking photographs (like us).

Via the M9 and before Linlithgow and Bo'ness, we diverted up to Blackness Castle. Then, doubling back before Queensferry, we went to the Hopetoun Estate

used for frontage and the rear for stables. Abercorn Church was close, too. Maggie ended up being married using that location.

It wasn't too far to go north into the Kirkcaldy region and East Wemyss to impersonate Inverness. Why Inverness needed a substitute I could not understand. We stayed in the town, as according to Diana's prize, in the very bed and breakfast of the television series - and the real landlady was called Mrs. Michelle Douglas, oddly enough, who welcomed us and was sorry we were not staying the two nights of the prize. The daughter of the fictional landlady Mrs. Grade appears later in the series when Maggie has grown up.

Here was a slight problem. Diana took the single bed and we took the double bed in the same room. It was impossible for Linda and me to keep our hands off each other and we made noises. Diana was very good. She tutted and laughed aloud, and then made no further comment of any kind as I made hay with the geography between Linda's legs and Linda returned the favour.

Whether the staff heard us, like Mrs. Douglas did, was unclear, but Linda and I enjoyed that night in the small town that looks nothing like Inverness at any point in history.

We had a packed schedule for the following day, and this meant that we used only one day of the two days' prize to stay in Kirkcaldy. We would move on and shift some miles the next day.

Diana asked that two of her suitcases continued to stay in the car. Sometimes she could be mysterious like this.

Even More Honeymoon Locations (Tuesday 25th February)

From East Wemyss, Stirling was a must, seeing the Link Bridge and the Pathfoot Building at the University of Stirling.

Here Linda and I made best use of the actual university for a couple of hours as Diana wandered around with her own key to the SUV. We two looked at the library. I declared my identity and postgraduate entry rights as a student of the University of Somerset. As such I signed Linda in, and at first we looked at some limited theological material together. St. Andrews would have been better for this. I made use of the small Gaelic section and we came together for the sociological material. Something took my attention.

I said, "I haven't seen this journal before. Bernice Martin wrote a significant piece about the 1950s: about a church, a choir and its boy members and female followers. "

"You have now. Sociology is so out of date," responded Linda. "Some would say discredited by fiction too. Howard Kirk?"

"There are organisational features worth extracting even from this," I said. "I suppose this is background to what you told me about your parish church."

"How much of the parish church time is going into your thesis?" she asked me.

"It's context. Some of the involvement you've had with Christine goes back to your time in that place. Adam's marriage concerned the isolated woman in the choir there. Another angle is internal cults and dependencies on leaders."

"Are you going to liken me to a cult leader?"

"I mean the bishops of the Vanguard group."

"How much is your Ph.D about our church - our Bethel - and how much about before all that?"

"I just told you. One is background to the other. I still have a lot of reading to do - there's a literature review to produce and then I follow the arguments in the literature with your Bethel as the example. Your Bethel makes no sense without the background, and sociologically doesn't without the literature."

"From interviews, surely."

"The background I discovered in various ways."

"How else?"

"Documents."

"What documents?"

"Diocesan, informal..."

"I haven't seen them."

"You're not supposed to see them."

"Are you?"

"I have."

"Every time it's the same! I'm in the dark; you know more."

"I'm a researcher. It's what I do."

"I'm on my honeymoon. I'm not going down this road again."

"It is a cul-de-sac."

"But one thing that puzzles me," Linda said, "and has for a while. All that about Folkways, and the whole emphasis of the Glastonbury department, and you choosing Gaelic. How come you ended up researching a new and rather standard church? Was it *just* to pursue me?"

"But it isn't standard, is it?" I replied. "It exists because of media money and a friends' network. It is local, and can be whatever it wants. It relates to wandering bishops, as some call them - I've got loads of literature to find on that - and then you joined something that relates to a short-lived Free Catholic movement a hundred years ago. Glastonbury's school covers a broad area: someone did a whole thesis on *Thomas Carlyle and Ecclefechan*, simply because that was very local, and how the Church of Scotland in its more independent existences related to a changing culture."

"He had tendencies to strong man fascism, clearly racism, and these accompanied a more liberal theology! And I think the name you want is Anson because I did look up Liberal Catholicism."

"He's biased. *Bishops at Large*."

"I give up."

"But, yes. I am doing changing culture as well: that dialogue sermon you had was all about our cultural understandings and against the magical and the supernatural. Why do you have this world view? That's my epistemological question for this research."

"*They* did that sermon."

"The thinking is the same - and it was under your watch."

"It's about making sense, how to communicate what we understand, how we understand."

"Sociology of Knowledge - you know that, Linda. So, if I say, that the

numerical value of procreation in Chaldean Numerology is nine and in Pythagorean Numerology is eight, you'd say this was bullshit."

"We live in interesting times," she said.

Linda left me to examine the Martin journal, and I was making some rapid notes and references. She went off, and I soon checked up on her. She had been reading about the different varieties of the postmodern in theology: of down the evangelical line (postliberal), the Anglican-Catholic line (Radical Orthodox), and the liberal line (Mystical Universalist, or Non-realist).

"We'd better go soon," I said. Nevertheless, I looked at the sociology of Church types as well, of which there were more categories. I showed Linda one of these, the newly categorised 'liberal charismatic', that had an interfaith aspect, used the dance culture, and was all about questions. As we left the library, we wondered if we could do this at the Bethel, using coloured and flashing lights, minimalist beat music that works its repetition, rituals adapted for greater visual impact, and questions offered rather than sermons made. So far, she said, we had followed almost a traditional subcultural model beyond some of the extra services and the use of the mikveh, and we hadn't broken out into something different.

Diana was at the car, having been in the town itself and, she said, making "arrival" arrangements. She wanted us to move on too and asked to keep the key.

Soon we went west to Touch House, and then on to Doune for the castle - seen as Castle Leoch in *Outlander*, and in *Ivanhoe*, in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, and in *Game of Thrones*. Also we invaded the wooded area near Doune, known as Hill of Row.

The next castle was at Drummond mainly for its gardens. We then went to Aberfeldy that was another small town via some tight camera angles and for its park.

We now had Linda take a long drive up the A9 for the all-important Clava Cairns. We eventually left the A9 and drove through the enlarged Culloden village.

Beyond the battlefield, where our stop was very brief, we arrived at Balnauran of Clava. Here Mary first went back in time, baffling everyone about her disappearance. This used the chambered cairn. We looked at the Bronze Age site, and in the cool evening some six others were present. But, later, Maggie used the ring cairn, so we went there, and it was very touristy.

One person among many was a broad woman waiting alone, among the stones, called Glenda McKay. We knew her name because she introduced herself, and Diana walked to her, hugged her and kissed her directly on the mouth.

These two went to the nearby car park and took possession of all of Diana's hefty luggage from Linda's SUV. Both returning, Diana gave Linda her SUV key, a letter for Aardse, and asked Linda not to try and look for her. Her husband should cope with the children. She gave me a two cheeks kiss and then Linda received a hug with a kiss on the mouth. Finally, Diana looked at me with a little aggression.

"Leave me when out of your sight," Diana said to Linda, with Glenda close behind her smiling.

Glenda and Diana shared the luggage load and walked around the far side as we saw it of the ring cairn. In some act of silliness, they lay down, as if to disappear.

This was the cue for us to leave. "Come; leave them," I said.

Instead, Linda wanted to ask what was going on, and went forward. But they had vanished. Then she realised there was a vertical fence of green and some brown, that when looked at from afar merged into the background. Apparently, even

in an ancient site like this, the TV and fictional world had affected the managed display for tourists. This vertical fence had been set up for people to act out disappearing, by crawling behind it. Obviously such people re-emerged. But these two were gone. Peter Marshall would have known about walking away with it blocking the view. So we left them presumably somewhere among the stones or maybe taking a hidden route to some car.

Linda looked staggered. She couldn't believe it. She had to drive away. We realised that we weren't to know any details.

Linda said in the next guest house lounge, at Newlands, nearby, when she wanted to reflect, "Time and time and time again, she told me that she was not like me. She had a husband: a man. And now she has disappeared with this unknown Scottish woman."

"The signs were there," I said. "The novel is all about a woman who runs her own show even in a male clan society; her daughter is a lesbian after all. And Diana has always loved you."

"Well, I didn't detect any signs," Linda told me sharply.

"Signs that she loved you? They seemed pretty obvious to me."

"Signs that she'd run away. It explains all that luggage."

"Some of these readers and viewers are really obsessed. She is, and Glenda McKay will be just the same."

"This is deception and betrayal - of Aardse to be sure, and of me. And what of her children? It's not as if she's gone for the odd day! We have to go back without her and explain something."

"It's taken her over. Literature and televisual exposition can become like a cult of attachment to a fantasy life," I concluded. "Those three thick books are a whole world to the devotees. It is the literary equivalent of religion."

"No! Wwhat are the rituals?" she asked.

"We've just seen one - disappearing at Clava Cairns. There'll be set pieces to re-enact."

Narrator: Linda *Other Honeymoon Locations* (Wednesday 26th - Friday 28th February)

Diana's departure continued to annoy me, of course. It also upset my honeymooning sex life with Allie because I was angry.

In wintry conditions we journeyed down the B852 and B862 and the huge distance down Loch Ness, to the A82 and along Loch Lochy, then past An Gearasdan (The Garrison) or Fort William, and Ballachulish for Glencoe, and arrived at Crianlarich.

This was where Allie's ancestor Margaret Urchardan was born in 1773 for a short life of seventeen years. In those days Crianlarich people spoke Gaelic, but not today.

I asked, "How come, back then, such a young first language Gaelic speaking woman travels from Crianlarich to Walsingham?"

"So it's what we think we know. James Rogers went to Scotland for a tour in May 1788 aged twenty-one, visiting all sorts of places including Jacobite locations

and met the fifteen year old Margaret where he was staying here in June 1789. He had sex with her and when he returned she knew she was pregnant, and the result was he took her back to Walsingham. Cornelius was born and she died on 17th March 1790, having only just married James. Cornelius Rogers with Lydia Hart had son Alfred in 1832 and Jennifer in 1834; Jennifer married a Jenner. And, of course, Alfred's son Brian married Alice Shrimpton who, really, loved Elizabeth Ford."

So, all wrapped up, we two walked in a forest at about Inverardran, where below a railway had been removed but nearby two railways were joined together. Soon we got to see Glenbruar Viaduct, of the railway for Fort William. I blurted out the main theme from Hamish MacCunn's *Land of the Mountain and Flood*.

"What's that?" Allie asked.

"I'll tell you about it later," I said.

Diana had two rooms waiting in Crianlarich at a guest house called Taigh AlltCharomain, so we lost money on one of them.

"What is this sudden liking for apples?" I asked Allie over our meal, as she chose two of them instead of cake.

"Suddenly I like their refreshing taste. Red ones."

In our bedroom, with that tune again, I recalled *Sutherland's Law* on television, a drama with a reference to Crianlarich although it was based in Oban as fictionalised into Glendoran. Allie said that, if this was on in the 1970s, then I did not see it, and I must have a brain full of learnt television archives. But I recalled seeing *Sutherland's Law* many times, because my father watched it. It was a proper, full drama for all of the BBC despite it then coming from Scotland. Iain Cuthbertson was its star actor as John Sutherland, a Procurator Fiscal. (I mentioned further my father watching him in *Budgie* along with co-star Adam Faith.) The best editions were ones that exploited the great outdoors. "Incidentally, John Sutherland could speak in Gaelic, Allie. I remember that, with a crofter. The theme tune Hamish MacCunn's *Land of the Mountain and Flood* appealed to daddy's liking for nineteenth century romantic music."

"All sounds more sensible than people disappearing into cairns and at stone circles," Allie said. "Would you like to go into my cairn?"

"Ah, but, again before my time, and just after Sutherlands' Law finished, Iain Cuthbertson popped up in a kids programme called *Children of the Stones*, and that was about time and astronomy too."

"It's about time you gave my circle some attention!" she insisted.

I had to do as she wanted. However, I soon returned to what was really on my mind: "I don't know what I am going to say to Aardse, when we get back."

"She's the one who's done it, not you. I'd never heard of Glenda McKay. Don't you want any more from me tonight?"

"I think this Glenda must have been an online fan. But this is a relationship: a woman to woman one too, after all that Diana has said."

"That's what's bothering you."

"Maybe she was only bicurious and now is curious for sure."

"She was more than bicurious - when it came to you at least. She had the hots for you from school onwards."

"Yeah, you have done your research."

"Time for my attention on you," she said.

I couldn't miss the sweet smell from her arse, presumably from the apples

she'd eaten at every guest house.

Allie said to me, "Do you feel a third presence? I think I was being felt up and your hands were nowhere near."

"Don't be silly, Allie. You are being silly aren't you?"

"I think they were the hands of ancestors."

"Where from?"

"Stones and hills and this house could be haunted."

"You cannot be serious!"

"Don't get wound up so easily," Allie cautioned me. "Spooky sex!"

Next day, Thursday, Allie looked in the area telephone directory and found a local name of interest. She ordered me to follow her, and simply knocked on a particular door. A woman opened it from inside.

"Do I know of another Mairead or Margaret Urchardan?" asked back the middle-aged woman in this single storey long house.

"Seriously," said Allie.

"Come in out of the cold because I do have some information."

I thought that this was quite remarkable, and that Allie was ever so pushy. The best this elderly Margaret Urchardan could offer was that a number of the family and others had made long-distance moves. Some went abroad, and some did go to fertile areas in the rest of the British Isles. One or two stayed by moving around and about. But there was a teenager with her family name and a returning traveller where the suddenness of their disappearance created a local story down the generations of murder. The female 'Urchardan Ghost' subsequently haunted select locations in A' Chrion Làraich (Crianlarich) and Taigh an Droma (Tyndrum). She caused wet dreams in boys when asleep.

Allie thus satisfied, our final driving stage this day was to the snowy highest village in England with a market - Alston. Once at the end of a railway branch line, closed long after Beeching, in 1976, and replaced in small part by a narrow gauge railway from Slaggyford south, this village had some rather narrow roads for parking our SUV. I just did not fancy such a long trip from Crianlarich to the Foss east coast.

Alston had no particular interest for either of us; we thought it had no literature but the Internet said it was used for the film *Jane Eyre* in 1997 and for Royston Vasey in *The League of Gentlemen* on television. We did purchase some Cumberland Mustard and Alston Cheese before entering our last minute accommodation, West View Bed and Breakfast, welcomed in by Mrs. Francesca Ellis, who recommended a local eatery called *Top Cod*.

We had haddock! Allie asked me afterwards, "Why did you take away a pear from the fruit basket?"

"Because I thought I'd like to work on you directly. Your juices have sweetened and your arse has wafted sweeter farts. So this pear can be solid state rather than wait for liquid and gas."

"I see," she said. "Better make me merry as perry, then."

We set off early on Friday. As we headed south east, roughly, turning from the A689 to the A68, one thing Allie said was, "Don't keep going on about Diana. Aardse - if he wants her back - can take it up with Adam Magellan."

"But how does anyone leave their kids? Walks out on them! How can she do it?"

"Some of us doing Folkways in Somerset researched past lives societies, and

some people really do live in the reimagined past. On a television report there was this Rochdale bus driver who did his job for the present, but that was it in his own time as he and his wife lived imaginatively during the Civil War as Puritans."

"But the secrecy she has used!"

"Ah," said Allie. "Secrecy."

"What?"

"It's at the core of any anthropological study. It's been at the core of me doing your group."

"That's for sure."

"It's more than that. If you go for Geertzian thick description, then the researcher of the familiar makes the familiar strange rather than strangeness familiar. Someone called de Jong has addressed this. We move from being familiar, as we are, to making sense of the situation from an outsider's perspective as a slow revelation because others do not see what they encounter within their own familiarity."

"Allie, however will you adjust to a domestic life of pregnancy and child-rearing?"

"Anthropology to work then needs its own secrecy as a method. On the other hand, remote places or strange groups like yours and the sex cult and even literary groups are secretive as a starting point. It also means that these cultures, like your group, have definite boundaries. There is a sort of sexuality like an anthropological penis going in to penetrate the truth that is hidden. Obviously you fuck it and then have to take the penis out for an exposed money shot."

"Lovely. You will ejaculate Liberal and Free Catholicism like some porn film," I said to Allie.

"Yes. Serninsea is full of secrets to be ejaculated. But, on your narrow example, against this, is the fact that Liberal and Free Catholicism are not unknown, so other people have *spaffed* this material before. What is interesting is the circumstances that set up such a church as yours."

"Is spaff a Norfolk word?"

"No, I think it is a toff's word meaning to waste champagne." Allie was laughing.

"Dirty girl. Meanwhile, Diana doesn't do religion, but she sure does do fantasy. I wonder what she and Gillian were doing last night?"

"It's not such a great distance between religion and fantasy. You are as committed as she is to a mental construct. It is just that - well, maybe, yours is more respectable, though both are indexical. Gabrijela Daffron may not be a cult leader but her product has created cult-like attributes. Diana de Groot showed necessary quiet and the imperative was joining the said Glenda McKay in their cult-like shared fascination."

"Are you trying to lecture me?"

"Fans of *The Jacobite Gap Years* shout down critics - you are either in or out. Diana was in. But what about you? You are just such a sceptic in everything. Your belief is always critical. You never jump in. I'm surprised you even married me."

"I think you are in serious danger of contradicting yourself, my intellectual girl. I gave you a list why I married you. As for your view of my stance, it seems that one minute I am committed to a mental construct and next minute I am such a sceptic. In fact you are in great danger of making the familiar incredibly strange."

"That contradiction must excite you," Allie said. "Theologians do it all the time; sociologists are accused of making the obvious technical in order to make a discipline."

"Apples and pears, eh? Oh I can't resist the sense of adventure your discipline brings to me."

"And I can't resist my need to finally attach to someone: someone who must be reliable for me. I am having our baby as a commitment of me to you, expecting your commitment to me."

"You're so frustrating, Allie. We need to get you home and get you pregnant."

"At least with our travels we managed to slow down time for us," Allie said. "Relativity. More planning time, perhaps."

"Two things.," I replied. "No we didn't slow time, despite our movement, because we went so much higher up than in Serninsea. And, secondly, any such change of speed is relative to others, not to ourselves."

"Your such a spaewife," Allie said.

"A what?"

"It's Scots English. Like a witch - you are like a witch - you see into the future. Some say a spaewife is descended from the erectors of standing stones."

"Bloody Nora," I said. "You couldn't make this up."

"Oh, I think they did," Allie replied.

One of our stops on the way was at Bever Wood, a very short diversion before heading more easterly. We met Jeremy and Lindy, about to go on their own 'as if' honeymoon in Devon. Their timing was from a growing fear that travel could very soon be restricted. Jeremy expected that his divorce would be contested by his wife.

Narrator: Linda *Jenny* (Friday 28th February)

While on our honeymoon, Adam Magellan had taken Jenny back to her hospital institution, and the reason was the growing sense of a pandemic virus coming our way.

"Her mental state was confused," Adam said to me in the evening, soon after our arrival back. "I wanted her to be secure among professionals ahead of any lockdown."

"What's that?"

"It's where we'd be confined to our homes except for essentials like medical and food supplies. I have been worried about reports that the government plan is a 'herd immunity' where as many as half a million Britons could get the virus. It's a crude and costly policy causing many individuals to need intensive care in hospitals and many could die. If they socially isolate then that contradicts herd immunity."

Adam advised that we needed business changes and so we arranged a late meeting of the holding company and the agency and the bethel organisations. Adam plus Ann Dromeghada and Labhaoise Vlahos joined Bishops Christine, Pauline and Bill, Peter, Kathryn, Kathleen and Winnie. Adam told us that dark economic clouds would follow the Novel Covid disease of the virus coming from the east. He told Kathryn, Kathleen and me to become employees under the bethel's economic

arrangement with his company, rather than being self-employed extracting fees. The fees would go to his company. He was leaving Roger on the scheme to see what the dole did about him. Absent Allie (she had gone off to Toulouse Road) would still be a student, still with her finances. We were to act on this from Monday, but Adam would do some backdating for official records.

I suspected that Adam might benefit if there was a general economic shutdown, but I also felt it wise to follow his advice. After all, the alternative was the dole, and we might get nothing. We agreed to these suggestions, further worrying about the income of the Bethel. Ann and Labhaoise said they would see we were all right through Adam's company via their property portfolio. Christine feared for her own Church (I could not see why) but her own property portfolio would protect her.

Adam broke up the meeting saying that he had an online meeting later on with a friend and did not want to miss it.

I sent an explanatory text message to Aardse. I added that I was shocked by events with Diana but despite the amount of her luggage I had suspected nothing.

Allie messaged Annie Fenwick that she was too tired to go out. In her reply Annie said Megan feared that pubs might be closing down.

Aardse the Client (Saturday 29th February)

Aardse replied that he would meet me along with Adam Magellan and indeed he arrived. Allie and I took him into the consultation room.

Adam then arrived, announcing his fee as £302 with VAT and expenses.

"That's what you charged me to begin," I said.

"Correct. But I won't be getting any extras this time."

"What extras?" asked Aardse.

"He was being crude," I responded.

"I expect, Magellan, a considerable discount was negotiated."

"Nil," I said, "at any point."

Aardse then asked me, "What exactly has happened? Her bank accounts are dead."

"Diana King perhaps? No?" I asked.

"They'd be new accounts, if there are."

"What did you think about three suitcases?" I then asked.

"She said there were meetings and gatherings related to *The Jacobite Gap Years*. She also carried them so one of them was mainly to be filled. Obviously not. And this Glenda McKay. Who's she?"

Adam replied, "Initial suggestions suggest it is an online name only. I've already been looking."

I said, to give an answer, "We went the long distance up the A9 for Culloden village and the reveal of Glenda (or whatever is her name) at Clava Cairns."

"Diana didn't see her at any other location?"

"I think their first actual encounter was near Inverness. It was fading light when they met. In the story, the people disappear in the cairns or tombs, where the ancestors meet astronomy. The site has set up like a game where you can disappear for fun like in the fiction. To the side there's a vertical wall in camouflage."

People do little videos."

"Why?"

Allie said, "The nearest thing to a re-enactment of the novels and television shows at Bronze Age cairns. It desecrates the site, but virtual reality is..."

Adam then said, "Glenda McKay is online saying that the books are faultless and that the television series is a different but faithful way of telling the story. It's almost like a religion. That board for hiding behind is actually on wheels."

"Oh," said Allie. "Didn't see them. There might be a Jacobite re-enactment society or a book club for maniacs."

Aardse then said, "For your big fat fee I want to know as much as I can, and an address, and I'm going to get a lawyer. She comes back within a week or I'll have no more to do with her. Failure to find her means that's it. Plus this is a lesbian thing, isn't it? It's all the things I suspected of her regarding you," he said, looking directly at me. "I tolerated her 'looking after' you, and I know she took you out somewhere because she was emotionally affected. Some disco where you touched each other up."

I said, "This isn't relevant to finding her."

"It's an awful lot relevant to losing her."

Adam added, "It may take longer than a week to find her. However, these days people cannot just disappear. They leave trails everywhere. You can't just cancel bank accounts and cut the trail."

I asked Aardse, "Are you contacting the police?"

Adam replied, "No point, because it is not illegal to want to vanish and set up a new life. It's just difficult to do."

I asked, "What about all the council and social services aspects of everything? What about her mobile phone? And this Glenda McKay and her car?"

"I know all that," Adam said. "Aardse. Your fee is without me going to Scotland. Here I will follow some online clues, work out some locations, and seek out some records and monitoring that happens - although we do not have access to the monitoring of the State. If we get a hook and need to travel to Scotland and stay, then with my assistant it's a thousand quid minimum."

"No way," he said. "She's not worth it. You owe her, Magellan."

"I don't owe her or you anything. We do this on a business and client basis or not at all. Your debit card, please."

"All right. Here. And here are different photos of Diana. A very few people still called her 'monarch' and 'your majesty' and 'HRH' from her maiden name."

"Did they?" I asked. "News to me."

Allie said, "I thought when I heard it it should be 'HM'."

I said, "Once again! Anything else in my past I don't know about but you do?"

Aardse said, "I've also got details here of the closed bank accounts. She wasn't on medications at all. She did have contact lenses. Did you know that, Linda?"

"I did not and I slept with her. I suppose you did know, Allie."

"Actually, no."

"My God," I said. "You're kidding?"

"No."

"Her living relatives are listed here, Mr. Magellan. Perhaps she will get in touch with one or two them in due course." Then Aardse asked, "Just how often *did*

you sleep with my wife?"

"You knew when, every time, and it was sleeping."

Adam said, "I need something like her toothbrush - DNA. Pop anything with her on it in a clean bag and put it through the agency door."

"Right, good, will do," said the new client. "Something perhaps that's been up her cunt but not yours at the same time," he said to me. "Don't want to pollute the samples."

"Steady on!" I said back at him. "You should know that, if anything, she made a distance between her and me."

Allie then said, quietly, "Don't be rude to my wife."

"What about Wednesdays?" Aardse asked me, glancing at Allie.

"We didn't have sex! We had chats. She was a naturist; it wasn't a sex thing."

"It meant she could see your body and you see hers."

"That's what happens when you remove the textiles. She was brave at the wedding - naked and stayed naked."

"Deception," said Aardse.

Adam stated, "We will have a question for the report: *Where is Diana de Groot?* Peter and I will contact other friends, family members, neighbours, and other old classmates, but also doctors, dentists and the like. Be assured. The one thing they have not done is gone back in time through a cairn, however old."

I said, "Your joke is too late. Peter is approaching," I added, looking through the glass in the door,

Peter arrived, saying immediately, "I did some lateral thinking, boss. Glenda McKay is an actor's name and played Rachel Hughes in *Emmerdale*. That got me nowhere. I asked myself, 'What about other names?' Her character's mother was Kate Hughes, later Sugden, played by Sally Knyvette. Our Glenda McKay on Facebook is, I think, Sally Kate Hughes - and I think this because Sally Hughes is one who makes a number of comments about *The Jacobite Gap Years*, *Highlander*, *Outlander* and even, dare I say, *Game of Thrones*. And let me get you to Sally Hughes's photo..."

"Yes," I said. "I remember her looking like that. Well done, Peter."

Peter said to us, "I think Diana will be changing her online name too. So think of Claire King, or Jayne Claire King, born Jayne Claire Seed."

"Or," said Allie, "they could adopt character names, like Mary Douglas, or Màiri NicCoinnich, that sort of thing."

So we split up and the investigators were to go back in pursuit, like they had been for me. Adam and Peter left the room to have a conversation in the seating area, presumably on methods, before resuming organised work on Monday.

Aardse then said to me, "I do blame you. All through our marriage she's had her memory she kept from you of a stillborn. Adam was the father; you were the emotional attachment. Want to know about it?"

"I do already."

"She didn't want to couple up with Magellan. She wanted to couple up with you, with a baby. That was long before these lesbians do this sort of thing today."

"This sort of thing?" I asked him. "Today? Allie and I will be proper mothers."

"Like that Jenny; they both ended up all confused. It's *your* fault. She's told me about all these blokes and women you've had. At least she didn't follow you down that particular road. And there is some dark secret in her life involving you somehow."

One day I'll get to the bottom of it."

Allie said, "This conversation is ending now."

"Well, since those dark days she's brought up a family with me. Stability. Yeah, I'm happy to leave. I would not want to stay a minute longer in present company. As I say: if she's abandoned me and the children, she's out."

Aardse left, as did Peter and Adam, from the building, the two talking as they did.

So with him gone, I fancied a night out with my wife.

"Soft drinks for me only," said Allie. "Annie bangs back the Theddle Pale Ale."

"Three of us then? I'm proud of you, Allie, I really am."

"Four, with Megan the barmaid. Marie Healand might be along as well."

So we both put on some leathers, as worn on the initial trip out on the honeymoon.

Narrator: Allie *Discipline* (Saturday to Sunday 1st March)

Four of us plus Megan behind the bar were out on Saturday night.

Marie Healand said she'd provide sperm for me but as part of her one-woman business. So we could pay her directly or even do it on camera with Annie present too and have viewers pay over a three hour session. It was so unappealing regarding the purpose. It would cost two hundred minimum for a fuck in the privacy of our bedroom.

It turned out that Megan had taken her new cocker spaniel called Stoke next door several times now.

We returned to our own supper and bed together, to be ready for Sunday's services. We did look at Annie and Marie online, doing a late night session. Adam was not messaging and not tipping, but many did.

'Transitory' produced over 'Headgirl', and it was the cue to switch off our anonymous viewing.

Linda said, "Have we done the right thing? She is enormous when erect and there was plenty there."

"Near the camera," I said. "Compare her hands to her head."

Next morning, Linda and I took less part in the service, it being 'after the honeymoon'; Peter led the service and gave the sermon, but Linda conducted the Eucharist with me involved in serving. In the congregation of seven was a certain Abigail Randall.

Peter's sermon discussed the difference between objective minimalism and subjective richness, and that the latter collapses into a kind of self-referential postmodernism no longer transcending in a unified form. He contrasted a creedless tradition of purity via minimalism and an institutional memory, against the retention of symbols and forms of poetic feeling. One was a religious humanism and the other was a playful content. To give his own preference he quoted Rowan Williams from a *You Tube* video:

"If you try you end up with a very very thin kind of Christian picture, you end up with a sort of doctrine that it's nicer to be nice than be nasty." (Williams, 2015)

He said this encouraged a kind of excess wrapping paper dishonesty, of having content for the sake of content. It brings theology into disrepute.

Narrator: Allie Discipline (Sunday 1st March)

Afterwards, with me alongside, it was Linda who asked Abigail why she was still in Serninsea.

"I met colleagues in Wytham, and have been working from Yojana Asthana's guest house. As I am now based in Bristol, I could be your external examiner, Allie. I had a look around places in some of the papers you've sent to Roland."

So I asked when she was going back to Bristol.

"When I have been your representative in sorting out your departure from Taunton Tantria."

Linda asked her to explain.

"Allie here made commitments to Taunton Tantria that she has ignored with continuity impacts among the Serninsea Vestal Virgins. She could have sought understanding from the group but ignored the gathering. Now she has to ask them if she can continue membership."

"That's easy: I'm not continuing membership."

"The group is meeting. Have the decency to attend its disciplinary procedures."

Linda said, "Hang on. The only disciplinary procedures Allie will face here are the ones within our bethel and within our marriage."

"Hey?" I asked.

"I will be your advocate," Abigail said.

Linda asked, "Shouldn't I be her advocate?"

"No. You are not a member of any of the groups. I am a member of The Milks Bristol group."

"Very droll," said Linda. "Carry on."

"You have an active membership demand that needs settling."

Carrie Chopin came into the building, and Abigail went to meet her.

Linda said to me, "I don't like this one bit."

"Oh, I'll go along with it."

Abigail returned. "Allie, wear the translucent gown brought for you; undress and put it on in the cloaks area. Bare feet as well."

Linda called over Kathleen and Winnie (as I walked away), reminding them that they were members of her Church clergy as well as in the Vestal Virgins and should treat me as a colleague.

Processing in were Paige Tuck, in charge of the eternal light, Carrie Chopin, Beth Gorge, Hattie Schepsutte, Kathleen Lott, Winnie Lott, Gloria Mabaso and then Olive Breslin - Ollie - from Taunton Tantria and indeed Abigail Randall (from Bristol Milks). Every one of them, including Abby, had hanging discs. I followed in at the end, the shutters were closed and we occupied the chapel area in private. They were sat on seats in an oval shape. Abigail came to me.

"Sit on the floor at the far end." (This was the end opposite the mikveh.)

"What's that?" I asked her, pointing between her legs.

"It was done this week, as Bristol has just taken up the practice started here, and Taunton has already added it. Now go to the far end of this chapel space and we'll bring you forward later."

"Can I say hello to Ollie?"

"No you cannot."

Carrie Chopin stood and asked Olive to introduce herself, sitting as Ollie stood up.

"I am Olive Breslin of Taunton Tantria. I bring greetings from Taunton Tantria members. I am here to deal prayerfully and with justice the matter of the lost Fighter of Concern and Member of Taunton Tantria group, Alfia Shrimpton, accused here and now of not maintaining the commitments she gave to be an active participant in my group or its associates such as yours."

Carrie took over, standing as Ollie sat down. "So this is a meeting to discuss a 'Period of Absence without Explanation'. This group passed a resolution on 22nd November expecting Allie Shrimpton to participate in our meetings, with an understanding that she might explain research requirements that prevented her activity. She continued to ignore us but now we have her here to explain her absence and if she wishes to resume. Our 'Ritual of Restoration' will have to take place if Alfia is accepted back for committed participation.

"Before we proceed to the trial, I ask for any other concerns."

Hattie Schepsutte stood. "Please consider in your prayers Bishop Linda Shrimpton's long-time friend, Diana-de-Groot, who has seemingly abandoned her family in pursuit of a passionate relationship with a woman met online in forums for the book and television show *The Jacobite Gap Years*. Nevertheless, we hope Allie enjoyed her honeymoon."

I wondered how she found out about this, but at Taunton Tantria they listened to gossip and personal news and had ways to then reduce the extent of the chatter to essentials. So Kathleen and Winnie must have passed this on.

Hattie now said, "Klärchen Sisse, of concern previously, has separated from Salome Lichtbau, and this has been a difficult separation. It was thought they might get back together, but they haven't. We gather that they continue to have extreme relationships with their dogs. Here Megan Furley is of particular concern, having purchased a dog she's called Stoke and made anti-man statements. They are making solid efforts to keep now three dogs in contact. We know that Allie Shrimpton here is named by Salome..."

"None of this is true," I said.

Abigail responded, "Be quiet."

Hattie continued, "Nevertheless, Allie Shrimpton here *has* been named by Salome Lichtbau as disturbing their partnership. Paige, can you please investigate this and return to us next time with some more detail? All of us need to pray for Klärchen Sisse, Salome Lichtbau and Megan Furley.

"Finally we pray for recent marriages, including our own Kath and Winnie, Kath's sister and Peter Marshall, and Allie to Linda."

"We move to the trial," said Carrie, stood again. First, I want to give thanks to Olive making such an effort to come here from Taunton. Hattie, with help from Abigail's extensive notes brought here, will join with Olive to compile a full report on

this trial to be delivered to Taunton Tantria. Hattie will go there and represent us. They could reject our decision but would have to have good reasons.

"Kathleen, Winnie, Hattie and Ollie please carry Allie to here and lay her on her back on the ground. Abigail please also put your hand under her back for symbolic and actual support."

"I can walk."

"Be quiet," Abby said.

Thus it was I was lifted from the far end of the chapel to where they were sitting, and I looked up to the ceiling. I was, of course, visibly naked underneath the standard covering they used.

Carrie said, "I confirm that, at our feet, is the member who has been absent without notice or explanation. Who gives the charge of misconduct?"

Carrie sat as Olive rose. "I do. It is that Alfia Shrimpton has been 'Absent without Explanation' regarding this and any connected group. Indeed she has been wilful in her shunning of us. She has neglected her duty as a Fighter of Concern. We must decide what to do about her."

Olive sat and Carrie rose. "This is a clear and evident accusation. Who represents her here regarding her explanation and mitigation? Please now deliver your defence, which I understand is to be extensive."

I am Abigail Randall of Milks Bristol, formerly of Taunton Tantria. I bring greetings from Milks Bristol' members. I shall be her self-appointed counsel due to her non-participation.

"My biography and the details of me introducing Alfia to the Taunton Tantria group have been given to members earlier in the week. It tells you that we had a sexual relationship when she was an undergraduate at the University of Somerset and this continued until I left for my post at Bristol. You should also know, as privileged and confidential information, that before coming here Allie underwent all three degrees of ordination at the Creech Moorlinch Coven. This involved her professor and me as Grand Wizard and Grand Witch respectively and explains why we two were ritually naked at their wedding, as was she. Her wife is a naturist anyway. Therefore, Alfia Shrimpton became an ordained High Priest or witch able to establish her own coven. I wish to use this matter in her defence regarding matters of commitment."

Abby sat. Carrie said, "Please go into detail. Membership of other groups is important and so is their ritual performance."

Carrie sat and Abigail stood.

"I have extensive notes; in fact they are liturgical writings from the time, and I shall refer to these. This may take some time but I want to give a full picture of the ritual and therefore the powers we gave to Alfia Shrimpton. I will use Pagan names within the Coven.

"In a neighbouring room inside Grand Wizard High Priest Roland Sunbright's house, a second level priest George Swordsmith dealt with the necessity of Allie signing first initiation consent forms. For the first initiation, George Swordsmith undressed Allie and bound Allie's wrists and he attached a blindfold.

"In our room I wore an open gown displaying my body. My Pagan status and name was and is Grand Witch High Priest Abigail Bloodred. (My period can be a very deep, even dark, red.) I drew a circle using an athame around a tin bath the assembled group were filling with water to three inches. I gave a purification blessing

by pouring salt into the water.

"Roland Sunbright, also in an open gown displaying his body, went to collect Allie. He sprinkled water over Allie, saying, 'I exorcise you, creature of fire, to renew our world, so that nothing may harm us.'

"George Swordsmith and Roland Sunbright brought Allie in, and I said, 'I summons the East, South, West, and North.'

"Roland Sunbright described how Alfia Shrimpton, previously known as Alice Rogers, had learnt about Wicca as an undergraduate. We in the Coven had decided that her knowledge and future adventure warranted her being ordained to the highest level for her self-development and for benefit to others, especially to run a coven.

"He described our practice in the Creech Moorlinch Coven as Eclectic Witchcraft: ordained into it, our initiate would use this. To inform you in the SVV: we approve of Kitchen Witchcraft, to use herbs and natural means for the betterment of others; we inherit forms of Gardnerian Witchcraft, so that we do maintain a coven.

"She was asked if she accepted initiations, or ordinations, of her own free will, and she agreed - just as she had joined Taunton Tantria. She affirmed and stated that she understood ritual magick as beneficial for others and herself.

"She was told - remember she was blindfolded - that there was a bath and enough water in it to seep into her yoni when sat. Everyone attending was either initiated or about to be initiated. They were invited to touch Allie's flesh in helping her get in and sit down. Members then added in herbs and oils and poured in some more water over her back and breasts. George Swordsmith lit incense and I waved a candle around Allie.

"Then everyone, except Allie, chanted, 'Blessed be your mind to learn of the ways; blessed be your eyes to see; blessed be your lips, to speak in beauty and keep secrets; blessed be your breasts, that they feed and enrich sexual pleasure; blessed be your yoni, that it is receives and gives pleasure and may be the gateway to renew the human species; blessed be your knees, to kneel at the altar; blessed be your feet, to walk the sacred way.'

"George Swordsmith and I helped Allie to get out of the bath but we asked her to kneel alongside it.

"George Swordsmith addressed her new identity: 'We have Alfia, a beautiful woman who is on the sacred road. She wishes to know the mysteries of this coven, to honour the divine. Do we have a name for her?'

"I said, 'She is to be known as Alice Moonbright, within the sacred circle. This reflects her name closest to birth and her optimism.'

"Allie repeated her name, at which point the blindfold came off and the cords were cut.

"High Priest Roland Sunbright, who was semi-erect through the gown opening and close to her mouth, told her that she would be guided on her travels through the principles and purposes of this coven. She accepted these principles, to become reborn to begin this journey.

"He said, 'Apprentice Priest Alice Moonbright, come from your knees and stand. Kiss me, High Priest Roland Sunbright; kiss High Priest Abigail Bloodred; kiss Priest George Swordsmith.'

"George Swordsmith put a robe around her and I gave her an athame to keep. Roland Sunbright told her that she had been reborn into the new life of an Apprentice Witch and invited everyone to kiss and hug her.

"With that I introduced the second degree ordination and George Swordsmith put her gown and athame to one side. He also organised the necessary paperwork of consent.

"Standing outside the circle, Alice Moonbright pointed at one of the goblets. She'd chosen one with a hot, bitter taste. She consumed it and it created a pain in her stomach and made her bend in agony.

"George Swordsmith told her to stand up straight and walk around the circle three times and face me.

"Alice Moonbright said she needed to go to the toilet.

"I said this would force her to leave the circle, so George Swordsmith gave her the other goblet asking her to stay in. It would calm the stomach. Of course it was the same, causing her to clamp her bottom cheeks together and bend over.

"She couldn't resist and ran out to the toilet and the result was all very audible. George Swordsmith took a sponge to assist Alice Moonbright in making her backside clean.

In the meantime we arranged four candles at compass points with water filled bowls alongside. The Apprentice Priest came back into the circle.

"High Priest Roland Sunbright told her that sometimes, in all practicality, one must leave the sacred circle to return later.

"I then gestured to two forward candles, that one was of the sun and one was of the moon. The other two were of the day and the night. Night is simply the shadow side - not evil - that shows the struggle. Even then, there is some light in darkness, as there is gloom in much light.

"Roland Sunbright took hold of her hands, briefly, and now we addressed the lights according to their compass positions.

"The eastern light represented learning, art and craft, poetry, song, instrumental music. He asked her to accept the blessing of the East. That's when she dipped her fingers in the water alongside.

"I took her hands briefly and said that the southern light represented life and energy, individuality, zeal, and vitality for desires, passions, and appetites. We love and hate, but we have joy. So this was the blessing of the South and she dipped her fingers in that bowl.

"George Swordsmith took her hands briefly and said that the western light is for compassion. It is for gift over contract. She should allow for failures - theirs and hers - and in the same way she accepted the blessing of the west.

"So it was back to Roland Sunbright to take her to the northern flame, which was for obedience. There are proper times when to obey, as in obeying the findings of wisdom and experience. She should identify the masters of learning and wisdom, and follow them. Once again she accepted the blessing.

"I then said, 'The world may perish but the lamps of beauty, life, compassion and obedience will continue to shine.

Apprentice Priest Alice Moonbright went on to say, 'I pledge at this circle and all it represents to be true always to the Art and its secrets, to never abuse the Art or her own powers, and to keep this pledge always in mind, body, and spirit.

"Roland Sunbright announced that she had completed the second initiation and was a Priest. She was then warned that the third level involved penetrative sexual contact and a life force deposit. She could stop now. She replied that she was on the pill and willing to proceed. So, of course, there was more paperwork to do

with George.

"She said to Roland Sunbright, as she lay on her front naked within the sacred circle, 'I've always wanted this,' but he pointed out that she was wrong in attitude in that this whole ceremony was purely ritualistic.

"The first part was a whipping using three strikes from a cat o'nine tails by the High Priests. I went first. She lay down on her front with her legs widened and I struck her upwards between them. Unfortunately she swore and High Priest Roland Sunbright paused the proceeding and told her not to use such language and indeed to remain silent. I then continued. After my further two he delivered three accurate sharp whippings.

"Then he declared that he was dissatisfied with my whippings, and I had to do all three again. He'd be satisfied only by Alice Moonbright staying silent and still, which she did."

"Everyone, I told her to stand and face us as High Priests, we standing side by side.

"Roland Sunbright said that after the ritual purification, through punishment, we give love, so everyone kissed Alice Moonbright on the mouth with intensity, laying hands over her body.

"After this Roland Sunbright picked up an athame and pointed it at her vulva. He said that her vagina within is the centre of her bodily power, and the origin of all things and that we adore it. With that he dropped to his knees and kissed her on the pubic area. Then I did the same.

"At this point Priest Alice Moonbright was instructed to lie on her back with the position of the Vitruvian Man. I removed my open robe that George took away and knelt over her breasts facing her feet. I proceeded to separate her labia and licked her there.

"I said, 'Marvel beyond imagination what you see: entry to infinite space, beyond any shame, glorious in its architecture, bewildering, the container of love and giver of new life.' I then announced her penetration by the male Grand Wizard High Priest Roland Sunbright, facilitated by the female Grand Witch High Priest - myself - Abigail Bloodred.'

"I squatted over her mouth and told her to use her tongue to receive any liquid to come from my yoni. I felt her tongue make contact with my inner flesh. Roland Sunbright positioned himself opposite direction to me and went into her, penetrated her. I was able to kiss him on the mouth as he attended to the ritual.

"He said, 'By sacred seed and root, and stem and bud, and flower and fruit, do I invoke you, queen of space, dew of body, in your avenue to your holy womb.

"I said, 'By dew from my holy body, down the avenues, liquids of my life falling, do I invoke you with sacred sustenance.'

"It was a little urine, everybody, and she swallowed it.

"I went on, 'The Gods and Goddesses be praised! Let us work to make her glad and glorious, and we know she can be held in this state of ecstasy.'

"Roland Sunbright was thrusting with effort, his hands flat to the ground, when Priest George Swordsmith started kneading her breasts.

"I think the whole situation led to our Priest initiate enjoying several climaxes, but we were giving her energy, not removing it. He delivered his sperm and it went on its way within her body.

"Roland Sunbright instructed her to stand for The Ninefold Kiss from him:

around her vulva three times, each nipple once, her mouth, her stomach and on top of each foot. I then did the same, and some of his dribbling sperm was on my lips.

"Everyone came forward to hug Alice Moonbright, one by one.

"Roland Sunbright then declared that she had been changed ontologically for all time. The divine had transformed her. He declared her a High Priest.

"I, Abigail Bloodred, then stated that we should encourage her, let her blood enrich, let her light shine, for there is no part of us that is not divine. I told Alice Moonbright to walk around the circle as a sign of acceptance.

"On her arrival both of us as Grand Wizard and Grand Witch held a necklace and placed it together over her head, a token of a circle. She was to wear it as a sign of commitment to all the principles and purposes of the coven.

"We two then closed the circle, declaring together, 'The Great Rite is over. For you, Alice Moonbright, receive Magickal Amulets and Talismans for magickal enhancement.' George Swordsmith brought over these further items on a silver tray. The most important was a wand made of wood, to cast a circle. There was also a *Book of Spells*, more of a liturgical book. It was explained that she could now initiate others, either alone or with the direct assistance of others from the second degree Priest upwards. I told her that she now possessed a high divine power of sexual expression, and that her intimacy is not to be used lightly or irreverently.

"With the circle closed George Swordsmith blew out the candles. We all left the room and gathered for a party, suitably clothed again.

"Ladies, since coming here Alfia Shrimpton has been inactive as a witch. We did not expect her to become active immediately because of her research work. Indeed, one person in the coven, then a second level witch, and now a third level High Priest, was missing by the decision of the High Priests. This person is now resident in Serninsea. Had Alice Moonbright known this, she would have been obliged to meet and carry out a ritual of starting a coven here."

"Who is she?" I asked.

"Be quiet. I do all the talking unless you are asked specifically to respond."

"You've let a large cat out of the bag."

"I told you to be quiet and if you don't zip it you will be removed. My point is, everyone, that these rituals are very powerful and commitment forming, and yet she was expected to be - huh - quiet in this location until her research ended. And it is my defence that you treat her the same, despite her commitment to Taunton Tantria that should have transferred here."

Abby sat and Carrie stood. "Can you give a character reference?"

Carrie sat and Abigail stood, who said, "Yes. I am aware that many of you have found Allie cold, unresponsive and ignorant of reasonable demands to explain her inactivity herself to this group. In defence, I would put this down to her extreme interpretation of participant observation, a research method where the researcher tries to both blend in and not affect proceedings of the group under study to minimise her impact on activities and decisions. Indeed, her professor Roland Mitton - who has the Pagan name of Roland Dunbright - later advised her to be more relaxed in how she presented a neutral face. Her dedication to her research has therefore come at a cost to other commitments including emotional. She has both failed to attend and participate here and, as explained, has not taken up any activities as an ordained witch.

"I also ask you to be considerate of someone alone in a new town until she

fixed her relationship with Bishop Linda, to whom she is now married. Do not speak, Allie. You have indeed prayed for Allie's welfare, aware of her drinking to excess and her sexual activities that were commercial and a continuation from her time in Glastonbury and Taunton.

"She has made friends with Annie Fenwick, frequently a person of concern here and also the next door neighbour, Klärchen Sisse."

"We are called always to be compassionate."

Abigail sat and Carrie rose to ask Olive to respond, and so Olive was the one standing to speak.

"This representation by Abigail Randall is not adequate. Allie could have informed us at Taunton or here. She has run away yet again. Presumably she did not simply turn up under cover at her research. She told people what she was doing and she could have attended here to describe her needs."

Abby rose as Olive sat. "But this would have required attendance and she did not want anyone to know the connection. And I should point out that our groups have failed to be sufficiently secretive. Initially they were to work unknown, but they have become more known over time. So her strategy was non-involvement. Allie is becoming more stable now. She is intending to be pregnant, if she's not already. I will sit, Olive."

Olive stood and said, "Her breasts will deliver milk in due course. Members should share in her breast milk. We have our communions. She should give us her commitment to share her milk when it comes."

Now it was Carrie standing up. "This could only be if we accept her back. Does this conclude the accusation and defence and responses? Then we need to move on to questions. Alfia Shrimpton, get off your back and sit on your bottom, staying on the floor. The questions will be answered by your counsel; she may consult you. Olive, give any questions."

Olive was the one now standing, "I see no disc. Is she pierced?"

Ollie sat; Abby rose. "No," she replied for me. "I only got my own this last week."

Olive up and Abby down, she asked, "She will be pierced, though, and accept the disc?"

Abigail asked, "I will consult the lost member."

"No," I replied, as Abby stood.

"No?"

"No!"

"You must!"

"I won't. And by the way, my breast milk would be for our baby - and Linda, if she wants some. By the way, I'm not pregnant yet."

Abby (still stood) asked, "Do you have a sperm donor as such?"

"It's being arranged among candidates."

"Who are they?"

"Mind your own business," I replied.

Kathleen rose so Abigail sat. "I think I know."

I said from the floor (and my bottom on it), "You want to keep your trap shut."

Kathleen said, "I will speak to Carrie later."

Carrie rose so Kathleen sat.

"I insist you tell us, here and now, because this member is under discipline

and we need all relevant evidence."

Kathleen rose. "Roger Humphrey is a sperm donor already; he lives quietly with his sister in the bethel and he could provide sperm; Marie Healand is a trans woman with an online performing penis; the Reverend Georgie Smith - recently revealed as transgender - declined; and there is her distant cousin and one time marriage-prospect, Jonathan Jenner."

I said, quietly, "Tell-tale tit."

Abigail rose and said, "Be all that as it may, I advise that the lost member will not get a piercing through her clitoris hood. Given that this is becoming the necessary practice, I don't see how we can proceed. We have negotiations with some women in the south west."

Carrie stood as Abby sat. "Yes but this is the same attitude as before from our lost member. One of these donors will make her pregnant and she refuses to let us share in her breast milk. She won't wear the disc. She remains rebellious even if we accommodated these divergences. Therefore we may as well cease; we cannot but eject her. We must dismiss her and banish her, and she would go without honour. Does anyone dissent?"

Abigail said, rising, "As her representative, I should dissent but I do not. I note that no one else is dissenting." Abigail sat down on her seat.

"I do," said Kathleen, standing. "She did not adjust to this area well, and has developed attitudes we should meet with compassion." Kathleen sat.

"Oh, I do, same reason" said Winnie, also standing and sitting.

Carrie rising said, "Then we must vote."

Raising their hands, Abigail and Olive both voted to have me removed. Kathleen and Winnie did not vote for or against.

Carrie said, "Olive, as someone from Taunton Tantria, I ask you to remove from her body the signs and symbols of attachment to our cause. This amounts only to the covering she is wearing. We shall then cast her out, naked and lost."

So, from my sat position, Olive Breslin removed the gown made of computer wrapping. I was told to leave on all fours; they'd open the screens a little to let me go out like that.

Instead I stood up and said, "Don't bother." I opened the screens myself.

Outside, I left them open, so they were closed by two of them.

I met Linda, as if from behind me, who beckoned me to follow her to the vestry.

"I was listening," she said. "You're best out of it. But I have a whopping big bone to pick with you."

"Go on."

"You went through third degree initiation to become a witch. You've never mentioned that *once* to me, including when you were ordained. Once again - once again! - you have kept things from me. I'm the one who should be punishing you; in fact no one else should except me."

"Had you known, it would have influenced things. You shouldn't have listened in like a spy."

"It's my bethel and I'll spy as I choose. Oh, and your sexual power? What's that all about?"

"I have sexual power. Haven't you noticed?"

"You believe that?"

"I'd have thought it was evident."

"It has nothing to do with becoming a witch."

"That's your opinion."

"Hmm. You need a shower. You're as grubby as fuck. They obviously think you're low-life."

"Right. I'll go to the wet room."

"Before you go: when was this ordination process?"

"Friday October 18th last year. Just before I was to come to Serninsea. I came here as a newly ordained witch. That's all you need to know."

"No it is not. I am truly getting sick of this. I am your wife, ten years older than you. I am Bishop of this Church and you are my deacon. I have a right to know."

"You're pulling rank when you're supposed to be my wife?"

"What am I to do? You've reverted to being a researcher again."

"You know the difference between a chemist and an alchemist? A chemist publishes and an alchemist keeps things to themselves. The coven is like alchemy. It's not about me being a researcher, it's about me observing the secrets of the coven."

"Like Abigail Randall told them everything? I'm *waiting*."

"She as High Priest chose to blab it out."

"Then so can you."

"You've heard it all! There is nothing to add. I'm a high priest, equivalent to a bishop."

As I turned to go to the wet room, Abigail came over to the vestry, still with her translucent jacket or gown on.

"Alfia Shrimpton, listen to me. As a member of Milks Bristol, formerly of Taunton Tantria, and in full alliance with Serninsea Vestal Virgins, I, Abigail Randall, as your counsel, am formally announcing to you that you have been summarily dismissed from membership and all participation in the groups Taunton Tantria and Serninsea Vestal Virgins, and all allied groups. You are no longer a Fighter of Concern. You go without honour. You are not to participate in any activity of these groups. We will, of course, pray for you and your well being."

"You *are* still my former lover?" I asked.

"Yes. I loved you," she replied.

"Then act like it," I said, pushing past her towards the wet room.

I went past several people milling about whom I knew, pointedly saying, "Hello!" to Olive, on my way into the wet room, where I turned on a shower hose at the wall, and had a good wash.

From there I went up two flights of stairs to the bedroom, dripping all the way, and then got some towels and did start to cry. Linda arriving said she did not need to know any more.

Narrator: Linda *Allie's Secret Told* (Sunday 1st March)

I said, both now in bed, as if there was a chasm in between us, "I don't know what to say. I do not know the woman I have married."

"I am the same person."

"You've allowed me to ordain you deacon, and I have thought you might have to be a bishop, and it turns out you were ordained in a different faith already."

"I rejected completely the Serninsea Vestal Virgins, but I didn't have anything to do to put aside being a witch."

"Did Rhiannon Fleetwood know you are a witch? Ha! Rhiannon *is* a song about a witch."

"No she didn't. Some might suspect it. Andrea does have special privileges from groups: she is a Fighter of Concern. Andrea attended Taunton Tantria."

"I don't care about her. I'm more bothered about you. This, coming after our honeymoon, no less, is like a punch in the guts. I tell you what does bother me, too. Come on, you know what it is."

"That I am still in love with Abigail Randall?"

"Well, are you?"

"It's a bit 'academic' now, to use a word."

"Here you go again. Cut the deception, Allie. Are you still in love with her?"

"Are you still in love with Diana de Groot?"

"Well, it hardly matters as she's in Scotland with some woman, yet still married to a man here - and you're doing it again. Answer me!"

"I never fell out of love with her. I've had to manage my loss."

"So if she snapped her fingers you would dump me and run after her."

"But I admired you at Margate. Abigail had dumped me by then, but she and Roland knew all about Margate. That sex in the third initiation was purely ritual."

"You orgasmed."

"But it wasn't with her feeling. She sent me to be with him overnight. He could have fucked me. He didn't. It was an exercise in being close to a body."

"Be honest. I'm your second choice."

"Linda, it's not like this. I would never have come to Serninsea if I thought Abigail could be with me. I'd have found something else to research. And there is a difference, there really is."

"Oh, do tell."

"There was never a moment where I wanted a child with Abigail. It never arose. She has shown no interest, and I didn't think about it. But I want a child with you. I want you to be the mother. I want to stay with you and bring up a child with you."

"She snaps her fingers and off you go."

"But you forget I was with Beathag after Abigail dumped me."

"I'm your third choice, then."

"Definitely not. Beathag stopped me going mad. She got me to stop drinking. But I wanted Abigail all the time. Abigail was more intelligent, shared the subjects."

"You learnt Gaelic from Beathag!"

"But she wasn't an academic. She was a secretary who could speak the language as a native speaker. This filled a void; that's what it did."

"And you were on the pill. Why?"

"Something you need to know. Like a lot of students I did some pornographic modelling for money."

"Many."

"What?"

"It's 'many' not 'a lot of' - you're not a pile of cement."

"You are when you do pornography."

"Thus your friendship with Annie, here."

"Yes, she does the full range."

"Beathag kept you because she disciplined you?"

"I think so."

"Then I should do the same. But... I won't. I'm fed up with all this."

"Perhaps you should."

"Do you love me?" I asked Allie.

"Do you love me?" Allie asked back. "You have said you do. You once said I am attractive, intellectual, artistic, and your love for me sees my reciprocity from need - which is true. You see me as energetic, and vital, offering you protection."

"Here you go again. Do you love *me*?"

"Yes I do," she said. "Now answer me."

"You see, with passion I should find a cane and give you a whacking. But I'm fed up. I don't know what love is."

"You don't love me, like you said you do?"

"Well, I think... All I said at our honeymoon is true. I do want to be married to you; I think we have a future; I want the child from you, but I don't *know* about love. You'll just have to accept it. I suppose."

"You love Diana," Allie asserted. "You'd cane her if she reappeared."

"No, I wouldn't. I seem to have these violent feelings regarding you, or I did."

"Your sense of inner violence doesn't extend to Diana?"

"Well, she's been around. She became close. We shared interests. Did I love her? She must have loved me. Inner violence? It annoys me that she kept her distance and married Aardse. Yes. I'd have welcomed her if she had only said so. But I welcomed you."

"Welcomed?"

"Welcome."

"I'm an incomer," Allie said. "I know I must earn your trust. I will let you discipline me. Abby told me to fight her. I don't want to fight you but receive your punishment."

I then said, "Nah. I've lost the will. I'm going to sleep. I'd prefer it if you don't touch me tonight."

Allie started crying. I felt little sympathy - I just didn't.

I said, "It's no good crying. We'll consider things tomorrow. I need to think. I still believe what I told you."

"My life is with you," Allie said. "I gave vows when I married you, and I said them including in front of Abby. She and Roland gave me their blessing, sky-clad, and that was to marry you. They acted as high priests to another high priest."

"Do you have a secret coven?" I asked her.

"No, and that is the truth. I have done nothing. I am inactive as a witch."

"And if you were to start a coven, would you tell me first?"

"Yes."

"And, if I wanted it, if it became relevant, would you ordain me as a witch? I suppose it would need a male high priest to fuck me."

"No it doesn't. I can do it alone. There are lesbian covens. And the answer is, 'yes,' I would ordain you. Of course I would. Like to me, I'd do you one, two and three in a row. But if I did, we would then need to make a coven - and I don't want that. On

my own I am a lone witch, if active, and therefore remain part of Creech Moorlinch Coven only by a sort of legacy of attachment."

"You're not going to ordain anyone else: Annie, Marie Healand... Peter is semi-Pagan."

"No. But... There's the issue of Andrea."

"You'd do Andrea Plimpton?"

"No, it's that she could be ordained a witch already in the Creech Moorlinch Coven. If she is, we ought to be active, and really form a coven here."

"Don't you know?"

"As a high priest I should be told. But they didn't tell me and she wasn't there. But I'm not stupid."

"She is an *Anglican* priest. She can hardly be an ordained witch as well."

"She was a member of Taunton Tantria. She is a Fighter of Concern. She's already broken that boundary."

"When we were in Glastonbury and visited your professor, did he do a ritual with you different from the one he did with me?"

"I doubt it. The simple ritual covered the meeting and didn't demand involvement in itself. It is not like the post-Buddhist Pagan groups. They expect involvement. And I've been thrown out, Linda, and they will never take me back. Abigail is involved, still, and for all I know, so will be Andrea here. If she's not active here, in the Vestal Virgins, then it's by arrangement. I wonder if Andrea's had her clitoris hood pierced."

"You're not to try and find out."

"Why not?"

"Because you're to concentrate on me as your wife. The only yoni that should now interest you, other than your own, is mine."

"I can't see how I'd get the opportunity to see hers, but you never know. She sees mine often enough."

"You won't see hers if I say you won't. Go to sleep you complete hussy," I said to her.

"Goodnight Linda. I love you, I really do. I want whatever it is you can give me back: pain or pleasure, but not nothing."

"Witch."

Chapter 34 Procreation

Narrator: Linda *Letter and Intentions* (Tuesday 3rd March)

Tuesday morning disappeared in bed, with Allie munching between my legs. At a pause she said, "You do have intelligence and authority. Abigail threw me away, and I don't want you to throw me away."

"I just hope there are no more secrets."

A while later there was a knock on the bedroom door, which I missed initially because my ears were being pressed by Allie's thighs. Naked as the day, Allie jumped off the bed and opened the door to Kathleen.

"Adam is here and, by the way, *Bishop* Linda has some post. *Unitarian General Assembly*, it says on the back of one of them."

I called out from the bed, "Tell him to come up; he's seen us like this before."

Kath said, "I think he wants to talk to you downstairs."

"Oh, fuck it, I'll dress and go down, and I'll look at the post."

Downstairs, holding two unopened envelopes, I alone approached Adam. (Allie was now with Kathleen and Winnie.) He said, "Discoveries! Apparently loads of people go missing from meeting at Clava Cairns. That's why they added that fence gimmick. It is a rendezvous, a bit like Gretna Green for getting married. There's a chap up there I hired and he pushed a line that some young woman was abducted there."

"That's not true."

"It enabled him to get a screen grab of the video from the car park, and we have Sally Hughes' car number plate. It was enough to get to the owner. Sally Hughes lives in Broom of Moy by the River Findhorn, in a house called *Clann Na Cloiche*, or *Children of the Stone*. She works in Forres, and is an estate agent. Broom of Moy is a very small place. I've told Aardse and he said I can tell you."

"Findhorn, that's where there is a kind of New Age place that charges fees for courses."

"Well, I know of no connection with that. There is *The Jacobite Gap Years* Enactment Group. Meanwhile, Aardse as my client has decided on cutting Diana off and he will have nothing to do with her any more."

"She's been my best friend."

"Do you want to be my client instead?"

"No."

"Good answer, in so far as Aardse thinks you reignited her lesbian tendencies."

"Bullshit, Adam."

"I could do you a deal, a bit of discount. Not quite like last time, but..."

"You really have no scruples, Adam. Go back to watching Annie like a good heterosexual. Oh dear, she gets online attention from Marie. Someone else's knob. Lost your interest?"

"There you go," he said, as he started leaving. "You should know that some people beg to differ."

"What, that you do have scruples?"

"No, that you *did* reignite her lesbian tendencies. I mean, you did, didn't you?"

"Oh, fuck off Adam."

"What about Georgie and being aroace? They're having trouble now."

"What? What's that?"

"Ask her to supply Allie with sperm. It will make no difference to her outlook. Aroace! Poor old Charley. She can't respond to his overtures despite a shock therapy of going naked, with him too, under your influence."

"You really are reprehensible."

"Byee!"

So I opened the letters, one that renewed my driving licence, one from Charley Darley, and the other from the UGA Ministry Committee. Despite my curiosity about the latter, I read Charley's first, dated 29th February.

Dear Linda

It seems that the Unitarian General Assembly Ministry Committee has responded very positively to my representations. I said you had experience of co-operative preaching with me, have arrived at a largely unitarian theology, took your bethel into a Free Catholic (creedless) Ecclesia, and that they might consider 'head hunting' you for training to go on the UGA Ministry Roll. You should be receiving a letter from them in the near future. I told them that you could be our second group minister and would bring in your church to the group. Hope I wasn't talking out of turn.

All good wishes. Charley.

*The Rev. Charley Darley, Minister Foss Group Unitarians.
Wytham, Wulfstan, Chapel Abbey near Thermaby.*

I opened the letter sent from the denomination.

*Unitarian General Assembly Ministry Committee
The Strand House
Thursday 27th February 2020*

Dear Bishop Linda Shrimpton

We have received representations from our minister of the Foss Group Unitarians, the Rev. Charley Darley, that he would like you to join him as his colleague in the Ministry in the Group, and that you have an interest in this role and would - if offered - go through suitable training to join the UGA Ministry Roll.

If you confirm this to us, we would like to act quickly because interviews are due very soon. Normally we would expect you to fill in an application form by November last year but we have a number of vacancies for training and considerable funding support available.

To help speed up matters, we only require from you a comprehensive curriculum vitae, copies of two sermons that illustrate your theology, and any relevant material outlining issues you have faced in managing a local church. We would also counsel that ministry inevitably involves your wife's involvement and we would like to know her willingness to support.

We look forward to receiving your response quickly (you can use email) and we can then get the ball rolling. The UGA Ministry Committee constitutes the UGA

Interview Panel for this year.

Yours sincerely

The Rev. Dr. Laurence Soames, Lancaster.

The Rev. Andrew Fallon, Doncaster.

The Rev. Dr. Adrian Hatch, Stirling.

The Rev. Anthony Lovatt, Skipton.

The Rev. Dr. Erika Zijderveld, Rotterdam.

Dr. Mina Jones, Chief Executive on the Roll of Officers

min@ugaunitarians.co.uk

"Rotterdam? Haven't they got any female minister in the UK?" I asked no one out loud.

I needed a meeting of our clergy to get off a rapid reply. I fancied a positive response. Even if it was training and subsequently a part time post it might give me some income from trust funds. I showed Allie the letters first; after all, the wife was included.

Allie had showered so I had a shower and both of us had breakfast together.

I sent a message to Charley Darley, to hear that he was in Lude, so could come south to us quite rapidly.

Notifying Adam of the meeting, he said he wanted to have the business end present, so he came along with Ann and Labhaoise. I put aside our minor disagreement.

Kathryn chose to take the minutes and we had Allie, Peter, Kathleen and Winnie. Guests Bill and Pauline came in as well. Christine was busy in London. Bishop Margaret Lindbeck popped up on video link.

I began, "So this is an emergency meeting only because I need to respond rapidly to a letter." In fact I read both of them out.

Allie said, "Go for it."

"If I do this, I want another bishop made here and it's time to make the deacons priests. I'd like your involvement, Bishops Bill and Pauline, and Christine, to give them equality of status with me. No problem, Margaret?"

"We have mixtures of apostolic and otherwise, but we do treat them equally."

"On this occasion," I said, "the next one should be like me."

Charley Darley arrived, with Georgie Smith (who sat out), and so his attendance only was added to the list.

"I think we want you in," he said almost out of turn, sitting down.

"It means training, if they accepted me, and then giving the Foss Group the attention it needs."

"It would benefit you if we swapped this Sunday," said Charley. "And for you to take our funds-securing service at Chapel Alley in the evening."

"Sure," I said.

"There'll be nobody there, but it secures the pot - four a year and a big payment from the entertainers."

Adam now spoke. "This is starting to sound like money. We set up this church, this Bethel as you now call it, and it was supposed to pay its way. The only activity that seems to be with a good income stream is the massaging service done by Kathryn and Kathleen, and occasionally Winnie. What's happening to the rest?"

I said, "It is a church, Adam. So we run our kind of cafe, and it is getting

increasingly popular. We do have our prices, but the fact is we check people a bit for benefits, and we do offer cut price and even no price food. People need this, Adam, and the effect is that the cafe barely breaks even, and it wouldn't at all if we didn't have the college students doing practicals here in learning to produce a really good variety of food."

"This building is a facility," he said. "Who uses it?"

"We do get some payments from the Vestal Virgins, but I made it clear they were here without charge. This remains, despite how they treated Allie."

"No issue with me," said Allie.

Winnie said, "That was done properly. We volunteered a small payment. It is a great base. I'm sure we can increase our payment, but we cannot talk out of turn, can we Kath?"

"No."

"My naturist group doing Gymnology pays a rent for meeting. But the fact is, Adam, that many of us here live basically on expenses: if we had proper wages the place would sink. I was once a paid, salaried, Anglican priest, and lived in luxury compared with now. Allie's paintings don't exactly flow off the production line either, and it's not long before her Ph.D funding she receives is finishing. We eat from our own kitchen because, frankly, it's all we can afford."

Bill replied, "We pay an access fee to secure us use of the whole place as we need. Christine is reluctant to pay for a theological or rather ecclesiastical model she disapproves of. We are Liberal even Old Catholics, and that stands for something, and this place clearly isn't."

"Of which she disapproves," I muttered. "Rabbi Neptune still pays a small amount."

Adam said, "Well, what bothers me is that the Bethel has made no attempt to generate money making schemes."

I said, "I'm trying to build a parish church, effectively."

"The old Presbyterian model," said Charley Darley.

"What?" I asked.

"You'll need to know this. The Puritans who were Presbyterians, rather than Independents, who from the James the First declaration of indulgence, and onwards - they tried to develop a parish ethos, as the Anglicans had. The Independents: they were separatists, with demands to declare your beliefs. Georgie can tell you more."

"I see you're nodding, Peter."

Georgie kept quiet.

Charley said, "Peter here is one of yours, but he's been one of ours, if online, for longer."

"Yeah yeah. Well, my point is, we have the cafe, we have the massages, and we have tried courses. Creating a theological institute is a possibility - but these are hardly money spinners. One might think of the Triatna group of Buddhists and their ethical businesses. What about a craft business or something like that? I'm just talking off the top of my head."

"The point is," Adam said, "Ann and I have to decide again to put a cash injection into this church. We need money to come from this place, not money sinking into it. The bills do not pay themselves. The place is heated all day and night, we have the lights on, there's the Internet and communications, and the maintenance, including your mikveh for that matter and its water supply."

I had to ask, "Are you threatening us with closure?"

Here Ann answered, directly, "No. Adam is being dramatic but we would like to see something. Christine makes money: she has a theological rationale, she tells me, for all that she does, and that means money comes into her Church. We ought to see the same here."

Allie said, "She's a prostitute."

Pauline said, "Steady on!"

Allie responded, "What's she doing in London now?"

"Er..."

I said, "Well, my theological rationale means it is difficult for money to come rolling into this church. And we don't get anything from Durham nor give it."

Margaret on scene intercepted: "We would like to send a bill for basic administration."

"Of course."

"We have our own financial issues: we don't have a Bethel like you do. It's just people's houses."

Adam asked, "Linda, Charley, how would your training and being a UGA minister bring in money?"

Charley answered, "Because it releases a whole load of historical trust based funds. They pay towards her training, they pay towards necessities and development projects. Obviously you cannot be like existing Presbyterian chapels like mine. We have three chapels as you know, and one of them is all but defunct, but so long as we provide four services a year there, we tap into corporate funds."

I asked, "How did you set that up? We here could ask for sponsorship."

"Do it," said Adam.

Charley did not name the entertainers paying the dosh: "The international media corporation wasn't there then, but it is now, and it has legal legacies, and we benefit. I have a salary and my salary comes from the ancestors."

Adam said, "We have a practical idea, here. Write off for sponsorship and join their mob."

"Right!" I replied.

The upshot of the meeting so far was I would accept the invitation from the UGA Ministry Committee to send in my CV, plus some sermons, and Allie would give her approval as my wife. We voted to ordain everyone up.

I said, "I further propose Peter becomes a second bishop."

He said, "It's too big a leap for me; I propose Allie instead. Keep it in the family."

I said, "But you link us to the Unitarians, and you are theologically informed."

"So is she informed, and we want someone not linked to the Unitarians - except by marriage."

The clergy agreed with Peter rather than me, their bishop, Allie staying neutral.

When the meeting was over, I went to speak to Georgie alone.

"Tell me, if you can, given what I am to do, about your relationship with Charley."

"Purely friendship."

"Not any more?"

"Spit it out, Linda. You mean you still want sexual conduct?"

"You're uncomfortable with sex?"

"Why is this relevant to your application?"

"Is it you or him, then?"

"You want to have sex with him?"

"No! Can you, without feeling, donate sperm to Allie?"

"I've told you before. I had gender dysphoria. Just before university, I took testosterone blockers and then oestrogen. I've taken these ever since. My breasts grew, such as they are - you've seen them - and I've lost body hair and have a more female shape. But I've had less sexual desire, and it suited me in ministry. Charley and I have notes to share on transitioning, we started debating religion, but he seeks another sexual partner."

"I'm sorry to have asked again."

"To put it crudely, I *can* ejaculate. Now you keep this to yourself: he helped me but it took a very long time and I felt nothing, and I really rather doubt there is anything to come out worth having. He is sexually responsive but his husband cannot accept the changes he has made so far. He gave me the ability to look at myself and think seriously about a vaginoplasty - I'm told they are incredibly good these days. I'd have needed perhaps a year's study leave or something to do it earlier in life when wearing a skirt was enough. I was a dedicated minister, and why I tried hard to stay close to Bernard Manning's theology."

"I'm sorry to have asked you again."

"If you keep going on I might just do it."

"Would you?"

"For goodness sake! Give it a rest, Linda."

There was enough time for me to go out, get the post office, and have my picture taken, like I did once for my driving licence.

Narrator: *Allie Money Making Resisted* (Saturday 14th March)

In Somerset I was awarded Ph.D funding from various institutions and education trusts - postgraduate support, sociological, theological, cultural - and so I did build an income this way. There was enough to live on. However, as an undergraduate it was loans and more loans.

Female students going into sex work were sometimes called Blunkett Babes. Given my experience with Jonathan, it didn't matter to me if someone unknown did the deed. So I found an agency and Taunton had the odd studio. Yes, I had another secret from Linda: my video name then was Jilly Rogered, near my old surname once I'd changed my surname.

Annie Fenwick, despite her intelligence, was at the serious end of the business, and no doubt was building capital. She was affording driving lessons. Her example was Bishop Christine.

Although I could live more easily and cheaply in Serninsea, top-ups to my income would be really useful. So I followed Annie to the Car Showroom, where we joined six women and about twenty men. These men were very poorly paid.

The chap at the way in wanted me to take part, and I'd get three hundred pounds.

Then someone said, "I recognise you. You're Jilly, aren't you?"

"I think you might be confusing me with someone else."

Nevertheless, Annie stared at me. I shook my head at her, and used my eyes as if he was a nutter or something.

Annie did not know my previous performing name. However, the one person in Serninsea who did know I had done sex work was Andrea Lindsey, my GP in Taunton and now here.

Inside, there were cushioned benches to lay on, with plastic sheeting laid on the floor (that meant urine and spilling semen), and this was going to be an endurance session, with Annie in the lead role.

One man, Benny Hard was joined by Roger Them, and they penetrated Annie for ten minutes before this other woman Cathy Kund went alongside starting with Stiff Willey. My first man was an unknown local.

Into the session I noted this man had stayed solid, so he said it was Viagra doing its job. Soon all six women were on their backs, and soon came a point to note our positions and have a short break.

The fact that these blokes were drinking an excessive amount of water indicated what was coming. In my case I too had several water bottles.

So we resumed where we'd left off, and rapidly the blokes started changing positions among us and we six were surrounded. The women started to relieve themselves. One woman was called Jet Force, understandably.

The sex display in all lasted above two hours, not including the break, and the end of the one and a half hours DVD part was a mayhem of an orgy and the usual ejaculations male and female, though the female ones were fake.

That done all we participants, where the badly paid males continued to grope us, and as if nothing had happened Annie headed off for webcam work to join Marie Healand.

But this was how I wasn't in debt when I became a postgraduate student and I didn't want to be in debt now. I reverted to my name Jilly Rogered in these productions.

Before A Ban (Sunday 15th March)

After Allie was unresponsive and even grumpy all night, I asked her what was the matter.

"Money. Like you were saying."

"You were with Annie. I thought you enjoyed her company."

"She has a lifestyle. She can do nothing all day and then go off to do the camera thing again."

"You're more familiar with this than you've been letting on. Suppose I want to view your Glastonbury work on DVD. Do I look for *Allie Shrimpton Entertains?*"

"Don't be daft. Anyway, it's Taunton."

"So how about *Allie Does Taunton?*"

"I wasn't Allie Shrimpton, or even Allie only."

"You changed your name as an undergraduate!"

"But not for that."

"*Alice Rogers Rogers Roger.*"

"Not quite. Hardly."

"So was 'Gael' early then?"

"Well, I chose to learn Gaelic, so 'Gael' was always appropriate. The more men and the fewer women, the more we were paid. So there was a compromise. Lots of men and a group of women students. We had to be busy and show enthusiasm."

"Well, in your new, shining, busy, ethical life of now, we have our exchange today. So it's time to go to Wytham."

The Rev. Charley Darley travelled over to Serninsea as we went west. I took the morning service at the Unitarian chapel, assisted by my wife, receiving the pay for a reverend. I wanted my sermon to have up to the minute relevance.

"It's so good to be back with you today, but I fear this exchange will not happen again for some time. These are uncertain times indeed. A Coronavirus, the Novel Covid, has caught up with us. From tomorrow we will have self-isolation keeping us to where we live, and what is being called social distancing for essential purposes when we mix in public. The government is stopping non-essential contact with others and ending all unnecessary travel. People should work from home if they can.

"Where I live it is one place of three couples in residence, and my associate who owns the building suggests that we won't even be able to have contact with whom we associate in another part of our coastal town. Only by doing essential shopping at the same time can we not quite bump into each other.

"What of churches? A church is a place of social gathering: and yet surely this church, and our church, like all churches, will not meet. We have a kitchen and we provide food, and yet no one will be able to come for it, to sit down and chat to friends.

"The Community Kitchen we run, basically after a Sikh model, is something we must continue. We'll do breakfasts and evening dinners, distributed outside in containers. We the clergy will help with the breakfasts. As for the core, specialist activity, I think we are going to have to exploit technology. We'll have to go online: your place and ours.

"I used to be an Anglican. I see that the Archbishop of All England, the Most Reverend William Blair Rothach, sometimes called William Kantos Albion, and the Most Reverend David James Fraser, sometimes called David Eoforwic Albion, are giving a joint presentation outlining that Anglican church services will be suspended, and their churches will not be opened for private prayer despite the government allowing this possibility.

"I think we will have our doors open in Serninsea, but we are going to make sure people sit far apart, and there won't be a choice of refreshments on site. This is subject to renewal..

"For a long time your place fought for the liberty to be able to meet and to worship as it pleased. We are going to lose these liberties. This is quite a thought, isn't it, of non-contact and not meeting. What we fought for we came to take for granted, and now we are going to lose it, and we'll know what we have lost."

I was disappointed to have presented a theology-free sermon.

Allie and I also had our service time down at Chapel Alley. Charley Darley was going in person to Wulfstan, to advise the people there in that chapel. All I had

to do, for him and his funding, was take a service and record the fact that this was done.

First, however, there was an Anglican service brought forward, now conducted modestly. Allie and I entered the cathedral at the back row. I was ordained there.

Lynton Plimpton was thus consecrated this Sunday, instead of waiting until 25th March, the feast day. They were desperate to shove out Derek Imperial, who vacated today. Andrea Lindsey was also Andrea Plimpton (except for the purposes of being a General Practitioner), sat on the front row.

At the end, she said, "Hello, Allie. Good to see you again. Because of what is happening, Lynton is not going to live here in Wytham, nor taking up residence at Caffenmere, but live at the vicarage with me in Serninsea. Because I am one of the GPs, Lynton is going to do a spot of vicaring again. They'll send him admin stuff from HQ, online. So you are Bishop Linda, now they call you."

"I am. That's a simple 'I am' only."

"Oh, er, John's Gospel. Ha ha. Most of my GP appointments will be by telephone and video."

"I want my thingy removing," said Allie. "The GP can't do that by telephone or video link."

"When?"

"Soon as possible."

"Come in tomorrow. I'll chat to you tomorrow. Just tell the receptionist."

I said, "Special treatment."

"I'll do an MOT of you, Allie."

I said, "You knew Allie did video work in Taunton."

"I can't discuss this, here and now, and not to you," said Andrea.

"Sorry. I'll mind my own business."

"It's no secret that Rhiannon has gone," Allie said, looking at me.

"Also less said the better. See me at, hmm, 11 am?"

Then Lynton Plimpton came among us, joining his wife.

"Thank you for coming."

I said, "We were in the area. I took a service at the Unitarian chapel. It was an exchange with their minister."

"I have to say I'm sad to hear it. How is independence?"

"Hand to mouth, but I like the flexibility. We joined a small Free Catholic group."

"What *is* one of those?"

"Symbols without creeds; superintendants and ministers, bishops and priests, equally."

"Hmm. I'd advise you read about Florovsky, Bulgakov, Khomiakov, Khrapovitskii, on doctrine generated from a consensus of the worshipping community without a magisterium but only a definitional role for the bishops."

"Russian Orthodox?"

"Yes. Might via the Eucharistic gift put you back on the trinitarian road."

"Good one," said Andea to her husband. "Back to Serninsea we all go!"

"No, we are going south. By taking four services a year, Chapel Alley secures corporate funds for the Foss Unitarians. I'm doing that now."

"I heard they have a place here, still."

"I might even train with them, go on their ministry roll. Could be interesting."

"We must get together, Bishop Linda. I call you bishop not out of recognition but respect. Valid but irregular, they call it."

"I don't demand you use it."

"I'm going to think about you, relevant to what Andrea is doing."

I drove south with Allie from Wytham Cathedral and opened up the chapel with the key given to me at Wytham chapel. I had a book, *Orders of Worship*, a curious, almost romanticist choice of liturgies from 1932, and based in parts on the National Church's *The Book of Common Prayer*. I chose a Martineau service and, basically, read through it. Victoriana it was - wafty theism and a strange Christocentrism of sorts. Given that no one else was there, Allie took a photo of me taking the service just like the Liberal Catholics record an event. I wrote in a book on site that I had taken the service.

I locked up and hung on to the key.

Allie and I nipped into neighbouring Thermaby for some shopping provisions before heading up back towards the coast and our own town.

In the evening we had yet another meeting. Adam, Ann and Labhaoise were with us, as were Kathryn and Peter, but they would soon be elsewhere: Adam, Kathryn and Peter would reside in their place, Ann and Labhaoise stay in theirs, and Allie and me, Kathleen and Winnie, and Roger and Marie would confine ourselves to the bethel. Thus Kathryn and Kathleen could not physically meet after today.

As for the meeting, as a taste of things to come, Charley Darley, Bill Masters, Pauline Junor and Christine Vine were all online at the same time, and then Dominic Himalia added to the online crowd.

Again, Kathryn took the minutes. Ann Dromeghda sitting with Labhaoise Vlahos assured us that we would be able to continue longer term. Their rent income was likely to drop considerably and house sales freeze for a time; so all their 'doing up' of houses was finishing. Nevertheless, like Christine confirmed for herself, they had savings and should be able to ride out the economic shutdown - so long as it did not go on and on.

The decision was therefore made to continue the food service by visits to houses, and to go online with the message of the church. Christine would arrange her own Church online service, from elsewhere, and both of us would come on live for our respective Eucharist or Mass elements of the services, with instructions about how parishioners might participate before each service began. Christine would insist on alcoholic wine plus bread, whereas I'd accept fruit juice or wine plus bread. Our own service providers would be limited to our bethel residents and contributions to be edited in by Peter remotely.

Adam had other news. He'd heard from Margaret McEnhill that the Bishop Lynton Plimpton was going to live with his wife in Serninsea and not in Caffemere. I said we knew this directly. Andrea would be mainly online. Adam added that Doctor Gujjar, the main General Practitioner in this surgery, and Sister Yvonne Curzon, the practice nurse, would be online too. I reckoned that my appointments at the gynaecologist and a coming check-up visit to the dentist would be cancelled. Allie kept quiet about her actual physical meeting to come.

Adam pointed out that tomorrow the Prime Minister would outline restrictions that would mean, for sure, Diana not returning (if she wanted to travel) and Jenny staying in her institutional setting.

Meanwhile, Allie informed us that she was reopening her research only in as much as taking note of the changes of activity - the lockdown added to the Unitarianism - although she was sure the boredom of a lockdown would facilitate her main academic task of writing up what she had already observed and using online library resources to craft this into her academic doctoral thesis.

The final part of our meeting was sad and rather telling. Peter discovered that a cousin of Gertrude Carter, Gabrielle Edwards, had been hospitalised with Novel Covid, and after oxygen and ventilating had died. I feared for Gertrude herself; after all, no one until now had been taking separation measures.

So we all went our separate ways.

Allie said she had to go out: her last chance to see Annie. "It's a busy day for me!"

Two hours later, there was someone at the double doors. It was Georgie Smith.

"Well, last chance: I've decided to come."

"Come for what?"

"Come to your weird world, come for what you want."

"Oh. Really? Allie isn't here. I could ask her to get back."

"Do it. The clock strikes midnight soon enough. It's not a curfew, is it?"

Allie. George Smith has turned up wanting to donate. Come and receive.

"This had better be worth it," said Allie, not understanding the need to be welcoming in these circumstances.

"Who'd have thought it," said Georgie, undressing in our room with the two of us.

Georgie said, "I still think we'll achieve nothing, but at least I'll do it. I know what Gertrude did, and it's about experience. So I want to experience."

I went down a floor and found Roger and Marie in. I didn't know they'd be there: they had the habit of coming in and going out the single door directly to and from the staircase. They never sat in the dining area and hardly mixed.

"Like Gertrude Carter?" Roger asked.

"Yes."

"Marie?"

"Standard donation fee," she said.

"Want to come along?" he asked. "Can she?"

"Of course," I said. "The more the merrier."

To begin, all naked, Marie sat out and three of us stroked Georgie's body.

I asked to feel Georgie's organ orally. I put my mouth to it. She was a grower but it took some doing. I could imagine that her time with Charley Darley had not gone well.

Stiff enough, I invited Georgie to enter me first, and so for this first part Allie was a supporting act.

Georgie said, "Forty years I had and did nothing other than my sacrifice to my vocation. So thank you for seeing me. I hope this is useful. I'm trying to build up desire or technique. I hardly have any. You're very tight, Linda."

"You've got some purchase now," I said. "Time to get deep into Allie."

"Funny thing is, I don't know if I'm attracted to women or men."

Roger had an idea. He asked all the women to get on their knees along the length of the bed. In order we had Marie, me, Allie and Georgie, with her testicles and penis hanging down.

First of all, without asking, he entered his sister's anus. I knew that from his position high above. Was I clean? In he went, regardless, and my anus easily absorbed his push and pull. He said, "I'll do you properly later," to Allie, as he went high in again. But the main purpose here was Georgie, who - probably for the first ever time - allowed a man to penetrate her backside. She went erect during this extended ride of increasing speed.

"Funny," Georgie said. "I quite liked that."

I invited Georgie to take her made erect penis and penetrate me. How did she feel going into someone's backside.

"Not sure. Well, I'm in. So I just do what you usually do?"

"Yes, in and out," I said, everyone looking on.

Finally, Georgie announced something was brewing so Allie went on her back and Georgie delivered sperm, and Roger wanking then followed her and pumped a great deal more into Allie.

Marie and I stroked Allie's breasts.

"You came all right," said Allie to Georgie.

The Reverend Georgie went and washed her penis in our bathroom, and then dressed. Roger and Marie simply left the room, to continue together in their own room.

"Thanks for the experience," Georgie said. "Charley was much dryer. Keep it private, please. I know I'm retired but I don't want any of this getting out."

Georgie left us, and left the building.

"Good sperm is good sperm," I said to Allie.

"Yeah, but if Georgie's gets there first - you know. Hmm."

Downstairs in the seating area I said that if the Chancellor of the Exchequer was soon going to introduce measures of financial protection towards preserving business and employment, then, I said, he would be adding money supply to a considerably reduced real economy. If this happened, inflation had to result. Once something like growth happened again the possibility was fast inflation leading to a crashable bubble. We'd already been living on borrowed time for ten years plus.

Allie said that when her student funds ended she would have to revert to Universal Benefits, joining millions more surely doing the same.

"The chances of her making a lot of money quickly, like at the Car Showroom, are over," Allie said. "It shouldn't concern you," I replied. "But I curse the day Labour took away student grants."

"I'm seeing Dr. Lindsey tomorrow - I'll walk."

"Hang on - that IUD will still be in."

"She's removing it."

"You won't get pregnant at all!"

"Well, Georgie wanted experience. I wasn't going to deny it. I missed out being a guest of Annie and Marie Healand to do what we did."

Narrator: Allie *Seeing Doctor Lindsey* (Monday 16th March)

"Linda," I said, "I'll walk to have the IUD out; Doctor Lindsey is giving me an MOT at 11 am."

"Do you want me to come with you?"

"No. I can go on my own. And don't forget, she was my doctor in Taunton."

"Ah, yes, I suppose you still have secrets."

"I had health issues."

So I went along by foot to the clinic, which now had chairs used to keep the public back from the reception, and there were many fewer seats to sit on. There was no automatic check-in any more.

"Allie Shrimpton to see Dr. Lindsey at eleven."

"Yeah."

After a short pause, Andrea called me in. I'd hoped by now that my Uncle Paul might have given me some useful genealogical information on Dr. Lindsey, but instead she was going to get some gynaecological information about me.

"Hello Allie!"

I said, straight out, "I want the IUD removing. Even Linda probably couldn't get it out."

"On the bench. Shoes off, knickers off, legs apart, and I'll use the metal speculum. I have cleaned it with disinfectant."

"I'm not wearing knickers. My wife prefers that I don't. And Abigail Randall said to stop wearing knickers. Abigail... Bloodred?"

After I'd widened my legs and she parted me she said, "Oh Allie, what have you been doing? I can guess. Is this like when you had alcohol problems and going with Himari Ishino in Taunton?"

"Er, probably."

"How many videos or DVDs did you make going with her?"

"Oh, about three."

"Really? Come on! I thought it was more like ten. You've come here to the east coast, like me. Has anyone seen you in them? What was your name in them?"

"You know what it was. Jilly Rogered. Here they call me Gael."

"I told you then it was no good for you. Well, it's no good for anyone. And now you could get this Novel Covid spreading like wildfire."

"Shutting the pubs means I won't see Annie. Oops. I'd better not give her surname. I went to what should have been the car showroom and now I can't get any more dosh."

"Allie, you're worth more than doing this. You're an intelligent woman. Hopefully the lockdown will prevent these."

"Annie is to retreat behind a camera. Marie - she's the trans - is moving in with her."

"I know them both. I'll prescribe you some cream. So why is the IUD going into my disposal bin?"

"Because Linda and I will have a baby via me."

"And the man, for your baby: is it your cousin back in Norfolk?"

"Too complicated, that."

"Not the trans sex worker, *please*."

"Not yet. There is a trans minister, retired minister."

"I was there: at her fireside naturist reveal, remember."

"Oh, yeah. You were in the buff too. There's a chap resident with us, with his partner. He's a donor at the clinic here."

"It has just closed today. Yes, I think I know who you mean."

"His partner is his..."

"I'm not discussing other people."

"But the relevance is he doesn't get her pregnant. Now you are here, and she isn't, tell me about Rhiannon Fleetwood. She didn't oppose you like she did me and others. Why was that?"

"I'm doing medical matters today. Out it comes. I'll leave the speculum in for now. Take your top off so I can examine your breasts."

"When else do I get to talk to you and remove the rumours?"

She was feeling my breasts, and I raised my right arm and left arm to her hand gestures.

"What rumours? I'm glad she's gone. If she hadn't, living here would have been difficult. This is a place of need, where I can make a difference as a GP. There is much demand for sexual health monitoring. Your breasts are fine. You don't do that kind of pornography where they get slapped?"

"Did you ever do that sort of thing, Andrea? I mean when Rhiannon and you..."

"Mind your own business, Allie Shrimpton. Remember, these breasts will have to function if you have a baby and I do recommend breast feeding."

"She treated you differently. And, on the level, how can you be an Anglican priest and join the Taunton Tantria?"

"I was invited. Lynton has his positions and so both groups, there and here, have taken this into consideration. Yes, I am a Fighter of Concern. You're a fool for not negotiating. You should still be the same. I am going to open this speculum further to really look inside. I need an extra light. You can put your top on when you want."

I wanted to talk instead. "So here is the really important one, Andrea. Did you ever get seriously involved in a certain coven? If you did you've an obligation to tell me."

"Rhiannon *would* have blabbed if she knew I went to anything like that. Me joining a coven would be a step too far for her. So that's your answer. Would you object if I photograph this and add it to your record?"

"That's not an answer, Andrea. I am a third degree high priest - a witch - of the Creech Moorlinch Coven. You know what that means. Photograph it - everyone else has."

"Sounds to me like you could be saying things you would want to keep secret. I'll use this mobile phone and transfer it across. This is a simple photograph, not a video."

"You are evading. You do know, or you should, that a high priest of a coven on finding a high priest of the same coven nearby must declare themselves to each other."

"I have enough depth in the Christian position to be the priest-in-charge here. People adjust; people accommodate. That's your difficulty, Allie: your inability to nip and tuck, to compromise. Everybody loves you, Allie, but you're too headstrong. Lynton is helping out in the parish. But I think he wants to talk to your wife. He, and I, for that matter, don't think she did anything wrong. Here we go. Yep, that's a good

image so I'll just transfer it. Your cervix is too red. Let me show you. On screen... now."

"Looks all right to me. You can only delay your answer to me to get corroborating information about me. You can't refuse."

"I think my husband, the bishop, could talk to Linda. Anyway, I'll unscrew this and relieve the pressure."

"You're too late. We are married and you don't accept same-sex marriages."

"Well, I think we might pioneer something different - yeah, *accommodating*. Would *you* object if she was Anglican again?"

"No, but she won't give up her new church."

"She could make that place Anglican - a slave church to the parish."

"No chance. We do things differently there, and it suits Liberal and Free Catholics. And she is a bishop."

"I'll put that to Lynton, doing things differently there, to require one more creative solution perhaps. Something has been up your bottom. Mind if I look?"

"To be honest, I don't think she is a Christian any more. She is still a theist, I think. She has been invited to have training with the Unitarians - to eventually go on to their Ministry Roll or whatever it is called."

"So I heard. One speculum out... and I'll just get another. Metal. Roll back a bit. In we go. Yep, widening now. What happened?"

"How many?"

"Twenty and then one later on."

"Allie! Oh well, it will restore itself. I'm afraid your time is up, Allie. Top and bottoms on now. Shoes on too."

I dressed to leave as she faced the computer, typing.

"Bit of cream will do your vagina and stop putting things up your bottom."

"You haven't spoken to me properly about your status as a witch."

"But I am not deaf. Speed up dressing as my next patient is due."

"If you looked behind you you'd see I have. I had a physical fight with Rhiannon, both of us naked in the vicarage garden."

"Not surprised. Now..."

"You're not playing fair, Andrea - the nature of your 'accommodation' with Rhiannon."

"Look. You are a very beautiful woman, Allie Shrimpton, and I am trying to keep you that way. I'm making an appointment for you to see the nurse - actually see her here - for the full MOT I promised including blood sample, urine and blood pressure. In a week. The nurse will compare that image and your vagina when she sees you. We need to know if you get pregnant. Now that device is out, you can get pregnant straight away. And the nurse will ask about your ongoing tendency to release gas from your backside. I'll open the window."

"Thank you. I've taken to eating more apples."

"Bye, Allie. Thanks for the chat."

"So what do I tell Linda: that the bishop will be in touch?"

"You can do, or wait until he does. Are you including it in your Ph.D.?"

"If it changes the bethel then yes."

"Then, perhaps as a researcher, you should wait for Lynton to contact her. If he decides not to, it would disturb matters if you create an expectation that he will contact her when he won't."

"That would be par for the course, Andrea, for you: creating expectations in Rhiannon regarding you. Everyone else gets her shit, except you."

"Goodbye Allie!"

"Well it's not fair."

"Goodbye Allie!"

Back at base, I showed Linda the cream from the chemist, and I said the device was in the Doctor's bin.

"Bit red?"

"It's because she used to see similar back in Taunton. I'm seeing the nurse in a week. We'd better delay having Roger inside me."

"Well, let me carefully apply the cream, starting now," said Linda.

Food and Procreation (Friday 20th March)

Adam had been right. Schools were closing except for key workers' and vulnerable children. People were staying at home to prevent the spread of infection. Restaurants and bars were being suspended.

It looked like Kathryn, Winnie and Kathleen did not qualify for the Chancellor's new Furlough scheme. Linda did, and we weren't sure why - probably being a bishop and minister had some sort of continuity. The scheme seemed open to corruption and administrative error. Adam and Peter were furloughed too.

Marie Enfield now worked for the Foss Upper Coast College from the bethel, in the sense of 'working from home' and Roger's scheme was ended but still received no dole because of Marie's pay; Roger's CV began a gap of inactivity. Well, he could be active with me.

Simply speaking we'd see them more; instead of doing everything outside and just coming through the private door and going up and downstairs.

Kathleen and Winnie and Roger and Marie joined Linda and me in delivering food; we had students coming into cook, deemed as an essential activity.

The primary school suggested some extra names of houses to visit and supply; the secondary school canteen was also providing a further service of reaching people. The Sikhs went outward too, as people wouldn't come inward to them. The kitchen we had thus combined with elements of being a food bank, so that some people received tins and packets of food to cook for themselves whilst others received ready-cooked meals. So tins were piling up in the kitchen.

When doors opened we stood back with bags of food left on the doorsteps to be retrieved. We often used hand sanitiser before and after picking them up.

Out in the streets we encountered some surprises, such as at one household with a provided address.

"Mr. Hal Ley? I'm Allie, this is Linda; this is some cooked breakfast."

This older man said, "Goodness me. I remember you, Linda Bode, at Saxiclite Club. Yes? Your family came from Syerston."

"Before I was born," she said. "And so you must have moved over here as well, Hal. Our family moved into a farm with a shop and have since left."

"I knew your mum, your dad. You had an elder brother. You and your elder sister looked so alike - and your younger sister was in your mum's arms. I never

married and now I'm here alone."

"It's remarkable and odd to see you again after all this time. Do you still practice naturism?"

"Yes. Oh yes. I go to Saxiclite occasionally - they've closed it now. You stopped going."

"When I became a curate, I moved from Saxiclite to Bever Wood."

"You are a curate?"

"I was." She told him that she was a minister of religion, actually a bishop, and I said I was a researcher and Ph.D student, having completed participant observation in Linda's church and now monitoring it during the crisis. Kathleen and Winnie came over, so we introduced them.

We had to move on.

Indeed, a number of unknown people remembered Linda. Ursula Major on our list remembered her as a kind of wild child in the farm shop.

The delivery over, we returned to the Bethel and washed our hands. It looked like most hours of the day would be spent indoors. We had a whole meeting area to sit in, and the various rooms around. The kitchen was ours at these unused times.

It was there that Roger with Marie told Linda and me that the clinic for donating was now closed. He explained that it wasn't entirely anonymous giving sperm because it carried the risk that years later some of the offspring would track him down as the biological father.

We confessed that when Georgie Smith called my IUD was still inside me. But it had gone. We'd pay a further fee for his services.

Marie said, "Roger can always help."

"I'm ovulating now, that's the point," I pointed out.

Linda said, "You realise that, like with Mrs. Carter, we were ministering to Georgie's personal need. If it wasn't for the pandemic it might have been several visits. What about you being forty-five, Roger? If you were a genetic woman, you'd be approaching menopausal."

"The clinic does think I am right at the top end of the age range. I'm not sure they'll continue with me when it comes to re-opening. But I do still produce good sperm. Marie is forty-nine, and there are hints..."

"Just starting," she said. "I look forward to when I can't get pregnant by mistake."

"Given Allie's timetable, can we do it very soon?" Linda asked further.

Marie said, "Why not?"

"Yeah," said Roger.

I then said, "Let's make it more loving for Linda. Do you know about the Vestal Virgins? They have a rule for lesbians. If the donor is present for natural donation, the woman partner should sit with legs out behind the woman receiving when the one to be pregnant is penetrated. So when Roger is ready, you get behind me, Linda, and you'll feel this thrusts."

"Allie! You rejected the Vestal Virgins."

"Still a good method," I said.

We all decided upon five o'clock.

At three o'clock we were showering and Linda asked me to inspect her rectum and vagina, unchecked but okay with Georgie and them. We began naked initial lovemaking.

At five, Roger Humphrey and Marie Enfield entered our bedroom. They'd discovered us naked on the bed, and in the process of much kissing. However, we paused.

Linda decided upon a literary quotation for us all. "Evelyn Waugh had once said about procreation, apparently in 1954 to Nancy Mitford: '*The pleasure is 'momentary', the posture is 'ridiculous', and the expense 'damnable.'*' I want our encounter or encounters to be pleasurable, to last above a moment."

They undressed. Marie this time had shiny red toenails as well as new shiny red fingernails.

Linda said to them. "Roger, this is a bit different, knowing that you donate sperm to the world in more sanitised and remote conditions."

Roger said, "Just to repeat, I have no interest in being father."

"No but I want Marie involved too. This is to be a loving act," Linda said. "Get him ready."

So far I'd said nothing!

Marie started masturbating her brother. We resumed kissing and making me feel sexy.

Linda said Roger should begin with her.

Marie said, "Fine. I get it."

"Help Allie, Marie. Stroke her pubic area; fondle her breasts. Don't leave her alone."

So Roger transferred his effort to Linda, who widened her backside, and Marie engaged in some same sex contact.

"Okay," said Roger. "Once again we go. The unusualness of this turns me on."

She said, "Going with you two opens up these experiences."

At the right moment, Roger transferred to me, out of Linda's arse, and Linda got behind me, and he pumped away into my vagina for his rich mixture to begin his journey, aided by Linda and Marie pulling my legs back and raising my backside.

Marie went one further, pushing her fingers into me to push sperm to my cervix.

Marie said to Linda, both still holding me to employ gravity, "We weren't stopped by the taboo that keeps brother from sister, and now we're doing this."

"So what happened?" I asked them, legs still up.

"Like you, I changed my name. I'm supposed to have taken on the name of my mother's family. You see, we start by telling people nothing, as if we are unrelated, but then news travels and so we say we're half-brother and half-sister. But our father contacts people and says the half-sibling story isn't true and we move on. Linda and Allie, you seem to accept us as we are."

Allie said, legs returning downwards, "I'd like to thump the shit out of your father."

"Our father?" asked Roger.

"No, Linda's."

"Oh, why?"

Linda spoke. "Because, and this will shock you, and you should keep quiet, I have had incestuous contact from my father, as has my older sister. The cuddle time she received involved sexual intercourse. I didn't have that, at least."

Allie then said, "I suspect something happened with your brother."

"Do you indeed? Well, you might be overstretching what you know and don't know."

"That's like one of my own non-denials, according to you."

"That's for you to wonder and me to know."

Roger said, "It has to be consensual."

"Or happen at all," I said.

Marie said, "So your sympathy for us is empathy based on your own experience."

"Yes," Linda said "But today was a happy time, when we behaved helping each other. We were all fully involved in the experience."

Marie responded, "At the clinic, they say he delivers. Or they did. Well, he has today. I'd like to carry on: can we?"

I said, "Yeah."

So Marie used her mouth on Roger, to taste the remains on his penis, and where it had been, to revive Roger.

Linda and I alongside, on the same body, started stroking each other's bodies and then she went down on me.

Roger under suction still asked me a question. "Those paintings of yours on the walls downstairs, do they have wider significance? I touched on theology and art in my MA - to the extent of the depiction of an erect penis and ejaculating as religious."

Linda paused her actions. "Well, you're the artist - dear."

"Then you'll know the answer is no," I replied, as Linda resumed licking. "It's like Georges Bataille and Michael Foucault on Édouard Manet. Whereas previous art had employed devices to take you outside the painting, Édouard Manet was drawing attention to the painting itself. Olympia, starring a prostitute, undermines the pretence of greater things, and so it's all about the painted canvas."

"Don't you ever stop?" asked Linda with a wet tongue flapping.

"I see," said Roger.

"And yes, Linda, I have painted Annie with these ideas in mind."

"I haven't seen that."

"Because she's got it. She hasn't posed because she gets behind the camera, but I did drawings."

With that Marie completed her task, and Roger pointed his penis so that Linda moved her mouth to him, and she can swallow.

All resting, I said, "My period is due, so if it doesn't come then bingo!"

Roger and Marie then proceeded to leave us, with us thanking each other.

Narrator: Linda *Service Moves Online* (Sunday 22nd March)

The website was updated and fully adapted for lockdown for the first Sunday.

Sunday 22 March 2020 - Coronavirus Mothering Sunday

There are no public services in the bethel until further notice. And we will miss coming together. However, we are still here and have a presence online.

There will be a service each Sunday from 11 am by live and partly prepared

video and then this will exist as a recorded video from about 1 pm.

We hope to set up an online Prayer Room on Wednesdays from 1 pm. Please email requests for mentions.

covidcontact@freeliberalbethel.org.uk

bishoplinda@freeliberalbethel.org.uk

You can come in the building as separate individuals limited to ten people within on spaced out seating. Please observe all government instructions. There will be sanitisers available. We encourage face masks.

You can make food donations. We have special kitchen cooking and delivery arrangements using our limited number of volunteers.

Financial donations must come via the website and we will ask for donations during online services.

The bethel is also a residence. The bishop (Linda Shrimpton) and three clergy are resident at home observing lockdown. We pick up posted messages. Use the double doors letterbox.

Do not come for conversation. Bishop Linda can give pastoral support via the telephone and video on social media.

The Free Liberal Ecclesia has concentrations in eastern Foss and in the north east of England. It is a creedless Church that observes Christian and some other faith symbolic practices.

Keep in touch.

Luke 12:4 (Christian New Testament: New Revised Standard Version) 'And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.' (You may not want to read on!)

Bhagavad Gita: The Lord [Krishna] said: 'Whence could such faintheartedness have come upon you at this time of trial? This is not proper for a civilised man, it does not lead to heaven and it will bring dishonour upon you. Do not give up your manhood in this way, Partha! Such a mood ill becomes you. Giving up this pathetic weakness of heart, arise, O destroyer of the foe.'

(The Bhagavad Gita teaches confidence to tackle the necessary battle ahead and to do it with intent without expecting and being attached to a particular outcome.)

Today: Many will have hoped to visit their mothers today, and many mothers will have expected a visit. Contact has had to move online. We are fortunate and thankful that we have these means of communication while the virus strikes. Take comfort that by not visiting the virus is less able to jump between people.

In the morning my prepared and edited service (including Peter's technology work) went out, and I went out live with Allie, using Kathleen and Winnie for the Eucharist element. Who would pour themselves wine or fruit juice and have bread? We did not know.

The sermon had to introduce us.

"We are initially individualist regarding belief, but in ritual were are more collective, more consensual. We Free Liberal Ecclesia bishops lead clergy teams, but we are not a magisterium. We bubble-up tradition from below.

"We can learn from the Eastern Orthodox. There's Ivan Vasilievich Kireevskii,

alive between 1806 and 1856. He stresses continuity with adjustments driven by the whole community. Everyone animates each other with the reasoning of the heart. Alexsei Stepanovich Khomiakov lived from 1804 to 1860. He's more Slavonic and ethnic; and 'Catholic' he translates as Sobornost as a gathering to determine the mind and heart pursuing sense and sensibility; Kath'olon means in Greek 'the whole' and for him relates to the functioning of each local church. Not everyone agreed with this, notably a priest theologian Georges Florovsky of 1893 to 1979. Florovsky considers the whole Church within the active parish, after Metropolitan Filaret, or Vasily Mikhaylovich Drozdof, of 1782 to 1867, that the content of faith derives from the charism as then active in the local community.

"Nevertheless, this all reminds us of our distinctive place as a congregation in the Free Liberal Ecclesia. Theology comes from the spiritual life. Nevertheless, we don't think that everything stays continuous when the culture makes new demands on us: we don't keep one tradition to one scripture.

"Antonij Khrapovitskii, alive between 1863 and 1936, added a moral stress into the doctrines, and both upheld the individual absorbed into the communion and that such involvement upheld beliefs rather than coming from rule-makers among the bishops. With Vladimir Sergeevich Solv'ev, of 1853 to 1900, the Holy spirit is active so that the individual dissolves (we could say) into the community as part of personal transformation. It's not about Slavonic society but a finite individual drawing upon the infinite contemplation in God from the activity of God. Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov, of 1871 to 1944, was more ecumenical and even sociological with his living memory of the Church, with Scripture within and interpreted by the community. He seems to split historical work on such texts from their theological interpretation within the worshipping community, but doctrines still come from internal, conciliatory, debate. Tradition and scripture come together. Florovsky agreed with Bulgakov, that universality follows on from whole faith, and is about charisma not history.

"I have to add that for us, historical research must affect theological conclusions and text affects tradition.

Of course they refer to very traditional and continuous Churches, with a lot here about seeing Christ in the other person, about the eros of love reaching into the non-finite active Trinity via the logos of Christ.

We, however, have flexible and unbounded texts of all kinds. We can read Hindu, Buddhist, humanist material, as well as a critical view of Christian and Jewish scriptures, and we can interpret worship on more anthropological (give and take, gift and exchange) general bases, and so our consensus is less certain.

So worship with us, and let yourself be transformed, and do it on the food and drink that reflects what was done as an Easter faith about Christ. You see how, with us, it all broadens out.

So it was thanks to Lynton Plimpton who put me on to some Russian thinkers in recent times about the very old. I could see this was not Unitarian - Kantian religion and all that, but might result in a Unitarian consensus from below. This sermon was quite a development for me, as I continued down the candle.

We received six emails, but we were pretty sure that more people had watched and listened. Later the web counter suggested 64 viewers, but some might have been very brief.

Christine had recommended very short sermons and her service went out at 9

a.m. live. Christine's service came from her home. The recorded version was her against a flat wall. We had the advantage of a chapel appearance.

News was that Charley Darley had not moved in with Georgie Smith either in Wytham or Serninsea.

Thanks for seeing me the other day. For forty years I've avoided 'mechanical Anglicanism' and slides to liberalism. But I watched you grow up and mature, recently as well as from my arrival in the 1980s. I followed a lonely path, doing what I was meant to do. I gave a plain, personal presentation, as in that robust Congregationalist theology and ecclesiology. By this path I lost out on the company of sympathetic persons, whether Charley or yourself. The lockdown forced me to make a decision, and why you saw me before it became impossible. But I haven't coupled with Charley, as if like two sad opposite transgenders. Your latest sermon drawing on Eastern Orthodoxy is worthy of a lot of thought.

Confirmation of Online Interviews

Later in the day I received an email to view a video. Gosh, I was going to be interviewed regarding training next week!

The video was a tour of the Steuart Campbell Warrington Academy building in York. The video explained that the origin of the Academy was at Warrington, one of the Presbyterian colleges that arose to teach people excluded from Oxford and Cambridge. The academy moved from Warrington to Manchester and then to York. Forty years ago Steuart Campbell as a Scottish textile manufacturer came south and donated much of his wealth to keep it viable. Yet, with numerical decline and changes towards competence based training, the actual ministry training college moved out, leaving the academy building as an arts and sciences adult learning college alone, although the college building kept its donated historical library of resources of General Baptists and Unitarian Methodists. Nowadays, said the narrator, students are based around the country and meet up near Bakewell at a hotel with conference facilities owned by the UGA. There is a second hotel in Wales - and not so far from our disrupted family farm. These were on the Roll of Accommodation, just as there was a Roll of Students, a Roll of Apprentice Ministers, a Roll of Ministers.

I contacted Peter and, of course, he knew about these places: they are all on the UGA Website.

Then I received another email.

Dear Bishop Linda Shrimpton,

We confirm interviewing you for training, for you to be placed on the Roll of Ministry Students if successful by selection. Rather than asking you to visit the Steuart Campbell Warrington Academy, it has to be via video links on Wednesday 25th March at 9 am where you will meet others online being interviewed. Your spouse can join in for all but the Core Interview. Please arrange a private space.

This is short notice. We can interview in December, but this timing allows you to be added to the Roll of Ministry Students this year in September.

The Interviewers have decided that, in your case, any provisional decision to train will then require, deposited with the College, an essay on your faith journey to academic standard with references and bibliography of not under 4000 words and not over 6000 words. This is because you did not supply us with such an essay ahead of a decision to interview. The essay will help us to ascertain the most relevant training for you if you should proceed to the Roll of Probationary Ministers.

Yours sincerely, Roll of Interviewers:

The Rev. Dr. Laurence Soames, Lancaster.

The Rev. Andrew Fallon, Doncaster.

The Rev. Dr. Adrian Hatch, Stirling.

The Rev. Anthony Lovatt, Skipton.

The Rev. Dr. Erika Zijderveld, Rotterdam.

Dr. Mina Jones, Chief Executive on the Roll of Officers

min@ugaunitarians.co.uk

Also, The Rev. Principal Aled Bolt, MA, Warrington Academy.

Charley Darley must have known because he sent me an email.

Well, they obviously think you're worth a try. Welcome to the tribe. Include Alfia. You know, they rejected three of the four last applicants back in December, and they don't just want lay preachers. Focus hard on your own academic ideas and not just in some preliminary essay. Why? Because they need a theologian course leader, and it could be you. You could be a big fish in a small pond. I'm staying in Wytham. Georgie is staying in Serninsea. Look out for her. Charley.

Narrator: Linda *Seeing the Nurse* (Monday 23rd March)

The clinic came after distributing meals, Allie having arranged to see the nurse. I went in with her, as first of all she removed her trousers to spread her legs. The nurse had a mask on, but we did not.

I said, "I recognise you."

"I'm Nurse Mabel Thorp; I used to work for Christine Vine as well as part time for the NHS. So, you, Linda Shrimpton, married Allie Shrimpton here."

"Yes," I said.

The nurse brought up Allie's record on the computer and then produced a full screen image of Allie's inner vulva taken previously by Dr. Lindsey.

"Let's look at you, Allie," said the nurse, putting on medical gloves. "Let's hope with the lockdown that all these sex events come to an end. I'd do a sexual health check but it will have to wait."

I looked over to Allie. "What sex events?"

She seemed to be rolling her eyes while the nurse pulled at Allie's vulva's outer and inner lips.

"I'll pop a speculum in as your cervix was a little red."

"It wasn't much and it's gone."

"And lights, camera, action eh? But, oh, I think you need a tampon. You use

them?"

"Yes. If it's started; pop one in."

At this point, Dr. Lindsey herself came in. She produced her own small torch to add to the light level. "Let's have a look. Oh, quite beautiful. Period started."

Nurse Mabel Thorp asked, "Did you bring a sample?"

"Yes." Allie gave it to the nurse from a screwed tight plastic container from her bag.

The nurse asked, "Were you at the recent event in the car showroom?"

"I see," I said.

"We've had a few problems from there," said Andrea Lindsey.

"Taking part makes my vagina redder than it is."

"Quite."

Nurse Thorp asked, "Linda, why are you looking down?"

"Do I believe her?"

Andrea said, "She *is* correct."

"Three hundred quid that was worth if I took it. The webcam can be a tenth of that."

"Oh," said the nurse. "I think we know the performer."

"There are two of them now," said Allie.

"Blood pressure now, Allie," said the nurse, enquiring no further.

"Take a photo record of in there," said the doctor. "Have you examined her breasts?"

"No, doctor."

Andrea said, "Just lift your top. Thank you."

The doctor performed the feel and when done lowered the top herself.

"They're looking good. That's it. Goodbye Allie," and the doctor promptly left the room.

I was offered the same basic MOT and accepted, and indeed left the surgery for the toilet to piss into a plastic container.

Back in the consulting room, Allie had already had a photo transferred to the computer records and blood extracted, and so I handed in my pot for the nurse to write on it and then experienced her stick a needle in my arm to take some blood and label it.

"I won't do your breasts or vulva," the nurse told me. "Anyway, CAIS women like you rarely suffer from breast cancer. Your gonads cancer risk is rising, though." (I groaned.) Instead she approached the issue of Allie's backside. "How is your gas production?"

"It's better. I'm trying to make it sweeter smelling, when it happens."

"There's not a lot we can do about it. You have no trouble defecating?"

"None."

"I'm going to look. On your knees, love."

A bar speculum opened up my wife's back passage. Lit by a torch, like Andrea's, nothing was untoward, though some paper administered by the nurse produced some shit.

The nurse said, "Linda, have you considered having the Vecchietti procedure?"

"Which is?"

"In an operation lasting under an hour, a small, plastic sphere is threaded

against your vaginal area. These threads are drawn through the vaginal skin, up through the abdomen and then the navel. That's where they meet a traction device, and you pull them so that the sphere is pulled inwards and stretches the vagina, by as much as a centimetre each time."

"No thanks, Sister Mabel. Dilating works and slowly."

"An alternative is very regular deepening sexual intercourse."

"That sounds a lot more welcome."

Allie stared at me.

When we were ready to go the nurse said, "Now then, you two. In case I've spoken out of turn I remind you Linda that you have also been involved in collective sexual events. Is it biblical about not throwing stones in glasshouses?"

"Hardly," I said to her.

"The woman taken in adultery, then: let he without sin cast the first stone."

"It is a made-up story. It does not appear in any of the earliest manuscripts. It's an iconic story so stays in but it should be removed. A bit like that IUD was."

We left the surgery building.

"Be honest. Did you join in? Annie is your Devil, your temptation."

"In Taunton I knew Himari Ishino and she was like Annie is here. They must have leather vaginas."

"*Rawhide*."

We walked silently with each other back to the bethel. I told her to follow me up to the bedroom.

"Drop your trousers, bend over and touch your toes, Allie Shrimpton. After deceiving me about being a witch, this is just the *latest*."

"I haven't lied!"

"Well, I'm covering all possibilities."

She did bend over and show me her bare arse.

I touched her bottom with the flat of my hand, and only lightly, and stopped.

"What was that?" she asked.

"Nothing. You bent over - that was good enough for me. I'm so pleased that you accepted my authority. We still have to get you pregnant. Roger gave you a rich sample, too. We need more sperm."

Chapter 35 Interviews Online

Narrator: Linda *Online Interviews Begin* (Wednesday 25th March)

Despite the need to be on time for the Unitarian days of interviewing and evaluating, we were able to join Roger, Marie, Kathleen and Winnie and some students to do the morning food deliveries.

Nevertheless, we had an appointment to keep and, indeed, at noon, from the seating and dining area we were looking at the big screen. We already had the software to have the online interactions. The microphones picked us up and cameras were directed our way, with one dominant. Allie and I just had to view the screen and respond.

I said to Allie, "I met Peter, an online Unitarian, and then each time encountered all the strangely different kinds of Unitarians, like as if one arc of a message was coming to me. So here we are, and I am applying to go into actual ministry training. So I shall treat this seriously, as if I have been called. Perhaps I was not to be an Anglican, but a Unitarian."

"Perhaps so," said Allie.

The first images of actual people were not of the interviewers or tutors but candidates.

"Have you let off?" I whispered to her.

"They can't smell it," Allie replied. "I'm nervous for you."

"Nurse Mabel should have given you a cork."

One person was on the central screen, with three others across the top (including Allie and me) and six greyed-out squares across the bottom.

"I'm Jason Goole. I have an Architecture degree. I am candidating for ministry today. I am not from Goole, but from Norwich."

"Ooh," said Allie, causing us to occupy the central screen very briefly.

"The Gooles come from Rochdale, originally - Unitarian Methodist country. My provided woody and panely background is fake, or virtual - it is from inside Warrington Academy. I wanted to be at Winster, virtually, you know, everyone."

"No I don't know!" I called out, showing on the screen. "What's at Winster?"

"Oh," he said. "Well, Heathcote Milk House. It's two extended farmhouses opposite on the main road. They function as hotels and conference centres."

Allie said, "Sounds a bit like where I came from, with two farmhouses down this road near Walsingham."

"Well, if you don't know, these two are opposite, and they have accommodation and facilities added plus grounds, but the road is a problem. There's talk of a footbridge: talking to the council. They added big street lights during the renovation last year."

"Why Heathcote Milk?" I asked, and people seemed to be looking at each other. Of course they weren't as they were separate.

Jason Goole said, "I'll tell her. Local milkman," he said. "The history is that one farmhouse was derelict and in 1948 the denomination bought it for opening up holidays for the urban poor. When the one opposite became available in the late 1970s, they bought that as well and then gave both the one new name."

Allie whispered to me. "Careful. You're showing your ignorance."

"So my background is the Martineau Hall. I'm unemployed at present. Remember, everyone, that the interviews start from now. They won't mind me saying they're looking in - those grey squares across the bottom."

One of them lit up and popped up. "I am Larry Soames, on the UGA Roll of Ministers, as we are, and on the Roll of Tutors. Your age?"

Jason said, "Dr Laurence Soames is a denominational historian. Fifty-three - me, not him. He's er..."

The tutor came back, "You're not introducing me or the staff: you're introducing yourselves. Next we have a bishop! I'll vanish and you introduce yourselves."

It was back to six greyed-out squares.

"Oh it's us already," I said. "Umm: I'm Linda Shrimpton, forty, and this is my wife Allie Shrimpton, ten years younger. I'm the candidate, *asked* to candidate. So I am a bishop in the Free Liberal Ecclesia, which shares some history with the Unitarians, I think, and I also do some exchanges here in Foss with the Reverend Charley Darley. Allie, my wife, is a deacon of this Church and she is also a Pagan High Priest, Alice Moonbright, able to start her own coven if she wanted."

Some man said, "Matthew Hopkins might have something to say about that."

Allie asked, "Who?"

"The Witchfinder General."

I said, "He wasn't Unitarian. Who are you?"

"Terence Chicken. There is an unfortunate property line from him to Unitarianism. Presbyterian Puritans were quite vicious towards anything resembling Paganism or atheism. Death was too good for them. Matthew Hopkins was just the most notorious, down in Suffolk, and as soon as the rates went up to fund his killing spree, the various towns and village folk stopped picking on the old women who were seen as nuisances in their villages."

Dr. Soames came on again. "Very good but we are only supposed to be introducing ourselves. I see you didn't select a background, so is that your church?"

"Yes, the Serninsea Free Liberal Bethel," I answered. "I didn't know we were supposed to choose a background."

"Allie, the wife, tell us more. I may as well not grey-out my square. Do we *need* to be hidden?"

"I was ordained into the Moorlinch Creech Coven. Moorlinch and Creech St. Michael are both in Somerset - Glastonbury area."

Jason asked, "Do you do spells?"

"No. I'm mainly an academic anthropologist."

I kept a smile going, while thinking that I was the candidate here. So I spoke. "I became bishop from an Independent Sacramental Ministry group, after I had been Anglican here in Serninsea. I was ordained," I said, "first as a deacon, and then as a priest. But I became a bishop in this group because, well, I and the team have built a congregation. I left that ISM group in my travel down the candle as they went up the candle, and now we are in a group that has superintendent bishops as well as apostolic, and we operate according to the Presbyterian principle of clergy voting equally, not just bishops."

Then a minister of a rugged and weathered face appeared, the Rev. Andrew Fallon, Doncaster, announcing his name and status. He said, "The Free Liberal

Ecclesia is well known to us for claiming Unitarian roots when it is well outside the denomination. It causes confusion and they have made claims in the past for ministry in our chapels. They get invited in, and then make a big fuss about it on the website. We know where Linda is coming from, but the advice is keep them out."

"I didn't see this. I have read every page. I've added our own congregational material. I've always been quite happy with them."

"Any relevant qualifications?" asked Andrew Fallon. "That's what you're supposed to tell us."

"BA (Hons.) Social Science and Religious Studies at East Midlands University; successful Anglican ministry training at Bishop Querceto."

Off the screen again, Allie leaned over and whispered, "This is going well."

"Isn't it just," I answered her quietly.

"I'm Terence Chicken, sixty. Preston I'm from but based in York, attending the York Cross Chapel. The background is our Warrington Academy at York General Baptist and Unitarian Methodist Library. Oh," he said, "there was that whole media hoo-hah there, in Serninsea, with that very dodgy Anglican suffragan bishop. Sex parties, bogus archaeology..."

Andrew Fallon appeared. "Well, we do have transfer candidates. I'm a tutor too - Unitarian Theology, if there is such a thing. I read Linda's most recent sermon on consensual doctrine. I'd like to tackle that."

The picture returned to Terence Chicken, announcing his wife, Julia, fifty-seven. She was well-rounded, very busty, and seemed to wear completely ill-fitting clothes, too small for her.

"Yes I am Yogini Shraddhadhi, or Julia Chicken, from York, with a Diploma in Western Buddhism. A Yogini can practice within a family life, and my other partner, both spiritual and in a relationship with me, is Yogini Lilasiddhi, or Celia Hindley, also from York, fifty, who should arrive later today. Shraddhadhi means 'she who has wisdom with faith' and Lilasiddhi means 'accomplishment through play' - which is what she does, but I don't claim wisdom, especially. She's a Western Buddhist, not a Unitarian - not yet."

Terence said, "We two have been knocking around Unitarianism for about four decades, haven't we my love? We had a son, and Celia moved in. We're all three secondary school teachers. I should say I have a new partner as well, Alison Martin, thirty-six, who is a primary school teacher."

Julia said, "I met her first time last week, and she is moving in."

Larry Soames appeared, "Yes, I know Alison very well. She grew up in Selby. So Alison is younger than your son."

"I know James very well!" a blonde woman appearing said. "But it's his biological dad I've partnered."

Terence added, "Yes, James we count as son of all four of us, despite being older than Alison. You two are the same age, Lisa."

"I do know that. I know most Unitarians."

"He was named after the man whose name was given to the other virtual room. He's still in the Youth Fellowship Roll, as they all get older - at forty!"

"I'm still in that," she said.

"I suppose you must be," said Julia.

I thought there's proof that they're committed to the cause! And, of course, he knew this Lisa among us and I missed saying he was *my* age.

Another grey square went live and its image also centred. "I'm Anthony Lovatt, minister at Skipton. So I know everyone here well except *Bishop* Shrimpton, isn't it?"

"It's not important," I said.

"No no," he said. "Don't hide it under a bushel: proclaim it! You could be the first Unitarian bishop since Herford!"

"He wasn't Unitarian," said Larry Soames, replacing Anthony Lovatt at the centre. "You stick to the theology side of things!"

"A whole family of Unitarian ministers," responded Anthony Lovatt, returning. "I give you Robert Travers Herford, who died in 1950, the brother of Professor C. H. Herford, of Manchester University. He started to learn Hebrew when he was thirteen years old, and later called himself a 'Jewnitarian', with a strong scholarly interest in first century Judaism and the Talmud influencing the New Testament and against anti-semitism.

"But Ulric Vernon Herford left. He went to India and created this Catholic Evangelical Church or some such," said Larry.

"Never lost his Unitarian theology," said Anthony.

"He never told anyone he had it!" said Larry back.

"Such accidents make history," said Anthony. "It is one of our noble, eccentric, Christian traditions. But as for apostolic succession, you know that the Hungarians reject it."

I came in. "Yes, I do know that. I know a Rumanian Unitarian, and she is still married to an ex-partner of mine."

"Another Mrs and Mrs?" assumed Julia Chicken.

"No, he was a man. He was married to this Rumanian Unitarian; by sheer chance she came to Serninsea, with her grown-up daughter. I knew her daughter long before my ministry. She was a worker on the adjacent farm to ours. But I didn't know of her mother's and indeed her own religion then, only later."

Jason said, "He was your partner but married to a Rumanian."

"Er, yeah," I said. "But I've just married Allie here."

"Complicated," said Anthony.

"Not more complicated than what Terence was describing."

"But they've been around a long time, and James their son," said Lisa.

Although that was a silly comment, I realised that I was doing myself no favours among those who knew each other.

One more candidate introduced herself.

"Hello everyone! As you all know, I'm Lisa Revie, single for my sins, Unitarian for twenty years, aged forty-one, done a bit of everything, thought I'd give this a go. I've done the preaching course. From the north, went north to Durham, known as a sensible chappess administrator but I do risk my neck down caves."

Far from having few candidates, this seemed to me to be more than a reasonable number for a very small denomination, if not as utterly tiny as my own.

Then Dr. Mina Jones appeared from the grey, saying, "So we have a panel but the Reverend Aled Bolt, Principal of Warrington Academy, as it now is constituted in its dispersed fashion, may join us later. Don't forget that late last year we selected one candidate to go forward, Ms Klara Merkel, of our Colchester chapel, who is forty-nine, with a Masters of Business Administration - more than me! Klara tells us that after our most regrettable Brexit she has acquired British citizenship.

Hello Klara!"

Klara, a woman with a blonde bob, appeared. She gave us a wave in the enlarged centre, and said, "I'm an antiques shop owner and auctioneer who's featured on television. I'm taking no part in this so goodbye!" Even the small square of her disappeared.

The small displays across the top changed to members of staff, and the retained display of students went to the bottom of the screen.

Adrian Hatch was the first to come to the central display. He explained that he had selected a virtual background of the Channing room at York - and the staff all shared it despite being in different places. Sat behind a desk, there was a chalice in front of him, and he lit it with a match. He said, "First of all the interviewers are going to introduce ourselves by title, full name, age, location, and highest qualification. So I am one: the Reverend Adrian Hatch, seventy-two, currently in Stirling but soon to retire, and I have an MA in Scottish History."

In a Dutch accent a beautiful woman stated, "I am the Reverend Doctor Erika Zijderveld, from Rotterdam, thirty-three, and I have a doctorate in European Protestant Development. I come from the Remonstrant tradition. I am an interviewer oversheer, sho I look at the integrity of the interviewing process as it goes along."

"I am the Reverend Doctor Laurence Soames, sixty-two, ministering at Lancaster, and I have a doctorate in Presbyterian and Unitarian History. I am an interviewer."

"I am the Reverend Andrew Fallon, fifty-seven, at Doncaster, with an honours degree in Theology, and I am interviewing."

"I am Dr. Mina Jones, thirty-nine. I'm Chief Executive on the Roll of Officers and I have an honorary doctorate in Administration, also interviewing."

"And I am the Reverend Anthony Lovatt, from Skipton, sixty-five, rides a motorbike, with an MA in Theology. I'm interviewing and I chair this part of the process, which is becoming informal discussion."

"Before we go on," said Mina Jones, "We have here four candidates plus one, and I have bad news. Unless we can stretch the budgets and find more trust grant money, and perhaps home chapels can pitch in, we have the budget for just over two successes in this process. People think we have an endless supply of trust funds. We don't. Unless regional funds and chapel funds chip in, we are limited to two candidates going foward."

"Surely," said Andrew Fallon, looking even redder, "we are free to select and the budgets should be found. We in this denomination lack people, not money. Money can be found."

Mina Jones replied, "Money is tied up, and unevenly distributed. There are jobs for all of them, somewhere, assuming all expected retirements happen. What there isn't is money to train, and either we believe in training or we don't."

Andrew Fallon replied, "Then we should take into account training that has happened. Lay courses and the like. Anyway..."

Anthony Lovatt interrupted, "This is a discussion for another time and place, though considerations for selection are relevant for the candidates. Right. Erika."

The Reverend Dr. Erika Zijderveld, told us: "Some interviewers may appear not to participate, and shay nothing, but in fact everyone is going to make notes, and all of us are all making evaluations and assesshments. I want to shtate now: anything that happens here in our virtual Steuart Campbell Warrington Academy stays here."

Conversations are confidential. Yesh, theology is leaky but let's keep this to ourselves, our notes and our deshishions."

Two Candidate Discussions

The Skipton minister, the Rev. Anthony Lovatt, now took central stage. "I want us to have two short discussions. The first is a controversial area. We're not Anglicans, so we don't get the wider publicity like you folks did over in Serninsea. However, we did have a bad press moment last year when one person on our Roll of Students had an extended sixteen week pastorate in our Darlington chapel. By the eighth week he'd managed to have an affair with the daughter of a congregation member, causing the congregation member herself great tension within her family, partly because this student minister was married. Contributions are wanted from candidates and spouses: what went wrong?"

Lisa Revie was first to speak, making the main screen of screens. "If he had the consent of the daughter, then it's nothing to do with her mother."

"What about his own wife?" asked Terence Chicken. "You see, we have a polyamorous marriage. Julia here is my wife, but she does have a relationship with Celia. I've met Alison, and Julia and Celia have given their consent, and so I divide my sexual time between Julia and Alison, and Julia also spends intimate time with her Buddhist partner Celia."

"Where's the consent in Darlington?" asked Julia.

Terence continued: "Here, it is all above board. Alison has moved in."

I said, "It doesn't work like that." There we were: centre-screen. "Even if both gave consent, the problem is both are in a client relationship, the daughter by virtue of the interest of the mother. By 'interest' I mean the mother's concern in that position, what is important to her, and she is in a pastoral situation. I know it happens, but plucking partners from a congregation even legitimately upsets the dynamic, for example the suspicion of favouritism."

Terence asked, central to our big screen, "So your wife is completely outside the church you operate as a bishop?"

"Er, no."

Allie said, quickly, "It was different. I was a researcher and still am for significant developments."

"Doesn't that still affect things?" he asked.

I responded: "Allie was outside, came in among us. Her blending in was on the surface, only trying to 'go along' with things so as not to affect decisions. So she was an outsider. I did not cross these lines. I knew and know that these lines exist. As a parish curate, I observed these lines, but then I was married to Keith, from before my curacy, and then had a relationship with Adam, who was not part of the worshipping community. I crossed no lines. However, as I said, it does happen in places, and often the minister does their best to handle the situation in a proper way as possible. It is especially awkward for a female minister, but we get traditional congregational hierarchical and patriarchal dynamics still when it is a man. The wife of a minister, and girlfriend, acquires a privileged position from what had been an equal one among her congregational friends. She is plucked out and it's almost,

suddenly, as if she has privileges, and she becomes separated out from her friends."

Lisa Revie asked, "Isn't this a bit traditional, a bit out of date?"

Terence said, "Sadly no. And if you're gay, or trans, it can cause additional revelatory gossip, and gossip is destructive. We are supposed to be more advanced, but are we?"

Allie said, "Linda was my chief informant and so I was around her anyway. Aren't we talking about this student at Darlington?"

Jason Goole contributed: "But that's not the situation in the example, is it? The daughter was not in the congregation."

I said in response: "I addressed that. Ministers can be friendly but they are not friends, for example. But everyone in our church is clergy, inheriting some Liberal Catholic practices."

"No laity?" asked Lisa of me.

"They come in and they receive and give ministry, but it's a very loose arrangement. We don't have members beyond clergy."

Jason said, "We're all off the point anyway. We are talking in general terms. In the press, the wife posed topless and forgave him for the affair. So he had received consent, even if after the event."

Terence said, "Hardly. She meant to embarrass him and it worked."

"She said she forgave him," said Jason.

Terence maintained: "It was embarrassing for Darlington, and the denomination, and he was gone."

Jason said, "He was wronged. Scandal got the better of them; something like in Serninsea. We had our own Serninsea over there, just that it was noticed less."

Lisa corrected him. "In fact she set out to embarrass him. She took the risk of appearing topless and that's because she knew it would reflect negatively on him. It I'm up here and it is an often-told story."

Jason came in. "Against my own position, I'd say he could not keep his hands off the daughter he met via knowing the mother. He should have concentrated on his work. He was gone within a flash of that topless pose appearing in the press. She made him an embarrassment."

"Because she showed her breasts?" asked Lisa Revie? "It's ridiculous. Don't blame her!"

I said, "I think that."

Jason said, "But I continue to maintain that although she intentionally stitched him up, he had consent. There was a lot of gossip but he did nothing wrong. You, Bishop Linda, said before that you had a partner who was married to a Rumanian Unitarian. How did that work?"

"But I met Mary, his wife, and she wished me the best in the relationship. They remained friends; they simply hadn't got divorced. I divorced my husband because, as in the public record, he constantly worked against me. He co-operated towards a fast divorce - I'll give him that."

Now Julia said, "There is a power issue in Darlington, where the minister has privileges and standing, and issues of favouritism can arise."

I said, "My point before. It's the principle regardless of consent."

Lisa said, "Let's name him, as it's no secret: Nathan Thames, and Nathan means 'giver' in the Bible but he is as much a taker, arguably."

Jason Goole said, "His wife, by the way, found a chap almost instantly."

The Rev. Anthony Lovatt appeared again. "That will do for that. Now I sometimes help out Andrew Fallon tutor theology. So, Hans Küng is a very elderly theologian these days, a marginalised Roman Catholic with an ecumenical and interfaith ethics reputation. He writes *On Being a Christian*, published here in English in 1977, later than our own *On Being a Unitarian*, 1968, by Phillip Hewett, and Küng's has an interesting section on page 414. I'll read it, degendered:

"On the other hand, myths, legends, images and symbols may not be criticised merely because they are myths, legends, images and symbols. Was this not a danger for Protestant theology, Church and proclamation, especially in the German-speaking countries, which frequently practised demythologization too thoughtlessly, hastily and arbitrarily? To a large extent pictorial, mythical, symbolical and sacramental elements were simply excluded from the Church. As if people had only ears and not eyes. As if the appeal had to be made to intellect and critical-rational discourse and not also to fantasy, imaginative power, emotions, to spontaneity, creativity, innovation. As if Christian faith were merely a matter of intellect and did not have to stir the whole person. As if being stirred could ever be replaced by intellectual comprehension, images by concepts, stories by abstract ideas, narrating by proclaiming and appealing. ...Thus, even when the mythical element is simply eliminated - as became evident in the theology of the Enlightenment and of liberalism - it is at the expense of the Christian message, which is then thrown out together with the myth. Faith then hardens into a rational religion.

"Now, have we hardened into rational religion?" Anthony Lovatt then asked. "Any agreement with him? Please discuss. Once again, no interviewers to join in, despite the temptation Andrew, and Laurence - our tutor in History and Ethos - and Remonstrant Erika!"

Jason Goole kicked off, making the main display. "The Puritans were pre-Enlightenment and they were, what's the word?"

Allie said, "Iconoclastic."

"That might be it: took away graven images."

Terence, appearing large, said, "But it is right. I think our Free Catholic should declare her hand."

"Happily," I said. "The Free Catholic or High Protestant approach is to have symbols without creeds. We have a regular Eucharistic celebration. Recently I invoked practice as a source of theological consensus."

"We do not," Julia asserted. "Hello, Yogini Lilasiddhi." There were three together now on the screen.

"Hello Yogini Shraddhadhi!" Celia Hindley said, "We don't want to be excluded by narrow practices. Meditation is open to everyone."

"So is eating and drinking," I said. "We operate an open table, especially with no lay membership."

Lisa Revie said, "We have coffee afterwards with buns and biscuits - I make many of them - and we have fellowship."

"It's not the same," I responded. "We ritualise it, observe the spiritual exchange involved. I know Derrida criticised the whole notion of gift, but it was never only gift."

"Aye," said Allie.

Terence Chicken said, "We have poetry in services, and we sing hymns."

"It is minimalist," I said. "We want to enchant and enrich."

"Do you do this when you go to Wytham?" he asked, the two women looking at him alongside him.

"No, I minister a service that they have. I don't impose."

Julia asked, "What about Charley at your end?"

"We haven't gone to lay presidency, so we have a Sunday off or others do it when Charley preaches. Our practice remains that a bishop or priest presides."

Jason Goole asked, "So *you* bend but *we* stay rigid?"

I said, "Let me tell you about a colleague. She's a follower of the theology and ecclesiology of the late Congregationalist Bernard Manning. He and she had simplicity in the delivery of what he and she called 'Word and Sacrament'. But she wasn't liberal, and we are - but we are with a performative ritual. We do have theatre, art and symbol."

Terence Chicken said, "But you are very clerical. It just shows we were right to reject Free Catholicism."

"We are no longer strict on Apostolic Succession. Obviously."

Allie then said, "The minister Unitarian Lloyd Thomas never got priested at Mayfair; W. E. Orchard did but he was a Congregationalist and went Roman Catholic."

"But he rejected the denomination," said Terence, "and I think you do too," he added.

"Not sure about that," said Jason Goole. "I mean, Lloyd Thomas was still Unitarian on a broad definition used at the time. Anyhow, you, Allie, said you're a Pagan doing spells and your wife is a Catholic."

"Wrong on both counts," said Allie. "I am inactive as a witch: there is no coven here, or not one I know about; and Linda is not a Catholic."

"A form of Catholic," Jason said. "Our man Martineau was about the limit. And from Martineau you get Francis Newman's broad theistic humanism. Now, our friend, Klara Merkel, already selected, wrote last year in our newspaper *Challenger* that our ministry should be for minorities and we could create something like an English Commonwealth Society. She clearly believes in a radical, equalitarian society and quoted the priesthood of all believers. Sorry, Linda, but you clearly are a hierarchical bishop. What do we think?"

I said, "Look, having bishops does not negate a priesthood of all believers," I said, "and in fact we have a priesthood of all by making them priests."

"You haven't. They're deacons," said Jason.

"I'm too slow since Liberal Catholicism. They will all be priested. We don't use the terminology because our stress is not on belief. It is on practice."

Terence Chicken said, "Nevertheless, our attending bishop's notion of equality is not from Enlightenment religion or liberalism."

Allie said, "No it isn't, and Küng locates it in Protestantism and is probably thinking of Ernst Troeltsch, and the category Mysticism, which is seen in the New Testament but owes more to the Enlightenment and indeed individualist liberalism - subjective faith."

Jason Goole said, "We perhaps need some objective-like standards, some identity, so we are not anything and nothing. Keeping some myths, some practices,

might be useful, especially in our postmodern chaos."

"But that would be the wrong approach," I said. "It is an evangelical strand to have definition derived from tradition, the line going from Karl Barth's cultureless transcendence to Hans Frei and George Lindbeck, those standards of role performance generating beliefs and identity."

"If that's what you do," said Jason.

"No it is not," I said. "We are open. We have a kitchen learning from the Sikhs and a pool for a future new life-orientation from Judaism. Our symbols are entirely open to wide meaning. But I do have some sympathy for what K ung states. It seems so do you, and in a more concrete way."

Lisa said, "I just keep it simple. Simple expressions clearly meant. Like this joker Bernard Manning, apparently."

Anthony Lovatt appeared. "So I think we have enough. Thanks to all contributors. Had we met we would have had more of a get together. But the interviewers will now chat online and we'll all convene tomorrow at two in the afternoon."

And that was that! The screen went blank, and indeed we did not converse among the candidates.

I asked Allie, "What do you think?"

"Definitely we are outsiders."

"Yeah. It's supposed to be all-inclusive and welcoming."

"But it has its own way of making boundaries, and does."

"Hang on. I have a message," I said. "Dr. Mina Jones is asking for worship ready for 2 pm tomorrow and it will be evaluated for competence and engagement. Quarter of an hour only."

Allie said, "Right. Let's be really innovatory. Do some Buddhist, Pagan stuff and surprise them with what we use. Your High Priest is activated! Let's get to work!"

"You are activating being a High Priest?" I asked.

"Sort of."

Worship and Discussion (Thursday 26th March)

It was 2 p.m. and the Reverend Dr. Erika Zijderveld introduced the fact that we were having fifteen minute maximum online worship.

The camera was directed at Allie, Kathleen Lott, Winnie Lott, and me in the chapel, behind our altar table. We had closed robes on (and nothing else). I introduced the resident colleagues in religion.

"What we suggest," I said, "was that you get some yoghurt, or some bread, or a biscuit, or piece of chocolate; and then some milk, or a drink of wine, fruit juice, water, coffee, as you want. The preference is for something that transforms, but we're not dogmatic, and also we wanted to include the Yoginis and something Buddhist. We are going to use yoghurt and milk."

Celia Hindley spoke, coming on to the screen we could see. "You are referring to us. Julia came to the Western Buddhist Sangha I was in. We were also in the York Yonis, a post-Buddhist group, which we still attend, and we know about you Allie Shrimpton because what happened at Serninsea has been reported. Julia was in the

Unitarians, with Terence, and..."

Erika reappeared. "The time for discussion is later. Please enter a state of calm for our short worship led by Bishop Linda Shrimpton, the Reverend Deacon Allie Shrimpton, and the other deacons."

I said, "We begin with a moment of silence."

Kathleen now said, "Let's start by loosening our bodies: Tantra is about moving energy through the body, so we unblock our systems first. Now, on ourselves, let's try light feathery touches, and gentle stroking. This is to heighten the senses in a slow way. Do this on your faces, and on your arms and hands, and, if bare, legs and feet."

Thus the four of us leading worship stroked revealed arms and legs accordingly.

Winnie continued, "Now we focus on breathing. Inhale and exhale mindfully; relax your tummy, and take slow deep breaths into your stomach. The need is to enhance the sense of intimacy."

Allie took over, reading what she had written: "*All of creation is a play between Shiva (consciousness) and Shakti (the energy or power of consciousness). This distinction is a device to comprehend the incomprehensible. The Divine Mother is transcendent, ineffable, and immutable. Come, Divine Mother, our souls inspire, and lighten with celestial fire, with earth, air and water guide. Anoint and cheer our longing face with the abundance of your grace; keep far our foes, give peace at home; where you do guide, no ill can come. Teach us to know you the divine mother, and praise be to you. Using the Mahayana Shraddhotpada Shastra, we can say: Adoration to our Great Compassionate Saviour, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent! Adoration to her potentiality and unmanifested universality! Adoration to activity, perfectly balanced and accommodating! Adoration to the pure essence of mind, wide and deep as the sea!*"

It was my turn. "As we gather at the Mother's table we must recall the promises and warnings given to us, such as in the various Scriptures and traditions, and so examine ourselves. In the Christian Gospels, Matthew 11.28 states: *Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"

Allie spoke: "*Yuthok Yonten Gonpo, a great lama who established the route of Tibetan medicine, said: 'If you take seven steps to help one patient, it is the same as circling all the Buddhas. If you give medicine once to one patient, it is the same as making charity for all sentient beings. When you fulfill the needs of one patient, it is equal to offerings to all the worthwhile. Refrain from: harming living things, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, lying or gossip, and taking intoxicating substances.'*"

It was me now: "*The Beatitudes of Jesus: Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"

"*Divine Mother, giver of light and grace, we have upset you and our neighbour, in what we have thought, said and done, through ignorance, through*

weakness, and deliberately. We are sorry and ashamed and shall take steps to be more aware and more respectful. Amen."

Allie called the Peace: "Let us greet each other under the Holy Name in resolve to pursue greater awareness and compassion. Offer one another a sign of peace."

We did this with each other

"In silence," stated Kathleen in a strong voice, "be aware of your centres of energy; in particular, recall that Krishna, after worshipping Rada's yoni, became God Krishna. Sri Rama Janaki Nath worshipped Sita's yoni. Vishnu, Brahma, the saints, and all of us were born from a yoni.

I said, *"Divine Mother, our hearts are open, you know our desires known, and we cannot keep our intimacies from you: Cleanse and Inspire us to become who we can be.*

"We give glory to you, and we keep peace and harmony on earth; we worship and give thanks and praise. Hear us, and give us the means for wisdom in action.

"Now from Philippians 2:1-3 I read: *...make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves."*

I read: "From Matthew 9:35-38: *Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the God of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into the harvest field.'*

"This is our read witness: Praise to the Divine!" Some people repeated the last four words.

Allie said: *"We have our intercessions. Before the symbolic yoni ask the Cosmic Mother to grant wishes. Wishes may be of any kind - especially cures and needs. The highest wish, however, is to realise the truth in the essence of creation, in the 'womb' that is the mystery of Shakti, going back to the Source."*

Allie said, "We pray for the the Roll of Churches of the Unitarian General Assembly, for better politics and governance of our continent and across the world. Consider those who suffer, especially in the lockdown, and those who have died, and for them we reflect in silence."

After a slight pause Winnie added: "Grant compassion for all, starting with yourself, for those you love, for those you do not ordinarily love, and expand that compassion to the whole universe."

I said, "Let us pause and anticipate the divine elements. These will come in a few minutes. We must wait in holiness for the divine action."

Kathleen and Winnie walked off to behind the camera. Kathleen returned with a bowl of yoghurt and four tablespoons. Winnie returned with a bowl of milk, four teaspoons and an athame. They placed these on the table cloth. The spoon handles faced me, the teaspoons near the yoghurt to my right and the tablespoons near the milk to my left as I looked out. The athame was placed in between them.

Allie stated: *"We die, and are gone; we are born, and are here; we emerge through the yoni. This is our story. Hosanna in the highest! The honour is yours, Mother, for ever and ever, in the cycle of bringing birth."*

I then picked up the athame, and placed it into the yoghurt. I said, *"With the*

air of the north, and the water of the west, and the heat of the south, and the dryness of the east: conceive and reproduce."

I then raised the athame again, and placed it into the milk. *"With the air of the north, and the water of the west, and the heat of the south, and the dryness of the east: feed and nourish."*

Allie said: *"The Dharma: make progress with the Dharma."*

I said, *"Draw near with faith. Receive the elements that conceive and reproduce, feed and nourish. God's holy gifts are for God's holy people: they are for all of us, all of us worthy of receiving and giving compassion."*

"We do not receive these trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. You are the mother of grace and mercy. Grant us therefore the way of wisdom ahead as we consume these symbolic elements. Draw near with faith, first to the yoghurt and then to the milk. Or, first to your food and then to your drink."

With the teaspoons, I gave each of my colleagues a sample of yoghurt. Then with the tablespoons I gave each a sample of milk.

When it was done, I said, *"Divine Mother. We thank you for feeding us with your body. Through you we offered our souls and bodies and received your divine power. Send us out in your Spirit to live and work to grant compassionate service to all."*

"The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and blessing you all, may the Spirit, be among you and remain with you always."

"Go in peace to love and serve the people. Amen."

After a pause the Reverend Dr. Erika Zijderveld came to the centre of the screen by saying, "Thank you for that worship from the Free Liberal Bethel in Serninsea, thanks to all four of you. Please introduce your colleagues."

So I did, and Kathleen and Winnie left the stage.

"Thus we have made another liturgy," I said. "I'm sure we'll adapt it and use it again. I can think on my feet liturgically, so I have these texts in my head, and I write creatively, with my friends. That's what we have been doing ever since I and we went independent."

Anthony Lovatt appeared, saying, "I have done communion services based on early Christian and pre-trinitarian liturgies, much as we know them. This was definitely post-Christian."

"Stripped of dogmatic and doctrinal content," I said. "You don't approve?"

"Well, you extended the boundaries. And Alfia added her Paganism to the Hindu/ Buddhist content."

Allie said, "I'd have added more using the Black Madonna, but time was short."

Lisa Revie asked, "Who's that?"

I answered, "She has a mysterious presence at secretive spots in old churches, especially in France and Spain."

"Is she black as in diversity and inclusion?" Terence asked.

"Nope. The blackness is as of the fecund, soil waiting before new crops make the land green. The origins of such churches can be on Pagan Goddesses."

"You believe this, Linda?" asked Terence. "You strike me other times as rational."

"It is not history, it is not science; it is the art of creative story telling that relates at a deep level. So in Glastonbury there is a kind of pseudo-science to our modern ears in the ancient ruined abbey dedicated to her name, especially in her chapel supposedly designed using the sacred geometry of the vesica piscis: these are two intersecting circles demonstrating the sacred marriage of spirit and matter and produce a womb-shaped opening for the birth of the Divine Child of Light. Venn diagrams, Terence, with your maths degree. The overlap is a vulva shape."

"Gosh," said Lisa. "Beyond me."

Anthony Lovatt now said, "The other feature of this, beyond the flesh, was the spoons and the replacement elements. They all took these elements on spoons held by you, Linda. You were definitely the bishop then."

"I specifically said that they could pick up the spoons themselves."

"What exactly was that milk?" Anthony asked.

"Cow's milk. Breast milk will come later, perhaps."

Andrew Fallon said, "Not in content but in flow and presentation, I'd say it was pretty faultless: nevertheless, the Eucharist is not a common practice now within Unitarianism and we rely on the chalice as our symbol of unity."

"Highly innovatory," said Laurence Soames. "Good. Now this time here is for free discussion, to go where it will. So we have two strong Buddhists with us and what is your support for Terence and his Unitarianism?"

Terence, Julia and Celia appeared in the centre of the screen. Allie and I moved into the seating and dining area where we had the bigger screen.

Julia said, "The Western Buddhists had strains and stresses with its separate sex structure. As a couple, we felt we were breaking what was an arrangement to separate people from erotic relationships. The York Yonis had Tantric activity. So I chatted with Terence here, and we took more services together in York, that doesn't have a minister, and the services became more and more meditative and multifaith in character."

Terence said, "We virtually guide it now, the three of us. I take most services, Julia does a lot of administration. I've taken on more and more pastoral duties. So to become a minister would be an extension of what I do. Both Yoghinis are ordained."

Lisa asked, "Who ordained you?"

Julia said, "The Western Buddhist Sangha. We wanted to talk to Alfia - your full name? - about Taunton Tantria."

"Would that be relevant?" asked Jason Goole.

Julia answered, "Probably not."

Allie asked, "You wear hanging discs?"

"Of course we do, and you do not," she said. "We happen to know this."

The Rev. Anthony Lovatt appeared, asking, "Go on, Jason, how do you make this more relevant?"

"Well, simply: must we go down this New Age route just demonstrated?"

I responded, "It wasn't New Age. It was texts from traditions, texts with communal memories."

"Divine Mother and yonis. Yonis?"

"Why not? We have them!" I said. "Do some worship based on the penis," I suggested.

He said, "So last night I looked online about the Serninsea scandal, and it says about you being intersex and you can't have children. So what was all that

about?"

"Because, Kathleen happens to be pregnant; Allie is trying to get pregnant."

"Who's the father or fathers?"

Allie said, "Donors."

Julia said, "Alison wants a baby from Terence."

Jason said, "I want to discuss the worship. Take for example the old-school ministers who preached without microphones. They spoke from their diaphragms. Everyone heard them, even at the back of a large Victorian pile, and in those days folk did not have hearing aids. Nowadays people have microphones and they *mutter*. We taught ministers to project their voices, to have clear diction."

"You're going back a bit there," said the Rev. Dr. Adrian Hatch. "Are you criticising our training before you've even been selected?"

"Maybe I am from observations up and down the country. But those ministers of old who went through formal training did the job. They delivered a clear, rationalising, simple, tradition. That wasn't."

"And what is 'the tradition' these days?" Adrian Hatch asked. "I suggest that the institutional memory at best has become confused: the rise in secular language and secular understanding has undermined even the liberal view of Christianity."

Jason Goole was returning to his view of postmodernism: "There was that attempt at a theological symposium some months back. And, yes, there was an interesting call to become postliberal in the Yale sense, now the world has opened out."

"Oh no," I answered rapidly, "that is no road to travel."

"It's about being recognisable, understood, defining who you are," Jason insisted.

"No, it is freezing culture, as if one can no longer take on experience, in favour of some imposition of what it is to be a Church. Culture keeps shifting, we keep absorbing, language keeps changing. This would be a sea-change for Unitarianism, surely, which is about subjective thought, and individualism among a crowd."

The Rev. Dr. Adrian Hatch then said, "Your sermon quoted the likes of Kireevskii, Khomiakov, Florovsky, Drozdof, Khrapovitskii, Solv'ev and Bulgakov. These are all collective and conservative, theologians of fairly recent times wanting to be continuous with patristic times."

"But I also spoke about using historical research, text affecting tradition when our texts are flexible and unbounded, and being more anthropological. Thus our consensus is less certain."

Celia said, the three appearing central screen, "Jason, You would exclude us with our far Eastern outlook."

"Yes I think I might as a central stance, but still contributing."

Terence said, "Second class citizens."

I suggested that this postliberal identity road was the way to adopting creeds and boundary statements and that it lacked courage.

Lisa now spoke (at last!): "Keep it direct, simple, efficient. I'm all for efficiency of speech. I didn't get much from the yoghurt and the milk. You'd have used breast milk if available?"

Allie said, "Definitely. You had any kids, Lisa?"

"No. No relationships either. Never really wanted them. I preach, do a lot of admin for the church, and keep the show on the road. I'll go to Findhorn, but I'm not

into wacky stuff."

"Nor me," said Larry Soames. "There's a lot to be said for going straight down the middle."

Erika said, "Today the perspective to is to evolve boundaries to include like our two yoghinis here."

Anthony said, "Laurence definitely agrees with me."

"He's a historian," Erika responded. "But you cannot live as living in the past. Do that and you really are a religious museum."

"Jethro Tull," I joked to Allie.

"What?" asked Lisa.

"Agricultural advancement," Allie said.

"Hey?" asked a puzzled Lisa.

Terence stated his view that beliefs would evolve, but he didn't seem to want to offer me any support. Jason clearly wanted inherited definition, and Lisa apparently wanted simplicity.

So I asked her. "What is your position on all this, Lisa. You mentioned Findhorn."

"When Unitarians go there; I wouldn't go alone. There might be some ideas and practices, that's all. Yours seemed to be even farther outside."

I muttered, "Further outside."

"What?" asked Lisa.

"Hobbies? Activities?" I asked.

"Speleology. Can't think it has any relevance."

"Can affect your outlook. Do you dig deeper, look below the surface?"

"Ha ha," said Lisa.

The Reverend Dr. Erika Zijderveld declared the discussion over, that she and her colleagues had heard enough. She seemed to hint that it wasn't the best of discussions, by saying that Klara Merkel last year had offered a clear line towards political and social relevance. I could see that we had discussed religion in a very cultic manner.

Meanwhile, we should prepare for our actual interviews, said Erika.

Off screen Allie and I admitted that we started to get a bit fast and loose with references to agriculture and hobbies, evidence of frustration.

First One-to-One Interview

My first interview was on a one to one video link with Dr. Mina Jones, Chief Executive on the Roll of Officers. She said that the video was being recorded at her end, and the Rev. Dr. Erika Zijderveld in Rotterdam would review it. Normally the interview would be with the candidate alone, but due to the video link it would include anyone else in hearing range and Allie was welcome.

"What I want to ask about is your motivation for being a Unitarian minister. Let's face it, when you were a National Church priest you had a secure employment and you didn't fret over the size of a congregation. Now you might be going by the seat of your pants."

I said, "We are already. We've started building a church up. It has no trust

funds, no endowments, no national funds. The Free Liberal Ecclesia does not send us any money. In fact we are due to send it a very small amount of money towards administration."

"Do you get a wage or salary now?"

"The pandemic has altered things, some of which I'd rather not discuss. Adam Magellan - who owns this place - tells me that the company is now a social enterprise. I live on expenses and subsistence. What we enjoy is the facilities, meaning the food and of course we have our accommodation."

"I sell paintings," said Allie, "and have done some other ad hoc work with a friend. I think I want to produce a book called *Painting Bisexuals*."

"Ah yes. Interesting. Let's move on. Arguably the Unitarian ethos likes to be progressive and inclusive, but it inhabits a Puritan legacy. It doesn't go for a lot of symbolism, like you do. I'll admit that some do meditative walks and dance."

"We would try and add some variety. This bethel would stretch into Unitarianism; I'd like the bethel to keep good relations with the Free Liberal Ecclesia."

"That might be a problem. We have already mentioned that they make claims of a connection that do not exist. One thing we have not discussed is that its Puritan shadow is not always tolerant about naturists like yourselves. Can you see why?"

"I've clashed with Christians before. But Christians are often naturists."

"True for Unitarians too. Do you know the Reverend Aled Bolt? He's just become the new Training Principal, still calling it Warrington Academy, and he is a naturist. He wasn't to do any of the interviewing, in order to overview procedures, but we might ask him to interview you. So I'll leave the discussion on that to you and him. If he doesn't consider it right to interview, someone else will ask about naturism. So let's move on. Charley Darley. You've found a colleague in our transgender minister, and is that personal struggle of his important to you?"

"I don't think it's made any difference to our co-operation."

"No, but any shared experience?"

"I'm not transgender. I'm a C-A-I-S intersex. It's not the same."

"Given that difference, do you not naturally empathise?"

"It is not naturally so."

"Not natural?"

"There are all sorts of cultural considerations: you're trying to make an equivalence of experience that is not there."

"Is there not a similarity of oppression, say?"

"In my case, no, because I look completely female. I just had to keep a secret. I've decided not to have it as a secret any longer. Charley had a fashion for tight trousers, did he not, which rather gave the game away."

"You looked at his crotch."

"My colleague and I could hardly miss it. But here is something interesting. Another trans of the opposite direction made friends with him despite her pursuing a simple Word and Sacrament free and full faith approach."

"We've heard of a new friendship with the UPCC retired minister; Charley has become distanced from her... his husband. And for some, the Puritan ethos about ministers and propriety kicked in. He's had to cope with that. So describe your intersex condition."

"I am genetically male, phenotypically female, gender female, sexually

bisexual. My wife is the one who'd have all the children."

"Your wife is happy with the situation?"

"Very," Allie said.

"So he would be genetically female, becoming phenotypically male or mixed, gender male, sexually bisexual?"

"I'm beginning to think this interview is out of order," I said to the Chief Executive.

"I'm testing your responses, and I do approve of your reactions here."

"It is not ethical to use him to test my responses."

"Another general matter then is your partner. You made her a Reverend Deacon. What will happen if you are a Unitarian minister?"

"She will be a bishop. She will manage this place. I will be here and travelling around Foss doing Unitarian things."

"How are you regarding death?"

"I have an ongoing funeral ministry. Allie takes some too. We get paid and provide a service."

"That's not what I asked. How do you *respond* to death?"

"There was the suicide of my Anglican counsellor, and I was surprised how little it affected me."

"Nothing among your family?"

"No. Deaths haven't affected me."

"Then tell me about your family."

"My elder sister is intersex on the same basis as me. My brother is awkward: he has male genes and is male, so thinks he came out right. My youngest sister is female throughout."

"How about your marriage now?"

"Allie has met my parents. I have a passionate relationship with Allie. She energises me. I have a desperate love for her; that's how it is."

"And me back," said Allie. "I get a freedom to be me with Linda. I nearly got it with a woman called Abigail, but what's good about Linda is how quickly she can accept a new situation."

(Her answer slightly puzzled me. It sounded sort of true.)

"Allie: do your parents accept Linda?"

"They wanted me to marry my cousin Jonnie, but they like Linda. And we are cousins too."

"Really?"

"Jonnie is fourth cousin one removed, and Linda is sixth cousin one removed."

"But Jonnie and you could have had a biological child."

"We've been avoiding that outcome for years," Allie said, making me squirm.

"Oh I see."

"No you don't. We were bathed together as babies. We were at school together throughout. About fifteen we became sexual but I didn't fancy him. He fancied me, and everyone wanted us to marry, because the two families would intertwine yet again. But I fancy women. I didn't mind him in bed with me, I warmed to his care, inside my body too, but just him you see. But I could not make even an exception for him. I wanted desire, and I got desire."

"Oh. I see." Mina Jones now said, "Er, we have a number of lesbian

relationship ministers. Their children do cause gossip especially among older congregants. That Puritan legacy again? Em, it is about discretion, I'm afraid. Don't flaunt the lifelong boy relationship. Allie, I know you are this High Priest Witch, but I would like you to consider your own application to our ministry. I don't myself think that the cold Protestant inheritance is sufficient now for us. We need that input from outside, I say, where the God isn't cold and distant and sky high, but located deep."

Allie said, "The God should be located in the vulva. Not conceptual, not distant, but in between our legs."

"I'm not sure that is my expression," said Mina.

"It is mine," said Allie.

"Mine somewhat," I said to support my wife, and getting rather fed up with the whole direction of this interview. "Aren't you going to ask about doing administration? I've done that. You have a doctorate, after all."

"It was honorary. Well our time allocated is short. We the interviewers are going to chat about our first interviews. I'm going to ask that we ask Aled Bolt to come along. Presumably your family is naturist?"

"Yes."

"We'll message you. Bye bye."

The screen went blank.

I said, "Allie. In any secular business, that would have been out of order."

"I think both of us have legacies that are problematic - and yet she wants me to apply."

"Maybe you should and I'll manage this place. It's a bit like my ex-husband intending ministry and me getting it instead."

A message received an hour later said that Aled Bolt would, in the interest of fairness, interview everyone in the form of a brief impression-gaining chat.

Second One-to-One Interview

The Rev. Dr. Laurence Soames, came on screen from Lancaster. "So it's hello for my interview with our candidate and I see your wife is with you. I tutor in History and Ethos. Here we go then. One of you. Name me a famous Scottish liberal and fairly mainstream source Protestant from the nineteenth century.

Allie said, "You'd better do it."

"Not Unitarian?" I asked.

"No."

"Er.. Thomas Carlyle? He was a Seceder in origin and had the doubt of the nineteenth century."

"Phew," said Allie.

"Good good. So what more can you tell me about him?"

"Born in Ecclefechan, and I know of him only because I think he came to believe in the fallibility of Christ. He didn't like orthodox theologians and didn't like railways, I think."

"Excellent. Question two in my non-pub quiz. What do you know about Dom Gregory Dix?"

"He wrote *The Shape of the Liturgy* and he was an Anglican Benedictine at

Nashdom: 1945, so it followed on from Gabriel Herbert's, *Liturgy and Society* in 1935. I know because liturgy interests me - thus our worship. The main contribution everyone remembers was the four-fold view of the Eucharist: he took, he gave thanks, he broke, he gave."

Allie cut in, "In other words, ritual becomes more than what's said."

"Dead on," I said, "but it meant joining in with the eternal act of Christ, a huge influence on liturgical reform and... Hang on, I see where this is going."

"Do you?" he asked. Question three. Linda, name me a nineteenth century Unitarian reformer based in the Midlands."

"Theological reformer?" I asked.

"It's up to you. Quiet, Allie."

"I can't think of one. From the Midlands? West Midlands?"

"Yeah. He's a very well-known figure, the one I'm thinking of - but perhaps you have a different person in mind."

"The problem is I don't have anyone in mind."

"So, if I said, you know: municipal housing, sewers, imperialist, Unionist regarding Ireland."

"Political?" I asked.

"The one I'm thinking of. Well, you make my point for me, I'm afraid. I thought you'd get one out of three. I didn't think you would come up with a Scottish religious reformer. Mention Dix, and I knew you'd fly away, and you did. I hoped you might come up with the big name of Liberal and Tory politics who was Unitarian. Tell me more about Dix."

"Why?"

"Well, what were his main lines of influence?"

"India," I said, "1947. United Church of South India, that combined episcopal and non-episcopal Churches. I had a thought about that with our tiny Free Liberal Ecclesia, which has different kinds of bishops in it. Humm. Well, who were you thinking of, Dr. Soames?"

"This room is named after him. You might have seen the label above the door. Chamberlain Room. Joseph? See, my next question is, how many Unitarian chapels have you visited?"

"Two, but I met a number of different Unitarians and heard about others."

"Chapel Abbey and Wytham do not cut it. You knew nothing about Heathcote Milk House. One point I'd recommend in any training is that you should spend a year doing nothing but visiting different Unitarian chapels. You might preach in some, but in others just learn about them. You see, I think you are very well informed but when it comes to our little band of brothers and sisters, you are largely clueless."

"I'm offering diversity from outside."

"I have no problem with diversity. But I'd expect some affinity. Your contact, and it's a very good contact, is basically with one new minister. I'd have you travel around, but you want to build your church further... Make it Unitarian by joining it to the UGA Roll of Churches. I should expect no less."

"My colleagues have indicated a willingness to do this. Peter Marshall, one of our deacons, is Unitarian."

"Yes, he is a member of a UGA recognised online body. But you'll want to make him a priest and we don't have priests. And the manner of your Bethel, as you call it, joining the Unitarian denomination leads to a problem."

"Oh?"

"As you propose it, it gives a back door for the Free Liberal Ecclesia people. Some of us regard them as a bunch of misfits with a history of trying to hitch a ride on the Unitarian name, making claims to ministries on our reputation. Will you give us the assurance, when you apply to make your Bethel a chapel on the UGA Roll, that you will leave the FLE, the Free Liberal Ecclesia?"

"No, I can't."

"Why not?"

"I'm happy with the FLE as a form of High Protestantism. What I will say is that it will make it clear that it is not part of the Unitarian denomination even if the Bethel spans both. I do argue for a clear distinction."

"Clearly not."

"You misunderstand, and this might be my fault," I said. "The Bethel is already independent. It can leave the FLE. On denominational matters, we vote with the FLE. But it can only recommend policies to us. We vote on all our things."

"And you have a personal veto anyway," said Allie, perhaps not helpfully.

"Oh," said Dr. Laurence Soames. "Tell me about your veto. On everything?"

"If I wanted."

"So you are a dictator?"

"No, more like a trustee - in the sense of Unitarian governance."

"But you are not a charity. You are a social enterprise inside an enterprise."

"We weren't a social enterprise originally. I do have a veto on everything religious, but I don't use it."

"I think you like Independent Sacramental Ministry."

"We moved away from Liberal Catholic. My argument would be that it is a good thing that Unitarianism can extend to High Protestantism again."

"And my argument is to the contrary. It confuses."

Allie asked, "Does anyone outside the insiders know any difference?"

Laurence answered, "But we do, and it is about not having groups claiming an association that they do not have. I have spoken about this already with colleagues. But let's move on. You get on well with Charley Darley. They like you at Wytham."

"Do they?"

"I know they do. Do you know why this might be so?"

"Do I preach well?"

"You might. No. This is a man with a vagina."

"Oh come on," I said, "you're not stooping to this. Not *you* personally..."

"Don't come with all this expectation that we are uniformly progressive. Set against him, you're all woman. Liberalism is for many a licence to be obnoxious, very right wing. She, some of them say, cut off her breasts. Basic stuff, this."

"I've told them I'm intersex."

"You look the part."

"I look like a woman but I've got gonads high up and I ought to have been a bloke."

"You come from a Church that won't even recognise that you two are married."

"It does recognise we are legally married. It would not have us in its ministry. We married after I left. Allie, after all, came along because I was starting off a new church and at the seaside."

"As a researcher. Yes. That does raise the issue we covered of a minister starting a relationship with a member of the congregation."

"She was not a member of the congregation."

"I wasn't," said Allie.

"But, *Bishop* Linda, you felt a pastoral responsibility."

"I felt more than that," I said. "There was a concern that in doing her task she was deliberately isolating herself. It was too much of a burden for a single woman in an unknown town, in a bit of a backwater with peculiar characteristics."

"Anyway, the fact is that many in Wytham wish you would swap permanently. I don't think his friendship with the Reverend Georgie Smith has helped. They know, even if the UPCC in your town didn't, that she is trans. And, here is another thing: Unitarian chapels see ministers come and go. The trustees or board - there are variations of governance - hire and fire ministers. But your relationship in Serninsea is fixed."

"I think if I moved away I'd talk to Adam about removing that veto."

"I think we have covered everything. The man I was thinking of was Joseph Chamberlain. Worship provided by others at 11 am tomorrow. Goodbye!"

The screen went blank.

Allie said to me, "Well that was shit. I knew about Dix because you once told me. I didn't know about Thomas Carlyle."

"That guy Francis Newman, all about the fallibility of Christ. A vegetarian chap. His brother ended up in the West Midlands when Roman Catholic."

"Too late."

At 6 pm Roger, Marie, Kathleen, Winnie, Allie and I stood outside our double doors and did a clap for the National Health Service - although I thought we ought not to do it slavishly by government approval.

Group Worship and Comments (Friday 27th March)

I was in Wales, at the farm. Allie had abandoned me due to her heavy period. I was there on my own. My naked father approached my naked self, and said Lucinda's death was very sad, and he wanted cuddle time with me in the attic room.

So I went with him, and he locked the door behind us. There was an A frames contraption in there. He wanted to paint my toenails black in recognition of Lucinda's death, and he would paint his own green. To paint mine meant me hanging from an A frame with its plank of wood raised against my crotch.

As he painted my nails he said, "Forget about Allie; you are Bode and that is all you will ever be. You will stay on this frame forever. Lucinda is dead and you must be dead to the world. Diana was on here for years, at my command. No more Allie, no more religion, no more anything. You will have me for 'cuddle time' forever, and that's it."

I shuddered, and Allie was alongside me. I reminded myself that Lucinda was alive and well, even if the family was fractured.

I did not want to lose Allie. I wanted to be with her all my life.

Suddenly Allie's eyes opened. "We have to be at online worship at 11 am so we should have breakfast first; let the others do the deliveries."

"Is your period heavy still?"

"Still going some."

"Your arse seems active, as is my nose."

"Sorry about that."

Roger, Marie, Kathleen and Winnie were joined by a few students to do the food deliveries, and we'd had our breakfast when they all returned with supplies for the fridge and freezer.

The worship was an unremarkable three hymns and two prayers, the prayers from Terence Chicken using 'thee' and 'thou' throughout. So it involved an odd online singalong - we had the books! Allie and I only joined in the 'amen's that happened at the end of these rather short prayers.

The sermon by Jason Goole had some interest. He said this, among other statements: "If you take the chapel we have at Chapel Abbey, in the county of Foss, you may as well end a sermon with something like, '*That's All Folks!*' and perhaps have a big picture of Roadrunner or some other creature by the side of the pulpit.

"Four services a year and then a big fat entertainment corporate cheque is signed. But go back in time. The Wytham Church itself, now in a ministry with Wulfstan and Chapel Abbey, had as its founding trustees: a linen draper, two malsters and a chandlera mercer, a saddler, a tallow chandler and an ironmonger. Some of these were fabulously wealthy merchants: people who made money on commercial privilege, doing one specialised job; later in the days of capitalism the industrialists spread their concerns and became even wealthier, one capitalist trustee generation appointing the next. Norfolk followed the same pattern.

"No wonder the trade unions tried to form Labour Churches: they did not trust us. Yet we claim affinity with the radicals of the Reformation, as in the Anabaptists, and revolutionary types. By and large we supported the French revolution: ex-Anglican Lindsey did."

I recalled the Anglican Lindsey and the Feathers Tavern demand for relaxation.

"Originally we were tough Calvinists, but tough theologies don't go together with a next generation in wealth, and the academies let in the more radical theologies, and chapel trustees often appointed liberal ministers against the majority of the congregation. Congregants themselves paid their pew rents and did no more.

"So how do we shift a gear now, when those days are gone, when many trustees are elected? Yes, we came good on diversity and inclusion, but social connections are lost. This year's one successful candidate, Klara Merkel, is good on politics. How does it compare even with the Oxford traditionalist Catholic movement, that saw a socialist religion in slums and rural places alike? Think of Thaxsted and the Red Priest. Can we not now join with Klara and proclaim something of a new commonwealth, a radical redistributive society and not just some washy statement about liberty in society?"

We had to give evaluations straight away. So I did. "I might make a number of points," I said from our seats in the Chapel. "First, why have these thees and thous?"

Terence Chicken said, "The language retains a sense of mystery."

"No it doesn't," I said. "You are confusing mystery with mystification. Mystery should come from the meaning; mystification just obscures. Secondly, Jason's got this Anglo-Catholicism all wrong. It was not about the industrial workers, but looked back to a pre-industrial artisan age. The workers it praised were of a different time,

a time indeed when they scraped a living and these merchants built their piles of wealth. Merrie England, whether in the slums or the countryside, was a fantasy. And they were very patriarchial."

"You should know," said Lisa Revie.

"And, anyway, what would a contemporary commonwealth look like?" I asked.

Jason Goole said, "The worship was, basically, a straight bat. I don't myself object to thees and thous, but I avoid them myself."

Julie Chicken said, "I like responsive readings and there weren't any. I would say we took part more in the worship yesterday, even if it was way over the top."

Lisa then asked, "What is going on with Anne Wise? Has anyone heard about this? She has given up her academic work during training. Third year, isn't she?"

At his point, the Rev. Aled Bolt MA appeared. "Yes, this is correct and somewhat concerning. There ought to be a sanction for it. I am Aled, if you don't know, Principal of Training, fifty-nine years old."

Lisa said, "Well, with Callum Wise being her dad and a minister, she can get away with it."

I thought, this is somewhat forthright from a candidate.

Aled Bolt said, "I don't think we should comment on this here. One of the actual issues, however, is our liberal structure. The Warrington Academy is now reconstructed outside of its building in York, but it stays as detached as it was, as are most UGA institutions - including the UGA itself. So the UGA can only recommend, because the Academy makes up its own mind, and then it is up to the UGA to do what it wants with those leaving the Roll of Students after training. In all likelihood, the Academy will take on who is chosen here, but they may not. We don't interlock like Anglicans do, with checks and balances. You discussed the Darlington scandal: one issue was the time it took for the Academy Committee to finally dismiss him. The student pastorate was ended instantly, once his wife had appeared in the press, but at first he returned to the Academy. The UGA decided he was off the Roll of Students, but the Academy removed him by a majority of one only. Had he continued, some chapels would have had him candidate for ministry. Arguably we have enough incompetent and unsuitable ministers, in my opinion. With him, they'd have had to lock up their daughters. Ah, grub's up. Sometimes have a late breakfast. I'll talk to Linda and Allie first, soon. Try two pm for them I think. Yes?"

"Yes," I said.

"We are now using a competencies framework to assess those completing their training to go on the Roll of Ministers, Apprentice level. This new system integrates with both Worship Studies and Denomination Studies, which we oversee, the first taken by those going on to the Roll of Preachers, and both taken by those going on to the Roll of Leaders. If you have done these, you're excluded from doing them again, but if you haven't you must do them within ministry training. Goodbye!"

I pressed mute, just in case, as the screen went blank. "I bet they've all done them," I said to Allie. "What he meant was, I'd have to do more."

"Will he talk naturism?" asked Allie. "Apparently he is one."

Third One-to-One Interview

Next up to interview me (with Allie alongside) was the someone else, the Rev. Anthony Lovatt of Skipton. "Hello. We were fortunate to get Aled Bolt on board as Principal of the Academy but we have to think of the next one. It's no longer like with Principals of old, sat in the office, overseeing a standard training curriculum, and organising and monitoring local university education, doing some teaching, and also joining university colleagues and doing research. It's so much more a flexible task. But we still need academic ballast, people who know the tradition and some others. And I do consider you two as some very capable academics. You've been asked this but why not candidate yourself, Alfia?"

"My research has given me insight, but Linda actually runs the church. These days contextual is everything, which is very within."

"We might be discovering this," I said.

"I see what you're getting at, contextual as 'inner knowledge'. But it usually means applied theology. We learn when in ministry, thus practical training and theology on site. But whatever happened to formation, education for education's sake, and someone's potential to hold and express the inheritance that we have? Everything these days has to have economic value, measured, practical, applicable. Why then are so many candidates thrown up by this new system so incompetent?"

I said, "We wouldn't know. We've just had a specialist in incompetence as an Anglican vicar locally and she didn't last five minutes."

Allie said, "We now have a replacement who'd rather be a General Practitioner only."

"We still want professional ministers," said Anthony Lovatt.

"Ah," said Allie, "the whole sociological function of professions is to exclude and restrict entry. It isn't just about training for an office, but regulating entry to uphold status. I notice more and more lay training, and therefore must mean less 'professionalism'. My status as High Priest is entirely cultic, and it has no professional barrier. There is no application process worth its name, no residential formation or anything like that, but you should have Wiccan understanding and absorption. ISMs like Linda have some training, but again they're cultic. I was also a member of Taunton Tantria, and that is pure rituals on a sort of New Age basis, again not professional, but a bit secretive and obviously of some Tantric content."

Then there was a surprise all right. "I'm sorry," said Anthony Lovatt. "It seems we staff have to meet unexpectedly and right now. Please stick around because we think this will be followed by a general meeting of staff and students."

So the screen went blank. The post came and Kathleen walked over with letters for me. One was from the new diocesan bishop, which I decided to look at later on once this sudden pause was explained.

Criminals

Dr. Mina Jones occupied the central display. "It's fallen to me to make an announcement.

"Terence Chicken has withdrawn from being a candidate. Julia Chicken is Yogini Lilasiddhi but the person we knew as Celia Jenkins, also known as Yogini Shraddhadi, is not Yogini Shraddhadi at all, and she does not have a diploma in

Western Buddhism.

In fact it's come to our attention that Celia Jenkins is a convicted criminal, under the real name of Carol Handley. She, surely assisted by Julia Chicken, used York Cross Chapel as a means to respectability. Ms Handley has past convictions for fraud. We at least knew that Allie had changed her name."

Allie said, "Surely there was a police identity and criminal record check. Linda insists on it for everyone."

"We relied upon the York Cross congregation trustees to tell us they had carried out the PI and CRC. But they didn't. This happens all too often, unfortunately."

Going white in my face, I looked at Allie.

Lisa Revie asked, "When and why did you change your name, Allie?"

"When a university undergraduate, to escape a relationship and redefine myself."

"Alfia had a within six months PI and CRC," said Mina.

Allie said to me, "I sent mine in separately. You sent yours?"

"Yes." I looked at her with anger - as much angry with myself.

Mina Jones continued: "The York trustees are going to strip them all of duties, if they want to still attend there. We have informed the police. It is sad to lose Terence, but this is the consequence because he wouldn't answer direct and simple questions following on. I'm afraid this is all we are prepared to say. Interviews will continue with Jason, Lisa and Linda."

The screen went blank. "I never saw your PI and CRC," I said to Allie.

"Professor Mitton said I should get one and also it doubled in usefulness when I became a High Priest. So if you'd asked, I'd have shown you."

"And did it say you'd changed your name? That would have saved me a lot of grief."

"No. It confirms that I am Alfia Shrimpton and that I have no criminal convictions. It doesn't give information like changing my name, but I did give this information in getting one. And who else's haven't you seen?"

"Christine's. Nobody's. Hell. Why don't you tell me anything?"

"What? You didn't ask; I can show you it if you want."

"Don't bother," I told Allie.

"I noticed they mentioned my name change as if it's dodgy, and it's not."

"Yeah, I do have one but I don't know about others."

"So you are up against Jason Goole and Lisa Revie only. What about replying to the diocesan bishop? Have you opened his letter?"

"Nope. I can guess what's in it. Let's give it rapid attention, saying thanks but no thanks. What's this text from Adam?"

I looked at the list of candidates. Focussed on Terence Chicken, because of his wife and lover and his wife's lover. Carol Handley is the new real name of a fraud convicted Celia Hindley, a fake Buddhist, using Yoghini Shraddhadi Celia Jenkins, who's been helping Yoghini Julia Chicken to recycle income their way from a Buddhist ethical shop when, also, Julia is getting State benefits and not declaring this income. I passed the info anonymously to your Roll of Interviewers. Terence Chicken has withdrawn, and you should have a better chance of selection with access to all those legit historical funds. Nothing on Jason Goole or Lisa Revie, but

Aled Bolt seems dodgy. Go for it! Adam.

"What a bastard," I said. "He's fucking interfering, and I don't want this."

Narrator: *Allie An Additional Chat (Friday 27th March)*

Before Linda and I were due to hear from Aled Bolt, I took to the telephone and made a private call to the High Priest of the Creech Moorlinch Coven, Professor Roland Mitton.

"I'm just checking on the rules. We can conceal the Coven and our membership from outsiders, but not from ourselves."

"Yes."

"But if a High Priest of the Coven meets another, they should declare themselves."

"Yes."

"The thing is, I *have* declared myself to Andrea Lindsey, also known as Andrea Plimpton, but she has not responded."

"Andrea Lindsey is Andrea Moonglow, High Priest of this Coven. There are only four of us: Abigail, me, Andrea and you, and, of course, two live outside the area here. George will soon join us and make five. But the rule also states that where two priests are in reasonable travel contact of each other, they should carry out rituals with each other, and in fact you should really begin your own Coven, with our informed blessing as you transition."

"So by moving here she is really required to engage in rituals with me."

"Yes, of course. 'Two witches gang together.' As you say, we are not in secret from each other."

"Thank you. I thought she was a witch, but I wasn't a hundred per cent sure."

"You are now. She is in a difficult position, being a Christian priest, and an Anglican one to boot, but she knew that when we ordained her. She was in Taunton Tantria and now is in Serninsea Vestal Virgins. She should declare her public persona with you, and you two can inform us as you form a coven of your own and leave us."

After pleasantries, I put the phone down (in the vestry) and went out to Linda in the seating and dining area, waiting for action on the big screen. I did not tell him about the Unitarian interviews or any counter offers.

Linda said, "Togs off, eh, to talk naturism with Aled Bolt?"

I agreed and we stripped naked, in front of the main seating area camera, the screen above.

Linda said, looking at that screen, at a man in a tartan wrap, "Oh shit. You're not Aled Bolt to talk to me about naturism."

We both folded our arms across our breasts.

"No I am not," said this man in a soft west Scotland accent. "I see that you are prepared for gymnology. I'll join you."

The man stood, his head above screen height (like some webcam sexworkers) and it was just one garment to unwrap: Diana had said something to us about older, longer kilts (in *The Jacobite Gap Years*, before Culloden). He seemed to

be semi-erect to me. We unfolded our arms, looking at each other.

He continued, sitting, "Aled did not want to interview everyone or you only. There are one or two issues arising with him: he might have put money into Julia Chicken's ethical shop, innocently I hope. I'm definitely second choice but they think I suit you two for an engaging conversation. I'm here in Scotland. I'm surprised no one is involved from the Non-subscribers in Ireland; usually they invite themselves into the Warrington Academy in York or meeting at Heathcote Milk House. I'd be looking to see if we in SUGA can take anyone chosen off to a suitable church in Scotland, just as the Non-Subscribers poach for Ireland."

Linda said, "Adrian Hatch is from Stirling."

"But he is so *British*, you see, an incomer, and he isn't into poaching whereas I am. I suppose you've heard about the Prime Minister."

"No."

"He has Novel Covid."

I said, "That's a rummun'. But on matters here, the only woman minister is from abroad."

"Yes it is embarrassing, when you want to be seen as progressive. So I am yet another man, the Reverend Seumas Caimbeul at your service. You see, I am not at the centre of things. I once proposed myself to be the new Bràthair Dùbhghlas, the only Unitarian monk. I think they all regarded it with as much contempt as your Free Liberal Ecclesia, as it now calls itself."

"Glè thoilichte coinneachadh riut," said Allie.

"Is that a party trick greeting or do you speak Gaelic?"

"I have a basic grasp."

"Ah. Tha feum againn ort."

"What?" Linda asked.

"He says they need me."

"I'm beginning to wonder who is the candidate here. Are you based at Inverness?" Linda asked him.

"No no, they have their own minister at Inbhir-Nis and she *is* a woman: Sine NicCoinnich. I'm in a little retreat near Ceann Loch Raineach. On the Roll of Churches, yes, but not really a church and a bit left-field. It and I didn't start out as Unitarian and I see their beady eyes are on Serninsea. Similar, eh? I sort of achieved ministry recognition, did some wee training after my wife died, learnt the denomination, and gave them a little gem into their Roll of Churches - a retreat. Tigh na h' lobairte. It's a sort of spiritual bed and breakfast and grounds. And we do... naturism. Do you?"

I said, "Well I go to the foot of our stairs."

Linda described the actual Gymnology group, and the use of the mikveh, and that it involves naturism because the Jewish practice is for single sex private parties when we mix them. "The point is the theology of the body, and here yesterday we invoked the Divine Mother as an extension of the body."

"So you don't do - or you do do, explicitly nude whole worship?" he asked.

"Our own wedding part was nude, and we did a Christmas mission to the Bever Wood Naturist Centre."

He asked us, "Do you not recall a television programme some years ago, *Gardening with Nothing To Go On*?"

"I do remember that. It was a short series," Linda commented.

"There were two lay preachers on one programme. They were living in York. Before Terence Chicken's time. It created one hell of a stink there, and this in a supposedly progressive denomination. Think about that."

"It must be over ten years since that was on," she said.

"They moved to Hull. That's how bad it was. York Cross Chapel is very different now, you know, the academy and church that you as candidates would have visited without this virus."

"And your place, in the Highlands?" Linda asked.

He said, "This place becomes a naturist centre at times. It sometimes needs a roaring fire. Indeed, we recently had a visit from a naturist from your county along with her girlfriend Sally. She was called Diana, attracted to the nearby Clach na h'lobairte or Stone of the Offering."

I said, "Cor blarst me!"

Linda, her eyes widening, said, "Tell me more, because there's a novel series, *The Jacobite Gap Years*..."

"Stone of the Offering features in *The Jacobite Gap Years*," said Seumas, interrupting her. "This couple were indeed also visiting Loch Dhùn Alastair or Dunalastair Water, which is by the filming site for..."

Linda did her own interrupting: "Diana? Diana *what*?"

"Monarch or something."

"King? She is calling herself King then."

"Monarch. Bheil am biadh deiseil?" Seumas Caimbeul asked, looking to the side.

I asked this time: "Someone cooking for you?"

"It's a simple salad," he said. "A fiesty local woman is here; brought my shopping over from Pit Cloich Aire."

Off screen we could hear, "Dùin do chab!"

"What?" asked Linda.

I said, "He asked if the food was ready and she called back 'Shut your gob!'"

"Caer dy geag," Linda said, not wanting to miss out. "Dyfed used it once - told me."

Seumas was back looking at his camera. "Did you know that author Charles MacKay was born today in 1814? He covered Gaelic and lowland Scots, claiming that thousands of English words go back to Scottish Gaelic. Nonsense, of course."

So I asked, "Are you a native speaker?"

"I was born in Tyndrum, and my parents soon moved to Caol Loch Ailse and there I went to Gaelic medium schools where I met my childhood sweetheart. Then we moved to Pit Cloich Aire and out to Ceann Loch Raineach. We tried to teach it to locals, to re-seed it if we could. She's since died, twelve years back, so I have her grave here. I still try and teach locals."

I liked this guy. I said, "I'm so sorry to hear this. Tyndrum? We went past that to arrive at Crianlarich. I have an ancestor there. Margaret Urchardan."

"Urchardan, eh? There is a tale of the missing teenager, that some say she was murdered by an English traveller and that her body was never found."

I said, to inform him, that in fact she had died in childbirth in Walsingham. "James Rogers went to Scotland for a tour in May 1788 and met the fifteen year old Margaret in June 1789. He had sex with her and she did not get her next period. Anyway, he returned to her and, and the result was he took her back to Walsingham."

Cornelius was born and she died."

"Ah but the folk tale is that she haunted the area as a spirit. But tell me about you and naturism, especially our actual candidate Linda!"

Linda gave me one of her looks, surely inferring that I was lolloping too much on her ground. She recovered her status by saying we could visit two clubs, Bever Wood of her current membership and Saxiclite: that both have swimming pools, sports facilities, games rooms, meeting rooms and rooms to stay in. Both are compulsory for nudity, changing to naked as you go in and dressing when leaving.

"They want me to ask you Linda if you know about naturism's background."

(I smelt a trap but kept quiet.)

"Of course I do. It is from Germany, predominantly, of the Free Body Culture or Freikörperkultur. But 'naturisme' was so described in 1778 by the Belgian, Jean Baptiste Luc Planchon, and the first club was actually in British India in 1891 by Charles Crawford, a judge for the Bombay Civil Service. But Germany had the ideas, and a journal, and Nacktkultur at the turn of the twentieth century. Fitness, sunshine and fresh air on the flesh assisted mental and psychological fitness - something we are all aware of presently with the lockdown. German naturism was also part of a youth movement. The big promoters were Adolf Koch and Hans Suren, mixing the sexes and being open about sex itself. Free-Light Park or Freilichtpark was opened near Hamburg in 1903 by Paul Zimmerman."

I thought: hook, line and sinker, she jumped into the the trap.

"Goodness me, such detail!" he responded.

She had more, too. "The French also had a wide philosophy, and the whole movement grew. We usually say naturism in France was connected with the ancient Greeks and tackling tuberculosis. Marcel Kienné de Mongeot started the magazine *Vivre* and the first French naturist club, establishing in law naturism so long as it was discreet. François Fougerat de David de Lastours wrote a thesis on heliotherapy in 1925 and also then opened the Club Gymnique de France."

"How do you know all this?" he asked in his lilting accent.

"Because we started the Gymnology group here and I revised the origins - I refreshed my memory. I am a dedicated naturist. Yes, it discusses other things but it also looks into naturism as a tradition and community."

"What about the British Isles?"

On she went. "Moonbright - no, Moonella, sorry, was the first club in Britain, in Essex, from 1924, where people had naturist specific names for anonymity. It attracted in members of the New Gymnosophy Society that came out of the English Gymnosophy Society. Didn't last long. It sort of shifted to St. Albans. I've never been involved in high up British naturism."

"Does anything connect naturism with Unitarianism?" the minister asked.

"That's an interesting question," Linda said, stalling. (She was caught in the trap).

I rescued her. "I read that there was a connection with American Transcendentalism, itself linked with radical forms of Unitarianism, so that Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau connected nudity and nature. I like the French concept of *joie de vivre*, of physically felt sensations and direct experience and a spontaneity. Think of André Gide, Henri Matisse and the Fauve movement. Be nude, be vegetarian, if you will, don't drink and don't smoke. I'm all of those but for eating some meat. Some of the German idealism went to a body perfect fascist right wing,

and some went anti-authority left wing. Koch was left wing, attacking parental authority, Church, media, law and order. Seventy thousand were in Koch's Körperschulen schools. I learnt this and the Gaelic at the University of Somerset."

"My God," said Linda.

Seumas responded, "Where else but Somerset? I think you should indeed candidate."

"I'm a Pagan," I replied.

"That's just who we need," he said. "Let me suggest it myself," said Seumas Caimbeul. "Does this suggestion cut into your plans? I'm talking to you through Unitarian channels here, limited in what I can say and propose."

Linda burst out her reaction: "She's a witch! Do you really want a *witch*?"

"Definitely! Excellent! Neo-Paganism is all part of the *Unitarian* new mix; left-field we may be but it's the future. I want her in Scotland. They don't burn witches any more but they might get out the ducking stool given the expanses of Loch Dhùn Alastair, Loch Raineach and Loch Teimheil."

So I had to say, "I'm afraid my future is here. I want to have a baby. I'm trying to get pregnant. Did you have children?"

"No. I'm like a monk, now. Well, a different kind of monk. Look," said the minister, "I've enjoyed my Unitarian chat, and we've demonstrated our naturism haven't we!"

Linda said, "It's been a remarkably useful chat."

But like Columbo he said, "Just one more thing. Have you heard about our minister in London who's joined the African Charismatic Church as one of its bishops, and still intends to be one of our ministers?"

Linda had gone quiet.

So I said, "Definitely rum."

"Our very own the Reverend Joseph Woking. Minister of long standing. He thinks it's a great honour to join this group and give it guidance in its outreach into the British Isles. They're not just charismatic, they are positively magical and superstitious. You've not heard of it, our Pagan High Priest?"

"Er, I didn't say I was a Pagan High Priest," I responded. "It's not the sort of thing..."

"But you are and tell him so," said Linda, probably trying to queer my pitch.

I replied more generally to his point: "Anyhow, I know there are charismatic African groups that veer into heresy as other charismatics see it. Charismatic religion alone is not stable. Moved by the Spirit, these are not guarantors of orthodoxy."

Linda looked at me again with dagger eyes, as she so often did.

He said, "All the best to you two. I'll pass on my impressions to the others. I hope one day we meet physically, even naked as the day. Plenty of wood on the fire and not to burn any witches! You know, if you do get to be selected, and I hope you do, you can always come up to Tigh na h' Iobairte for some of your practical training - in a retreat! Bring Allie; she'll be perfectly safe. Bye bye. Sláinte."

The screen went blank.

Linda said to me, "Great! I'm on the outside and everyone is telling my wife she should be the candidate. Perhaps you should, Allie. Stone of the Offering? How tempting that must be for you. You're going to run away again, aren't you?"

"No I won't."

"They don't want me but they want you, and then they'll train you and you'll

settle in Scotland. Crianlarich or his place, with a name close-by like that."

"I think you are confusing me with Diana," I replied firmly, causing Linda to get off her seat, look at me with her big breasts hanging and sit down again. I made the point, "You're always mobbun about suffun."

She asked me, "Are we going to dress?"

"Why? I'm not."

Narrator: Linda *Final One-to-One Interview* (Friday 27th March)

After about an hour the Rev. Andrew Fallon came on screen and said, "Adrian Hatch and I are sharing the concluding interviews. He's doing Lisa now and I'm doing Jason after this. Aled Bolt has agreed to be investigated for connections to Julia Chicken's ethical business. Hello?"

Running from behind the main camera, each of us held a camera off button on the portable control as we slipped on our blouses.

"We're here," I said. "Picture in a second..."

He explained that when they met physically at York or Heathcote Milk House they announced the result before the candidates went home. The equivalent online was next day, Saturday. We had to be ready for 1 pm for the recommendations of the interviewers to the UGA Roll of Officers.

"Our final interviews are based on what the team think we ought to ask each candidate, based on what the candidates have shown as strengths and weaknesses. As you are now the only candidate with a spouse involved in the process, we thought about asking Allie to absent herself but decided against."

Allie said, "I can leave."

"I'd rather you didn't," he advised.

No, and I could think why. They wanted her, not me.

So our interviewer began. "I was thinking about some of your approaches. What do you know about Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow?"

It wasn't that long ago that I was reading them! I said, "One is post-Christian and one remains within Judaism. Both think that divinity is found within our lives and shared experiences."

"Do you know about these theologians, Alfia?"

"Oh, I think so," she said. "Linda recommended them, after dealing with a Reformist rabbi, but I knew of them. They did *Womanspirit Rising* a long time ago."

"Yes they did. Tell me more, Linda." (There was an emphasis on 'Linda'.)

"You are obviously thinking about the body, Andrew. Do I call you Andrew?"

"I'm not sure what else. Go on."

"It's panentheism, world and body, not simply pantheism. Theology is experiential, then, within this world and our bodies. Theology should make sense and promote the good life. They've done dialogical theology."

"So faith is from God, religion is from humans?"

"That's dialectical. Easy mistake."

"It wasn't a mistake; I was being deliberate."

"They dialogue with each other, the emergent feminist theology being pluralist."

Andrew Fallon asked, "Do you think Plaskow's God is more personal or impersonal?"

"Impersonal. As Allie indicated, I've had a number of dealings with a rabbi called Maurice Neptune in Wytham. So I did read up on some progressive Jewish writers. She's become a sort of ground of Being person, but her God is active in supporting all that is."

Allie said, "All I know about Carol Christ is that she sees the world as the body of the Goddess."

I said, "She promotes the Goddess as love and intelligence and sort of consciousness. That's a more recent development in her thinking. I am interested in post-Christian thinking, obviously. Plaskow tackles evil, something itself to be tackled in experience, with the God as ground and being and becoming: not gendered, not personal, creative. Carol Christ does gender her Goddess, and it is about caring and being personal and striving for love and the good in the world."

"Very full answers - as we have discovered - and clearly something Allie and you can discuss together. As we suspected, you Linda have a highly developed theological outlook. And this example raises the question: what can we do with you?"

Oh dear. It looked like Allie and I had over-cooked the pudding (again), though the focus was on me.

He went on: "You could do a Ph.D in some suitable theology, but this may be an indulgence. I'm asked to ask you about Don Cupitt: he has been fashionable among some radical Anglicans. What do you think of his writings? He has said that his writings are his autobiography."

"Not fashionable with me," I said. "This everyday language stuff isn't theology any more. It's a survey of uses. He still goes on about language and its closure around everything. I don't believe that. The embryo and foetus to be in Allie's body won't be about language."

"Are you pregnant?" he asked of Allie.

"Not yet."

"Linda, you were saying."

"Language is programmed into us, but it isn't the be all and end all. And yet he does have some insight into biology and culture. He also has much on outpouring solar light. By the way, I am not an Anglican. I was more by accident than by design, and I have moved away."

"You do know, Linda, about the one-time West Midlands theologian, minister, practitioner, J. M. Lloyd-Thomas?"

"Yes, the Free Catholic and thus, what I call High Protestant."

"Offer me some proof that you know something about him."

"He worked with W. E. Orchard, the Congregationalist, at the Mayfair church where the first female trinitarian minister emerged, who was a Congregationalist with a theology including the Virgin Mary, for her sins. Constance... I forget. Too many names."

Andrew Fallon said, "Coltman. Was Todd. A little after our own first female minister, who was called?"

"Don't know."

"Gertrude von Petzold," he stated. I took it that Allie did not know or remember either. "Would it be fair to conclude," asked Andrew, "that in training and education you need grounding in Unitarian theological movements? There's too

much history about but we do need to know what we are. I do have a suggestion for a project."

Now Allie spoke up saying, "Hervieu-Léger is the one who considers the chain of memory within a religious institution."

"Allie! Let's hear what the minister has in mind. I'm all ears," I said to Andrew on screen.

Allie said, "You'd look odd if you were."

He said, "You've hinted at this already. James Martineau is the polar opposite of Karl Barth. For one, revelation is in the general of which the particular is one example, but for the other revelation is in the particular for which the general could even be misleading."

"The latter would be Barth," I said.

"It has been said that Karl Barth saved the Protestant Churches of the Continent of Europe from Unitarianism. A Unitarian chap called Spencer wrote that, just after the war. But there is a view, of a kind of thought experiment, by Linzey the Anglican not Lindsey the Unitarian, that had Barth done his dialectical approach on the Holy Spirit he would have come to a much more open and dynamic position on revelation. That's about immanence and the creative Spirit."

I said, "It's an eat cake and have it position. You either embrace liberality or you just hang on to the doctrinal rope."

"You make my point for me," said Andrew. "Being dialectical is to never get away from something with its opposites. It's not necessarily Hegelian, going up each time with a synthesis. But the dryness, the rationality of Calvinism, often leads to a transfer to a simpler Unitarian road."

"What's the project?"

"So without wanting to get too denominational - there's no point in that - the issue we are tackling here (if we accepted you) is methodology for claiming a legitimate theological development. You can do such a project without being a minister. As for your connection with Unitarianism, I should say that Adrian Hatch thinks that High Protestantism or Free Catholicism is, really, a fantasy and a cul-de-sac. It is too close to Independent Sacramental Ministry. It is not us. It is reinventing, glorifying, puffing up tradition. Neo-Paganism is fantasy. How do we avoid fantasy?"

Allie cut in, saying, "Ride with it. So what if neo-Paganism involves an invention of a past for legitimacy purposes. Take Gerald Brosseau Gardner, for example. Also, more relevant here, there's Iolo Morgannwg, you know, the Unitarian fantasist with stuff that led to the Gorsedd in the Eisteddfod in Wales. I know about him because of the Druids thing."

"Very good," Andrew said of Allie's contribution, as I looked at her with more dagger eyes. "Tell me about being this Pagan High Priestess."

"My coven, although I can't attend it as it is in Somerset, uses the neuter term 'priest' alone. So I am a 'High Priest', meaning I have been through all three levels of initiation."

"Who was known as the Witchfinder General and what is his connection with this denomination?"

Allie answered, "Matthew Hopkins."

"Very good. Was he fictional or real in that film?"

"We did chat about him earlier," I stated.

Allie continued: "The film's placings and timings are all wrong and some

details are skewed. He was from Suffolk, and a Puritan Presbyterian on whose original land the chapel that became Unitarian stands."

"Suffolk Unitarians. Impressive. And the connection with Pagans is pretty obvious."

"Aye, he went after women who were village nuisances, and basically killed some of them by supposed judicial means. He be a torturer."

"His activities didn't last too long," said the minister. "Why not?"

"He wrote about his distasteful activities, and drew attention to himself, but he put his expenses on the rates and that wouldn't do. He didn't have the sticky end given to him in the film."

"Linda. Who was Richard Baxter?"

"Crumbs."

He said, "Anglicans tend to forget him. He was the supposed moderate Presbyterian, who gets this label because he did stress Christian essentials."

"I know about the Restoration restoring the bishops in 1660 and producing the foundational Prayer Book of my former Church in 1662."

"Yes. But did the Presbyterians rule the roost for at least a time?"

"No. Cromwell was an Independent."

"His kind were the more tolerant," said Andrew Fallon. He even tolerated John Biddle. The Presbyterians wanted to dominate via Parliament and use Scottish power - the politics not the electricity company! Cromwell fought the Scottish off directly. But later the Independents narrowed and the Presbyterians broadened - and, arguably, Baxter inspired that."

"But surely the Presbyterians are the origins of Whig toleration," I suggested. "Charley Darley told me about 1844 and all that: trust funds and all that secured on the basis of a liberal reunderstanding of Open Trusts. And the social scientist in me knows about Eric Hobsbawm and invented tradition - as does Allie about Hervieu-Léger."

"Which is?"

"As we said: it is the fake end of institutional memory for purposes of legitimacy. The fact is that Merrie England and all that, from Oxford Anglo-Catholicism, is a myth of legitimisation. Then there was *Lux Mundi*, a sort of Hegelian Anglo-Catholic compromise."

Allie said to me, "You're not helping yourself."

"Tell me more about *Lux Mundi*."

"It won out in recent times, especially after ordaining women. But the Liberal Catholicism I later encountered was the Old Catholicism breakaway, that became associated with Theosophy and had its own liturgical developments. So I moved on to Free Catholicism that I have been developing with colleagues."

"And I think," said Andrew, "that you are seeking financial resources for your church. The retreat near Kinloch Rannoch has become relevant and partly why we asked Seumas Caimbeul to report back to us. It gets UGA development money, and has become eligible for Scottish trust monies. You are in Foss, and I think your church into our movement would make it eligible for trust offerings for development, and you might get Foss Group corporate money. Clever man, our Charley Darley. You see, we think you are here because of suggestions from him about money. He has probably told you about extra financial backing for Seminsea. But it actually means a kind of growth of his empire."

"I don't think he is like that; he has never been like that."

"Plus the fact he has marital troubles, and he has a congregation that took him on but would rather have a change. See, he can see how your place is somewhere he can go."

"He can come here now, with our pleasure."

"But if Serninsea were to go on the Roll of Churches, then he could change base within the Foss Group - and so could you."

"This is far too cynical. Don't you like him? I do."

"He sees just how Serninsea could bring in the money. But it can't, can it, because you won't cut ties. I for one would insist that you cut all ties with the Free Liberal Ecclesia. Furthermore, this ethos of ordaining everyone is not our ethos at all."

"Then we have come to a full stop," I declared.

"Really?" he asked.

"Yes. The more I think about it, the more I think this place is precious."

"Well, there is your place and there is your person," he responded.

"May I ask something? How much do you include Allie's contribution to my selection or do you want her alone?"

"We would see her as essential backing. But clearly she has a religious faith and a stance; she is knowledgeable and could contribute to our movement. We shall no doubt consider all such matters and be in touch tomorrow."

And with that I had endured my final interview.

"You apply for next year," I said to Allie, and I decided to take myself off up the stairs to lie on the bed. Being a minister of religion was supposed to be my field, my speciality, and Allie had outshone me. Allie took the hint and stayed downstairs.

Decision

Allie had just wiped clean the letterbox and both doorbells with disinfectant. This was to assist those having to push mail items through to the property. She came and sat next to me, waiting for the screen to come on.

On screen on time appeared the Rev. Dr. Erika Zijderveld. "Hello from Rotterdam again! I have the deshishion of the Roll of Ministry Interviewers, to be pashed as a recommendation to the UGA Executive and the Steuart Campbell Warrington Academy in York Board. Either of those two could reject the recommendation; then we would have to see in what manner it is rejected, but it would likely mean nothing happens. Are you both hearing me? Are you both well?"

"We are," said Linda. "The Health Secretary has got it, though, as well as the boss."

"So Klara Merkel was selected in the actual Academy after breakfast. All the interviewers met and each candidate heard from them all together. But now we are online and it falls to me to tell you two the verdict of the interviewers. Are you ready?"

"We are," said Linda.

"We are not prepared to accept you for training at this time. However, we would like both of you to apply next time, Alfia as well as Linda. But there is a condition: that your chapel, your bethel as you call it, if it is to come into the

denomination, should cut all ties with the Free Liberal Ecclesia, otherwise to be an applicant you will have to cut ties with the Bethel.

"In the meantime we encourage observation and some training. As you continue to exchange with Charley Darley, and remove from the Free Liberal Ecclesia, we will support observing and in some cases preaching at nationwide Unitarian chapels outside of the Foss Group, once the Novel Covid regulations permit this. A round figure would be six to view and two more to preach, per person. You can have one paid for bed and breakfast accommodation for each visit. We also want you each to attend the expenses paid Unitarian History Course at Heathcote Milk House, near Winstar, which is the Unitarian Conference Centre across two extended farmhouses. This course may now have to be done online but we do want the visits and preaching to be real and not virtual. We also propose at least one eight week pastorate for both of you together somewhere in England, Scotland or Wales. We exclude Tigh na h' Iobairte for a pastorate or visit at this time."

Allie said, "That's a shame; I'd like to have gone there."

"You can go to places separately or together, one might preach and one might observe. Because of the pandemic we realise that the physical aspect of visiting and preaching may mean applying in two years time and not next year. We realise that you might travel, learn and do a pastorate and then one or both decide not to apply, but this is at our risk. We think this is a positive and generous offer, but these visits, the pastorate and the education must take place before we will give strong consideration at another set of interviews for going on to the Roll of Ministry Students."

I said, "We will discuss this together with urgency."

"This decision will come to you on paper in the mail. Your decision to us whether or not to proceed - and how you cut links with the Free Liberal Ecclesia - can come to us by email with some form of signature."

Allie said, "This makes sense."

"We will monitor your experience-gaining progress. You pay up front and record all expenses. You won't be out of pocket for very long. Course fees and physical accommodation with meals at Heathcote Milk Houses are waived.

"Is all this clear?" the Rev. Dr. Erika Zijderveld asked.

"Yes," I said.

"Yes," said Allie. "Tell Seumas, Beannachd leibh."

"I doubt I could reproduce that," said the reverend. "I would ask you not to give this decision to others at least until you have received the decision on paper, and the other two will not tell you their outcomes until then. Before, we have asked candidates to leave the buildings rapidly. We have known the decisions to leak. Terence Chicken will, of course, receive a different communication. You should know that Aled Bolt invested in Julia Chicken's business in all innocence and above board. The interviewers thank you for your virtual attendance. They and I wish you goodbye."

I asked Allie what she thought about the offer and conditions.

"Go for the experiences: we can always say no and scrap it."

"I don't agree," Linda said. "I'm not accepting the conditions, or appearing to accept the conditions."

"I was hoping to go to Tigh na h' Iobairte," she said.

"Yes, I suppose you were," I responded. "But they've excluded it."

Allie said, "It's like a club. That's what keeps them together. Clearly you get these semi-Christians who think they're Christians, along with the history boys, and then there are others like Pagans and Easterns and Erika is a bit humanist - in this case those Easterns were corrupt. But we are from the outside. The insiders predominate. They talk inclusivity but it isn't just an absence of an ethnic mix but all about being in a club. You weren't in the club."

"I'm trying to get you in the club. Ha ha. Let's leave it and discuss it in a few days' time."

"Have you opened the bishop's letter yet?" she asked.

"I will now."

Chapter 36 Easter Garden

Narrator: Linda *Anglican Correspondence* (Saturday 28th March)

I opened the letter I had kept to one side. I did know what to expect, and it was no surprise.

Dear Bishop Linda Shrimpton.

You resigned as curate in the Diocese of Wytham on 30th September last year. My review of those events since coming into office has concluded that this was unnecessary on your part. From the standpoint of the National Church, you remain a priest in good standing.

You may be aware that my wife Andrea would prefer to become a full time GP and only have a small pastoral ministry as a priest. The Novel Covid pandemic has added to her medical workload.

I would like to invite you to apply to become Vicar of the Parish of Serninsea. I cannot guarantee success, but I have made it clear to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) that you would have my full support and many in the Parish and on the PCC are keen that you should apply. As you may know, the parish of Serninsea has been expanded south to include Inglemire and Caffenmere. I have no reason to change this. I will attempt to find the Serninsea Marshes' eleven churches a new Priest in Charge.

If you were successfully appointed, three things would follow.

1) Without questioning the validity of your consecration as bishop, the National Church cannot recognise it and, in office, would only refer to you as a Reverend and as a priest.

2) Parishioners are aware of the brave and pioneering work you have done with others in building a new church. We would wish to treat this as a Fresh Expression and slave church of the St. Sernin parish church. St. Sernin would be the hub church of the parish.

3) Whilst you may wish to make other arrangements for this independent church of yours, as a National Church priest you cannot also be the minister of another denomination except under strictly approved arrangements in a Local Ecumenical Partnership - and we do not recognise the Free Liberal Ecclesia as sufficiently sound regarding the doctrine of the Trinity and the uniqueness of Christ for there to be a Local Ecumenical Partnership (even on a unique basis).

Please respond as quickly as your work allows. My predecessor, Bishop Derek Imperial, valued your theological insights and your experience of parish life under pressure. I now see that you have built a local church from scratch. This only adds to my admiration of your skills and therefore my support.

Yours in Christ.

++Lynton Wytham.

"No chance," I said.

"Don't just dismiss it," Allie said.

"Well, I've moved on and it does not mention my marriage. Why doesn't it

mention my marriage? This marriage includes sex. It's posted as well, when it could have been hand-delivered."

"I'd consider it. Kewter and all that."

"Not a motive."

"Liar. That's why you were doing the Unitarian thing - accessing funds."

"Allie, I cannot fit back into the Anglican box."

However, Allie said, "I'd give an open-ended reply to this diocesan bishop. Include the possibility that I can run this place, if you want, and you can be the parish priest."

"No way! Let's write something," I said, and I decided what to put, not Allie.

Dear Bishop Lynton Plimpton.

Thank you for your recent letter, which I have read carefully.

I need to point out that I am married to Alfia Shrimpton. She is my wife and I love her deeply. I could not fit in within the Anglican ethos and rules that limit relationships to Civil Partnerships, especially as they are becoming redefined among heterosexual couples as more associative. This is not my relationship with Alfia. Please understand that we are sexually active. Anyway, married couples cannot transfer to Civil Partnerships.

As for the Bethel, it has been a team effort in Serninsea. It is not mine to turn into a 'slave church' or 'Fresh Expressions' or any other subordinate status of the Anglican parish, and I am sure that my colleagues want a liberal and independent future for it. My wife is a Reverend Deacon of this Church, and she will be priested at some point soon and I am minded to make her a bishop.

Yours sincerely, Bishop Linda Shrimpton, Serninsea Liberal Bethel, of the Free Liberal Ecclesia.

"That should end it," I said. "We'll hand deliver it today, where Andrea and him live - and let her continue to live and function there, where Colin Cromer lived."

Narrator: Allie *The Bishop and Wife Walk In* (Monday 30th March)

With Adam's agreement, Margaret McEnhill sent a message to Linda.

Lynton Plimpton's letter was because he knew you were being interviewed by Unitarians.

I said, "Kathleen and Winnie are duty-bound to inform the Serninsea Vestal Virgins anything of significance that is going on. group. Andrea Lindsey is then bound to pass things on."

"Does her husband know she is breaking Anglican exclusivity rules?"

"Good question."

I was thus prompted to go to the consultation room and use a laptop to talk to my Uncle Paul.

Linda came to me, given so few people were in the building. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"I'm contacting my Uncle Paul via social media. Can I have a private conversation? It's about genealogy, his favourite pastime."

"Sure. Sorry."

"He's on now. Hello Uncle Paul! Linda is sending her best wishes."

She called out, "Hello Paul!"

"Hello Linda. You want some information, Alice, but it's a bit unusual," he said immediately, causing Linda to pause - and then she left the room.

"What have you found out about Andrea Lindsey? I used to know her as my GP in Somerset, and now she's moved up to be my GP here."

"I made some notes so far. First of all Lindsey relates to the Brythonic name for a lake and especially around your neck of the woods. Somerset isn't its base. It also became a male first name in the nineteenth century and for females since. Think of Lindsey Buckingham, male singer, and Lindsey Davis, female author, and female 'Lindy' relates to 'Lindsey' in a way that Linda does not."

"Yeah yeah."

"We need the general before we can get to the specific."

"Apologies, Uncle Paul."

"Lindsey the Unitarian founder was Anglican when he located at Puddletown in Dorset in 1755, then called Piddletown, and your Andrea Lindsey was born in nearby Piddlehinton. But he was born in Middlewich, Cheshire. In 1760 Theophilus married Hannah Elsworth, born 1740, in Yorkshire's Richmond parish church. In 1763 they went from Piddletown to the Church of St Anne, Catterick in North Yorkshire thanks to the ongoing influence of an aristocrat again.

"Present day Andrea was a medical researcher before becoming a priest, unpaid, and a doctor. Her maiden name can't be from the Theophilus line, because he had no children with Hannah Elsworth. Local Anglican histories tend to ignore him. Hannah went with him from Catterick to London and the Unitarians, hoping but failing to start an Anglican route to that heretical denomination."

"So there is no local connection there from Lindsey to Lindsey," I said.

"Perhaps someone way back when took on the surname in tribute and she connects with that. So far I'm not there."

"I've another job for you, Uncle Paul. The Reverend Seumas Caimbeul, who is fifty, lives now at Tigh na h' Iobairte at Kinloch Rannoch. Because of the spellings I'll send it in text but he's on the Unitarian General Assembly Roll of Ministers and his church is a retreat. Hang on. Talk of the devil! Guess who has just come into this building?"

"This Scottish minister?"

"No, the Anglican bishop and his wife, the very same Andrea. Quickly: the Scottish minister was born in Tyndrum or the family was there. Is there any connection with our ancestor Margaret Urchardan, of Crianlarich? These are small interweaving communities. Linda is keeping her social distance from them."

"It's a big distance in space and time."

"Not them! Must go."

I came out of the room and approached Linda.

Andrea said, "We are allowed to visit for private prayer."

"I thought Anglicans have to do it Anglican," I suggested, thinking that this could be a slogan for the back of a car.

"I have with me our own current prayer book," said Lynton Plimpton. "Private

prayer can take place anywhere - in a bus, at a bus shelter, in here."

Andrea said, "We are also on our exercise walk today."

Linda said, "However, you've come to talk to me, haven't you, and we'd better sit down keeping some distance between us. Perhaps we ought to wear masks: there's quite some debate about their usefulness. We hear we might have a new garden soon, extracted from part of a seafront house back garden. Ann Dromeghda and Labhaoise Vlahos are involved."

"Not the other bishop originally from our stable, Christine Vine?"

"She organised Allie's other house."

I said, sitting near Linda, "She's going to take it back, soon. The lockdown has paused things."

Lynton and Andrea were themselves sat close together, and Lynton kicked off.

He said, "This is a fine, compact, place. I have imagined this as a slave church or Fresh Expressions, if it was Anglican."

"But it is not," Linda said.

"No. Andrea sees the need now to concentrate on being a local general practitioner. Apparently Rhiannon Fleetwood is still in and out of town. She was an immediate disaster. Hmm."

"Actually, I have had an offer from the Unitarians."

He asked how that had come about, and so I decided to cut into this unconvincing performance of ignorance.

"You already know," I said, "that Linda, and I for that matter, have been interviewed by their Roll of Ministry Interviewers."

"How am I supposed to know that?" asked Lynton.

"Because Andrea was informed."

Linda looked at me, as if I'd said something new.

Andrea asked, "How would I know, and if I did from chatter during a medical examination, would I pass that information on? As a GP I maintain confidentiality; as a bishop my husband maintains confidentiality. We do this regarding each other."

I asked, "What about, er, various groups of people round here who like to know what is going on?"

"Ah," said Andrea. "Nothing to do with me. And given you were removed from all such groups, how would you know this?"

"There are routes of information into the Anglican bureaucracy at Wytham."

Lynton said, "This may or may not be so."

"We need some honesty about this," I said.

"Of course you do," said Andrea. "Your wife, who we ordained priest, also knows the importance of confidentiality."

"Whom," said Linda.

"What?" asked Andrea.

I commented, "We could end up hearing all sorts of only innocuous stuff, like: 'The moon was glowing last night and bright.' That should offend no one."

"Was it?" asked Linda.

"Waxing at about a third exposed," Andrea said, pausing. "It's Waxing Gibbous until April 8th, its brightest and most glowing day."

"What are you two on about?" Lynton asked.

"I ask that question a lot of Allie," Linda said.

The bishop said, "Yes, I do know that the Unitarians had interviewed you, and I'd rather not say how I know. I'd like to make my own better offer - in person."

Linda said, "We haven't responded yet, so what would be your better offer?"

"May I know what theirs is?" Lynton asked.

"So you don't know if yours is better," Linda responded.

"I bet it is. What is their offer?"

"Paid observation and training for both of us, and then they want me to reapply and Allie to apply."

"I'm offering instant employment, and to release Andrea from most priestly demands."

Andrea said, "Sooner the better."

"But your terms and conditions are too harsh," Linda responded.

(Actually, they were of the same impact - cutting off from the Free Liberal Ecclesia.)

"Making this a slave church or fresh expressions? If not, you could cut your formal ties and this place would carry on as before."

"Have to be the latter," she said, "as too many others are involved. And what if I'd make Allie a bishop?"

"It's your own formal connections that matter," he said. "When push is shoved."

I then said, "Andrea knows, and it's no secret this, that I am trying to get pregnant."

Lynton responded, "Well, it can't be from Linda's efforts."

"But it includes Linda's efforts," I said. "I'm having or wanting a natural conception from a trusted friend in the context of my sexual relationship with Linda. I'm telling you; I'd tell anyone."

Linda said, "But the GP must keep confidentiality."

Andrea said, "Correct, including from Lynton."

Linda said, "My secrets are probably too exposed now to be an Anglican priest again. I'm intersex, bisexual, and married to a woman; what's more, I am an independent bishop and this *is* actually a proper bishop, bishop."

"But here's the thing," the male bishop said: "the fundamentalists would have to be consistent. You see, if they regard you, Linda, as a god-given male, then they cannot object to a marriage with a female."

"But they can from having the seed from a third party," I said.

Andrea said, "Some discretion is needed, one way or the other."

"It's the honesty question," Linda said. "You don't realise how refreshing it is outside of the Anglicans."

Andrea said, "I think I do. But they're not exclusive when it comes to maintaining secrets."

"You like it both ways," I said to Andrea. "But maybe not."

"I think you do too," she said back to me. "I did not tell Lynton, right?"

Lynton said, "Before we go - and thanks for the chat, better than only sending writing - there is surely no harm in you being interviewed, as in each side testing out the other."

"Online," I take it, "Linda said.

"I think if it's the whole PCC, I cannot see any other option. But I might suggest exploratory one to one chats in the church hall?"

Linda then said, "You realise Rhiannon was in post for five minutes and this with Andrea looks like two minutes."

"No problem for me," said Andrea. "I might keep my hand in, as a possibility."

"I know the sensation," I responded.

Andrea said, "Ah, the old gynaecology joke. I do use equipment."

Lynton said, "Yes, Andrea is adding already to the sense of instability. But I'd hope you'd calm the ship. You could represent continuity and stability."

I then had a further question. I asked Andrea if she'd ever looked into the origin of her surname in the area of her birth. She hadn't but was aware of the Lindsey name as a former vicar of her birth parish.

"I'm not happy," said Linda. "I want to know, Bishop Lynton, your view of sexuality and me being ordained, presiding over Holy Communion, for example, when she is clearly my wife."

He said, in response, "It is perfectly fine surely that two people form a pact or covenant to assist a stable life together. The validity and efficacy of the sacraments does not depend upon the moral standing of the celebrant."

Andrea said, "A covenant like marriage should help avoid a promiscuous and unsafe lifestyle, Allie."

I stared back at Andrea but kept quiet as Linda looked at me.

He went on. "There might be a sexual component to fade out over time. Marriage of itself - as I try to argue - isn't sin because it can be approached from different angles."

"It's supposed to be good," said Linda.

Lynton replied, "For St. Paul, better done as a container for fornicating. It's about intention. Holy Communion assumes good and proper intentions, an examination of conscience and sincerity, but does not depend upon them. Priesthood should be the same. But we don't allow marriage to be initiated when a priest..."

"Same-sex," said Linda.

"The question here is what if you already have it? But if you were to stand up and say, 'I am married to a same sex partner, I think this is right and I'm conducting Communion,' then you are taking on and misrepresenting Church teaching on marriage and human sexuality. There is no revision of Church teaching on marriage and sexuality. The guide is *Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned*, as in Luke 6:37."

Linda said, "Oh come on! You've come pretty close. The fundamentalists can think I'm a man marrying a woman, and that allows the others to consider we have progress. Now you're saying there *is* no progress. You are judging! The issue of wrongness of intention didn't arise with the Unitarians; the marriage was just accepted. Indeed, they pretty much accepted a polyamorous arrangement with one candidate - and so would I."

"But you cannot use it as a platform. That's all. People can think but cannot both do and advocate. Until policy changes, and the bishops as a whole accept the change, there can be no platforming from same sex married individuals who happen to be married when it is prevented among others. I am saying about transferring-in. I'm saying we should accept this if it is not platformed. If it is platformed then expect a Clergy Discipline Measure."

"Ridiculous. I'm a campaigner for change!"

"You can campaign, but you cannot platform."

"Eh?"

"I'm being flexible - with you, Linda, and with Jeremy. I want you and Jeremy to be neighbouring colleagues."

"Jeremy Symes - to come back?"

"Yes. *And* I want a suffragan bishop too, and it would make your title ours too. Let people think it is progress - I am saying, in a round-about way, not to platform it, not to take on Church teaching. Do it quietly."

I said, "Hey, Linda? They want the suffragan to come back."

"It's not good enough."

I said further, "You'll agree with not to platform, Andrea! So you *would* be staying on as priest in case Linda becomes suffragan bishop?"

"Lynton can find someone else," said Andrea.

Lynton said, "No platforming but you must disconnect absolutely from both the Free Liberal Ecclesia and the Unitarian General Assembly. We're not interviewing the two of you like how those heretics did it. We'd be bringing a priest back into the fold. You know us; you are trained; you know the locality. Look, we must go. I don't know if you know, but the Archbishop of All England was going to tour all England. He was due in the diocese in May. It's all off now, such travelling, but he has asked if we can do an online equivalent."

"I liked him. We both did, didn't we Allie. She used her Gaelic."

This bishop said, "It is his first language. One of, what, forty thousand now?"

Linda said, "Half a million speak Welsh in Wales."

"We must go."

"Many more have learnt Welsh," I responded.

"See you dreckly, Allie," said Andrea. "We'll have a one-to-one chat, perhaps on a fair stank together, using my professional name. Bye, naughty girl and Linda."

With them gone, Linda asked me, "Why would I want to go back to all that, to the Anglicans and all the duplicity? I haven't said a creed never mind *the* creed for well over a year."

"Oh you could just mouth it," I said. "Who cares? If you're the parish priest, you can create your own latitude."

"But *you* wouldn't join the National Church."

"Absolutely not."

"By the way, what is 'dreckly' and a 'stank'?"

"English in Cornwall. 'Dreckly' is soon, but any time, so might not be soon, and a 'stank' is a determined walk, like the exercise we can do. D'you fancy being suffragan bishop, no less, Linda?"

"Ironic, isn't it, Mrs. Shrimpton."

Narrator: Linda *Unitarian Correspondence* (Monday 6th April)

We'd done a fairly standard and online service on the Sunday, but beyond these messages we were quite bored. Monday's post brought a first class stamped letter.

Dr. Mina Jones, Chief Executive, Executive Board, and for the Roll of Ministry

*Interviewers, Unitarian General Assembly
For Bishop Linda Shrimpton and the Rev. Alfia Shrimpton*

We confirm here in writing the offer made orally after your attendance at the Unitarian Ministry Interviews after candidating to go on to the Roll of Unitarian Ministry Students.

We would like either or both of you to apply again next year or the year after (given what may be possible regarding restrictions with Novel Covid) as follows:

Applying to go on to the Roll of Unitarian Ministry Students will depend on you having carried out eight unpaid observations by whoever reapplies in different Unitarian chapels and each of you preach once each unpaid in two of these. The offer includes overnight expenses-paid bed and breakfast accommodation for each visit but travel expenses should be negotiated with each chapel. Each applicant to be considered must also attend the Unitarian History Course online or at the Unitarian Conference Centre, Heathcote Milk Houses, near Winster. Fees and accommodation but not travel will be paid for the course.

The oral offer of an eight week pastorate for both of you was made in error - we cannot fund this. Sincere apologies.

Observations and preaching exclude Tigh na h' Iobairte near Kinloch Rannoch and Heathcote Milk Houses chapel. Also necessary is that either or both to be a candidate must cut professional ties with the Free Liberal Ecclesia; and your bethel, should it come into the denomination, must itself cut all connections with the Free Liberal Ecclesia.

Please respond. You may now inform others of this decision and your response.

Lisa Revie sent a message: she'd been accepted for college entry and she added that Jason Goole had been rejected. There didn't seem to be any logic to this, but then we didn't know. We told them about our training offer before reapplying, and that we had decided we would reject the whole offer. Then a message came through from Klara Merkel of congratulations to me, so we corrected that. Klara must have heard via a different, leaky route.

Allie went to her house and brought over some of her painting stuff, and with the doors closed to the public I laid myself out for her artistic prowess.

While we were doing this, Roger and Marie came by and my gaping nudity must have reminded them of the next attempt at our procreation. We'd try mid-month.

News was the council announcing that the Novel Covid had already finished off the dock as a going concern. It was to be left to silt up and then at some point would be filled in.

Later on I got dressed and we two walked along the beach towards the south that was short in length, after which was the beachless approach to Titansea. So we looked at the failed dock. We denied ourselves the wider beach at Ingle Barrow because of the possibility of bumping into Stephen and Helen McPhail, whose large house had access on to the beach and where the sight lines were long. Nevertheless the drain there proved very enticing, and we had a skinny dip together using the high banking for some privacy.

Nevertheless, when we stopped swimming, Ann Dromeghda called us and

suggested we meet back on the promenade. Allie and I waited together, and along came Ann and Labhaoise to stand at a distance from us. They pointed at a house with a disused shop front.

"This is the shop we had bought a while ago," said Ann. "Half its garden width backs on to your bethel, on the other side of the tenfoot of course. So behind the fence we have already divided the garden into half, and sold that half to Adam - for a quid. Next we'll insert a gate at the side of the garden opposite the bethel property."

"Great," I said.

It was more than great because it was a vote of support in the place in the context of rejecting the Unitarians' conditional offer.

Labhaoise said, "We thought, and we still think, that the seafront property could become Caroline's base. If so, the gardens could have a gate between them. Otherwise we'll seal their separation."

"Could be a seaside cafe church, here," Allie said.

Ann said to her, "Haven't you been following the news lately? There is no future in cafes."

"She could design the social distancing from the off. She doesn't have a congregation and not likely to get one or much of one."

Ann said it was Adam's idea to divide the long garden behind the promenade road property. She said he and they continued to give their support to my bethel project. In this garden we'd be able to sunbathe naked with no interference.

In fact there and then a message came from Caroline that she was not interested and so the property would be sold on with its halved garden.

For our response to the Unitarian denomination, Allie wanted a low-key rejection as possible. Given that she was regarded as a stronger candidate than me, I simply agreed. She wanted to use the lockdown as an excuse.

"You write it then," I told my wife.

For Dr. Mina Jones, Chief Executive on the Roll of Officers, Unitarian General Assembly

We thank you for your written confirmation of a potential observation and training schedule for ourselves, Linda and Allie Shrimpton, with some expenses paid.

We have considered your offer carefully. Entering into enforced lockdown makes the immediate future unknown. We want to retain and develop what we have in place now, in the Serninsea Liberal Bethel, and this includes friendly relations with the Reverend Charley Darley and Wytham Unitarians in particular and the occasional exchange of pulpits. We wish to retain our denominational identities here.

Therefore we have decided that it is unlikely that either of us would reapply or apply for professional ministry training next year or after with the Unitarians and it would be wrong to take up your offer of observation and education without such an intention.

Bishop Linda Shrimpton, Serninsea Liberal Bethel, Free Liberal Ecclesia.

The Reverend Deacon Allie Shrimpton, Serninsea Liberal Bethel, Free Liberal Ecclesia, and High Priest of Creech Moorlinch Coven.

I said to Allie, "That's rather to the point. I expected something academic and long-winded. What's amazing is that so much led up to these interviews. I met all

these different and sometimes strange people with puzzling Unitarian denominational identities. I ended up applying myself. And yet, in the end, they were too clubby, too internal, for either of us to take up their offer. I've had to say 'no' to them."

"Too tribal," said Allie. "All institutions - even small ones - have their characteristics, but it depends how you are formed into or away from them. I'm Pagan, post-Buddhist, feminist, humanist, ritualist, anthropologist, and I don't really fit into that, or not easily."

"And it turns out I fit into it even less."

Narrator: *Allie Garden Available* (Thursday 9th April)

The workers had lowered the fence to 6 foot and added a gate opposite the door from the Consulting Room or Library. If we wanted to jump across the tenfoot naked it would be out of that room door and through the gate. Klärchen Sisse might see us but I doubted she was the shockable type. The garden width took it opposite Klärchen's house but it did not extend to the northern end of our double property including not as far as the kitchen door into the tenfoot.

An idea to use the space to park Linda's SUV would have been a change of use and wasn't considered for more than a minute.

We were back from food deliveries and the workers had gone to lunch. Turf had been laid to produce instant grass with a few rolls left.

Also added was a decorative abstract stone carving. It was a sort of oval with two curves jutting out above, thinning to the sides. It was little like a Barbara Hepworth.

In fact when the workers returned their task was to clear up and no more. Given the temperatures were well above average, Linda went back indoors for a couple of blankets and we took off our clothes indoors, jumped across with the blankets and lay down in the new garden.

Linda said how she missed going to Patricia's to lie naked with Diana, but now we had our own outdoor spot. She told me that Labhaoise had made the sculpture herself, and it was just over twenty years old.

For a moment I thought its shape was like Linda, but that seemed a little far fetched.

Roger and Marie came through the gateway and found us in our sun-responding state. They also thought it great that we now had this garden.

Linda said to them, "We want to resume trying to get Allie pregnant soon, if we can all start earlier than last month. Her period is once every four weeks. It's bit like Ramadan, it can go backwards through the solar calendar."

"Ramadam?" asked Marie, with a wrong 'm'.

"Ramadan isn't perhaps the best comparison; try a Hindu month that always starts with the new moon."

I said, "Full moon was yesterday. So today it is waning gibbous at ninety-five per cent brightness."

"Moonbright," said Linda. "Mmm. There was some reference to this, wasn't there, when the bishop and his wife called."

I said, "Keep it to yourself - everyone."

The rest of the household, Kathleen and Winnie joined us. But Winnie said, "We are seriously thinking of moving to my mother's. She is alone and is feeling isolated."

Linda asked them, "Do you want your room reserving then?"

"No, I think after the pandemic we want to try and get a house, from either Ann or Christine."

I said, "I could give you - or rather Christine could offer you - 135 Toulouse Road."

"Except we'd move in with mum first," said Winnie.

"Well, I've had the house and lived here; why can't you live with your mother and have that house? Ask Christine."

But then Winnie said, "I thought you, Linda, were not sun worshippers."

I replied, "It's ten degrees above normal today, and what's not to like?"

Winnie and Kathleen decided to go for a walk and would talk at her mother's front door.

With nothing else to do, Roger and Marie decided to strip off and join us. The gate was closed, giving us privacy.

Some ten minutes later there was a knock on the gate.

I asked, "Is that Klärchen? I haven't seen her for ages since the lockdown."

"And since I said stop seeing her," added Linda, who would have been heard.

"Linda!" I snapped.

"It's not Klärchen Sisse but Andrea Lindsey. I want to talk to Allie."

I called out, "Don't talk into the gate! Open the gate - we're naked but legally you're not supposed to meet me, even in a private garden."

"Well, where can we talk?"

"Online."

"No, it's too insecure."

She watched as I just about jumped across the tenfoot to get my clothes on inside. I told her to go into the street and I'd stay within the tenfoot entrance area. She was probably five metres or more away from me.

With no one else near she said, "I had a chat online, of course, with Abigail Bloodred."

"Ah," I said, "At last."

"You are Alice Moonbright. I think it is safe, now, to declare myself. So I declare I am Andrea Moonglow."

"I don't know how you do it. You were a member of Taunton Tantria, and you are a witch, and yet you are an Anglican priest. How does that work?"

"It works because I'm terrified someone will tell Lynton about me being a witch. You've told Linda. He knows about Taunton Tantria and forced me to have extensive opt outs with the Vestal Virgins."

"I told her about me only after we were married."

"Abigail says you and I have to do a ceremony together: all that is stopping us is the pandemic. We should have done it when it was possible and didn't. You are not to tell anyone; witches keep a code of secrecy when secrecy is necessary."

"I'm not going to tell anyone," I said. "I realise there was Rhiannon Fleetwood sniffing around."

"You mustn't even tell Linda."

"Our moon bright and moon glow conversation made her suspicious."

"You were trying to extract my declaration."

"Because you should have given it."

"Not with Lynton. I told you I am a Fighter of Concern."

"Not quite the same thing. A witch in my Coven is rather different."

"Online I can be more involved with the Vestal Virgins and have been already."

The connection is supposed to be secure, but Lynton knows I have obligations to them. I think someone monitors the vicarage computers."

"Colin Cromer, your predecessor but one, told Linda to keep away from the Vestal Virgins."

"I married Lynton already involved. I joined the coven nearly a month after you. Then you were isolated and inactive. But me coming here means we have two Eclectic Witchcraft High Priests in the same location. We are obliged to work together, even if no one else joins us. We can do it in secret."

"Did Roland Sunbright have ritualistic sex with you?"

"Of course he did, and Abigail Bloodred. It was the same as you. Lynton didn't know I became a first degree witch. I had two initiations in a row. I could have watched your initiations, but they accepted that once being your GP and a priest married to Lynton was a good excuse to absent myself."

"Well, perhaps when the pandemic is over, we'd better have a sky clad ritual."

"No. There's more. I told Roland I have a plan."

"Go on."

"Linda becomes the parish priest. You and her move into the vicarage. I'll have a bedroom in the vicarage, but also Lynton will take up residence in Wytham - for me to join him. One will have to be a 'bubble' or something like that; we could be in the same household. That will allow you and me to hold ceremonies, and of course as a witch I'd like to sleep with you, if Linda allows it."

"You know, I've been asking questions about you for some time. You have wanted to have sex with me?"

"Yes. I fancy you like hell."

"Why didn't you just ask me?"

"I was your GP and I've been in positions of responsibility."

"Almost my gynaecologist. Anyway, your household plans are fanciful."

"You're beautiful."

"We are also supposed to be ritualists, and not personal with it. My sex with Roland was purely ritualistic, as with the later sexual contact with Abby. Fancying me is not a good idea, and I am married."

"I think Paganism and Christianity should join, like the Saxons merged the two for a time. I want to fuck you, Allie, and I don't care if I am a Christian priest."

"Andrea. I live here and part of this household is brother and sister Roger Humphrey and Marie Enfield, and Roger is trying to make me pregnant. He can only do that in the same household. Linda and I are not moving out, *they* are not moving out, though we've just heard Kathleen and Winnie are moving out. So if you want their room, well here it is above the Serninsea Liberal Bethel, part of the Free Liberal Ecclesia. I don't think Lynton will be able to approve that. Problems, eh?"

"We can do it online."

"Yeah, but we can't sexually engage."

"I'm sure I told you Annie and Marie Healand are patients of mine. They do."

"They've moved in together. The online bit is their work."

"You do services online. So do we. So can you and me. Someone is coming."

"We could sky clad, yes. Different locations."

"Shut up!"

Andrea moved backwards into the road. The person passed, and Andrea moved back again. (There were many fewer people either walking or driving.)

"You'll do it?" she asked.

"We'll work out a convenient time," I said.

"Linda is some distance behind you," said Andrea. "She's got nothing on. She's pretty. You're so fortunate."

"Yeah. I am going to rejoin my wife and enjoy this sunshine. Bye."

"Oh Allie. Bye."

So turned and joined my bare wife.

"What did she want?"

"Well, I am sworn to secrecy, but let's say they might have marital problems."

"Already?" Linda asked. "Anything I can do?"

"Yeah. Stop being exposed to the road. By the way, there was a side hint that if you were to be invited to be priest of the parish, you'd be expected to live in the vicarage."

"I suppose so," Linda said, as if it was an unsurprising matter of fact.

"Well," I said, "I rather like it here."

"So do I; it's why I've said a hundred times I'm not going to be a parish priest. It's you who's said, 'Oh go and do it,' or words to that effect. But in your world of secrets I take it that you've now changed your mind."

"I hadn't thought about changing accommodation. But now I have, I think we are better off as we are."

"You usually think of everything," Linda said.

Back in the new garden, I stripped off again.

Then I said, "We can be seen from some upstairs windows."

"Ah," Linda said, "they are commercial properties."

Roger asked if he and Marie should absent themselves in case we had issues to discuss, but I said no and Linda agreed.

Then Linda said, "Allie's been tracking Andrea for a while, and she's discovered something significant. You have, haven't you?"

"Yup."

"And you're not telling."

"Nope."

"I can guess," said Linda. "I can wait until Allie removes all doubt."

Narrator: Linda *Allie's Easter Message* (Sunday April 12th)

We'd put out simple posters advertising our service for 11 am, and it was on the website. How many took the live video we could not easily tell.

I didn't follow the lectionary or the liturgical year quite like I did when with the Anglicans. We were more like the Free Churches, in the sense of only observing the key festivals. So we did Good Friday, Holy Saturday and of course Easter itself - the

Day of Resurrection. I'd given the tasks of writing and delivering the sermon to Allie. This was also Kathleen and Winnie's final contribution from this base. Peter Marshall appeared at a desk in his father's house with Kathryn not in view. (They had moved from the investigations agency accommodation.) Peter was able to use his remote position to advise others viewing to act like him with water and bread, that my ritual blessings went through space and time to his participation with elements and to anyone else so responding.

Allie's message somewhat qualified the day:

"What our ancestors did, perhaps better than the Neanderthals they met, was symbolise and communicate. They might have been nomadic animists, but from the off they symbolised and enchanted what was around them. They recognised animation in life. They and their cultural, settled, agricultural successors developed myths, and the most significant was that of death and renewal, that winter involved real and actual death and yet more light returned and the spirits were active again in pushing up the crops and feeding the animals.

"We can't escape the fact that Easter follows a mythological structure, and let's not be deceived that history somehow randomly replicated the mythological structure. The myth is part of the writing. Easter is written, constructed, produced, and the people who saw that they had a new Gospel also thought in terms of some of the oldest renewal myths of homosapiens.

"What of Easter and the structure of the story? Some think if you go back to Sumerian legend of Damuzi (or Tammuz) and his wife Inanna (or Ishtar), you get an epic myth called 'The Descent of Inanna' that far back. It was found inscribed on cuneiform clay tablets and, well, that far back was 2100 BCE. Damuzi dies and so a grieving Inanna takes herself to the underworld. She goes through seven gates, and becomes naked; she is judged, killed, and then hung up to be seen. Her loss means the earth can't produce crops and animals don't reproduce. The crisis lasts three days when her assistant looks to other gods to help, and then Enki does help by creating two creatures who take the plant of life and water of life down to the Underworld, and sprinkle them on Inanna and Damuzi. This resurrects them and are able to become back on earth as bathing in the light of the sun - but for six months. Then Damuzi returns to the underworld of the dead for six months, and Inanna pursues him, which prompts the water god to rescue them. Therefore the story has the winter death and the return of spring life, but winter will come again.

"The structure of this story, indeed the story itself, spread, and this story structure had other origins, with different names. In the 4th century, Christians identified where the empty tomb of Jesus had been - where a temple of Aphrodite, therefore Inanna, had stood. The temple was razed to the ground and the Holy Sepulchre was built.

"Another strand is Easter being from a celebration of Eostre, or Ostara, Austra, and Eastre, goddess of Spring. She is all about renewal. Light now equals darkness and it will grow - in the northern hemisphere above the equator. Ostara gets pictured with a hare, and we know that hares breed like rabbits. Dawn is radiant, light is growing, and joy results.

"At this time the bunny or hare breeds and the bird lays its eggs. And some Germans reckoned that Ostara healed a wounded bird in the woods by changing it into a hare. Because it had been a bird it laid eggs as gifts. The egg connects with

other mythologies of civilisations.

"So, today, spring comes and people decorate actual eggs and eat chocolate Easter eggs with extras inside. This ceremony comes after Yule, when there was the end to darker nights as a celebrated turning point, and then weeks on we have rebirth and renewal, as it has been celebrated for thousands of years.

"These rituals will continue all the time they are meaningful. They must be meaningful to us, because we are here recognising it and that's despite our online restriction! Our celebration and ritual is both past and future: bread and wine looking forward to a harvest of what we see emerging in the light and warmth.

"Incidentally, Welsh has Pasg; Cornish and Breton use Pask. In Irish Gaelic it's An Cáisc, Scottish Gaelic A' Chàisg and Manx Yn Chaisht, all Greek in origin. Scots has Pace, from Pasch.

"Rather as modern art suggests flatness and the process of painting itself, and loses a single view from which going to transcendence is assumed, so that we have developed multiple viewpoints within only the painting itself, so we are more self-aware that ritual is ritual.

"Ruth Weiss is an artist in Judaism who, I think, still wants it both ways. She recognises that Judaism gives her a key to ways of thinking, about remembering, levels of interpretation, that everything is open to question. But she paints, such as Separating the Waters II, from which she can make transcendent points: this naked woman is submerged, rather as in the mikveh, but she rises up with arms forward, eyes closed, so the water or fluid and woman go together, like when she is born; and her mother's water breaks, when she cries, when she menstruates, produces liquid upon arousal and gives birth herself through this medium. But do we all agree with such an interpretation? Is it a dream - is the Jungian perception really so certain - or is it a purpose rather than dreamlike? There's brown red, and green, and blue - much colour, form, and it's not entirely realistic. Why does she want it both ways?

"Because, she has a painting and we know it is a painting; like in the Passover Seder meal, there is a story to be told and we know it is a story: 'And on that day you shall tell your child, for this God has taken me out of the Land of Egypt.' What is the tale to be told? What is this day? Perhaps, most of all, and that it is a story for this day. What is the character and purpose of the story to be told? It becomes an act in itself, the story told: and to not to want to hear it, and not to want to tell it, devastates continuity. Yet that is all it is - the act of telling a story, a story that is a story. This is Easter now - lots of origins, lots of perspectives, some sort of pattern. Such has been considerably weakened, but it continues to be repeated."

As bishop, I thought that, at Easter, we could try to express the nearest thing to a creed. So we had something revised and informally agreed amongst us, that we said together:

*So much of life is chaotic and yet interacts into stability:
Thus many features can be represented through simple equations;
So the suggestion is simplicity, beauty and transcendence.
Everyone has dignity: so practice love,
Look after the animals,
Seek justice;
Find truths through searching:*

*Come together like now to search;
Draw on experience,
Read prophetic books,
Learn from insightful individuals,
Discover with science, social science and the arts;
Be sensitive to natural rhythms,
And always act with compassion.*

Thus was the core of our Easter service. Allie did well.

Narrator: Allie *Procreation Two* (Monday 13th April)

Linda was in the vestry while I was watching soul-destroying afternoon television in the seating area. With the double doors open for individual visitors, we had a middle-aged woman with medium white hair and in a long dull coat walk in and look around. I put the screen off.

I called across. "We have to keep our distance. Please take a seat and we'll clean it afterwards."

"Hello. I'm Allie or Alison. I moved into Serninsea at the time of the scandal, locally, and joined the parish church when Rhiannon Fleetwood was briefly priest-in-charge."

I went to fetch Linda.

This Allie explained without any context that in the last few months a number of changes had happened to the Parochial Church Council via resignations, and that she had been elevated to it on the basis of being new and not sceptical about the previous minister in office. "In fact I'd been on other PCCs, otherwise I wouldn't have considered it. She was wrong about me: I was one of those who said she had to go."

"Well, this is all very interesting but why are you here?" Linda asked.

"We have Andrea now but she needs support as she is very busy with Novel Covid and local health issues."

"I can't help you," Linda said. "My ministry as it stands is not recognised by Anglicans."

"The bishop suggested an informal chat."

I asked for her surname, and it was Dare-Baron. I then (if off the immediate point) asked about the origins of her name. Dare was Saxon and Baron was Norman. I suggested that we call her 'Al' as I was Allie.

Linda ignored my suggestion. "Mrs. Dare-Baron, have you been told that we were interviewed for ministry by the Unitarians?"

"No."

"They made us an offer, which we have refused. However, this does not mean we would take up any offer from you. It would involve too many compromises, too many losses, not enough honesty."

This Anglican Al Dare-Baron commented, "It might seem an odd thing to say but individualistic honesty and religious institutions often don't go together. Individuals do have to compromise. In fact, as was in Lent, it's not about honesty but personal sacrifice, and the PCC has been considering investigating your willingness

to undergo personal sacrifice for the good of the Church."

Linda said, "What you call 'The Church' is also here, so involves the good of this church."

At this point I could see a police constable looking through the double doors, and she then wore a mask and decided to come in.

PC Layla Jenkins reminded us that whilst individuals could enter a church for private prayer, this looked like having a meeting. She said she would advise us on this occasion and not issue a fine, but Al Dare-Baron had to leave immediately. If there was someone to meet, then we should do it online, or at the very worst stand outside and be very distanced within hearing range, probably on the sea front.

"Is this a Police State?" Linda asked her.

"It's a Health State," she replied. "And we have the powers to enforce it."

With that we decided that after the food was prepared and distributed each day, no one else would come inside other than the residents.

Fortunately, Roger and Marie were residents, and rather than be bored again we went to them and suggested we have another procreation attempt. Roger said he'd be with me alone, and aim to make me more receptive.

We gave ourselves an hour to prepare. Linda and I shared a shower and did some sugary strips afterwards."

Meeting up, Linda took Marie off to our room for some experimenting, from Marie's point of view. I lay on my back on their bed, my feet on the carpet. Roger was undressed too, and knelt on a cushion on the floor at the foot of the bed.

"Very good. So this time being more receptive requires rules of the game. You can choose from these seven words only: 'nearer', 'further', 'faster', 'slower', 'harder', 'softer', 'away'. If I'm on it, another 'nearer' won't count. 'Away' means a reset or finished. Got them? They're in binary pairs."

"Nearer, further, faster, slower, harder, softer, away."

"I've got my bottle of water, though hopefully I won't need it after a short while. When you're receptive you can either do me something in return or I'm going in to give the donation. Off we go."

Contact was made.

"Er: further, slower. Softer, softer, slower, nearer, faster. You're moving about."

"One word only. Speak more slowly - give me a chance."

"Yeah. Nearer, then. Harder, harder, slower. Further. Are you doing letters of the alphabet?"

"Shush."

"Faster. No, slower. Further, softer... Hmm. Further still. Go around!"

"I'll decide that."

"Nearer, a bit. Harder, harder, slower. Further. You are doing letters of the alphabet!"

"One word only!"

"No, closer, harder, faster. Er, further, softer... Hmm. Further still. Nearer, faster, faster, nearer, harder, slower, further. No, faster, nearer, faster. Here we go."

"Allie!"

"Harder, er slower, harder, faster, now nearer, nearer. Faster, nearer. Yep, ah, not yet: slower, softer, softer, further, slow down!"

"Slower?"

"Sorry. Nearer, faster now, harder, harder, faster, woow! Away!"
I shook about somewhat. Roger raised himself and came to the side of the bed.

He said, "Deeper, lick, suck, shallower, lick, lick, deeper, enough! In I go below."

In he went and it wasn't long before he made his donation, and once done he lay by my side, my legs up and feet pointing towards the ceiling.

We soon decided to go one floor up to our room and join in with his sister and my wife.

More Than Observing (Wednesday 15th April)

After food deliveries I was using a laptop, and Professor Roland Mitton had clicked on to see me before he had an online seminar.

He was telling me, "I've told Andrea to trust Linda. Linda understands all about confidentiality, as Andrea surely knows. However, we don't invite visitors into Coven activity. Andrea will be online this afternoon. Online ceremonies are valid; the intention is the same, and time and space is relative to the situation. You'll need four positions, earth, fire, water and air, in each transmission, these positioned around your cast circles, and best be sky clad because you are both High Priests in a ceremony involving no one else."

A message came through from Andrea that she would go online at 3 pm. So I asked Linda if I could use the chapel alone.

"Well, you can but no one has private rights to it. Can't I take part?"

"It's Andrea Lindsey."

"Anglican?"

"She and I must keep this confidential, including from her husband - especially from her husband."

Linda said, "She's a witch as well. Moonglow, Moonbright - yes? She's Moonbright and you're Moonglow."

"No, she is Moonglow and I am Moonbright. We're doing a simple ceremony that makes our connection explicit. We start a new Coven but we'll be pretty inactive."

"How can it be explicit when private?"

"Well, we'll have made a mark. Someone could record it, I suppose."

Linda said she'd like to observe, but I said the Creech Moorlinch Coven did not admit visitors and we start with its rules. Everyone who took part in my initiation and in hers was initiated to the first or higher levels, I explained - including, then, absent Andrea.

"But people have to be there uninitiated in order to be initiated."

"But they are initiated there and then. Are you trying to find a philosophical conundrum?"

"Just trying to find a way in. Okay. Have it your way," Linda said. "I'll go in the new garden."

There was an exchange of messages with Andrea, at 3 pm, who said she understood that Roland trusted Linda to keep confidences.

"But," I said, "dem rules are dem rules. We could make our own rules but we start with dem rules."

"In that case we have to set up a Coven. We'll just have to observe some rituals from time to time, and the Serninsea Coven will accept guests."

"No," I said. "If we accept guests we give potential access to people we don't know and don't want. Rhiannon Fleetwood is one. We'll initiate instead."

So we made some rapid arrangements by me emailing liturgical documents to Andrea and me receiving her liturgical materials. Andrea would stand stark naked like me so that my robe could be presented to Linda. All the screens were on, and cameras were activated by movement. Andrea could see what we did and we would be able to see her.

I went to the garden. "We will initiate you to the first level but only after we've set up the Coven. Then you can observe whatever else we do. It will involve a ritual cleaning by touching the mikveh water with your thighs and then initiation time in the cast circle. Interested?"

"Great," she said.

"Put my robe on and leave it open. Wait just outside the chapel," I instructed.

So in our chapel, and without even a gown on, I put a cloth with a chalk circle drawn on it before the altar table, and then placed a rock to the east, a lit candle to the south, a bowl of water to the west, and some incense burning sticks to the north. In the centre was a goblet of red wine and a shiny but blunt athame to its side.

Andrea spoke. "Can you see me throughout? We've had new High Definition cameras installed everywhere and they go to the vicarage computer suite and I'm in charge of that."

"Yep. You're not in the church."

"I thought about using the church but remember what happened before with Linda as curate. So I'm near the computer suite and have just made a circle on the ground. The Circle is connected in both locations, here in the vicarage and there in the Serninsea Liberal Bethel. I'll start.

"Hubble bubble: we begin, the circles made. O wind from the north, refresh us; O earth from the east, nourish our growth; O flame from the south, warm us and give us energy; O water from the west, give us renewed life."

She then picked up the knife in her right hand, and the goblet of wine in her left hand. I did the same.

She said, "O Goddess come down, and bless this spiritual union between the High Priest Witch Alice Moonbright and the High Priest Witch Andrea Moonglow. We are one."

I said, "O Goddess come down, and bless this spiritual union between the Witch Andrea Moonglow and the Witch Alice Moonbright. Though two, we are one."

We both placed each goblet down, and stabbed each knife into each goblet of wine. We then raised each knife up, blades up, lowered them, widened our legs, and in an act of unity said, together, carrying out the insertion of the blades upwards, "Circling inside our vaginas, three times first against the clock, and then three times with the clock, we affirm our togetherness as ordained witches in this town."

With these actions completed we entered each blade into the wine again, removed the athames and drank the wine in one act. I further wiped the athame for its later use.

I said, first, "*The Goddess has blessed us to our very core, and we are empowered to give good magick to this our town. Thus is born the Serninsea Eclectic Coven.*"

She then said the same.

Linda came into the chapel, wearing my open robe.

I spoke. "We use the mikveh. Linda was blindfolded and gave me back the robe. I guided her to descend the steps carefully only as far as the water touched her yoni. Bending her knees a little, I told her that she would become ritually cleansed outside and inside through her yoni and anus. I spread some water around her body, including wetting her hair, and Andrea mimicked this.

I said, "I won't use herbs and oils in our mikveh."

"No, don't," said our blindfolded initiate. But incense was being lit by Andrea only.

Then Andrea and I chanted, nearly together, using (in my case) laminated notes, "*Blessed be your mind to learn of the ways; blessed be your eyes to see; blessed be your lips, to speak in beauty and keep secrets; blessed be your breasts, that they enrich sexual pleasure; blessed be your yoni, that it is receives and gives pleasure; blessed be your knees, to kneel during sacrifice; blessed be your feet, to walk the sacred way.*"

I assisted Linda to turn about and leave the mikveh. Still blindfolded I put a towel to her and dabbed her skin. The open robe went back on her. I then tied cords to connect her wrists.

I said, "We come to the First Initiation." I walked Linda, holding her hand, into the sacred circle by the altar table. "Who do we have at our sacred space?"

Andrea said, from afar, "We have Linda, a beautiful intersex woman who is on the sacred road. She wishes to know the mysteries of this Coven, to honour the divine. Do we have a name for her?"

I said. "She is to be known as Linda Bodleian, within the sacred gathering. This reflects her name closest to birth and her learning. Candidate for ordination: say your name."

She said, "Linda Bodleian."

Andrea said, "Remove her blindfold; cut those cords. I ran my finger up from between her legs, and there was a little bit of light reflecting from my fingertip.

I said, "*In joining this coven, you become part of our greater spiritual family. You become one with our kinship and mutual hospitality. Kneel.*" My yoni was close to Linda's nose and mouth, but she was to kneel passively. "*You cannot learn everything immediately, and neither can we. Each of us is on a journey. Be guided on your travels. Will you uphold the principles and purposes of the Serninsea Eclectic Coven?*"

"I will."

"*Will you be reborn into this journey?*"

"I will."

"*When you deal and relate to people, will you embody the principles and purposes of this Coven into your daily life?*"

"I will."

"Linda Bodleian, stand. *Come from your knees and kiss. Kiss me, Alice Moonbright, kiss into the ether* Andrea Moonglow. She kissed me on the lips, and blew a kiss for Andrea.

I gave her my recently used athame to borrow.

I said, "*You have been reborn into the new life of an Apprentice Witch in the Serninsea Eclectic Coven.* When you physically meet Andrea, kiss her. We never decline basic sexual contact," I said. "We are bodies of expression and we use them."

Finally Andrea and I said, together, "*So mote it be! The circle is closed.*"

After a pause I said, "That was good, Andrea. Pity we couldn't do it together, me into your vagina and you into mine. But that's the government for you."

Linda smiled. "You could have put it into mine."

"Not into a first degree witch," I said.

"Have you two made love?" Linda asked us suddenly.

Andrea replied, on screen, "No, because circumstances, professional and distance, and Abigail, and Beathag, have each prevented it, but I've wanted to make love with Allie for years."

"And now I am preventing it," said Linda. "Just to be clear."

"Would you rather I was dishonest?" asked Andrea.

"She is *mine* and she is having our baby. And, yes, I will keep this ritual a secret, and your expressions of desire about my wife."

"I suppose you will be interviewing for a couple to have your spare room once Kathleen and Winnie move out. I know about this."

I answered, "Obviously. It won't be easy. We can ask the students who do the cooking, who still do come in here, if any two would like to share a bed and enter our household."

"Bye then. I'm going to wipe the recordings."

"You'd better," said Linda.

With Andrea gone I asked how Linda felt being a witch.

"I only wanted to observe you two starting a Coven. But I like 'Bodleian' as a name. It's a much better choice than 'Reticulum'. Thank you, Allie. So, you realise the consequence here?"

"No?"

"I'm your bishop and you my deacon; you're my High Priest, and I'm your first level initiate. But, when I make you bishop, you will have greater authority."

"Then Andrea and I could make you a High Priest."

A Different Suggestion (Thursday 16th April)

Allie and I had joined the others in again distributing food for selected residents in Serninsea. We were back to see a (this time) hand delivered letter. Once we'd washed our hands I started to open the envelope, wondering if I should have to wash my hands again.

From the Bishop of Wytham, Lynton Plimpton.

Dear Bishop Linda,

Thank you for such a prompt reply. Anticipating that you might reply as you did, I have suggestions ready. Matters are more complex (and therefore positive)

regarding marriage than your reply allows.

No doubt that the extension of Civil Partnerships to heterosexual couples is part of this, but we need to evaluate the options open to us in The National Church.

It is true that we do not allow clergy in office to initiate marriage if in a same sex arrangement. We prefer Civil Partnership and a solemn declaration of non-sexual relations. However, we recognise that, if rarely, some transferring clergy will already be married to a same sex partner and in this case the bishops would seek that they move into a sacrificial relationship, that is not to engage in sexual relations with their partner. Divorce is not encouraged as a means to move to a Civil Partnership.

However, your case could be even more fluid and this needs putting in writing. Given your own writings that you are genetically male, then phenotypically female, being gender female and in sexuality bisexual, many of our biblicist colleagues would regard you as a God-given male. If they claim this, they then cannot object to your marriage on any exclusive behavioural level.

At the same time, other colleagues, with a different interpretation of the Bible, would be excited that a marriage between two females could have our recognition as an ongoing marriage. Nevertheless, we (holding this view) would therefore still ask for a solemn declaration of ceasing sexual relations. How you proceed on this is a matter of conscience for both persons in the marriage.

You might like to know that I have written to the Rev. Jeremy Symes, resident at the Bever Wood Naturist Centre, to undertake interviews to become Priest-in-Charge at Serninsea Marshes. In his case the discussion is that he does marry Lindy Peacock, his partner, with flexibility shown on all sides (including his former wife).

You two would make excellent colleagues. With care and discretion, you two could examine any theological parallels between orthodox Christianity and naturism.

Yours sincerely

++ Lynton Wytham

I said to Allie, "He says, 'With care and discretion'? What the fuck is that about? The whole thing is absurd! I mean, when it comes to Jeremy, what he means is that the Church will overlook his affair with Lindy, via some flexible formula of words."

"You know why this section is in the letter?"

"Do *you*?"

"Because it wouldn't be in there unless Jeremy Symes is going to agree."

"I think you might be right. I thought he and Lindy were so happy working at Bever Wood."

"As for us, he hasn't stated that we should have separate beds."

"Come on Allie. These words embody the worst kinds of duplicity. Am I going to declare that I won't have sex with you? I'll sit on your face while I sign such a paper declaration on top of your stomach."

"Elegantly put," she said.

"Maybe not - it could cause you to fart. Look, my move into independence has been about honesty - and are you suggesting I go into full reverse gear?"

"If you've got a reverse gear then you can use it to get into position," suggested the clever clogs. "What I'd like to do," said Allie, "is test out his own

duplicity. See where the institution operates for real. I'm doing a whole Ph.D on informal and actual decision taking. For example, you could be the Anglican parish priest but decide things for the independent bethel in our bed. Come on, aren't you tempted?"

"Get thee behind me, Satan."

Narrator: Linda *Procreation Three* (Friday 17th March)

I spoke to Roger and Marie downstairs, when Allie had nipped to the loo. A film was paused on the big screen. Winnie and Kathleen were up and down the stairs taking items to a van outside.

"I think things are still too complicated. The main thing is to get sperm into her. Approach her any time you want to ejaculate."

"If you put it like that," said Roger.

"What have you been saying?" Allie asked, returning.

"Just let him deposit sperm as and when he can."

"Have we got any stables for me?"

Marie said, "Keep it to recognised sessions."

"Okay," I said. "We'll have another session now and have more until you miss your period, until we test you positive for pregnancy."

"And to keep away from Coronavirus," she said.

"He can't both social distance and fuck you."

In their bedroom again, I sat with Marie Enfield, as Allie exposed her inner vulva to Roger, who simply wanked himself to her exposure and put himself into her, spurting within. We assisted with her legs back.

I said to him, "Any time you are going to ejaculate then come to our bed and just get into her."

"So I come to a climax with Marie, and then rush up the stairs?"

"Absolutely. Don't knock. Just jump into our bed and pump it into her."

While this was going on, Kathleen and Winnie were moving out. By the night we thus had a largely furnished room to be occupied. Now we could offer the use of a garden.

Yes, Allie and I were in bed kissing. The door flew open and our duvet cover came off. I moved to the side, he pushed into her and spurted more sperm.

Marie was at the door, looking, also with nothing on. She had bright blue toenails and fingernails, luminous in the dark.

I said, as Roger left the bed, "We've got to keep doing this as sure as eggs is eggs."

"To fertilise her eggs," Roger said, as Marie told hold of his emptied todger and balls.

Back on our own in bed I passed Allie a book about Michael Foucault commenting on modern art. Mine was a book by John P. Plummer on the Independent Sacramental Movement in all its varieties.

"Those athames in your vaginas," I said. "I rather fancied that."

"At a higher level, you'd understand it better," Allie replied. "Are you really so Pagan? First degree ordination is a basic commitment but to be third degree needs

knowledge and direction."

"And Andrea doing it. When her brother is Barthian, into dialectical theology. Hah!"

"They both married to advantage. Their father was the late Reverend Ronald - *Ronald* - Lindsey, who bigwiggled it with leading clergy including bishops. Their mother is still active and had numerous affairs with clergy including some bishops, the very people her father visited and shared writing Church reports. The big rumour around Taunton was that he encouraged his wife's affairs. If this is true, she was a prize for working with him. He died of a hushed-up heart attack spending a night with the Bishop of Devon's wife."

"Gosh. But Andrea, as she is... Was she after you in Somerset, to express sexual power with you?"

"That's too early to use Coven language. The relationship she conceals is the one with Rhiannon Fleetwood."

"You're sure about that?"

"She traded sex for peace. Andrea married for position but spreads out everything else."

"The Bishop of Wytham is a likely House of Lords position. That's a pretty good marriage. Would she offer herself to assist him?"

"Exactly," said Allie. "She adopts and adapts her mother's behaviour."

"But what of me and any favours to become parish priest?"

"I wonder if Rhiannon Fleetwood approached Andrea to *keep* her position."

"And what did Andrea do?"

"In this case, nothing - I'm sure of it: Rhiannon was too chaotic."

"But she might offer her facilities to me?"

"Dunno," Allie said. "You're in bed with me."

"But Lynton is filling appointments, scrambling around trying to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. She may have a role."

"The difference is he's not into it. Her father was. And not with Jeremy Symes, I don't think. And she's far more likely to approach me, not you."

"I miss Diana." (I couldn't let Allie have all this focus.) "I wonder how she is getting on?"

"How long does it take for a fantasy - the attraction of the cult as exotic and different - to wear off?"

"You can be perceptive, Allie. Good question."

"Thanks."

"I hope that you are I are more than an exotic fantasy. It's why it's really important that we get you pregnant and we have a real child to raise. We've got to develop this place. We need someone, two people, in that room below. Two strangers may have to learn to share a bed."

Narrator: Linda *Andrea in Distress* (Monday 20th April)

Andrea was at the double doors, ringing to be let in.

I went to the doors, and opened the letterbox, and moved to the side. "You wishing her a happy birthday?" Then I noticed through the glass that Andrea had two

heavy suitcases.

"I need somewhere to stay. Where can I go?"

"Well, you can't come here. Why do you think you can come here?"

"The guest houses and hotels aren't taking anyone," she said.

At this point, thirty-one year old Allie came along, having come downstairs. She opened the double doors. "Andrea? What's going on?"

"The service I did, with you; I did wipe it but I didn't know it still went to Caffemere. The people who rent it found it on their computer, and they sent it to Wytham and Lynton has done his nut."

I made the obvious response: "I got caught with the CCTV in the church; you weren't in the church."

"He says he has to act; staff have seen it."

I said, "You inserted a blade into your vagina!"

She replied, "It wasn't sharp."

"Hardly the point," I replied. "Or no point..."

Allie said, "We can't leave her out there, Linda, and we have a room."

"A room to rent - we need the income."

"I'm still a GP. I can pay whatever rent you require."

"Linda. Let her in."

"She can go to your place, 135 Toulouse Road."

"Christine wants it back. She should have had it back by now."

I relented. Andrea came in, and Allie took her to what I hoped would be a very temporary room. Allie soon was back, saying, "We are supposed to look after lost sheep and she is a known sheep."

I replied, "Don't come that one with me."

The thought passed me, all right: Andrea knew full well she'd be seen naked, inserting objects, and she'd want to get away from her husband and get close to my wife.

Allie said, "Look, she's helped me on alcoholism, sexual health, and negotiating awkward people. She's not planning on staying."

Later on Andrea came down the stairs to the seating area to thank us, and said she would approach Ann and Labhaoise and also Christine for places to stay. "Even in lockdown people move house."

I said, "You've only been married five minutes. Things don't seem to last very long round here. I hope this isn't a bad omen for Allie and me."

Allie asked her, "Why can't he sweep it under the carpet?"

"Because he thinks it is 'objectively disgusting', he said to me, and of course he did not know I am a High Priest. He didn't know that you and I have a connection. Also, he does not know who else knows - does the signal go beyond Caffemere to Tamworth even and is the previous suffragan keeping a record of what is going on?"

"Oh what a web they weave," I reacted.

We sat and made a rent agreement, short term and with a week's notice to quit.

It was while doing this with Allie that we received an actual landline telephone call. I dashed to the vestry.

"Bishop Lynton Plimpton here, and just checking - is my wife there?"

I signalled to Allie and Andrea to come over.

"Yes, she is; it is difficult for her to find a place to go at the moment. Do you

want to speak to her?" I covered the mouthpiece. "Do you want to speak to him?"

Andrea shook her head.

"She's with my wife."

"Doing what?"

"Talking through the situation."

"I tolerated that Taunton Tantria and Serninsea Vestal Virgins rubbish. Now I find she's some weirdo witch as well. And they've adopted you, sort of."

"It was so I could observe; they don't have outsiders observing. It's rather difficult living here and not seeing what's going on."

Allie looked up to the ceiling, and Andrea looked at Allie.

"Well, she can't take services until the PCC has had an enquiry. You see, the people renting Caffernmere, who saw everything - everything - contacted Alison Dare-Baron, the one who as a local official rents out the house. She told me. I told Andrea exactly what I thought, what embarrassment she has caused. She is undermining my ministry. She is introducing gross moral turpitude."

Let me put this to you, Lynton: if you say she cannot work as priest there for gross moral turpitude, then neither can I, because I acted with others at the altar table in the actual church; Andrea avoided the actual church and erased the recording. She told us."

"I think your crime at the altar table, offensive as it was to Colin Cromer and his oversight at the parish, is nothing compared to someone standing naked, carrying out lurid sexual acts with a knife, and speaking mumbo-jumbo that has nothing to do with the Christian faith. And in Easter week? I married someone who never told me she was a member of a Coven."

"Well, so did I," I replied. "Allie didn't tell me, because they have a secretive side, and she was inactive until Andrea came along. Andrea was inactive too, and indeed was obliged to inform Allie and did not. Allie suspected she was a witch, made the necessary enquiries and forced Andrea to reveal herself."

Andrea put her thumb up to me in approval, and Allie nodded.

I continued: "Allie has been full of secrets ever since I've known her, but we learn to live with the nature of our professions. Andrea was careful."

"I'm her husband! She is supposed to stay within the Anglican fold, but instead denies her affirmations and doesn't tell me."

"You knew she was in Taunton Tantria," I said, speculating.

"Is that what she told you? Are they there, those two?"

"I've answered that."

"Well, here is the thing. I discovered she was in Taunton Tantria, and ended up in bed with her!"

Andrea smiled.

"I don't need the details," I said.

"What is it about those two?" he asked.

"Sorry, what do you mean about my wife?"

"I mean her brother. He married Bishop Vivienne Space, the Suffragan Bishop of Morchard, and she went all quiet when I asked her. And she's slept with Serninsea Ings Rural Dean, the Reverend Grant Trapp."

Andrea said, "No I haven't. I heard that."

"She is there," he called out. "This has more consequences, especially married to me."

Allie said, "Tell him everyone knew she was neo-Pagan in sympathy. She is not like her brother at all."

Lynton said, "I heard that. Tell her that the Parochial Church Council is going to hold an emergency online meeting among themselves and she will be informed of their decisions, but meanwhile she is not to lead any services for the time being - and that is my doing along with informing them. I only hope her brother is more honest with Vivienne Space."

I replied, "Well, he is as straight and narrow as a modernist of sorts can be, and she is as broad a brush as a modernist bishop is likely to be."

"You think? I think I'm going to have to do with Jeremy Symes what was done with Rhiannon Fleetwood: for the time being, put him in charge of the whole area."

"Well, if you can forgive him, and forgive me, you can forgive your wife. There is more at stake, after all."

"Oh I don't know about that. I'm all of a sudden hearing terrible rumours I have never heard before, and I'd better keep any more of them from you."

"Bastard," said Andrea. "And what he expects of me? Ugh."

"I heard that," he said. "She opens her mouth about me and her in private - where marriage is supposed to be - and I'll take her to pieces in public. In fact she is good enough at taking herself to pieces. Suddenly people think she is a slut."

I said, "I don't like that sort of language. No one around here is a slut."

"It's what people think, and it's all coming out. And you weren't shocked at what you saw?"

"Surprised: only surprised. I think, Lynton, you should find ways to smooth this over and learn your wife's actual religious stance."

"You think? Well, let her practice such stuff there, amongst your lot, but she's not doing it amongst our lot."

"I'll pass that dismissive message on."

"Obviously she can hear me. I've said enough. I suspect I'm taking a risk over you too, Linda."

"I told you that myself."

"You know that clergy are avoiding this diocese? People won't come. And now this adds to the mess. If we appoint you, Linda, you have to accept corporate responsibility and toe the collective line. You understand that? It seems that my wife - if she is to stay as my wife - doesn't."

"Like Brian Glover said, 'I know the rules.'"

"Who?"

"When he was wrestling; he did acting like in *Kes*."

Allie's eyes widened and her mouth opened.

"Well, so long as you *do*," Lynton said, and told me that was the end of his call. He would announce the result of the PCC enquiry, to be in touch for that, and regarding my interviewing.

"I don't get it," I said, "how I am suitable and she is not?"

"Well, ask your friend Brian Glover," said the Anglican bishop.

"He's not my friend; he's dead."

"But learn from him. Goodbye."

"Who?" asked Allie.

"My father got excited - jumped out of his chair - when the wrestling was on. He told me about Brian Glover and his antics."

"Naked?" asked Allie.

"They wore leotards - five o'clock in the afternoon!"

"Your father, you Nellie."

"Oh yes. His knob was flying all over the place when these wrestlers were on. Brian Glover was a teacher and actor and writer. I know about him because he stopped wrestling when I was a baby but I noticed him in Porridge and elsewhere. Some I saw *and* were told about were Big Daddy and Giant Haystacks, Jackie Pallo, Kendo Nagasaki with his mask, Masambula and Johnny Kwango - racist, really, Mick McManus, Catweazle, Mike Marino..."

"News to me, all this," said Allie.

Andrea told us she was going to her room, and would stay there until the morning.

I said to Allie, once she'd gone, "Don't go in her room."

"I won't, I won't. I've kept away from her approaches, right? Anyway, I'm pleased you called it 'her room.'"

"Only for now," I replied.

"And thank you for my actual present."

Her actual present was a book by John Tosh on *The Pursuit of History* and by Anna Green and Kathleen Troup on *The Houses of History*.

Allie looked further at these in bed.

"Just something for now," Allie said. "There's more to this than meets the eye."

"What?"

"Hold you hard and see," Allie said.

"On which point, I have a little something extra to unwrap, under the bed." It was a plastic and rubber vibrating fist, with rechargeable batteries. "Not for wrestling," I said.

"Oh you do think of me," said Allie.

So we had a go with it, and Allie's yelping added to Andrea's crying and Marie's own high pitched sounds below the floor.

Chapter 37 Secret Mission

Narrator: Allie A Secret Mission? (Tuesday 21st April)

The new garden was a windbreak with its fence and also a suntrap. Andrea called it, 'a really useful little parrick,' a Doret word I understood for a fenced-off parcel of land. Indeed, it was great for getting togs off and lying in the sun, even on the east coast with the sea so close. All of us were there, naked as the day: Roger, Marie, Andrea, Linda and me. And Andrea was wearing a silver disc from two metal loops, one through her clitoris hood. So I looked at it and then everyone did. One side had on it, *SVV* and the other *A A Lindsey*.

"You weren't wearing that at our online ritual."

"No, well I take it off for other, specific, rituals. I did for Lynton, too. But I like wearing it as decoration."

"What's the other 'A' for?"

"Aurora. Aurora was the Roman Goddess of the Dawn. Alan has a second name Eberhard, like a wild boar."

"Larry Grayson's friend," said Linda.

My phone buzzed, in my clothing, so I picked it up and squinted to see the display. Adam Magellan had called.

Allie. Come to opposite the parish church in an hour to chat with someone? There have been developments that would benefit from your optional involvement.

Linda asked, "What's that about?"

"Someone wants to talk to me outside the Anglican church."

Andrea Aurora asked, "Is this about me?"

"I don't know."

"Can I see your phone? Linda asked.

"Yeah: I'm not getting involved in a conspiracy."

So Linda looked. "From Adam. Well, what is the real reason?"

"I have no idea. He has sent that message, and I'm presumably to agree."

"Why would Adam Magellan be involved if it's about your husband, Andrea?"

"I don't know. Maybe it's about who received the video. It's not a secret. Oh, fucking hell," said Andrea. "Time passes quickly naked in a garden. I'd better get dressed and prepare for my shift at the surgery. I'm supposed to be off the next two days and do some parish work but I can't see it."

I said, "And I'd better get dressed to go and see what this is all about. I'll let you all know, too."

We both hopped over the tenfoot and dressed indoors. I'd thus had a chance to view Andrea naked. Her crotch area was as smooth as Linda's, and presented itself as no more than a letter box for thin letters. She had Goldilock's breasts. Her bottom was so inviting.

Fortunately, Andrea's route took her a different way than the church.

I asked Adam, on meeting him, why we were meeting in this location.

"Because it suggests something other than what it is."

"Which is?"

"Well, it seems that quite a few relationships are breaking up no sooner have they got started. And one of them is in Scotland. The fantasy has been broken already, and Diana doesn't particularly like the person who shared her fantasy. How many times does an ideal person online turn out to be different in reality? She discovered some re-enactment obligations too, that she disliked intensely."

"Of events in *The Jacobite Gap Years*?"

"Indeed, of characters. She was given the role of Lady Gordon, a captive after Culloden, which meant being the wife of Lord Gordon."

"But we're confined to our houses and a daily exercise each day."

"Quite. Very odd. Fancy an illegal car journey? It's a lot further than to Durham and Barnard Castle and you can't claim it's for an eye test."

"I'm the wrong person. You should be asking Linda."

"Ah. Diana doesn't want to involve Linda; in fact, she wants to slip back into Serninsea unnoticed. I've arranged for Yojana Asthana to take her in at her unused Maa Skelter Guest House."

"Into a cant of the Serninsea area. Hmm. You have something with Yojana."

"Why is Yojana a cunt?"

"'Cant' means it cuts off a corner, that's all, or forms a corner."

"If you say so. It's strictly business with Yojana."

"Then why do I need to go? If you need a woman, take Yojana."

"To offer reassurance. You've got the 'intel' on Linda. She can make it clear to you that she wants to slip into this, er, cunt of Serninsea and know that Linda is unaware."

"It's not 'cunt!'"

"Your accent."

"This compromises me."

"Your accent?"

"No, Linda'll square me up again."

"Diana thinks you keep secrets from Linda."

"Is that what *you* said?"

"Nope, but here's what to do. Make an excuse to get out of food deliveries tomorrow. Pack enough for three nights. Come with me; maintain radio silence. No one else will know."

"Tempting, but no."

"Go on! Mrs. Doyle and all that."

"Where would we stay?"

"This Sally Hughes lives in Broom of Moy by the River Findhorn, in a house called *Clann Na Cloiche*, or *Children of the Stone*. She works in Forres. However, Diana has travelled a long way to a compassionate minister near Ceann Loch Raineach. Those two visited there. Apparently this minister of religion knows you and so is another reason why she wants you there. We two can stay in an out-house one night only, other nights in the car when journeying."

"I'm coming," I said to him. "Tomorrow, outside your place, and have some breakfast in bread ready for me. Fried eggs in bread, because I won't be sharing breakfast tomorrow at the bethel."

"Great! I will pick you up outside the Titansea Grand. You'll have to walk there."

"A thought, Adam, for part of the deception: what if Andrea Lindsey comes lolloping along?"

"Hadn't thought of that. Devious c...ant, aren't you? In the out-house I could sleep in one single bed and look at you two getting nice and close in the other one. I'm told they have a roaring fire to keep you warm."

"You're such a perv, Adam. I'll bring an unused double airbed from the wetroom - suitable for one person."

"As you wish."

When I got back to the bethel, I said Adam was all hush hush but basically (for the purposes of misdirection) I said then it would be useful if Andrea joined the food distribution and I didn't. I could not say more, I told them, in that I was also in the dark.

Somehow Linda didn't quite believe me, as she'd grown not to believe me. "Here we go again," she said.

"I thought you were tolerating secrets, so long as they come out at some timely point."

Later on I suggested to Andrea that in fact she make it alone to the Titansea Grand and have enough for three nights away.

"One day ring in sick," she said. "Bugger them, why not?"

"We will be travelling illegally."

"Don't get caught, then," she said. "Adam'd better be a dabster at this sort of thing. Are you joppety about this?"

"No! I think it'll be good fun."

Meanwhile it was a little early to be sure but my period hadn't come. I knew that Linda wanted me to receive sperm, but this wouldn't now happen anyway.

In fact she reminded me and Roger. "Despite your secret world, more sperm for you tomorrow. Is your period due now?"

"Yes it is. There may be no need."

"Oh that's good," said Roger.

"Best to be sure. You can still give me another dose and then we'll run a test."

Meanwhile I contacted Uncle Paul via my laptop as to what he knew about the fifty year old Reverend Seumas Caimbeul living at Tigh na h' Iobairte near Ceann Loch Raineach.

"I'll send you details in writing in an email. Things do join up, but boy do they zig zag and the genes are quite diluted. Also, they all do favour the Gaelic in the records I found. So the Reverend Seumas Caimbeul was born on 5th January 1970 at Taigh an Droma or Tyndrum. His father was Dòmhnall Caimbeul, born on 15th of May 1946 at Crieff. Up and around it goes: in fact there are three routes connecting you. For now you only need to know that Dùghall Dùbhghlas Caimbeul is the 9 times great uncle of yourself."

"That is thin."

"He was born on 2nd January 1760 at A' Chrìon Làraich, whose sister was Fionnghal Caimbeul, born 3rd May 1758 at Taigh an Droma, and she was the mother of Mairead Urchardan (who married our all-important James Rogers). Mairead, whom we know as Margaret Urchardan, is the 7 times great grandmother of you; and the Reverend Seumas Caimbeul is therefore your 7th cousin twice removed."

"Brilliant! Well done Uncle Paul."

I did not tell Paul that I hoped to meet the Reverend Seumus; indeed I didn't even contact the Reverend himself.

Travel to Scotland (Wednesday 22nd April)

Once they'd gone delivering food I did a rush job at packing a small suitcase, to then go into Andrea's room and grab her filled bag. Finally I took a folded airbed from a box and then struggled out via the private door to go down to Titansea and stand outside its main hotel. Adam had three sleeping bags: I knew that.

Andrea had run off from the distributing party, causing Linda to call out. She'd run the wrong way and took several streets round. She was a bit warm from her running and fast walking.

Adam drove up in his Vauxhall Astra and our bags and airbed went into his boot. We were off for what was an illegal trip in terms of length and crossing into Scotland. I sat in the front seat and Andrea at the back. He had a box of face masks in the car, as there was a debate over their effectiveness. He also had a paper map, for unusual ways over the border.

There was a long way to go first. After eating his supplied fried egg butties - Andrea had some cereal bars too, I told him about the new addition to the family tree based on this minister and the connections to the Urchardan family. There was Mairead (whom we knew as Margaret) Urchardan and she was my seven times great grandmother and that the Reverend Seumas Caimbeul was my seventh cousin twice removed.

He said, "The genetic material you share is minimal. It's a long way back and the generations don't keep together."

"My cousin Jonnie is one removed but that's because his father is so old. I find family trees so baffling because what looks to me like some great great uncle is in fact some cousin. I think my Uncle Paul does it by finding likely stages of convergence and matches them up."

"But as you go backwards, just as you go forwards, the choices multiply."

"But as you go backwards, especially in rural areas, you keep overlapping the same people."

Andrea said, "My name Lindsey is local to my birth area but not from the infamous rector."

I said, "I've already looked at this."

"Have you? That's interesting, Allie, that you should take such an interest."

"It gives my uncle something to do. He's actually my cousin."

Later on I asked Adam who was his client, because Aardse had promised to cut Diana out of everything.

He said, "It is Diana, but I am being generous. She doesn't like me, and thinks I have wronged her, so this is something that I can do to change her opinion."

"Are you a big softy all of a sudden?"

"Well, think how much money I've put Annie's way."

"Yeah, but she's providing a service. She stimulates you into wanking. You may as well admit it."

"Why would I deny it to you?"

"Andrea's here."

"Headgirl is less fun now. She used to face the camera and laugh and giggle with her stories while getting her hand working. Now it's all about being rogered every night by Marie's penis."

"It's sad," said Andrea. "Annie's doing herself no good at all."

Our route took us beyond Wytham to the A1, but Adam decided we would rest away from service stations as they contained police asking people about their journeys.

Our route involved taking the bypass around the west of Newcastle, and then going up the A697. After Wooller and Millfield I did the map reading to take us down the B6396. On a minor road via the Bowmont Forest we kept south of Kelso and joined the A698 and left it again to go through Nisbet and Ancrum and pause for the night near the village of Lilliesleaf.

Adam decided he'd watch on his tablet a film, *All About Anna* from 2005. Did I want to look? "It's a Danish film, erotic one, and I fancy a wank, girls."

No I didn't. I got in the back with Andrea, and we sort of leaned on each other.

"No, I can't sit idly by," I said to Andrea. "Oy, Adam, would you like me to do it?"

So I got in the front. He watched the film, I took over his toddler and I played with it. I felt it was by way of reward for his driving and involving us.

Adam said, "It's about a woman who wants an active sex life while staying clear of emotional involvement. I wholly approve but I don't think she's successful because the old flame still has his pull."

"Not my approach," said Andrea from the back. "I didn't know that Lynton was a sexual pervert, but there you go. Who would know? But a wife has her duties."

I said, "Interesting."

"What?" asked Adam. "This film or Andrea?"

"Your knob *and* Andrea."

The film he was watching has penetration sex, fellatio with ejaculation and cunnilingus. He asked me, as I manipulated him, "Have you had any messages from Linda?"

"Yes, and by looking she knows I've seen them. I've not answered. So it's not 'total radio silence', but my phone doesn't have a tracker application on - we don't share locations."

Andrea said, "Obviously she noticed I'd run off. She doesn't know my number."

Adam said, "If she remembers our time in Wales, she might ask Peter to get information on your location. I have already told Peter not to seek it or give it by saying the chap who did it before isn't able to do it during lockdown."

"Is that true?"

"Of course it isn't," Adam replied.

Then I asked, at the film's cunnilingus, "Are you near? I usually have an idea but you're a bit slow."

"I like how you do it. Oh, Linda is messaging me now. First one."

Peter won't give me your location. I assume by his response that you, Allie and Andrea are together, somewhere. Andrea and Allie haven't done a simple run-away together. I don't believe that.

Adam said, "I'll ignore it."

"No," I responded. "Say something like, 'I'm on a job here, so I can't help you.' To make it more realistic, add in something like, 'I have thought about re-employing Peter, but I can manage alone.' Don't worry - I can keep up the wanking."

"I'm not going to tell her I'm wanking."

"No, that's me talking to you."

"Oh. I'll get my soft pen out."

"You already have: what is the matter with you?"

"It's not Annie," said Andrea from the back. "I bet if Annie was here and not on screen he'd be just as flacid."

Linda, I cannot give you details. I'm on a job here, so I can't help you. I thought about re-employing Peter, but I can manage alone.

I said, "Adam. This film must bore you and my hand is not effective."

"A reply has come."

At least answer me this: are you with Allie and Andrea?

"Come on, brainbox, what shall I answer?"

Andrea said, "Tell her 'yes' and it will put her mind at ease."

Yes I am. They are both informed and useful. That's the most I can say, to reassure you.

Adam commented: "You see, she'll want to ask more. I want to tell her less. Here we go."

So you are not working for Lynton Plimpton, but against him.

I said, "Now you *don't* answer."

Adam now declared that he was bored with the film, and would look in via Goosechat for Headgirl and Transitory.

Mikey gave a tip of 10 tokens.

HelenMC has joined.

Adam has joined.

Querceto has joined.

"Hello Helen, hello Adam!" called out Headgirl, as she turned to Transitory on the viewers' right and Marie popped her large erect penis into Annie's mouth.

Adam said to us, "She can't do that and tell stories."

Querceto gave a tip of 20 tokens.

Querceto: I've located Gael. Thank you for responding earlier. She's with a friend or two.

Annie emptied her mouth and said, "Thank you Querceto. Gael is welcome to come here. Your tip means we've reached our target, and now Marie can do me rotten."

Querceto has left the room.

I said to Adam, "You've gone harder. I suppose you wish you were her."

"Annie?"

"No, Marie."

"How do her tits look so natural?"

Andrea said, "They're from long term hormones."

"I suppose you've seen them in the flesh," Adam said.

"Ah, no, I'm not commenting on that."

"I mean who'd have thought it with the Reverend Georgie Smith, eh? A lifetime of a skirt and no knickers, of everyone assuming. She had to sit on that dress correctly every time without fail."

Adam's sperm went into a couple of pieces of kitchen roll kept in his car. I cleaned him up and folded the pieces for later disposal. He left Annie and Marie to their performance.

As the night went on, we had drinks, and Andrea and I went outside to find a place to piss at a reasonable distance from each other. I could see Andrea holding up her silver coloured disc. In fact she had a shit too, and so I walked over to her with the kitchen roll.

"It is a basic, necessary function," she said. "Some of the Vestal Virgins say that they can pee without the disc getting wet, but I can't and have to hold it up. And I can't shit without pissing. Does my dirty talk bother you?"

"Not at all. I'll have mine in due course, and he will have his."

"Lynton likes dirty. You liked wanking Adam, didn't you? You're not really a lesbian."

"Let's not fall out," I said to her. "It reminds me of when I was with Jonnie. Anyway, he's putting the seat back, and I will, and you can have the back seat laying down."

"My knees will be up and need some room."

"We'll adjust."

I consulted the map before sleeping. Adam got in his sleeping bag, and I got in mine, but Andrea used hers like a cover.

Lilliesleaf was about ten miles from Selkirk. The idea was not to go into Selkirk at all, but we would need a garage or shop for some more food and drink.

Narrator: Linda *Where's Allie?* (Wednesday 22nd April)

During our food distribution Andrea did a runner, going north, leaving us to carry her food-containing bags.

After being back an hour from food distribution, with Allie not in our room or in the garden, or anywhere else for that matter, and Andrea not back, I decided to ask if anyone knew of their whereabouts.

No one did, of course, so I went for a walk all the way to 135 Toulouse Road. Neither Allie nor Andrea were there, or they weren't answering.

Once back I sent out messages directly to Allie's phone and via social media; she wasn't replying.

Next, I rang Professor Roland Mitton.

"I am teaching but I'll listen if you're quick, Linda."

"It's just whether you are expecting to see Allie and Andrea today or very soon. I know this new Coven stuff is very secretive but they've both done a runner."

"I do not expect to see them, and there is no arrangement to see them. I've heard that the online ceremony was controversial."

"Yes it was. I'm sorry to have disturbed you."

"Not at all. If they should turn up, I will let you know and tell them I've let you know."

They were not knowingly travelling to Columns Farm or Selions Farm either, but if they arrived they would let me know too. However, Paul Jenner told me that she'd been in touch to hear the family trees connecting her (and me) to the Reverend Seumas Caimbeul. The notion that she'd gone off to Scotland to pursue a family tree connection was preposterous, so I discounted that.

As night fell there was still no Allie. No one responded to my messaging.

I messaged Adam asking if he'd seen Allie but received no reply. Interesting. I contacted Peter Marshall by telephone as to whether he could locate Allie and Adam via their mobile phones as he'd done once before with Adam. I knew this was via a third party but Peter said he, meaning Peter, was on Furlough and staying at his father's with Kathryn his wife. He was still on Adam's books, of course. He rather assumed that the person who could find out the location of a phone was on Furlough too.

"Roger had been ready to donate more sperm this evening. He's making love with his sister instead - what a waste."

"It won't be a waste for Marie."

Ah, there was the other Marie. So I reinvented myself as Querceto.

Querceto has joined.

Querceto gave a tip of 200 tokens.

Querceto: Gael isn't with you, is she? Has she visited, perhaps with a friend?

Headgirl said, "Querceto! Thank you, thank you. We'd love to see Gael and she could join in the party. Transitory would love to burrow elsewhere any night. But there's only my rabbit hole here tonight."

Marie said, "I want my rock hard to get right into her softy."

Well, I escaped the prostitutes. I said to myself, "She just buggers off when she feels like it. Time to make some assumptions and see if he responds." I messaged Adam

Peter won't give me your location. I assume by his response that you, Allie and Andrea are together, somewhere. Andrea and Allie haven't done a simple run away together. I don't believe that.

"Ooh, he's replying this time."

Linda, I cannot give you details. I'm on a job here, so I can't help you. I thought about re-employing Peter, but I can manage without him.

This was some progress, at least.

At least answer me this: are you with Allie and Andrea?

I had to ask the direct question. This meant that an absence of answer might be as good as a yes. However, he answered in the affirmative:

Yes I am. They are both informed and useful. That's the most I can say, to reassure you.

So this meant that Lynton Plimpton had not employed Adam, but Adam must have had something on the new diocesan.

So you are not working for Lynton Plimpton, but against him.

I said to no one, "Now you don't answer!"
I went back to Goosechat.

HelenMC has joined.

Mikey gave a tip of 10 tokens.

Adam has joined.

Querceto has joined.

"Hello Helen, hello Adam!" called out Headgirl. She turned her head and what looked like a huge penis close to the camera was stuffed into Annie's mouth.

Querceto gave a tip of 20 tokens.

Querceto: I've located Gael. Thank you for responding earlier. She's with a friend or two.

Annie released herself of Marie's weapon and said, "Thank you Querceto. Gael is welcome to come here. It's when we like to say you can get stuffed. Your tip means we've reached our target, and now Marie can do me rotten."

Querceto has left the room.

I wanted Allie to keep away from Annie, and lockdown will have helped but I was pretty sure anyway that Allie had not met Annie recently.

Then I wondered about Rhiannon Fleetwood. So she wasn't entirely gone from the area. Was Lynton going to re-employ her? Allie might break her legs and arms. I decided my thoughts had become fanciful. Most likely Adam had a job monitoring the diocesan bishop, and he had Allie and Andrea on the case. If Rhiannon was involved, it might be some sort of sexual liaison, especially with Andrea cast out.

I first wrote this text message for Allie.

Goodnight wherever you are. Shall I drive around the streets to see if I spot you?

I wanted to involve Andrea:

I don't know why a stakeout has to go on all night. I suppose Andrea might be wearing a secret listening device attached to that hanging disc.

Narrator: *Allie Travel in Scotland* (Thursday 23rd April)

It was back to map reading again. I suggested that we bunged the sleeping bags into the boot in case the Scottish police should stop us on the main roads. First we dodged about some narrow hilly roads to get to the A708 west of Selkirk and then took the B709 all the way to the A7, which we made our road to get breakfast of sorts and petrol and put on masks. We got on to the Edinburgh bypass.

I had more messages to ignore when I switched on the phone to look.

Goodnight, wherever you are. Shall I drive around the streets to see if I spot you?

Another one was:

I don't know why a stakeout has to go on all night. I suppose Andrea might be wearing a secret listening device attached to that hanging disc.

I suggested to Andrea that we might have some fun here. I gave her Linda's number and details, and she could send a text message.

I know you contacted Allie. What you don't understand, with respect, is that Rhiannon never quite left the area, and the question is what she is doing now? What plans, if any, is Lynton cooking up? Is there some kind of negotiation happening?

Andrea asked me if I normally lie to my wife.

I said it wasn't lying, and it had come from her phone for Linda and not mine. "Anyway, if that had come from me, she would have detected that it hadn't directly answered anything. Oh, you have a reply."

Good job you paid the rent for the room otherwise I'd be looking for students or others to occupy it now. Bring some shopping in after your stakeout. Does that hanging disc release a supermarket trolley when you go shopping?

I said, "Well that's not very nice. I'll have words with her over that. Later, of course."

So the masked male driver and the masked female passengers crossed the Firth of Forth using the Queensferry Crossing, but Adam was keen to get off the

motorway and so we took the slow road.

The A985 took us to a right turn and Kings Road to Queensferry Road, going on the A823 north of Dunfermline. We stayed on this road, on and on until it became the A822 and ended up at Craoibh (Crieff), the birthplace of some of the Caimbeuls or Campbells. The A822 and A826 took us all the way to Obar Pheallaidh (Aberfeldy).

With a check on the time we paused there and we burks of Serninsea looked at the Birks of Aberfeldy. We found a supermarket for some essential immediate supplies. Adam sent a text to our host to be. The route on was the A846 to take us up into the hills and Loch Kinardochy. Then we used the Schiehallion Road past the loch on its western side. There was a spur after Crossmount to Ceann Loch Raineach. The B846 got us to Clach na h' Iobairt and indeed Tigh na h' Iobairte.

The rather bearded minister came out to greet us wearing a dressing gown and sandals. "Diana Monarch's indoors here: made her way by public transport and walking," said the Reverend Seumas Caimbeul.

"Oh it's you," was her less than enthusiastic greeting, as I walked in after Seumas but before Adam and Andrea. She was in a dressing gown as well. "I had a shower, earlier. Who's this?" The fire was raging.

"Adam..."

"I know it's Adam, you twit, but the woman."

"Andrea Lindsey, my General Practitioner."

"I don't need a doctor."

"I didn't say you did. I knew her in Somerset and she now lives in Serninsea."

I noticed Diana's hair wasn't wet, and what I assumed turned out to be the case. They'd been doing the naturist thing in this retreat location.

Their two gowns came off as they sat naked either side of the roaring fire and we were directed to three chairs facing the fire.

"Adam?" I asked.

"I like to dissent," he said, as I did a masturbation motion to his face. "Oh, all right."

Two of us were undressing: I detected slowness in Andrea's actions. I wanted enthusiasm. I turned my attention to Diana. "Are you normally as rude as this to three people who've come a long way?"

"Ah," said Seumas instead. "I'd say grumpy. She's had a difficult time. Being asked to re-enact Lady Gordon in a three night meeting wasn't a good idea. They get very realistic, these historical literary cults. And Sally appealed online..."

"And different in reality," said Diana, taking over. "Okay. I appreciate that it is a long way here. Hello Adam, Allie and... Andrea. Thanks for coming. I'm trying not to be rude, but as Sally would say in re-enactment, 'Why are you here?'"

"Me?" asked Andrea.

"Yes. You."

"I'm a sort of decoy to put Linda off the scent."

"And why have you got a dog disc off your fanny?"

"Serninsea Vestal Virgins."

"Oh, them."

Seumas said, "One of those post-Buddhist New Age type groups?"

"Yes," Andrea replied. "I know. I'm an Anglican priest and a yet member of that and even a High Priest Witch. At some stage I'll come under a Clergy Discipline

Measure - sooner rather than later, probably."

"Ah," he said. "Yeah."

"I'm Pagan and Free Catholic," I said. "And you, *the* Reverend Seumas, as my wife Bishop Linda insists?"

"Yes, the full works. Naturist, Pagan third-level ordained and a Unitarian minister too. This here is a Naturist retreat and a Unitarian retreat, but there are Pagan stones."

A woman, Màiri Camshron, with a pinny on over her flesh, came in, introduced herself and said there was cooked food and drink available in the kitchen next room along. Her flesh was the brownest and she had quite a considerable bare bottom for her small height.

We went through.

"So what does Linda think... think about me?" Diana asked in the kitchen, as we sat around its large table on pre-laid towels.

I said, "She misses you. But she thinks that we are on a job after Andrea fell out with her husband. Her husband is Lynton Plimpton, the diocesan bishop."

Diana knew that Aardse had cut off all contact. So what she wanted to do was slip into Serninsea and make quiet approaches to her husband, if possible, but after a time of waiting and thinking. At first others might let him know that she was no longer with Sally, and it turned out to be a disaster living at Forres and travelling to Inverness for re-enactments of *The Jacobite Gap Years* story.

Seumas asked Adam, "How was your illegal journey?"

"Back roads as well as main roads."

"Needs must," said Seumas.

Soon Seumas reminded me that the last time we spoke was online, and he knew that we had rejected the Unitarians' offer regarding training, observation and re-applying.

"It's not good enough," he said. "I want you in Scotland. Look how we match up! Perhaps before you take Diana to her real homeland, we could try some Pagan religious content together."

Diana was still on about herself: "Online is different. Oh, Sally and I shared plenty. We started passionately, but she just was not my type nor me hers. Participating in re-enactments in a new single life up here wasn't on. And I miss my kids. I miss Linda too; these are deep roots and he's right: my real homeland is eastern Foss.

"Linda scares me because of what she brings out in me. The stories plus Sally seemed different. Clach na h' Iobairt was exciting to see. And when it all went wrong this place was somewhere to come, because Seumas knows of Linda and you, of course, since those interviews were arranged."

Seumas said, "I'm so pleased to see you for real. Surely you could have taken up the training offer the interviewers made: *you* should be the candidate."

"Nah."

Diana had her own room in the main house. Adam went to the outhouse, where we three would stay. But Seumas asked me to accompany him for a pastoral chat and he agreed that Andrea should come along as well.

But before we did Adam said Mary Ann Magellan had received a message from Linda, and he had replied to Mary deceptively.

I'd had a job in Serninsea. It's a simple as that.

So our task was to produce more fake trails. Andrea went first:

I know you're making enquiries. What you don't understand, with respect, is that Rhiannon never quite left the area, and the question is what she is doing now? What plans, if any, is he cooking up? Is there some kind of negotiation happening?

Then I had another idea, to mention something I'd surely never said previously:

Here's a thing. Linda Woodhead, the sociologist, studied theology at Cambridge, located to Lancaster and did a sociology study of Kendal (including its Unitarians), was born in Taunton, and grew up in a village nearby. Her rather was a farm labourer. It's something I found out.

Narrator: Linda *The Art of Misdirection* (Thursday 23rd April)

After waking up alone, a local business had solar lights to poke into the garden, and a firepit to add warmth in the night. Another business turned up with two long garden seats.

Roger and Marie looked on and suggested revised positions. The firepit should be near the garden's long seats so positioned to allow chat.

Later on, I asked them in the said garden, "Have you any idea where Allie, and I suppose Andrea for that matter, went?"

"Barnard Castle?" suggested Roger.

"The obvious place is outside the vicarage or the suffragan's old place at Caffenmere. My chances of spreading Novel Covid sat in my SUV alone are nil, so I am going for a drive around."

In fact I went to various other places as well, such as the Titansea Grand and Yojana Asthana's guest house. There wasn't a sign of anyone. No one was in at Adam's place.

I tried a long shot. I had contact numbers for Mary Ann Magellan, the one-time Mirela Annabella György. Yootha Ann Aysher was another. I sent the same message to both.

Hope lockdown isn't too restrictive. Adam has gone absent without leave. He's not with either of you, is he? He should be in Serninsea. Perhaps you could contact him.

I received a reply from Mary Ann. I started to smell a rat, because she was smelling a rat.

Adam replied he'd had a job in Serninsea. And he is using the past tense. Adam once told me how to make it seem you've answered one question when you answered another, for the purposes of misdirection. The magician does the same.

He could be anywhere, but he isn't here and isn't with Yootha Ann. Stay safe.

I thought, yes, Allie is just the same. Answer something else, and misdirect. They must have gone on an illegal roadtrip. That group (Rhiannon Fleetwood was both part of it and avoided it to suit) had relocated to Tamworth. I never quite knew why Tamworth and perhaps we might find out. Perhaps desperate Lynton Plimpton was fishing in those waters, to bring some of them back into the fold.

There was a message from Andrea that had the sniff of more misdirection.

I know you're making enquiries. What you don't understand, with respect, is that Rhiannon never quite left the area, and the question is what she is doing now? What plans, if any, is he cooking up? Is there some kind of negotiation happening?

Ah, that was volunteered information out of the blue. I smelt Allie and Adam all over that message. Allie sent a message of her own.

Here's a thing. Linda Woodhead, the sociologist, studied theology at Cambridge, located to Lancaster and did a sociology study of Kendal (including its Unitarians), was born in Taunton, and grew up in a village nearby. Her rather was a farm labourer. It's something I found out.

Very clever. Then I had a most basic idea. Had Allie taken the laptop she had been using? No, she hadn't. Time to investigate. It was in the vestry.

There was an email from her Uncle Paul, not exactly her uncle but another distant cousin. It was all about the ancestors of the Reverend Seumas Caimbeul, born on 5th January 1970 at Taigh an Droma or Tyndrum. Ah. I saw a Marsaili Urcharden and Anna Urcharden and others. Places included Ceann a' Ghiùthsaid (Kingussie) and Baile Chloichridh (Pitlochry). I read the detail going back to 1793 and an Ealasaid Urchardan born 1770 at A' Chrìon Làraich, and her sister Mairead or Margaret Urchardan born 4th March 1773. She was the one who married James Rogers and was taken off to Walsingham. There was a Caimbeul or Campbell line connecting up at the mother of Mairead (Margaret) Urchardan. Then there was the Urcharden route itself. Three routes!

I spoke into the air. "So she *is* related to this Unitarian minister and naturist. What was preposterous isn't, after all, but Adam would have to do something illegal - at risk to himself - and give her a roadtrip to see Seumas. And Andrea? What does Paul conclude? Yeah... Ooh!"

At the very bottom of the email was this:

It follows therefore that Seumas Caimbeul is also the 7th cousin 3 times removed of Linda Shrimpton.

"Fuck me! So why haven't I gone? Why has she taken Andrea - assuming they have gone there?"

It was time to do an Internet search on the minister. The UGA had him on a list of active ministers.

The Revd. Seumas Caimbeul describes himself as a 'neo-Pagan Unitarian'

and promotes the 'Earth Spirit' inside the Unitarians. He offers a retreat for Unitarians at Tigh na h' Iobairte near Ceann Loch Raineach (Kinloch Rannoch) base. We should advise that it is also a Naturist retreat.

I knew about that, of course, but the search also produced an oppositional website, and this one had been visited by Allie as well. It was in her Internet history. *Uncovering Witches*, it was called.

Seumas Caimbeul, from Caol Loch Ailse or Kyle of Lochalsh, is a notorious libertine, Pagan and flagrant naturist, said to believe in the unity of the Goddess. The Unitarian General Assembly, a sort of overseer of a driftwood Church, took him on as a recognised minister so long as he stays at the retreat they gained from him. He rarely preaches. He appeals to the weirder members who attend individual and small group visits at Tigh na h' Iobairte near Ceann Loch Raineach (Kinloch Rannoch).

He tries to get visitors naked, and many do try it for the first time. Years back he toyed with the idea of becoming Bràthair Dùbhghlas (he prefers the Gaelic - he teaches it to locals) of the Unitarians, walking the rural roads in a habit and bare-footed, but Scottish ministers sat on that notion. (There was once a Free Catholic habit and sandals-wearing Brother Douglas!)

But this weirdo enjoys the fruits of his nudity and ritual. Some selected visitors have reported having had sex with him as part of their visit. So far it this seems consensual. He tries to keep his wilder witch activities secretive but his Coven will be the one at Caol Loch Ailse and I invite him to deny this and take me to court.

It's the rituals that do it. These Pagan crazies share semen, urine and menstrual blood. These nutters could be from some Dennis Wheatley novel. He is nothing less than a High Priest of the Craft, from an initiation usually involving sexual intercourse with at least one existing Pagan Witch. He had two. The two lovely ladies whom he penetrated and mixed juices were Ealasaid Rothach and Beathag Urchardan, the latter at least a distant cousin - if not both are related in a display of incest.

I spoke into the air again. "This must have been so attractive for Allie. The motivation is there. So Andrea has gone because, also - if not the same Coven - he is one of her lot. Glastonbury - Serninsea - Kinloch Rannoch. Mmm. But Andrea can drive, so why is Adam involved? Or he's involved in some wopping deception. *He won't risk his neck getting an eye test in Ceann Loch Raineach...*"

"Who are you talking to?" asked Marie Enfield, appearing at the vestry door with a smile.

"Me. Working out where Allie and her witch pal have gone."

"Have you worked it out?"

"Yeah. Other than Adam's involvement. Actually, I have worked out his involvement. He is providing cover; he is a willing decoy. It's the sort of thing he'd do. Perhaps he's staying with Peter and others."

"Andrea's car is up the road," said Marie. "I suppose they could have got a bus and a train to... It'd be Pitlochry. But people aren't supposed to travel. Very expensive."

"Yeah. The message Allie was so happy to show me when in the garden was pre-arranged. She's tried to put me off the scent but I am smarter than my little

intellectual so-and-so thinks."

"If my brother did that to me, I'd cut his balls off and hang them up - during sex."

"No, don't do that. You'd lose quite a bit of income. Allie has a shiny but blunt athame and already puts it where I'd shove it. They are so *filthy*, those two."

"Your old friend Diana is in Scotland."

"Diana. Of course. Yes! She and her new love visited Clach na h' Iobairt and Crossmount. Yes, Allie must have been as envious as hell. So they've gone and left me behind. Cunts, utter *cunts*."

"Snip snip," said Marie. "Stop that now and get your togs off and come over into the garden. Roger has his testicles still attached and has got the firepit going, and we can sit and chat about something else."

"I hope he hasn't toasted his testicles."

"Mmm! Yum yum! said Marie. "Testicles roasted on long forks."

"Your brother looks after you, doesn't he?"

"Wonderful. I want no one else, ever. I love licking his balls, sucking him off."

"She's missed out on his really globby sperm. I'm so annoyed with her."

A Ritual in Scotland

"Again I want to persuade you, Allie, to take up the offer. You. We think Linda has her own valid legacy and attachments, but you're free to take up an exciting ministry by preparing for it."

"I'm probably too Pagan."

"We are a minority within the Unitarian fold. You could make that vital impact. I am High Priest Seumas Tursachan."

"I'm a Pagan High Priest Alice Moonbright."

"I'm High Priest Andrea Moonglow. We were both of the Creech Moorlinch Coven, based in Somerset. We've done nothing locally but technically we have now started Serninsea Eclectic Coven."

He said, "The difficulty is Linda's attachment to the Free Liberal Ecclesia. She's found something there, but we have such difficulty with them."

"Too late because she is my wife, and I'm pretty sure I'm pregnant now."

"You are?" Andrea asked. "You'll need to come in, get into the system."

"Tell me about the name you were given, Seumas, and how you received it."

"Tursachan' means Standing Stones - plural. So, yes, I am a Coven leader, but the Coven is located elsewhere, at Caol Loch Aillse and goes into An t-Eilean Sgitheanach."

"Then we must have a ritual," I concluded.

"I would like to give you a blessing for becoming pregnant. What about my sperm?"

"A blessing should have a physical component."

He said, "It's a bit late to get pregnant from a third party."

"Pity it isn't you," I said. "But it will work as a ritual. Andrea can smear it on her yoni as well as an offering to the Goddess."

She asked me to remove the disc, and this was done by removing the top ring

and leaving a neat hole through her clitoris hood.

So we got to it there are then, beginning by casting a circle. However, I pointed out that in travelling to Ceann Loch Raineach neither of us had brought our athames with us. So we would use wands.

The circle had the usual four winds positions with air and incest to the north, a rock to the east, fire to the south and water to the west but placed for human body dimensions.

Seumas it was who lay on the circle, rather like Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, but holding a wand in each hand. I stood above him, legs apart, and Andrea kneeled in between his wide apart feet.

I nodded, so Andrea picked up his penis and started masturbating him.

She stated, "*O wind from the north, refresh us; O earth from the east, nourish our growth; O flame from the south, warm us and give us energy; O water from the west, give us renewed life.*"

He placed one wand into my vagina above him, and then Andrea lifted her legs on her knees to receive the other one into hers.

"Let the magic happen in the fruitful places," he said. The wands were removed and laid to either side of him.

I said, "Rise up lingam and do your task."

Andrea repeated those words, continuing her actions.

"Pass me your sterilised waters as a blessing," said Seumas Tursachan.

So above him I directed a careful flow of water from my urethra into the high priest's mouth.

He said, when he could, "The Goddess in her life force will come to you, Alice Moonbright, through the very sperm I will pass to you as assisted by Andrea Moonglow. The male gives to the female, so that the female gives to all."

I moved closer to Andrea and dropped on to his erect penis and started to use some of my own skill. Andrea rose up on her legs, picked up the wands, and inserted them deep to her cervix in the manner of the athame at our online ritual.

I felt his liquid come into me.

"Come Holy Goddess and bless this woman with your fertile abundance!"

I rose up from him and Andrea bent forward, and pressed her tongue to my few thin red pubic hairs.

She paused and said, "Let the land and the people fertilise across the whole world."

She licked all around my pubic area, spreading her spit and his semen. She also stuck two fingers into my vagina and scooped out some of the mix in there to spread on her labia and above.

We'd done enough. Seumas brought his arms and feet together and pronounced a closing of the circle. "*So mote it be! The circle is closed.*"

Andrea and I said the same together: "*So mote it be! The circle is closed.*"

Then we noticed Diana leaning against the door frame. I smiled at naturist Diana.

"My God," she blurted. "You being married to the diocesan bishop!"

"Yeah," said Andrea, licking her lips. "That's become a problem."

"I bet it has."

I then helped Andrea reattach her Vestal Virgins disc, to hang with the 'SVV' facing forwards. Diana said, "Well, that beats having a nose ring."

Seumas said that our ritual was really one of mutual recognition. It used old, magical, maybe alchemical language because it is all we have, but we had connected intimately and this is what mattered.

I agreed. I said (as I have before) that there was greater awareness of the ritual itself rather than pointing to anything beyond. The mystery was in the act itself.

He said, "The more agnostic we get, the more physical and real it must be."

"Same with paintings," I said. "The focus has shifted."

But Andrea dissented: "No, I think we are drawing on real powers; otherwise I wouldn't risk everything to do it. I also agree with those who say the divine is best revealed through the orgasm but do it through appropriate groups rather than within, say, an Anglican cult."

Diana said, "That's why they'll chuck you out: you've gone to do your shopping elsewhere."

Andrea and I wished the best to Seumas and to Diana, as we went over to the outhouse, carrying our retrieved clothes.

So Adam, in there, looking at his tablet, asked me, "Are you in with me, or with Andrea?"

"Andrea, you clot."

(I know I had an airbed but I wanted to be tight to this woman.)

It wasn't long before Andrea and I were very close together in the single bed and went to sleep. I had a tendency to flick her silver coloured disc on its rings, and there was a lot of out of focus staring eyes to eyes, either seen open or shut.

Journey Back (Friday 24th April)

"Why are you kissing me?" I asked Andrea, her body pressed against mine.

"Because I want to spread the love."

(I was playing with her disc.)

"Very nice too," said Adam, from the other single bed. "But we do have a long journey, and eight hours means another overnight stop, I'm afraid."

Andrea then said, "I am insured to drive your car."

"Well, why the fuck didn't you say so before?"

"You never asked, Adam. A GP needs to be able to drive. I can leave it at the surgery but, as it happens, it's just down the road from the bethel. The double mini-roundabout hardly helps."

Adam said, "Anyway, Diana drives and she probably has third party insurance driving mine."

We two females went starkers to the kitchen in the house, finding Màiri and the reverend dressed. They assumed we'd have dressed to go home, as indeed Diana had. Oops! We returned to the outhouse and put on our textiles for travel.

Back in the kitchen, and joined by Adam, Diana confirmed her insurance status if she drove another car.

I said, "This place has some opposition online."

"Oh the fundies have a field day," said Seumas. "It's what keeps us alive. The Unitarians alone are otherwise ignored."

After breakfast, being a solid meal in itself provided by Màiri, I said to the

Reverend Seumas that we three must keep in touch.

Seumas said he would see if terms and conditions could be changed for me if I applied alone through the Unitarian General Assembly; indeed the Scottish Group might take me on according to their own terms. "In liberalism, you see," he said, "we do our own things."

"I *am* pregnant," I said. "My duties lie elsewhere. And thank you for your lifeforce ritual."

"It wasn't mine and we all contributed."

Andrea and I gave Seumas full-mouthed kisses. We used our Pagan names in saying goodbye. Diana was very grateful too that he had given her sanctuary. Seumas ran his hands up and down her clothed body. He insisted that Sally had not known where Diana had been these recent days.

"You're not the first," he told her. "We do important missionary work here freeing people from The Jacobite Years literary cult. As I speak, no doubt, another online obsessive is coming her way to Forres."

In the car, with masks on, Diana sat at the front. Diana spilled the beans that at the end of the last week she had contacted Adam for a lift, but only to be from Rasa Market. Her plan was to go by train from Raineach station and pay the rail fare and then pay Adam for his own time and short journey, as well as organising Yojana herself to accommodate her. However, Adam offered to take the railway fare himself and do the journeying, and he organised it with Yojana, partly to give him something different and exciting to do.

He said, "You make me sound ungenerous." We were going past the Birks again at Obar Pheallaidh (Aberfeldy),.

"Hah!"

"What does that mean?"

Diana declined further comment. Seumas, however, had refused payment from Diana. What a difference!

I said, "We didn't pay him either."

Adam responded, "He didn't want anything but I gave him the hundred quid donation towards his project. Diana has already paid into my account."

I said, "Adam. I wanked you for free. Should I send you an invoice?"

"Hah!" said Diana a second time.

Diana took up the map reading this time. After Obar Pheallaidh, we went south to Craoibh (Crieff) via the A826 and A822, and then to the A823 to turn off on a minor road before Dunfermline (C69 and C493) for the B9097, to get us to the necessary motorway and the M90 for the Queensferry Crossing. If the police stopped us there then we would have to simply say we were going home. They didn't, so Adam continued to drive this time for the A68 from the Edinburgh bypass. We did not go on to the A697, but continued, and then turned off to find the A6105 and the B6397 to Kelso and after there to find the B6352 going north in a kind of 'detouring' road over the border into England. Via the A6351 we joined the A697.

Diana said we were daft taking these routes, but she took over driving and was determined to travel directly down the A1.

I went to the front seat for map reading. Adam was in the back seat next to Andrea and he soon dozed off. The journey was light with traffic, even around Newcastle. She joined the long motorway south, as it had become, and although we passed several police cars none of them stopped us.

I asked Diana what she wanted to do longer term.

"I don't know; it's all a mess now."

"It's just that things might be changing in a way I didn't expect. I am pregnant but I'm not sure I'm really cut out to be a mother."

"You are kidding," Diana said.

"That's different," said Andrea.

"I'd be a surrogate."

"You've only just got married to Linda," Diana added.

"Yeah, but that could be flexible."

Diana went on, "Allie. I'm not having this conversation. You are unreliable. Linda deserves better so start meeting your responsibilities. Don't follow my example."

"She's right," said Andrea.

"Fair enough. I thought I was being practical."

"Don't complicate things any further than they have become," Diana commented while looking in her mirror, and I wondered if that was for the traffic or if Adam showed any movement behind us.

Diana then said, "I hate him; I'll never, ever, get over what he did to me. That's why I paid him because I want no gifts from him. Carry on wanking him because that way his sperm is being wasted."

The motorway part ended, and we found a pause off the dual carriageway at Darrington itself. Here Adam woke up (I suspect he'd been awake more than he was letting on) and, after a short walkabout, and urinating openly, he offered to take over driving.

However, Andrea took up the wheel and Diana ended up in the back seat next to her hate figure of Adam.

We went on to the A1(M) again past Doncaster. Of course Diana commented that we could have spent time at the Bever Wood Naturist Centre.

Funnily enough it was after Wytham that the Foss Police in the person of Constable Sky decided to stop us, asking where we were going. It was here that Andrea displayed her GP identity document, and said that we'd picked up ill Adam on his necessary rail journey from Scotland and we were heading for Serninsea. The risk was that the police could have checked cameras for data down the A1 and its motorways, but they let us go and we weren't fined.

We arrived at the coastal guest house to be greeted by Yojana Asthana. Diana told Andrea and me in particular that in no way should we tell Linda that she had come back. She would reveal it herself in her own time and in her own way.

"Do you want some money, you two?"

"No," I said.

"Definitely not," said the GP. "Make sure you come and see me for health checks."

I introduced Andrea to Yojana. Yojana was in a simple top and knickers and her nipples were so obvious.

The sun had gone down and it was getting gloomy. Adam dropped us off north of the Bethel and so we walked to face the music, and to conceal that Diana had been collected.

Andrea tried to suggest I could ask to rejoin the Fighters of Concern, in the Serninsea Vestal Virgins. She'd argue for me to join.

"Once bitten infinitely shy," I answered, approaching the bethel.

Back in Eastern England

So we wandered in using the two main doors to see Linda watching television on the big screen above.

"The prodigal daughter returns with her sidekick," she said. "Trouble is, the prodigal son returned just the once and this one keeps running off."

"We've done what we did. Andrea is happier now. Any grub about?"

"Get your own stuff. I thought you might have gone shopping."

"We couldn't because Andrea couldn't get her leg over the shopping trolley handle, to use her disc."

"You could have taken it off for her. Perhaps it would have jammed in the trolley."

"You know, Linda, sometimes you're not exactly a model of religious toleration."

I microwaved chicken curries in four prepared packs. It was enough - plus a couple of apples. It was as if Linda didn't want to talk. Andrea kept a kind of diplomatic silence despite the offensive comments she'd heard.

Then Linda said, "You must think I am a fucking idiot."

"What about?" I asked.

"What you claim to have been doing. You weren't."

"So what do you think we were doing?"

"That's for me to know and you to speculate."

"It's you who are speculating. Perhaps later on you can go through a list, Linda, and I can say, 'Not necessarily,' to each suggestion."

"You'll be in your own bed tonight. I believe there is one at Toulouse Road. You can take her with you."

Andrea asked, "Is she always like this?"

"Getting worse," I replied.

Linda said, "I've heard of absentee landlords but here we have an absentee renter."

"There was a task to do," Andrea said.

"Allie's an absentee fucker, as it happens, in that she didn't get her latest installment from Roger."

"I don't need it. I'm pregnant."

"You are?"

"Yes. Definitely."

"Oh."

"Oh what?" I asked.

"Well, you pick your moments."

"I think we did with Roger and Marie. His stuff went in and it's done its job."

"What a moment to tell me."

"It's as good as any."

"Huh."

"Aren't you at least happy about this?"

Linda did smile, but she was busy displaying silent anger. Then two came downstairs and walked towards us. "Oh, here's Marie and Roger. Want to say anything truthful about your adventure, either of you?"

"Hello, Allie and Andrea," Marie said for both of them.

Andrea said, "I thought marrying Lynton was the thing to do. Like my brother is admittedly doing the same sort of thing."

Linda said, "That's not talking about your adventure, Andrea Lindsey, Andrea Plimpton."

Marie said, "Linda knows."

Andrea said, "She's not telling."

"Are you telling?" Marie asked.

Linda said, "Leave it. I don't want to particularly speak or hear from either of you two travellers."

I asked Linda where I was supposed to sleep.

"I don't know. Where do pregnant women go? Did you sleep with Andrea?"

Roger said, "This isn't for us, Marie. Let's go back upstairs."

Marie said, "I did say to Linda that if *you* behaved like this I'd cut your bollocks off."

"But this is for them. Come on."

So I said, "Regarding your question, Linda, Andrea was on the back seat of Adam's car and I was in the front seat next to Adam."

"Keeping watch on this and that, I suppose."

"Actually, didn't he, at that point in the car he was looking at Annie and Marie - the other Marie. Sorry Marie." (On hearing 'Marie' they had paused going up the stairs.)

"He did," said Andrea. "Anybody could have come along."

"I suppose by that answer you wanked him off, Allie, being next to him, having done this before."

"Er, I did; I think Andrea was surprised."

Linda said, "You mean she discovered that you are a filthy slut."

"Adam is a sad man," said Andrea. "He is addicted to seeing Annie online. If she stood in front of him, physically, he probably wouldn't respond."

"The thing is," Linda said, "I don't believe a word of it."

Allie said, "That is the absolute truth. In the car, before he had a piss and went to sleep, he was looking at Annie Fenwick and Marie Healand online. His seat went back, my seat went back, and Marie was just about under them laid out on the back seat."

"Adam was with you."

"Yes. All the time."

"Oh."

"You think he wasn't?"

"What does it matter what I think?"

"Someone tell you he was somewhere else? It was his gig."

"Shut up Allie. Right, well, you can come up when I've got into bed, about an hour after I've gone up. And don't bullshit me. I still don't think you were on a job looking at Lynton Plimpton or Rhiannon Fleetwood. That's just falling chaff. I only want you alongside me so you might get sleepy and let out the truth."

Andrea went wide eyed, facing directly at Linda.

"And don't you get your hanging disc in a twist. I've already said I worked out what you were doing."

Andrea replied, "If you think Adam wasn't there then you haven't."

I said, "We know you contacted Mary Ann and Yootha Ann, Linda."

"I *know*. I did a lot more than that."

"Adam was in charge. He does this sort of thing."

"Save your breath Allie. You'll find your room is still there, Andrea, unfortunately. I'm going up. I don't care what you two do - oh leave it a couple of hours, Allie. You two could do some sort of fanny-licking ritual together, that sort of thing."

Andrea said, "She is impossible."

"But I love her," I added, causing Linda to stomp off to and up the stairs. "I'm having her fucking baby!" I shouted out.

In bed Linda said we had a lot to talk about; saying that I didn't trust her, and she didn't trust me, and we had to get this sorted out to be mothers of this child. I said nothing in response because, as of this moment, I had a wife and could end up with a mistress living under the same roof.

I took it that Linda's subsequent silence meant that she didn't know where we'd been. I turned and looked at her face a few times and she looked back at me, and no further words were expressed.

Chapter 38 Return

Narrator: Linda *Allie Tested Positive* (Saturday 25th April)

Food deliveries were combined with with a trip to the chemist, open on Saturday morning as an essential shop. We bought a pregnancy test kit.

After breakfast Allie and I went to our room and she squatted above the toilet, peeing in front of me over the test device.

She was indeed pregnant.

Allie asked me to stand with her and with Andrea in the seating area. She asked, then, "Can we at least be civilised with each other?"

"Sure," I said. "We'll carry on and see where it gets us. But it can't be normal because you are lying to me and you keep doing it. Correction: perhaps it *is* normal."

Allie and I decided therefore to use the mikveh, for being future mothers. After all, if we didn't use it, no one else would during lockdown.

Andrea said, "I'll read some blessings and prayers."

"What, Anglican ones?"

"Er, I do others - as I think you've discovered."

I agreed on the basis of being civilised and improving crippled relationships.

She said, "I don't have to wear my disc if it offends you."

"But you can," I said, "because you're not going in the water, unless you want to mark your own future as a single woman again."

"I won't for now, to see what Lynton does at first."

So Andrea said some words while we two were submerged.

"It must have been some ceremony," I said afterwards, as we dried ourselves with towels. "What you did."

"Ah," Andrea said. "You mean Scotland."

"Scotland?" asked Allie.

"Pack it in, Allie," I said.

Andrea then said, "Allie, witches may be secretive but we are committed to the truth. So are Fighters of Concern. So she is right. We went to Scotland."

"And Adam was there?" I asked, facing Andrea.

"Yes. Adam was there all the time."

Allie said, "Those two shared the driving."

"Two nights?"

"Yes," Allie said.

"And you met Seumas Caimbeul, the minister. He's a High Priest. There's a lovely website trashing all he does."

Andrea said, "Yes he is."

Allie said, "Adam likes a sense of danger, to get one over the authorities."

"He's a chicken," I answered. "All right. You've said enough. I still don't get why you slept in the car, though, when that minister runs a retreat."

"Well, we did," Allie said. "It's a long way."

"Ah," I said, thinking of one night only in the car, but then two directions. I believed them that they had slept in the car, but surely beds were available at the retreat. (Maybe the accommodation was too expensive?)

Marie and Roger were pleased that matters had slightly improved.

It was during a coffee with all five of us in the garden at the firepit, and naked, that Ann and Labhaoise arrived and said they had a van outside at the front. Ann said, "We're taking half of your seats."

"Don't we need them?" I asked Ann.

"Not when you've socially distanced. Spread them out."

"We could store... I mean, we already risk a real sense of kenopsia."

"What?" she asked. "And just a cotton-pickin' minute. With no extra charge, right, we've just given you this new garden. So I think we can take these seats to put in our houses for rent."

"Of course," I said.

"And we've brought you some small communion glasses," said Labhaoise. "You ungenerous... Only kidding."

"Where from?"

"We bought a Methodist chapel. It is shutting - killed by the virus."

"I don't like communion by individual glasses," I said.

Allie said, "We won't have much choice when people come back."

"I'll take a common cup and pour into the glasses. Put the glasses on plates and pieces of bread."

Labhaoise said, "Good job you only have a tiny congregation."

I said, "It has some advantages."

So these two took seats to a van, another example of people coming in and out who perhaps should not.

Later on Peter made contact from his father's house. "Your viewing figures are quite high and seem to be growing. Do some videos: one on the Ecclesia, one on naturism - make them interesting. Do a podcast and people can imagine you are naked on that."

I said to Allie and Andrea. "I suppose you won't do any videos or podcasts on your Coven adventures."

Allie said, "No. It's a different ethos. That's been my point all through."

As for the next day's service, I decided that I would preside and do the sermon, but decided against 'secret messages' for Allie about honesty and deception. I went in and grabbed the laptop.

Before I worked, still naked, I did an internet search. I found the website I'd missed reading:

During the lockdown I regret to announce that Tigh na h' Iobairte cannot take in visitors. What follows will, we hope, become the situation again. The Reverend Seumas Caimbeul.

Come to the retreat at Tigh na h' Iobairte near the stones of Clach na h' Iobairt. View Loch Dhùn Alastair (Dunalastair Water), Loch Raineach (Loch Rannoch) and Loch Teimheil (Loch Tummel) nearby and visit the village of Ceann Loch Raineach (Kinloch Rannoch).

This is a Scottish Unitarian (SUGA) Retreat House and a centre for naturist visits with the Scottish Undressed Group (SUG). We have other religious links with Caol Loch Aillse (Kyle of Lochalsh) and An t-Eilean Sgitheanach (Isle of Skye) that you may wish to discuss if you have ritualistic inclinations.

You can of course just rest and we don't ask you to leave during the day. Of

course you may want to go out and walk, or view.

Accommodation at Tigh na h' Iobairte is very limited. We have a couple of bedrooms in the main house and a three singles bed dormitory in an outhouse (two beds in it). We can be very busy but if you get a place we offer hearty breakfasts and evening meals. We can anyway - just call and ask. You can view across the water and down to the mountains. There is more accommodation in the village of Ceann Loch Raineach, of course.

We teach courses on Unitarianism, Paganism, and Gaelic, for all levels. We particularly welcome local people learning Gaelic. We want to reseed the language.

We are on the road between north of Baile Chloichridh (Pitlochry) and Raineach railway station. There is also a road up from Obar Pheallaidh (Aberfeldy).

Crossmount near Loch Dhùn Alastair can be reached from here, but seek permission to enter. You won't find any standing stones there, but Clach na h' Iobairt is real as well as fictional.

So it followed that he wasn't taking in visitors. This explained why they stayed in the car - presumably each way. Other hotels and guest houses would have been shut as well. On the other hand, they did a ritual together of presumably intimate contact - unless they substituted some actions. I gave up at this point. For some reason Adam had gone there: the only explanation being that he was a second driver.

As for us having no visitors, at the double doors outside was the known face of Bishop Lynton Plimpton.

I called Andrea, who stood naked as the day at the inside of the closed double doors, opening the letterbox.

He didn't stay near long. After he'd gone, she came to me.

"All he said to me was, 'Typical!' He was referring to my nudity. He said, 'I'll divorce you. I have public sympathy and the people are behind me on this; local Anglicans and others think you are worse than Rhiannon Fleetwood, and that's saying something.' Thanks to Novel Covid we didn't have to let him in. But there is more..."

"Be honest with me. You didn't monitor him and Rhiannon Fleetwood at all?"

"No. The rumour is that she is in and out of town. No, we went to Scotland. We met Seumas Caimbeul. Yes, we did a Pagan ritual."

"The website says there are other religious links with Caol Loch Aillse."

"That's the location of his Coven. Like with our origins, his Coven is far away. We did not create a new Coven because we don't live there."

"Thanks, Andrea."

"Lynton actually came for you, but told me to pass the message on. The PCC wants to get on with it. Can you do a service at the parish church for online? Mo McArden will see that the cameras are working and that it goes out online. Tomorrow?"

"I'm working on tomorrow, here, now, for here."

"He doesn't negotiate - he expects."

"I can *do* this?"

"He's authorised it."

"Neither of you called me over!"

"No, he instructed from afar. So very busy, ha ha. Come to the garden when

you're done; the fire is lovely."

Narrator: Linda *Parish Church Service and a Daughter* (Sunday 26th April)

So it was, with the permission of the diocesan bishop, and the expectation of the Parochial Church Council, that I was back in the parish church.

The service from the newish *Common Prayers* felt really dogmatic to me. I wasn't sure I could digest it. Nevertheless I'd agreed to take a service and preside.

It came to the sermon, and the fact is that the one I was about to give was more orthodox and directed than I had intended. I had written it out on Saturday so that I didn't go all heterodox on them. The significant Bible text had been Luke 24:13-35.

"The biblical stories at this time, the given forty days - an important number - are the theologised appearances of Jesus to his disciples.

"This is when Jesus is shown to be who he was - the new messiah - and gives authority to his disciples, after which the resurrection period is ended and explains why he no longer appears this way to anyone.

"We see the theological purpose of food, fellowship and the body. It is not about ideas but presence. It is about hospitality.

"It's also about giving hope to the disciples who have heard about the crucifixion. After that, well Jesus is either finished or will return as the Messiah to bring in the last days, as indeed he gave them the expectation that God was about to bring in the last days.

"The Emmaus story is so theological, because what it shows is that Jesus the Christ is not recognised. He walks with them and shares hospitality. But when he is recognised, when their eyes are opened, he is gone.

"Last week the message was about Thomas believing better what he didn't see, but Thomas wanting the evidence - as people do.

"We are not told so much about the apparent conversation between the two disciples joined by the resurrected Christ. But one must look to scripture - the Hebrew Bible - and its forming of tradition. In fact the text suggests probably that God kept the disciples in the dark, not the disciples themselves. ...'their eyes were kept from recognising him.' The resurrection story is a shape, a realisation, not just a surprise. In a way it should not be a surprise. Still, it takes the risen Jesus to explain the meaning of the text. It is now the Christian Easter faith.

"Then we have it: 'their eyes were opened, and they recognised him.' This does seem a little manipulative to me. It's better if they are blind and come to see it themselves. There is a moral or ethical problem if God does everything - as the Enlightenment realised.

"Clearly there is a reference here to the feeding of the four or five thousand males plus women and children. The fellowship works via the miraculous getting its part in the story. The miraculous suggests revelation, does it not? It's not just a meal, it wasn't just a walk. The walk and the gathering had another presence.

"Later the guiding presence will specifically be the Holy Spirit. That's how it's organised. The resurrection does not carry on and on: but time isn't everything, and

just as we participate in the one crucifixion at the Eucharist so we also come into that one resurrection. These are eternal things inside time and break out of time.

"The lockdown and a virus is a matter of time. The fact is that this virus will go on and on, but it will merge into the complexity of things. We got rid of Smallpox but this seems likely to go on. But it isn't eternal. That's a different dimension.

"We celebrate Easter each year to tap into that dimension. And eating, drinking, fellowship - what's important - signals transcendence. Signal transcendence and you touch eternity."

The Creed followed, which was like swallowing concrete.

Whether it was legal or not I wasn't sure, but there was a young female churchwarden in the building. She was medium height, a dark blonde, long hair, a good build. She had opened it, she had switched everything on, and told me that Mo McArden was in the vicarage making sure the service went out on to the World Wide Web. For the Eucharist, I had with me some of my own recently given glasses, so that the common cup of wine was poured into two glasses before we consumed it, and the bread she took for herself from a pack - though I blessed it. I consumed a half goblet of horrible wine as part of the procedure - one I had kept in the bethel, by the way. We didn't 'chuck it away' afterwards, observing Anglican procedure.

When the service was over she introduced herself.

I am Janet Mueller, daughter of Lucy Mueller, and you will have known Lucy at school as she was then known as Lucy Coggan."

"I recall Lucy at school, but she wasn't a close friend."

"She went out with Keith Jupitas; he became your husband. He was her first true boyfriend, but it was very quick. I know that she lost her virginity to him.

"I don't think any girl in my year was safe from him, and I don't know about those in his own year either."

"You were the one to marry him," Janet told me. "My mother lost her virginity and lost her innocence. Your husband..."

"Ex-husband, please."

"...is my biological father. I hear there were boys of his."

"So I've discovered. My goodness me. I didn't know, honestly, about any of his offspring."

Lucy said, "He wrecked her life. He carried on being this Anglican of good standing. How did he do that?"

"We were all fooled," I said.

"Mum gave up on any churchgoing but I'd decided otherwise, and when you left I came here."

"Sorry I was a blockage."

"It was before your time, but I am a real person, living a real life, and if I ever see him it will be once too often."

"Do you want to meet your half brothers?"

"Not really. I haven't known them."

"Well, thanks for helping me here and I'm very pleased to have met you."

"I kept quiet and you didn't know. So is that sermon what you think, then?"

"Well, a combination of what is expected and what I think."

"It sounded to me like you were hedging your bets."

"I was."

"Well, I can't see the PCC wanting you. The bishop has pressed us several times to interview you, so we will. Jeremy Symes is going to Serninsea Marshes and I don't think he should be going there either. It's a neighbouring parish to his old one. So Emily will be furious. What's clear is the bishop wants a suffragan, and I think he wants you."

"And you think I'm unsuitable."

"I think you are doing your own things down the road. I've heard yours and others' sermons from there, online, and I think they are, well, enlightening - to use a word - but you couldn't and shouldn't say them here and I don't agree with you."

"We did allow people to come into the Serninsea Liberal Bethel on the pretext of private prayer, but the police came. We could talk outside, if ever you want."

"Might do that. It would be yet another mistake if you came here."

"Oh."

"The new diocesan bishop is a mistake. His wife is a nutcase."

"She's not a nutcase."

"She does lurid sexual acts and calls them rituals. This, after all the scandal here, in which you were a victim."

"Yes, well we've taken her in at the bethel; she has our protection."

"One wonders what their marriage was like. He must have known she was this crazy witch. She's a GP as well, so how does that work out?"

"The health service might have more religious toleration than Anglicanism; in fact when it comes to employment it certainly does. Pleased to have met you."

I disrobed and wanted to get out. When I left the church Mo McArden was outside, and he kept his distance.

"You should know. Reactions have been anything from disappointed to furious."

"Right."

"That wasn't proclaiming Easter. It just wasn't. It was all stories and possibilities and meanings."

"Well, if the PCC interviews me then you can move on and look for someone else."

"Trouble is, no one will come here. We have escaped the crazy witch. They'll accept anyone now for the eleven churches of Serninsea Marshes and beyond, and they have. Those two had an affair. We know you met him and both of you were naked, and Emily told you to go. Today we had no one to preach, and we got you thanks to the bishop."

"So is he accepted at Serninsea Marshes?"

"He works as some sort of manager-caretaker at a nudist club. I mean, desperate or what?"

"I wonder if he's avoiding me because he knows I cannot understand why he'd come back from that. I thought he'd found a really happy niche there."

"Because you're all nude and stuff, like him. Whatever happened to modesty? What is it about this part of the world?"

"His views shifted as well, so I don't know how he is going to fit back into the glove."

I went back to the bethel, where Andrea indicated to me almost straight away that she'd like to be ordained into the Free Liberal Ecclesia.

"Yes, I think we need to shuffle the pack a bit."

"How was it?" she asked, with Allie coming near.

"Bloody awful and a woman announced herself as one of Keith's offspring. Three and counting."

Narrator: Linda *PCC Interview* (Wednesday 29th April)

We were all clothed. I said, "It's ad hoc and it's informal, this online PCC meeting in ten minutes, Allie and Andrea. Now, like the Unitarians, the bishop would like to get his hands on this place; if you listen in, stay out of view of the camera."

They decided to sit near the double doors.

Andrea said, "The bee in my bonnet over that is when they do the Forest Church, a sort of Pagan thing, attracting Pagans; they put the Christian Trinity in there and a Christian enough Eucharist. It's manipulative."

I said, "When they do these Fresh Expressions or Forest Church, as a way of attracting the young, they put the clergy into them, to impose order and gradually pull them in according to Anglican conformity. So my veto, which I've never had to use, would be used so that they are not getting their hands on this place. And if I went you should get the veto."

"Would I be a bishop?" Allie asked.

"I'd like Christine to do it."

"I'd have to join her Church."

"Yes, probably, if temporarily. I know the FLE is relaxed on this but I just want the same level of recognition I get now. Look at the Anglicans: they have to recognise I am a legitimate bishop and that gives them a problem."

"Someone at the doors," said Allie. "We know them!"

It was Lindy Peacock and Jeremy Symes.

"Open the letterbox, Allie."

"We won't come in. We are diverting to say hello before going up to Serninsea Marshes."

"What's happened to Bever Wood? I'm surprised you've shifted and so easily."

"Bever Wood is shut. Even if it opens, we will have difficulties socially distancing the naked. Ministry is what I wanted to do, and all I've ever wanted to do. I told Lynton Plimpton that Lindy must come with me, must be accepted, and my beliefs had changed."

She said, "They've accepted everything. You're in a very strong position, Linda."

Jeremy said, "I know you are being interviewed any minute. Press the point: you are married, you are a naturist, you have your liberal beliefs, and they're not getting their hands on this place. And become my colleague because we'll work together in this deanery. Oh, and, just a small detail: you are a bishop, legitimately. They are bound to make you suffragan bishop almost immediately."

"You're kidding," I said.

"He certainly needs one suffragan, even in a parish. Wytham is too big a diocese without at least one suffragan."

"Surely there is enough ambition within the National Church to overcome the

bad reputation of a diocese?"

"Maybe. But it is unusual - not unknown - to have a bishop who isn't a bishop in post. We can work together."

"When is your first service, Jeremy?"

"Not until 17th May. It will all be online."

"Love you," called Lindy through the letterbox.

Off they went. And very soon across the screen there were some twelve people in different locations with one of them centre-screen.

"I'm Harold Crosland at home and you must be indeed Bishop Linda Shrimpton."

"I am. I'm not an Anglican bishop."

"Bishop Lynton advises that you are a bishop if not in a recognised role. If you are a bishop, you are a bishop, if only to be respectful."

A smaller, more rounded man, came centre-screen. "I'm Andrew Bibby. So, I'm a church warden as is young Lucy Mueller, whom you met on Sunday. I think we may need to refer to the service. So let me introduce, or let them introduce themselves one-by-one to come centrally on-screen each..."

"Janet Mueller at home. Lucy, sit here."

"Mo McArden doing some maintenance in the vicarage, actually."

"Jim Sayle at home."

"Elaine Thorp at home. My sister is Mabel Thorp, the nurse you know."

"Catherine Mould. Of course you know my daughter."

"Sheila Gillespie."

"Evie Waite."

"Beatrice Kerr."

"Clodagh Grant. You met me before at an Electronics Conference."

"Alfred Burger. Titansea Grand is where I live, where you met me."

Harold Crosland resumed, "This may be an informal webcams PCC meeting gathered at such very short notice, but can we stand where we are please for the passing of Gertrude Carter yesterday. She was taken rapidly into hospital with Novel Covid and has died in Christ."

"Oh dear," I said. "I didn't know." I saw many trousers and skirts. I stood. Andrea stood but Allie didn't.

Harold continued, sitting, "I did not know her that much. Mo, tell us more."

"She was such a personality, a stalwart of the church and served on the PCC before all the changes and new influences. She had the measure of people. She always supported Colin Cromer. She did not like Jim Wilson and saw through Rhiannon Fleetwood immediately. She is the second Covid death in her family."

I said, "I knew her very well."

Mo said, "She liked you, and that counted for something."

Harold Crossland said, "Flòraidh MacLean is in hospital, having tested positive."

Andrew Bibby said, "Mention has just been made of Jim Wilson. I'm fairly new to this church but I was at Serninsea Marshes. I wasn't involved in appointing Jeremy Symes. I would have opposed that. I did like Jim Wilson's firm convictions."

"Nasty individual," I said. "I should know."

Harold said, "I became more involved six months back and we've all had to pick up from the hope and disappointment in Rhiannon and now even the bishop's

new wife. We did take an evangelical turn after Colin Cromer, and goodness knows what Andrea was thinking, creating yet another scandal here, and you are not, Bishop Linda."

"I am not what?"

"Evangelical."

"I'm at the liberal end of the spectrum. And I am married to a woman. You might find me so unsuitable because, like Jim Wilson, I stick to my principles but rather different ones from him."

"You say it yourself," said Harold Crossland, centre-screen.

Andrew Bibby replaced him and said, "I gather that some people loved you despite some notably incomprehensible sermons."

Allie started giggling.

Andrew Bibby asked, "Who's laughing?"

"My wife, Allie."

Harold said, "So the diocesan bishop informed us of your potential availability and obviously you have shown firm interest by taking up this interview, under the circumstances. He is impressed that since you left you have built up your own new church."

"That's a team of us," I said.

"Even better," he replied. "So we are very pleased to see you, and, er, hear your wife. May we see her?"

"Yeah. My *wife*. Allie, come and sit by me."

"The bishop tells us - though I don't quite understand - that the extension of Civil Partnerships to heterosexual couples makes all marriage complex. Although we would not accept new ordinands who are married to their same sex partner and certainly no one in ministry can marry, we can apparently accept gay-married transfers under certain conditions."

"We are not gay-married," I said, with Allie now sat at the next available (reduced number) seat. "We are simply married."

Jim Sayle said, "Isn't it like the Roman Catholics accept married Anglican priests transferring over but not their own? Hello Reverend Linda! We clashed a bit at a magic show discussion."

"Well, that was me trying out liberal theology. Look, I was married to Keith, and that means I am bisexual."

Sheila Gillespie said, "Then I wonder why you couldn't marry a man again?"

"Because, able to marry her, and wanting to, I did. We have... a partnership, her and me. Relationships are about trust. You should all be reminded that I am an intersex female, something I did not declare at the time of being a curate."

Harold said, "The bishop adds that relationships and sexuality are more varied and complicated than we once thought."

I said, "I hope you have views of your own. Don't be so subservient!"

Allie said, "It's quite simple really. You fall in love and you have a fulfilling and sexual relationship."

Mo McArden said, "This town!"

Harold said, "All of this does bring me, as chairing this meeting, to three areas the bishop has highlighted as necessary for this appointment to take place. In this informal meeting, I'll go through them. The first - especially running a place called the Serninsea Liberal Bethel - is the issue of your orthodoxy. This is tackled easily, in

that you tell the Archdeacon of your orthodoxy and good character, and in the first day's services as appointee you declare again your consent for the creeds and sympathy with the Articles of Religion."

"I assume so. Assent."

"And consent. The second issue is the bethel itself. The bishop says that it can be incorporated as a slave church, a Fresh Expressions church, but we can't recognise its clergy. On the other hand, if it carries on under its present and definitely unrecognised denomination, you, as Vicar of Serninsea, as an exclusive Anglican, can have to have nothing to do with running it, or even serving it."

"Allie or someone else would lead it," I said. "I'll make her a bishop, just like me."

"Well, we'd rather have hoped that your, er, wife would have supported your ministry."

Allie said, "There are responsibilities to the bethel, although there are other clergy available."

I said, to muddy some waters, "She is also a Pagan High Priest and can run her own Coven of witches. How about that?"

"You mean, the same as what we were told about the supposed Reverend Andrea Plimpton? She was the very person Andrea Plimpton performed with?"

"Absolutely," I said, looking over to Andrea. "You've not seen the video?"

"No. Too lurid, apparently. The bishop has it; the Caffenmere residents erased it. Is *she* there?" asked Harold.

"Yup."

"Oh dear. How far does the bishop want us to stretch?" he asked openly. Then he said, "Can I just have some time out to consult the others on the PCC?"

A minute in of this silence and someone was at the double doors again.

"It's Aardse."

Allie went over and opened the letterbox.

"Just tell my wife all contact is via solicitors and if she comes near the children again I'll get a restraining order."

I was startled. He'd gone.

"What's going on? Is Diana in town?"

"Must be," Allie said.

"Hang on," I said, as Harold Crossland and the rest came back on screen.

He asked, "Are you definitely keeping the bethel going as independent, then? Your wife would be the bishop."

"Or someone else," I said. "I would not run it."

Allie looked at me.

I said, "They would be ordained under Liberal Catholic ordinances, that is Liberal Catholic in the whole Church sense, not the Anglican party sense. Same basis as my own consecration. I have to find out about ordaining partly online - about space and time, presence and technology. I would not be the main person ordaining, but Bishop Christine Vine - I think. Trouble is, we might have to wait until lockdown is over."

"The bishop wants you in post sooner rather than later."

"I haven't said 'yes' yet, assuming I do."

Allie whispered, "Diana did not want you to know, when we collected her."

"You're fortunate other people are watching me. See those crows out there?"

They're called a murder."

Andrew Bibby wanted to speak. Centre-screen, he said, "I don't know what you are saying there but this is a good point to mention a couple of incidentals. One is your naturism, and another is indeed your gender and future behaviour. It's a question of potential embarrassment."

Harold said, "We're concerned about your own association with ritual nudity. There's a mikveh in that place, and you mix men and women, and witches do outrageous things naked."

"We *do*," said Allie. I wanted to kick her.

"Look, is this the best we can do?" Harold asked. "Excuse us."

The screen went blank again.

"What happened?"

"Tell her," said Andrea from far off.

"She wanted to slip into Serninsea unnoticed. Obviously she has tried to reach her children and he's come here. He's blown her cover."

"So that's why Adam went, to pick her up."

"Yes. Nurse, the screen!"

"And your gender?" Andrew suddenly asked. "Some of us think you are male, in fact."

"Think what you like," I said. "My one insistence is that mothers breastfeed their children openly and without pressure. If Allie is breastfeeding our child, in nine months time or so, then she does so, and that goes for any other mothers."

Andrew said, "You get this now in surgeries and people just do it."

Sheila Gillespie asked, "I read that you cannot have children. How then is a baby your child?"

"Because the baby will have two mothers."

Andrew said further, "So you appear to be a woman. Is that it? Have you fathered the child?"

Mo McArden then said, "She is definitely a woman. I confess that I've seen all her parts."

"I am a woman, I can assure you, and the Anglican Church married me quite happily to a man. I have male genes and when they are not recognised you form as a woman. I have all the parts of a woman, as I wrote, without the reproductive areas because I have undescended testicles. Is this clear enough?"

"Very," said Andrew. "You didn't take sperm from them to make a baby?"

Sheila Gillespie immediately asked, back large, "As an intersex woman, can you provide sperm?"

"No. My testes don't function other than providing oestrogen."

"There must be a father somewhere!"

"Yes. He gave us his seed in a kind of ministry to us. We know who he is and he'll play no part in the baby's upbringing. Sexuality is far more complex than the silly rules of Anglicanism, so..."

"If you don't like them..." Andrew said, quickly.

"We are still allowed to criticise, even if we conform."

"I suppose so," he replied to me. "By the way, Harold Crosland has gone offline. So you are trans... something."

"Genetically male, I am phenotype female, and gender female - I am not transgender - and I am bisexual. That's the list."

"And I am female, female, female and a lesbian," said Allie, with irrelevance.

"The point being," said Andrew, "whether you will sign a declaration to the bishop that you and your wife will cease having sexual relations."

Evie Waite said, "She's going to have a baby!"

"Yes," said Andrew, "but that does not involve Bishop Linda, does it?"

"I was there at most donations. It was done naturally and in the context of a loving relationship."

Jim Sayle now said, "She means they had a threesome. This is not defining living your life in the likeness of Christ and ordering your household in a wholesome fashion and welcoming in your neighbour!"

Allie said, "I did welcome in our neighbour. He provided the sperm."

"My God," said Jim Bill Sayle.

I said, "It wasn't any threesome because there were four involved because the donor has a partner."

Jim asked, "Can we know who they are?"

"No. He takes no part in the baby's life, so it is nothing to do with the public."

Andrew said, "We're done on this. We've done as the bishop asked and last week put out an agenda for a formal meeting for early next Tuesday. But it helps Bishop Linda and her wife know where we stand and we can inform the diocesan bishop ahead of that meeting. Oh, one more thing. The bishop wants you to consider becoming, immediately, Rural Dean of Serninsea Towns and Country."

"I'm not so sure about that," I said.

"Not to say," said Mo McArden, "that there is still no suffragan bishop for Bolingbroke."

"That is well off my radar," I said. "I would likely turn that down."

Andrew said, "I want to remind everyone that the bishop thinks your title of bishop is valid but irregular. On that basis, we want to address you as bishop. Best if you take up the office, if offered."

"I've said I was consecrated under Liberal Catholic ordinances, recognised in law. They even gave me a bishop's name and you would not want to use that."

"What is it?" Mo asked.

"Mar Reticulum."

Catherine Mould, probably hard of hearing, even from her speakers, asked, "My Reticulum Um?"

"Precisely," I said, as Allie started sniggering. "Mar - with an 'r' - Ret - i - cu - lum. It is a horrible name. It's why my dear wife is laughing. I do not use it."

Andrew said, "We would call you: 'Bishop Linda Shrimpton, Vicar of Serninsea.' It's under common tenure, by the way. Colin Cromer was under the old more secure freehold system. By the way, your new neighbour, and another liberal naturalist, Jeremy Symes, is also getting common tenure. He told the bishop that he would not come back without it. Jim Wilson was Priest-in-Charge there, but common tenure gives better security of position and terms and conditions."

I said, "Yes, freehold has gone. It was last offered in the Wytham diocese, up at the north end."

"So, folks, scattered around: to return to the main matter, given what Bishop Linda has said: do we informally want her? We are going offline from you, Bishop Linda, Allie, and I suppose the Reverend Witch Andrea, to discuss and vote prior to a proper, regular, meeting. I see that Harold Crosland has resigned with immediate

effect."

Everyone said the grace across cyberspace and our screen then went blank.

"Where is she?" I asked Allie.

"Where is who?"

"Diana, you fool. Where is she staying?"

"The point is, I'm not allowed to say."

"Get out of my sight," I told her.

"That was the idea," she replied, and went to the stairs with Andrea in pursuit.

I felt utterly betrayed. I shouted at her, "You're not my wife! Why don't you take *her* as your lover? You two have the baby. I'll go to the vicarage and sod the lot of you! Diana too. She's fucking here and you couldn't tell me. You bastards, all of you."

Perhaps Aardse knew where she was staying. I had his number. I sent a text asking if he knew where she was staying. I soon received a reply.

She turned up at the school. I was furious when they told me. She didn't stay long with them; she didn't say where she was staying. I assumed she'd be staying with you. I don't even know where she was in Scotland and how she came back here. I don't know if she is returning to Scotland. But she can stay away from the kids and from me.

I needed to reply:

The woman's real name was Sally Hughes. She lived in Forres, near Inverness. All I know is that Adam Magellan, Alfia Shrimpton and Andrea Plimpton travelled to see a minister called Seumas Caimbeul, a Pagan priest like these two women. He has a retreat at Kinloch Rannoch. I did not know they brought Diana back, but Allie has just told me. They made out they were on a stakeout in Serninsea, but I worked out they'd gone to Scotland. I had no reason to think that Diana's relationship with Sally Hughes has ended - if it has. She was calling herself Diana King or Diana Monarch, something like that. I am quite upset about the deception everyone has employed.

Consulting Bishops (Friday 1st May)

Christine on screen thought we could make the argument that an ordination service of eternity can be across space and time in which we were nevertheless in direct communication, and that if others did not agree we could later on, after lockdown, do ordinations *sub conditione* to make sure they were accepted.

Nevertheless, Christine said someone must be present physically. This ruled out making Peter the bishop because he could not come into the building. Allie and Andrea were residents, and my hands would be on one of those heads. Andrea would need incardinating as well, I suggested.

Christine added, "Even Allie has to be ordained in a Catholic manner into a bona fide Catholic Church: I'd therefore incardinate Allie into the Albion Church and

then, if you must, send her back into your Free Liberal Ecclesia. It sounds like you don't want to consecrate Allie?"

"She is not trustworthy. She is more interested in being a witch and being sexually ritualistic with Andrea."

"Interesting, that. And you are going to be an Anglican again? Really?"

"It's not interesting: it is betrayal and so close after our wedding. Like Andrea and Lynton Plimpton, it's gone wrong. These two must be actively destroying marriages - and Allie is pregnant."

"I don't buy it. Allie loves you. So you weren't attracted to the Unitarians after all. The Anglicans must pay better too. But at least the Anglicans are nowadays apostolically sound."

"The Unitarians were too clubby. I understand the Anglican club; I'm still partly and culturally Anglican. Yes, it is about having an income. I will be cut off from the Serninsea Liberal Ecclesia but I could donate some of my salary to keep it going. I suppose I'd have to move into the vicarage too."

"It takes self-sacrifice to a new level! I must say, I do agree with you moving back into a properly apostolic Church. But you surprise me even considering such a move back. You don't do self-discipline enough."

"You do, of course."

"I do self-sacrifice."

"Talking of money, and property: have you housed Diana King, Diana de Groot?"

"No. Is she back in town?"

"Yes, but Allie won't tell me where. She, Andrea and Adam brought her back."

"Then it's more likely Ann and Labhaoise have found her somewhere to live."

"Yes, of course: Ann will have told him to go and get her. That is why he went all that way."

"Isn't that sort of roadtrip illegal?"

"Indeed," I replied.

I arranged a time we could do an ordination service. It would have to be with Allie. I went outside Andrea's room.

"You two in here? What are you doing?"

Allie opened the door, a small amount, with nothing on.

"Are you two having an affair?"

"No. We are avoiding you."

Allie opened the door wide and a nude Andrea was sat on her double bed in front of a *Coppit* board game, where they were using all six colours.

"My God, they've got the toy box out."

Andrea said, "Got it out of the toy box."

Christine online, and me next to you, are going to ordain you as bishop, Allie. I don't know if I can trust you."

"Adam went to collect Diana. She wanted me to go as well because she can't stand him. When he said she had sanctuary at Tigh na h' Iobairte, Andrea and I jumped at the chance to go. She and I did a Covens ritual with him. We brought Diana back."

"Is she in one of Ann's properties?"

"Diana arranged it - or, rather, she was intending to get the train from Rannoch Moor to Rasa Market, and Adam pick her up from there. Fancying a sense

of adventure, Adam took her hefty rail fare and gave her a lift all the way instead. Diana did not want you to know she was back in town, but obviously having approached her kids Aardse came here to warn her off."

"I am involved so where is she?"

"I will ask her permission to tell you."

"I'll swing for you one day."

"Seal of the confessional."

"You're not a priest, not yet. Go back to your lover."

"Andrea is not my lover. Look, we've been avoiding you daytime; nights with you are terrible. So fuck off and leave us alone. "

"Don't you dare tell me to fuck off."

"Just fuck off Linda and start to behave yourself."

"How dare you! I took you in off the streets. I built this place, and you just stuck your snout in."

"Fuck off. Try and punch me Linda and you'll be on your back and kicked in the crotch."

Andrea then said, "Allie! Leave it."

I stormed off back down the stairs and sort of circled the seating area with its many fewer chairs. Now there was a message from Lynton Plimpton.

Visit the empty vicarage and see how you'd fancy living there. There is a limited budget for redecorating, so consider that. The door will be unlocked this afternoon. Just go in.

Arriving there, I was so conflicted. Who would not be the Vicar of Serninsea?

I did love Allie, but I could not handle her. I did not know what to do with her. She seemed to do just what she liked when she liked. Andrea, being separated after five minutes in her own marriage, seemed like the happiest woman in the world. Allie seemed to be the same as she ever was. I was the mug. Even Diana did not trust me. Ann had not housed her, apparently.

It seemed to me the vicarage was in good order. Then there was a ring on the doorbell. This could be my first action as vicar before even becoming the vicar, if I'd become the vicar. I opened the door to find Bishop Lynton Plimpton.

"I'd like to come in."

"You're not supposed to come in."

"I do live here, on and off. Let's keep our distance, then."

He walked backwards. So I let him in, walked backwards myself, and he shut the door. Then he wiped the handle.

He said, "I, er, viewed the PCC meeting but didn't have a camera. Harold Crosland resigned and I had to tell them to continue. I'll sort all that out."

"They don't want me. I can't go against mass opposition."

"It's not as simple as what they want. We're not a democracy. Your pal Christine Vine knows that."

"I'm not sure she is my pal."

"The fact is I need to sort out this corner of the Wytham diocese. Jeremy was easier to install, but then Serninsea Marshes and its many hardly used churches is very weak. Many of its people came here but, frankly, Serninsea isn't much stronger. I want to get back to Wytham city. You two can run this area pretty much like you

want. You two would get on well, have more of a unity of purpose. You'd be the rural dean from the off. What do you want? How long do you need before you take your first service?"

"I don't know."

"Run around naked, go to bed here with your wife. I don't care if you and her run both places from your bed. Just don't quote me. As for Harold Crosland, I think I can get him back on to the PCC."

"You make a tempting offer, but then so did Satan."

"Thanks for that comparison. Do you actually *like* Allie? I don't even like Andrea. I wonder what she has said about me?"

"Andrea gave no details and I don't want to know. I actually love Allie for her faults. I can't handle her, but she is exciting."

"Marriage does involve exposure to personal habits. It suited both of us, the marriage, and yet it was soon impossible. While it happened she did her wifely duties and chose not to complain. She will have an affair with Allie."

"They're not. Not so far."

"She did with Rhiannon. It's how Andrea bought her off. I discovered Andrea's past too late. She'll calculate when it's best to get her sexual kicks from Allie. I'm best shot of her. It was my mistake to think that her ambition and public role as a doctor would suit a public marriage."

I said I'd look at the bedrooms and he'd better leave well in front of me.

He said, "I'd have married *you!* We'd make a good team. Do you *fancy* being Bishop of Bolingbroke? Imagine what John Barman would make of that. You'd have one over him."

"You keep tempting me. Go away, Lynton."

"I need decisions, Linda, not your prevaricating."

He went and I toured the house. Colin Cromer had a fine house for such a long time, before he retired to the Lake District and found love. He could have married the Rumanian, until he was userped by Adam.

Seeking Diana

I walked to the Titansea Grand but had to ring on the doorbell and speak into a grille.

"You do have some residents staying here?"

"Yes we do."

"Do you have a woman who came recently and took up residence called Diana Monarch, Diana King or possibly Diana de Groot?"

"No one has come recently. We have a handful of residents, all of whom have been here for some time."

"Like Alfred Burger, for example."

"Yes, I know the man."

"No one called Diana?"

"No one called Diana."

Walking back towards the bethel, it dawned on me that Adam and Yojana Asthana had a client relationship. I'd get my SUV and try her parents' guest house, Maa Skelter.

At the car I saw our neighbour in the tenfoot with her dog, coming round the back from the north.

"Hello Klärchen," I said.

"And Dieter?"

"Hello Dieter."

"Can I see your new garden?"

"Yes, but not with the dog. The turf is new."

"Dieter is not going to foul your garden, and if he did I would do the 'poop scoop' as you call it. You know, Mrs. Shrimpton, you can be horrible to Dieter."

"Oh, go on." They followed me in. "So we have benches, and a big firepit. Makes a difference. You can keep really warm, even at night."

"Thank you. Come on Dieter."

Dieter then pissed against the high fence and Klärchen looked at me.

"Territory," she said.

"Yes, I know."

I got into the SUV and drove north for the coast road that took me to the coastal guest house. I could see Diana on the beach, wearing a top and shorts, and it wasn't a private beach so I walked towards her.

"Oy. You could have told me."

"Who told you I was here?"

"No one. I worked it out for myself. Sally Hughes, wasn't it?"

"The fantasy didn't last very long. I contacted Adam. Later I told him to bring Allie. You had to be out of it. Aardse blames you for turning my head."

"Like a lesbian?"

"Yeah. I'm not a lesbian."

"I live in a mad world with a wife who says she is a lesbian when she's had more knob in her fanny than I've seen naturist willies, and a woman who says she isn't a lesbian when she desires sex with women. I mean, come on!"

"How did Allie try to keep my trip back unknown?"

"With cock and bull stories including about a stakeout with Andrea over her separated husband and Rhiannon Fleetwood."

"You saw through these?"

"None added up."

"Those two are disgusting. They did a kind of sperm-smearing ritual with that Unitarian minister. I recovered my naturism with him."

"Sperm-smearing? He's a Pagan High Priest. I doubt there's much call for it in Unitarianism."

"She was already pregnant so his sperm wasn't exactly needed. Congratulations, by the way."

"Maybe."

"Allie was near to heaven, there. It sounds to me like she is very reliable too, keeping my secret at potential cost to your relationship. She keeps her word. You should treasure her."

She explained that she was not surprised that Aardse was rough mannered towards her. She said Yojana wasn't charging a commercial rate to stay; Diana was the only person outside the family staying there.

I asked, "Do you have any plans?"

"I have no plans at all. I'm exposed as a fool. I'll have to find a place to live,

and arrange some sort of access. If I'd have waited I could have had the college job online and the job at the casino furloughed. I'm going to try and see if anything is possible next week."

"What possessed you to just run off with this woman?"

"I don't know. I was fed up, things were sterile, nothing was going anywhere. I was part of a group of people who were crackers about *The Jacobite Gap Years*. More and more I chatted to one woman and, well, all my self-discipline regarding you went out of the window with her. But she was nothing like the person I imagined online. Yes we visited places and so on, but she was unreal or opposite of me. They expected us to do re-enactments. That was seriously weird."

"What did you do?"

"I was Lady Gordon."

"What did she do?"

"Look it up. I wish to unremember it, if I can. Oh Sally will move on: the more the merrier."

"Come and live at the bethel, though I might not be there much longer. The new diocesan bishop lives in Serninsea but with Andrea out he wants me to be Vicar of Serninsea. And Bishop of Bolingbroke."

"I'd do it," Diana said. "If they want you, you can call the shots."

"If you come to the bethel, you may have to share a room with Andrea Lindsey - for a while. Do you know her at all?"

"She's become my GP. She's already sent me a prescription for tablets. When it comes to accommodation, beggars can't be choosers," said Diana.

I pointed out that she wasn't begging and she'd be welcome. The bethel functioned as a household and she could join it. She said Yojana had told her she was in their household, a resident - but only for the time being.

I told Diana that I would come up until she came down to move in.

Narrator: Linda *Apologies* (Friday 1st May)

In the sitting and dining area, I said to the two Pagans, "I've got a problem and it needs both of you to listen."

Andrea said, "I will need to shower quickly and soon, because I've got surgery this evening."

"I've found Diana and chatted with her, at the beach behind Yojana's place. It was an obvious place to visit. Anyway, she said you, Allie, are reliable, keeping her secrets. Puts a different perspective on things."

"Yeah, well, there you go. I couldn't win; I knew that," said Allie. "Andrea supported me. Anyway, read what Derrida says about a secret. A secret allows a promise to be made. We promised Diana."

"Not Derrida at this point, *surely!*"

Andrea said, "He does change the definition of 'secret', Allie. A secret is something that lies beyond systematic rationalising or intuition. It's not something I know and keep to myself. This secret always escapes anyone's possession."

"I know this," said Allie.

"And I don't and I don't care," I stated.

"It allows for creativity," said Allie. "And faith."

"Derrida is totally overrated," I added.

"Even if there is no secret, it remains paradoxical," said Allie. "But, yes, I prefer the concept of the secret in anthropology: it defines identity, and both group belonging and exclusion."

"Hmm. Meanwhile, on planet Earth, Diana needs somewhere to stay, and there is your half of a double bed, Andrea."

"It's not the most obvious arrangement, is it?" said Allie.

"What of our marriage if I sleep with Diana and you sleep with Andrea?"

"We've managed to keep hands off. Rituals only," Allie said.

"It's no secret that I really must be having this shower," said Andrea.

"Andrea: don't take her from me."

"I'm not."

"*She* hasn't - but you've come bloody close," said Allie.

"Yes, yes. I'm sorry."

"Look, Diana slept with you when you needed it, so now you can sleep with her. I'll sleep alongside Andrea."

Andrea herself said, "I'm in the same room regardless? I'm going upstairs."

"We do have showers in the wet room."

"Change of clothes as well."

"Do you need a lift?"

"My car is but a short distance away."

"Let me take you."

As I drove her to her surgery, Andrea said, "You don't want to lose Allie and she will have this baby. Allie thinks you've lost your sense of daring."

"Hmm."

"Diana is probably very fragile and alone. Be her friend and support. She'll welcome the comfort."

"Here you are."

"I shouldn't tell you this, but one of my patients this evening is Annie Fenwick. I have to see her physically. I'm going to try and read her the riot act. I'm pleased that Allie has not had contact with her recently. Allie did pornographic performances in Somerset. She could be going the way of Annie now. So the strong ritualistic sex has been all there is between us. I've kept my hands off her otherwise. I've enjoyed being naked with her, but we haven't even showered together."

"But if Diana comes, you might."

"Just be realistic, Linda. I must go." She got out of the car.

"What about you and Rhiannon Fleetwood?"

She stood by the opened window. "Up front, then. By having sex with her, a number times, and I enjoyed it, it forced her to be fake with all her puritanical preaching. I told Lynton not to use her, but he did, and I told him to get shot of her, which he was forced to do by circumstances. She thought she could stay on by revealing our behaviour to Lynton. Nah."

"I didn't know."

"*She* could have married Lynton: they'd have made a great pair. I really do have to go. I didn't fake my religion like her. Thanks to the lockdown I won't let her in. Bye."

"Crumbs. Bye."

I went back to Yojana's and waited outside. Diana and Yojana appeared, both of them with piercing nipples into their tops.

"Hang on," she said to Yojana and separated from her.

I said, "Come to the bethel, Diana, any time. You'll share my bed. Allie will sleep with Andrea for the time being. Roger and Marie are in the other room."

"Can I think about it over the weekend?"

"Of course. My mobile number is the same."

"Mine isn't. I'll send you a message and that will give you the contact. Yojana and I are going to risk taking our tops off."

That meant three of us, for half an hour, turning on to our fronts when the odd person passed by. I preferred nudity and some shade from the sea breeze, so ended up nude in the garden along with Allie, Roger and Marie. Tomorrow there we'd celebrate Naked Gardening Day.

Narrator: Linda *Ordinations* (Sunday 3rd May)

Ringling around, no one objected to Allie being a bishop and deacons being priested, so that I had the ability to walk away to the Anglican vicarage.

The hasty ordinations service was going out online, and coming in online. Roger was doing the honours with the technology. His sister, Marie, was watching the service as laity. It was to be led by Bishop Christine Vine, on video from her new house in Eslaforde. From Coniscotes to the north appeared Bishop Bill Masters and Bishop Pauline Junor together, where they now lived as one household. They were just beyond the Serninsea Marshes collection of parishes. The Reverend Deacons Kathleen and Winnie Lott appeared from Winnie's mother's house in Serninsea and the Reverend Deacon Peter Marshall was at his father's in Inglemire to the south. Kathryn Marshall was not involved. An essential participant was Bishop Dominic Himalaya from near Durham. Of course we were on screen to FLE others.

I explained. "We'll have a meeting at very short notice this week, but I could be Vicar of Serninsea on Sunday next and so we need to get our ordinations done now. We make the argument that the ordinations are legitimate now but when we can all gather physically we or you will do them again."

This was going to be a long service, because of the several stages it had to go through.

Bishop Dominic was going to release us all from the Free Liberal Ecclesia and then, at the end, take us back. He didn't like doing this, but accepted my request because of my potential loss and the need for the equality of the replacement - Allie. This meant that during the ordination process, we were part of Christine's Church.

Indeed, Bishop Christine started with her welcome, and pointed out that the service was under the auspices of the *Ecclesia Albionis Catholico Orthodoxa* or the Albion Catholic and Orthodox Ecclesia and its use of the altar table at the Serninsea Liberal Bethel. "In the matter of eternity, all our hands and actions point to that altar table. Bishop Linda, physically present at that altar table, known in holiness as Mar Reticulum, will become bishop of this Church, the Albion Catholic and Orthodox Ecclesia. The liturgy is authentic Liberal Catholic of a variety under the guidance of the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Albionis Catholico*

Orthodoxa."

Christine continued: "However, for the avoidance of doubt and as indicated we shall at the earliest opportunity repeat the liturgy physically in one place and ordain *sub conditione* at that forthcoming time. But in this time, in these places, we point to that place in Serninsea and claim this is one ordination service, just as Masses up and down the line re-enact the one crucifixion. The bread and wine of this service are around our locations, but the one altar table extends itself to all participants. This includes anyone taking part, who brings their own bread and red wine to their devices and participates in this service. We all connect with that altar table."

So what she meant was something like having a virtual setting for real presence.

She also explained that, "When we hear ordinarily, '*This is my body, it is given for you, do this in remembrance of me,*' we understand that the ritual gift requires something from us, from our bodies given for the other. '*This is my blood*' ordinarily surely means this is my life flowing around my body, and for this we just embrace life against death, held in a fluid. But in these days of Coronavirus, our ritualistic passing of fundamental sexual energy must be symbolised and made safe. We are not anti-science; the supernatural aspect does not overturn science."

Bishop Bill began with, "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world. The peace of the God be always with us.*"

We said, "*The peace of the God be always with us.*"

Moving between Bill and Pauline, we made our apologies to the divine, for forgiveness, and this moved us to the first substantive segment, incardination.

Bishop Dominic Himalaya said, "When I give your name, bow your head, and as according to denominational decisions made collectively by our clergy, you are each released from the Free Liberal Ecclesia.

"Bishop Linda Shrimpton, the Reverend Deacon Alfia Shrimpton, the Reverend Deacon Peter Marshall, the Reverend Deacon Winnie Lott, the Reverend Deacon Kathleen Lott."

Then alongside us two, the Reverend Andrea Lindsey raised her arms and said, "I declare that I have formally resigned from priestly ministry at Serninsea Parish in the National Church Diocese of Wytham in a letter to the diocesan Bishop Lynton Plimpton, otherwise known as Lynton Wytham. An email indicated receipt and acceptance with a formal letter to come. However, I was ordained priest and priest I remain."

Bishop Bill now said, "We have examined the deaconate and priestly ordinations of the Reverend Andrea Lindsey, investigating those involved in laying on of hands, and we are satisfied that she is indeed a *bone fide* priest."

At this point Bishop Christine incardinated us into the the Albion Catholic and Orthodox Ecclesia under the guidance of the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Albionis Catholico Orthodoxa*. Each of us had to remove our ecclesiastical gowns and drop naked to the floor, lying upon them, in the direction of the altar table or, elsewhere, towards the screen showing the Serninsea altar table.

Bishop Christine named us as coming into her Church. "Mar Reticulum, Bishop Linda Shrimpton, formerly of the Free Liberal Ecclesia; the Reverend Andrea Lindsey, priest, formerly of the National Church, of the Anglican Communion, the Reverend Deacon Alfia Shrimpton, formerly of the Free Liberal Ecclesia, the

Reverend Deacon Peter Marshall, formerly of the Free Liberal Ecclesia, the Reverend Deacon Winnie Lott, formerly of the Free Liberal Ecclesia, the Reverend Deacon Kathleen Lott, formerly of the Free Liberal Ecclesia."

There was a surprise in the next part. We had to say together, one by one, 'I give my fealty and collaboration to the bench of bishops: Bishop Christine Vine, known as Mar Werburga, elevated to Princess Divine Impactor the First, the Primus Bishop of the Albion Catholic and Orthodox Ecclesia, and to her sister and brother bishop successors.' I didn't know that she had become 'Princess Divine Impactor' and 'Primus Bishop', but I thought I should say it without laughter. Cameras picked up our sprawled bodies and mouthing the words we had to repeat.

With the words given we were all told to rise and wear our gowns again.

Christine now introduced the ordinations: "*God gave a hierarchy of ministries. Bishops shepherd Christ's flock, guard the faith, proclaim the faith and lead the people in mission. Bishops ask their priests to represent them, where bishops cannot be present.*" (Actually, Christine's Church had no priests.) "*Bishops gather God's people and lead them into celebrating the sacraments through which, in their local Church, they link with every Church in place and time. Deacons also gather God's people to represent, preach and teach, as directed by the bishop.*"

Then, remotely, across virtual space, we ordained Peter Marshall, Winnie Lott and Kathleen Lott as priests. I laid hands on Allie and she became a priest too.

Then came the making of a bishop into the Albion Catholic and Orthodox Ecclesia, and as a guiding member of the vanguard body, the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Albionis Catholico Orthodoxa*.

Bishop Christine asked Bishops Bill, Pauline and me, "*Do you believe Alfia Shrimpton to be of godly life and appropriate learning?*"

We replied together, "We do."

"*Is she called to this ministry?*"

We replied together, "She is."

Bishop Christine asked Allie, "*Do you believe that you are called into this episcopal ministry?*"

"I do," Allie answered.

Then she gave her oath of continuing allegiance to the Albion Catholic and Orthodox Ecclesia and its Princess Archbishop, Mar Werburga, to work with her and other bishops in collective responsibility, and to develop with other bishops the guiding work of the *Principatus Theocratic Confraternitati admissis in Ecclesia Albionis Catholico Orthodoxa*.

Bishop Bill and Pauline handled the Hebrew Bible readings: Isaiah 42 v. 1-9 and Isaiah 61 1-3, the New Testament reading Acts 20 v. 17-35 and the Gospel readings: Matthew 18 v. 1-6 and Matthew 28 v. 16-20."

After the Gospel readings all said, "*Alleluia, alleluia.*"

Next stage was for me to describe a bishop as *moderator, promoter, and guardian of the Church's entire liturgical life to reveal the mystery of the Church, as in the Eucharist, led by the bishop, at which the priests fully assist and the deacons and people participate.*"

I now addressed Alfia. "*Sister, remove your robe to the ground and lie front first naked on it in front of me.*" She did, revealing some pubic hair that seemed redder than ever. "*Will you give your body and your life into this ministry that comes to you by the laying on of hands?*"

She said, *"Drawing upon the help of God, I will give my body and my life."*

"Will you be faithful and constant in your approach?"

"Drawing upon the help of God, I will be faithful and constant."

"Do you further affirm your acknowledgment in the role of the historical witness of the Creeds and Seven Councils of the Worldwide Church?"

"Drawing upon the help of God, I do so acknowledge."

"Will you therefore preserve and develop the faith?"

"Drawing upon the help of God, I will do both."

The rest was to accept Church discipline, be faithful in prayer and action, to build the Church, be collegiate and in general show compassion.

"Will you live a principled and holy life and make your home a place of hospitality and welcome?"

"Drawing upon the help of God, I will live a principled and holy life and make my home welcoming."

As a result I asked for God's grace, that through this woman she *would guide the Church in word and sacrament, baptise and nurture, preside and be collegiate regarding the the ordination of deacons, priests and bishops.*

Leaving her on her front, Bishop Dominic took up the role of intercessions. This meant he participated in prayers without doing the controversial stuff.

Once done Princess Bishop Christine said, *"O God, we give you thanks that you have called your servant Alfia Shrimpton to forward herself as bishop. All present bishops shall again lay hands across cyberspace and physically in Serninsea.*

I said, *"Alfia, arise; naked to the world, kneel on your ecclesiastic garment, and bow your head."*

With all bishops having their hands outstretched to their cameras and mine on her head, Mar Werburga, Bishop Christine, called out: *"O God, send down the Holy Spirit on your servant Alfia Shrimpton for the office and work of bishop in your Church. Fill this your servant with the grace and power which was given to your Apostles, that as a true shepherd she may feed and lead your flock, proclaiming the gospel of your salvation. Sustain her as she guards and develops the faith, and works the sacraments, and acts as teacher and guide. Use her to increase your Church and renew its ministry, in humility and authority, uniting the faithful in truth and love. In the name of our parental God, embodied in humanity, and animated through us all. Amen."*

We all said, *"Amen."*

Now Allie was able to put on her robe. Bishop Christine now said, *"Welcome Bishop Alfia. You had already received a Bible. Receive now from Bishop Linda a pectoral cross, and a mitre. Marie handed them to me and I gave them to Allie, the cross placed around her neck and the mitre on her head. (Actually, they were my spares!) Then, Marie gave me a pastoral staff, and, giving it to Allie, I said: "Take this staff as a sign of your pastoral office: keep watch over the whole flock in which the Holy Animator has appointed you to shepherd the Church of God."*

I did the sign of the cross.

Christine named her: *"Right Reverend Bishop Alfia Shrimpton, your holy name is Mar Bana-Bhuidseach. You are: Mar Bana-Bhuidseach, Bishop Alfia Shrimpton."* Yes, she correctly pronounced the 'Bh' as a 'V'.

We now sang a hymn. It was called, *Bread and Wine are of the Earth*, from a

Unitarian hymn book. This indicated the next stage, which was the Eucharist.

I conducted it, during which I explained that all the bread and wine in the various locations had been consecrated by me, and it included the bread and wine any viewers had brought to their devices. This was within the one Church, the Albion Catholic and Orthodox Ecclesia, I said. (Therefore, Dominic Himalaya took no presiding role.)

The final part of the service was Bishop Dominic asking Bishop Christine (the Princess Archbishop Mar Werburga) if she would release the following people from her Church: he did not use our ecclesiastical names. He called out these names to which she said, "Yes," each time. They were Bishop Linda Shrimpton, Bishop Alfia Shrimpton, the Reverend Andrea Lindsey, priest, the Reverend Peter Marshall, priest, the Reverend Winnie Lott, priest, and the Reverend Kathleen Lott, priest.

In that order he asked us if we wanted to join the Free Liberal Ecclesia each time to each name, to which we each said, "Yes."

That was it, followed by a hymn.

Yet it would all be repeated at a point where we could gather in one place, but in the meantime we would see if other Churches made statements to accept that these were proper ordinations. We assumed they were and this is all that mattered.

In conversation afterwards, Pauline, Bill and Christine had decided earlier that Christine, as primus of their Church, should be a Princess Bishop and she chose the name Divine Impactor (the First). She knew the legacy of the name Divine as both godly, heavenly, and prostitute, and the Impactor suggested making heavy blows for the Gospel.

"I am a primus bishop and not an archbishop because our bishops affirmed me and we keep our given roles, as we keep our dioceses, when becoming primus, and principal loyalty is to the bench of bishops in all its principles. In a sense all the bishops together are the Archbishop."

Allie approved of her ecclesiastical name, Mar Bana-Bhuidseach.

"What does it mean?"

"Female sorcerer - a witch."

I did not give the golden vote to Allie, the one I held in reserve, at this time. I'd hand that power over at the last minute, as I'd leave for the vicarage.

Narrator: Linda *Collecting* (Monday 4th May)

Two phone calls and one video call later with Diana, I drove to Yojana's parents' guest house to park towards the beach and for Diana and me to lug two suitcases into the SUV. Some of the luggage had come from a trip to her former home with items left outside. Fortunately these days had been cloudy and dry.

Diana and I got into the vehicle. I had some words for her.

"We have rearranged sleeping, right. Allie has gone into Andrea's room, and you are coming into mine on the top floor."

"I don't need looking after."

"Okay, so before we start let's not revert backwards. You used to lecture me on the difference between having a man and having a woman. You spun this line, until indeed you looked after me and then we went to the Caramel Club. And then

you tried to isolate the Caramel Club. Well, you're coming into my bed not because I am going to look after you but because we can enjoy the company of each other."

"You're married to Allie. You changed your name. She's having a baby with you."

"I've been thinking. I can't approach Allie without putting on some kind of authority figure presentation, whereas I approach you definitely as an equal. We have known each other a long time and, whatever Allie and I have done and are doing, I am and always have been deeply in love with you."

"I made a great mistake with Sally Hughes. Anyone who calls herself something so different online has to be dodgy. I was hoping for some time of reflection. I've been a fool and I don't want to make a mistake with you."

"Changing one's name is getting rather frequent. Allie changed her name and now Christine has added another name set to her own collection."

"What?"

"Princess Divine Impactor. *Bishop* Allie has acquired an ecclesiastical name: Bana-Bhuidseach."

"Allie is your wife. You have sex with her. I need to stay somewhere, but..."

"I'm not asking for sex, but for love: you alongside me. You can reflect. We have long days in there: I'll have some afternoons making love with Allie. But we two can sleep alongside each other."

"Do what you want. I told you beggars can't be choosers."

"Oh, Diana. It's not going to be like that." I explained that we still have students coming in, who prepare food, and we go out distributing it, keeping our distances at every front door. We have since negotiated with the Sikhs as well as the Social Services and the NHS about doors to knock on. At least it gave the mornings shape. I told her of the new garden and of having little to do with our neighbour given that Allie cannot go next door to have her hair done.

Arriving at the bethel, parking at the front, and viewing the private door, Diana said, "Two bloody suitcases; all I've got to show for anything."

"Have you brought your editions of *The Jacobite Gap Years*?"

"What? I left them in Scotland, mate. Your man Seumas Caimbeul has the discs."

"Allie's man, not mine."

"That book series and television interpretation has caused me nothing but grief. I joined a literary cult. How Allie understands any Gaelic I don't know: I couldn't make head or tail of it but I was expected to learn it while meeting Lord Gordon's penis under a long kilt. And the other thing is, if you're related to someone as umpteenth cousin and a few removed, are you actually related to them at all?"

"You are if you keep fucking them, like she did."

I gave Diana keys to the private door and our own room. She lugged the suitcases while I took the SUV around the back, and squeezed it into its parking space. I could hear a noise from the garden, so took a look.

Inside was naked Allie and not Andrea Lindsey but nude Klärchen Sisse and her dog Dieter along with nude and tattooed Megan and her cocker spaniel Stoke.

Gesturing to bring Allie forward, which she did, I said, quietly, "We're not supposed to share with other households in the garden."

"She's lonely. Have some compassion."

"And Megan here?"

"Megan's moved in."

"Klärchen's not lonely, then."

"Just be more generous. Everyone is behaving themselves."

"Where is Andrea?"

"Andrea is talking to patients - she's doing phone appointments in the consultation room."

"I have to help Diana. Two flights of stairs and heavy luggage. Kiss me."

She kissed me.

But by the time I got upstairs to the third storey, Diana was in the open small lounge there outside the room.

"Where do you do the laundry?"

"The kitchen, bottom floor. We do it when the students have gone."

Inside the bedroom she had items to place and clothes to put in the wardrobe. Allie had removed hers already.

I said to Diana, "Let me look at you. I thought we'd lost you for good."

"You lost me for five minutes."

Now I kissed her on the lips, and she didn't move away.

"You see, Diana, I love you so much. You're not some flash in the pan. You are in here, somewhere."

"You'll have no resistance from me."

"That is precisely the wrong attitude."

"Things are not easy for me."

"I know." My hands were on her shoulders. "But this place is sanctuary. It is for Roger and Marie, and it is for all of us. And I know you love me, because you demonstrated it. And you had a stillborn once, and you called her Linda."

"That was a worst time than this."

"Diana. I'd like to make love to you. Can we undress and actually make love?"

"If you want."

"Diana, *please*."

"Yes."

"Good lass."

"My pubic hair is massive. That's how the Highlander women had it, they said."

She and her thick, dense, pubic hair, and what lay beyond it, received my attention. What I liked was I was able to examine her closely. I'd seen her nude so many times, but this was up front and personal. I licked her, I wetted my fingers from her juices within.

I presented myself to her, just as I am, and she commented upon the actual depth of my vagina.

Some forty five minutes later I was parting her hair from her eyes. The passion I had for Allie didn't match this: here was my life partner who'd made a recent mistake and several earlier.

"Help me see my children," Diana said.

"Yes, I will. Aardse has to be reasonable. Your relationship with him is finished, but they are your flesh and blood."

I soon told Allie that we'd made love, and she was free to enjoy Andrea however she liked. We'd still be mothers, but we had to be realistic about our emotional partners. "I don't want to lose you, but I think Andrea is better for you than

me."

"I have an idea for you to consider," said Allie. "Take Diana to the vicarage. She can be your housekeeper over there. Then she sleeps with you there, and here too. She'll have a whole house to organise. She could run your diary as well."

"Wow. This is a really good idea. At the moment she'll do anything I ask. Bishop Allie, you're so, you know, *intelligent*. Yeah, I could take her with me."

Narrator: Linda Sarah, Diana and Andrea (Wednesday 13th May)

Sarah Deimos, Suffragan Bishop of Heretu was making a call.

"Am I on the big screen or a little screen and who can see me?"

"Which do you prefer?" I asked.

"You only."

"It's just me, in the vestry, and out there the screens are now... blank. Are you welcoming me back into the Anglican fold?"

"Am I fuck? What do you think you are doing? This is why I am calling. Please stop."

Diana approached the vestry and then wandered away a few feet (the door was lightly open).

I said, "Lynton Plimpton's tank has flattened all before it. The PCC has rolled over. I'm becoming Vicar of Serninsea. I'm taking Diana to be my housekeeper and my lover."

"I thought at least one person - you - had some sort of moral credibility."

"You don't approve of Diana being in the vicarage?"

"Not *that*. Crumbs, Harriet's here. That's *their* immorality. I have to hide her because we are sexual and you'd have a housekeeper when she's really a lover. That's what Roman Catholic male priests do: Hilfs."

"Hilfs?"

"Housekeepers I'd Like to Fuck."

"Sarah!"

"But more than that, you are religious I'll admit but you don't believe all the crunchy guff."

"I don't think moral and ethical standards come into it. I threw them out a while back. You might be confusing me with somebody else," I replied.

"Who?"

"No idea. There's no one left."

"You know about me and Jenny World lying through our teeth. You'll be doing the same. At least Andrea Plimpton has come to her senses. I need someone to talk to I know, like you, and who is unashamed about my Ms Leda. Come on, my sister joined your mob and she knows you like being in it. I just want to get out, when the moment is right."

"It seems I'm taking the shilling. Even Allie wants me to earn the dosh and donate. She's a bishop now, ready to take up the reins."

"There is a rumour coming from the Reverend Margaret McEnhill at Wytham diocesan HQ that Lynton Plimpton wants you as Bishop of Bolingbroke."

"That's gossip is doing its thing."

"So is he giving you what you want?"

"I don't want that but yes in other ways. It must be the shock of him losing Andrea and shoving me in a ready-made hole or two."

"From what I've heard, much via Middlesbrough, Andrea and he suited each other. She's ambitious; he's two-faced. A few got to know that she had to wipe his arse - and I don't mean figuratively. She had to do it when he was Suffragan Bishop of Sumorsæte. Here's the thing: he could have been in that sex cult and it's only a fluke that he wasn't. Instead of promoting you, he could have been oppressing you. Sumorsæte were glad to be rid of him, for all sorts of reasons, and now you've got him! Her brother Alan is just the same, and he's far more orthodox too."

"She wiped her brother's arse?"

"No, in marrying that suffragan, em, Bishop Vivienne Space, the Suffragan Bishop of Morchard, who is temporarily up in Middlesbrough - on loan, so to speak. There was a transfer fee of nil. He has ecclesiastical ambition, the fool. I don't know what they do in bed as he isn't in Middlesbrough. Maybe nothing ever. She's a gossip and is spreading some shit about Andrea. It's Linda, Harri - don't worry. She's a good egg. Anyway, I should know that if I come down there, to your vicarage, I can bring along Harriet and we stay in the one room?"

"Yes, of course. Hello Harri! So are you going to welcome me back in?"

"No I won't. Linda: you are a bloody fool. I'm not going to tell you lies. I do it too often, as so will you. All this does is tell me to make more of an effort to get out. I need somewhere to go, to pay my way."

Off she went. Sarah had made her point. In came Diana, who'd been outside the door walking back and forth in the shape of a snake.

"You were talking to someone."

"Sarah Deimos in Hartlepool. Full of passed on secrets, she is."

"Allie says that if I have secrets from you I'd better tell you. Especially if I am going to clean for you and do your washing."

"You still have some?"

"You know that your father took away my virginity."

"Well?"

"You should know how it came about."

"You were invited to our farm by me."

"Your dad wanted me to show him my private parts in more detail: to give his comments like educationally, this in a large shed. I thought naturists must have no barriers"

"You opened myself."

"Showed him. He said I had thicker labia than most, and also was rather gooey. He put his finger right in, you see and I let him do it. He told me about Lucinda's operations and that as a father he had a duty to see they'd worked."

"He never said such to me."

"He said you were an innocent and you knew it as 'cuddle time'. He told me that I seemed much more mature. He could tell if I was healthy and forming properly. I assumed you were normal."

"I am normal and I always was, and so was Lucinda."

"Sorry. Vaginaplasty or some weird name he told me then she'd had, but you hadn't. Well, of course you hadn't. He looked forward to see if you were functioning properly."

"Functioning properly?"

"Yes."

"I told your dad to try it out with my working vagina. In a box of pens and stuff he kept in a desk in that barn, he produced a ruler. There was a tap on a pipe close by and he washed it. Twelve centimetres it went in me - a bit of pain. So then he fucked me."

"What if he'd given you the stillborn?"

"I only lost my virginity to your father. I suppose Keith and then Adam followed on easily. I didn't lose my period after your father or after Keith. Your father withdrew and his sperm went over the ground. I'd never seen such before coming out."

"Did it put you off men?"

"No, but the person I fancied was... Ann Dromeghda, the teacher, always showing her legs and her tits. It wasn't just the boys she turned on. And I fancied you. I felt I was a bad girl. I was sort of pleased to experience what your dad did. I kept it from you because - according to your dad - telling you might have affected your growing up, your own sexual awakening sort of thing."

At this point there was a request to take a video call from Andrew Bibby.

"Hello Bishop Linda. We decided today, at our PCC meeting, as directed by the bishop, to offer you the post of Vicar of Serninsea. There will be a piece of paper to sign, and Bishop Lynton wants you to sign it in the vicarage. The papers will be there on Thursday and do it by two o'clock on Friday. Once done you move in on Saturday evening, your first set of services being on the Sunday coming. We need your answer."

"I want to have a meeting with my people here first. I've always sought their advice and consent, even if it is for the final time. Meanwhile, I'll want a new super king size bed for my bedroom in the vicarage, the bedroom that Colin Cromer used to have, and I want a double bed in the second bedroom for my housekeeper Diana King. Diana - show yourself to Andrew. I want her to live there rent free and be paid by the parish above the minimum wage for twenty hours a week work keeping the house and garden up to scratch."

"I'm sure the bishop can get someone to arrange that. Mo McArden, probably. And your wife will be living where?"

"In the Bethel. She's a bishop now. Andrea is her priest in the building. We have other priests elsewhere."

"So you'll separate from your wife?"

"No, we'll sleep in the same bed in the vicarage from time to time."

"No sex," he said.

"And plenty of trust," I replied.

"I will inform the bishop that you are first and finally seeking advice and consent from the people there."

"I expect to get it," I said back.

Thus the call confirming my appointment ended. I said to Diana. "There you go: I got you some spending money."

She said, "I don't want it. Your dad didn't abuse me. I saw him naked like I saw all your family, and I was doing this with reference to you. I could see all your body, unlike Ann Dromeghda's, and you could see mine. So, really, I invited your father into me. I wanted your father to show me. Keith and Adam were pushy. You didn't approach me, and I didn't know what to do because I wanted you. It's the fact

that Adam didn't support me when he should have. And later I thought your father was a bit unusual."

"And you didn't know about Jenny and me?"

"No. Only something was going on, somewhere, somehow, but no one knew and no one was sure who was involved. I hoped to find out, but Adam and you both kept your mouths shut. Linda. I heard Sarah Deimos just now. She's right. You should not be going over there. I'll go with you - of course I will, but you are selling your soul. It pains me."

"Oh. I didn't realise you thought that way."

"In our Wednesday meetings and other times I've seen how you've changed. Don't go back. They were rotten people. I know the worst of them have gone but the vibe off that Lynton Plimpton is dodgy. I'd heard from the college that this Plimpton isn't much better than Barman. At least Barman was consistent. People think Plimpton's acting decisively for them and then he drops them from a height. You'll get in post and then he'll undermine you rotten to show he's in charge."

"He's offered Jeremy and me a free hand."

"At best he changes his mind erratically. And I heard rumours about his personal habits as well. He is always with Miss Cork in college and they go to the toilet together. He won't go on his own. I think he used to soil his underpants too easily and has ended up with a cleaning fetish. Miss Cork is a former nurse, probably on a retainer."

"Oh crumbs. Let me think one final time."

Narrator: Allie *Linda's Necessary Meeting* (Wednesday 6th May)

We were gathered for a meeting, intending to release Linda, and send her off to the vicarage. Roger Humphrey and Diana King were in the garden.

One screen section showed new priest Peter Marshall, and another had new priests Kathleen and Winnie Lott. All clergy were voters. Then on screen came Bishop Dominic Himalaya followed by Margaret Lindbeck, both of them bishops of the denomination in the north east. The Reverend Louise Deimos, sister of Sarah, popped up. Each person speaking triggered the movement to the centre of the screen, others of us along the top and bottom.

Now Adam appeared on screen from down the road. We then had a request for attendance as a visiting Church from Bishop Christine Vine, now a Primus Bishop of the *Ecclesia Albionis Catholico Orthodoxa*.

We clergy took a vote, and Christine was welcomed from her home, along with bishops Bill and Pauline from their home.

Marie Enfield was asked by Linda and co-opted to take the minutes as a guest on site.

I sat as bishop alongside our retiring bishop. Also on my other, right hand side, was the Reverend Andrea Lindsey, newly incardinated. The camera saw the three of us at once.

"Can't understand why you are doing this!" said Louise, jumping to centre-screen. Sarah and Hari could be seen in the background against a brighter window.

Margaret Lindbeck added, "You're back-peddalling, Linda."

Linda (with us replacing her) said that she would try to explain everything as best she could, and of decisions made and yet to be made.

Linda asked an important question. "Why did you ask to be present, Adam - as you are entitled?"

"Because I need to oversee the matter of money and the holding company, and who gets the golden vote to override any captured vote. Linda has this authority, but in the vicarage is forced to have no dealings with this place and so who will gain her protective power?"

Once the minutes of the last meeting were accepted, and no apologies received, and all visitors welcomed, Linda explained matters.

"As you all know, I've been head-hunted by Unitarians and Anglicans. I have been interviewed by both, formally by Unitarians and informally by local Anglicans - but enough for both of them to make their decisions. In the end, the Unitarians only offered training ahead of another application, and they turned out to be too clubby. They were also hostile to Free Catholicism in general and the Free Liberal Ecclesia in particular - and I am not."

Dominic Himalaya offered the opinion that the Unitarians could be quite accusatory regarding supposed interference and possessive of definitions of being Unitarian.

Linda continued. "In terms of clubbiness, it was soon pretty obvious to me that I knew my way around Anglicanism. Now why would I even consider it? After all, the Anglicans won't recognise my marriage properly, and some have strange views about my sexual identity thinking that I am a man. Most of all we have the split between the *de jure* and the *de facto*, which is the basis of contradiction between what is laid down and what is done. But the clubbiness of Anglicanism is precisely negotiating its duplicity, which runs from top to bottom - orthodoxy, sexuality, even how it treats ecumenical and other faith relationships."

Margaret Lindbeck said, "If you stray into fundamentalism, as Anglicanism does, this is what you get."

Louise said, "I had to get out and lose a lot of economic security."

Linda said, "Meanwhile, they recognise, as it has been legally established, that I am a bishop, and so they want me to be, 'Bishop Linda Plimpton, Vicar of Serninsea.' Given that I am a bishop there is talk of me becoming Suffragan Bishop of Bolingbroke..."

"Stop!" said Christine. "Listen. This is new information, and you all need to know it. I have been interviewed, informally, by the PCC of St. Sernin's."

Linda said, "What?"

Everyone went quiet.

I said, "Tha's a rum do!"

Christine explained. "Harold Crosland resigned from the PCC and others on it were not happy with their informal interview of you. Lynton Plimpton pushed them to offer you the post, because he sees this corner of the diocese to be run by you and Jeremy. But he got Harold Crosland back on the PCC on the basis that they interviewed me, informally of course, despite being in the *Ecclesia Albionis Catholico Orthodoxa*."

Linda said, "I think we need to know the outcome."

"There is no outcome. He also wants one of the suffragan bishops put in place."

"So could you become the replacement for John Barman?" Linda asked.

"Or Julian Worsley - but definitely only one suffragan."

I asked: "How did the PCC respond to you: presumably they didn't care for your escorting activities."

"No, actually, they regarded me as having a ministry to sex workers, of which there is a need in this town. They liked the fact that I am a property developer, owner, renter. They liked the fact that I have a strong ecclesiology. In fact they seemed to like me a lot."

Linda asked, "When did this informal interview happen?"

"Yesterday evening."

"After - *after*? - I was offered the post. The papers will be waiting for me in the vicarage - for me. Andrew Bibby contacted me."

"He did, but Harold Crosland didn't. They are both churchwardens."

Adam said, "Sounds like a churchwardens' power struggle going on."

Andrea asked if she could comment.

I replied. "I'd love to have your insight, because we could make decisions here and then I walk into the vicarage and find some sort of complication. Andrea, please!"

"Lynton does this. He sets things up, finds oppositions, acts to see how they might resolve, and then further acts to make a conflict that suits him. He does want, in all likelihood, Jeremy and you to run the parishes. But a number of people transferred from Serninsea Marshes to Serninsea after Jim Wilson vanished, and with Rhiannon Fleetwood appointed. Then a number of people left. Well, some will leave at your appointment, Linda, and you haven't handed over this Bethel as a slave church or Fresh Expressions. So you come with nothing. Christine has, well, her own money and resources. Have you asked for a salary, Bishop Christine?"

"I told the interviewers that I could be unpaid. I don't need common tenure either, because I don't need any sense of protection in employment."

Andrea said, "In the light of Bishop Christine's revelation, I would like to advise my Bishop Linda not to take up the PCC's offer. You see, they have a habit at the moment of employing and getting rid. First there was Rhiannon, and now there is me. Yes, you could say I designed my own downfall, but they didn't care for my appointment and my split with Lynton answered some of their prayers. So the PCC will be unhappy appointing you, my Bishop, and I'm afraid Bishop Lynton will drop his wish to have a 'team' of two running this corner of the diocese, just as it suits him. And, by the way, he has no commitment to any theology like the Right Reverend Derek Imperial, or his predecessor, the Right Reverend Lord Daniel Dimpleby."

I said, "I thought we were friends, Christine. Are you wielding the knife?"

"Not at all. You have first shout."

"I didn't know there was going to be a second shout."

"Oh what fun," said Adam, appearing on screen. "As regards the golden share, the golden vote, it looks like you could be keeping it, Linda. After all, you've never used it, and it is there to preserve religious continuity against people joining to create a religious takeover. And Ann and I would never have allowed it to have become Anglican. It would have become a small conference centre or something like that, after lockdown ends."

Bishop Dominic said, centre-screen, "Here the Presbyterian principle and limited membership by clergy offers its own protection; however, bits of property of

all kinds have additional trustee protection. But I would respond by saying we would like to keep Linda among us and she can give episcopal guidance along with Bishop Allie, Mar Bana-Bhuidseach."

I asked Marie Enfield what had been prepared.

"There is this motion:

"We thank Bishop Linda for her guidance in the early stages of the Serninsea Liberal Bethel, especially within the Free Liberal Ecclesia, and wish her well in her move back to Anglicanism. Bishop Allie Shrimpton, Mar Bana-Bhuidseach, will provide guidance to her clergy, and all the clergy will continue to vote on policy. We welcome Peter Marshall, Kathleen Lott and Winnie Lott as priests of this Church, the Free Liberal Ecclesia. A reserve vote overriding the clergy vote will be held by - blank - to be used in emergency situations only on the judgement of - blank."

I said, "I have another motion, please write this down:

"Bishop Linda Shrimpton stays as our bishop, in partnership with our new Bishop Alfia Shrimpton, Mar Bana-Bhuidseach. These bishops will provide guidance to their clergy, and all the clergy will continue to vote on policy. We welcome Peter Marshall, Kathleen Lott and Winnie Lott as priests of this Church, the Free Liberal Ecclesia. A reserve vote overriding the clergy vote will stay with Bishop Linda Shrimpton, to be used in emergency situations only on the judgement of Bishop Linda Shrimpton."

There was spontaneous applause in the Bethel and on screen from the various locations.

I said, putting us on screen, "Have you got that, Marie? Yes? Good. Happy, Bishop Linda?"

"I think this has to be the way," she said.

I said, "All clergy present, including from the north east as representing the denomination, please vote."

Marie said, "Everyone has voted in favour."

Linda now said, "Thank you everyone for showing such confidence in me. Bishop Christine, perhaps I can address you. Recently some of the folk around here broke lockdown rules. Do you fancy just about breaking lockdown rules? Let's go to the vicarage. I'll arrive at 2 p.m. and then leave the back way as you arrive at 2:15 p.m.. I will not be signing any papers. They will be yours to sign."

Christine jumped to centre-screen. "If you really want to break lockdown rules, come to palindromic base 2 and 8 regarding Toulouse Road at midday. Do you remember that? Don't say it! You don't want it minuted."

Linda said to Marie, and therefore everyone, "Just put that we will go separately into the vicarage where Christine will sign the papers if she so wants and I will not."

Then Bishop Bill spoke and came centre-screen. "Bishop Pauline Junor and myself, Bishop William Masters, would like to state that we wish our Bishop Primus, Mar Werburga, Princess Apostle Divine Impactor the First, godspeed in her new role. We shall release her and continue the Church and its structure that she created. We shall hold our own Bishops' Council meeting to this effect."

I said, "Yes, you can minute that comment from our guests and add that as a Bishop in the Free Liberal Ecclesia I wish your Church well.

"So do I," I said, as Bishop Allie.

"We carry on. Thank you everyone!" Linda called out.

The meeting was closed formally.

The screen went blank. Linda then said, "Thank you Marie for your help and thank you Andrea for your timely intervention and advice. I feel free and liberated."

Marie said, "I'll go and join Roger, Diana and Klärchen with Megan and their dogs in the garden. It's good with the fire and the solar lights, though it is still light out there, just about."

There was one text message I wanted to send out, shown to Allie and Andrea.

Good evening Bishop Lynton. This evening the clergy of the Serninsea Liberal Bethel of the Free Liberal Ecclesia agreed that I should view and act upon the transfer papers to be left for me in the vicarage tomorrow, Thursday 7th May. I will arrive at 2 pm sharp.

The two of them smiled at me as it was sent off.

Narrator: Linda *Brutality Denied* (Thursday 7th May)

I arrived at once of Christine's houses, 73 Toulouse Road, but a message inside told me to go to 14 Languedoc Street. This was two doors from Annie's camera operation, now shared with Marie Healand. When I went in, Christine was leaning against a far wall, naked, and close to me on a table were a selection of long whips and canes.

"Oh, I see," I said.

"No you don't," she replied. "This should have been in reverse. You should have sacrificed your individualist ego for the larger service of the Church. I would have struck you in approval, whatever my particular approval is worth."

"You want me to strike you?"

"Yes."

"Why? I mean, you are making your sacrifice, giving up your miniature Church, your ideas too."

"Do it!" she said. "If you don't want to get close to me, that whip is long and the cat o'nine tails is one of the largest I've got."

"Christine. I'm breaking the law even being in this same room as you. Look, I'm through with all this. Once I wanted to punish and correct Allie but I couldn't do it. She now has my permission to take a lover. My other sacrifice is I could have drawn a decent salary, with a secure position in the National Church again: a Rural Dean position to pick up immediately and a likely suffragan bishop role."

"You'd have been the next diocesan bishop."

"Oh, come on."

"They dumped an incompetent administrator and taken on someone more like a bull in a china shop. Your ego has prevented you doing the right thing."

"So my ego, is it? I could have taken Diana off to the vicarage and lived with

her and said sod off to all and sundry. And, meanwhile, you do nothing to tackle patriarchy. You'll enjoy everything, whereas I carry on subsisting."

"Then you undress and I will crack the whip at you. Show you mean it."

"From patriarchal guiding society to orgasmic divine revelation. You added the names 'Divine Impactor'."

"I shall set up what John Barman did."

"What?"

"Do you want me to box your ears, Linda? They seem to be useless."

"No, it's not right, Christine, not right at all. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss, in fact the very same. Patriarchal Anglicanism, and nothing to correct it. And this Lynton Plimpton is a potential sex pest if others perform his anus-located duties."

"I can handle him. I can do arseholes. Listen, Barman was a theological liberal. I'm not. Those instruments are still in front of you. You could show your contempt for me.. I suspect Bishop Lynton needs what I can offer. You've never tackled the need for ecclesiastical authority: patriarchy is irrelevant category and a sociological misapplication."

"I'm going to queue up at the supermarket and I'll *not* see you at the vicarage. You'll be called what, Bishop Christine, Vicar of Serninsea?"

"If they want me. I wanted to praise the Holy Spirit for your choice to be back in the apostolic fold. And you walked away."

"Well, I'm not. The Goose has me cooked differently. You wipe the diocesan's bottom - and no doubt much else besides."

"Jógvan has joined the Albion Church. You know that he covers the Faroe Islands and Shetland. His wife Oddvør is going to leave the Fólkakirkjanboth in the Faroe Islands and join him, Bill and Pauline. But I won't be with them..."

"As you now take the shilling."

"But I do believe in proper ecclesiastical authority and there is, like it or not, a relationship with the State."

"You could be the one ending up pontificating in the House of Lords."

"Then I really will need a bishop to beat me."

"Well, your own ego is on display, achieving 'proper ecclesiastical authority' indeed; you're puffed up for your new job."

"Don't say that. Not without striking me. And you'd be different?"

"I'd at least have campaigned to remove the bench of bishops. They should not be there. Maybe there could be one or two clergy along with Sikh, Jewish and Muslim leaders. Anyway, Wytham isn't automatic. Bishop Derek was always upset that he didn't follow his predecessor as Lord Bishop."

"Sign those papers, Linda. It is your authority to do it, not your ministers'. Nothing will give me more of a thrill to see you've signed them. *You* could be a national leader, Linda, a voice for the Gospel in all its senses. You could put them right about sex and sexuality. I'll then carry on as an independent. So I'm not puffed up about that role."

"I'm going."

"It is right for a bishop to strike a bishop! It should hurt and mark the body. You disappoint me. Stay and fulfil your duty!"

"Sorry, Christine, but I've more important things to do, like shopping, and don't ask me to share the same roomspace again, not until we can. It's called proper

authority during a medical emergency."

Narrator: Linda *Who's Signing?* (Thursday 7th May)

I could hear a machine noise coming from behind the large detached vicarage, and it was Mo McArden with a grasscutter. Planting and weeding at the edges were Sheila Gillespie and Evie Waite. Both kneeling with some distance between them, Evie said that they realised there would be a big change again at the parish.

Inside I went. The place had been cleaned, presumably by the parish hiring a company or by volunteers. Some books for the study shelves had been dropped in. Leslie Paul's *Son of Man* was not to my taste. My preferred Machoveč's *A Marxist Looks at Jesus* wasn't on the shelves. I thought about donating mine, but it was too late. I wasn't coming back.

I looked at the papers on the table and a sheet for explanation.

Bishop (not in Anglican office) Linda Shrimpton. Please sign with several signatures for the appointment documents for the Parish of Serninsea in the Diocese of Wytham PCC and the diocesan bishop, Lynton Wytham. The pink paper statement is for your solemn promise that you will not engage in sexual relations with your wife Alfia Shrimpton during your appointment or as an Anglican clergyperson. On the green paper is a statement that you will not be a member of the Free Liberal Ecclesia or involved in activity with the Serninsea Liberal Bethel, although of course you can still go in there for social gatherings among friends and meet your wife. The grey sheet is for your statement of orthodoxy and to use only Anglican forms of worship - you will also assent to your orthodoxy and standard of conduct at worship services on your first Sunday. The yellow sheet is your agreement to move into the vicarage within the week of appointment, to live there, to use it for church meetings, and keep a welcoming household. Your wife can live in the same property, perhaps occupying a separate bedroom. (There is no restriction on where your wife lives with you.) Your housekeeper will be employed on a part time minimum wage and can rent a vicarage room formally from the parish. You will also become Rural Dean.

I looked at all four documents. Four! A few moments on and the doorbell went. I did not open the door, but Harold Crosland did from the outside. I looked down the corridor to the front door.

He asked, "Have you signed?"

"No."

"Good job I brought these then. I'll read the text and then you can leave by the back door."

"Bishop (not in Anglican office) Christine Vine. Please sign with several signatures for the appointment documents for the Parish of Serninsea in the Diocese of Wytham PCC and the diocesan bishop, Lynton Wytham. On the green paper is a statement that you will not be a member of the Ecclesia Albionis Catholico Orthodoxa (The Catholic Orthodox Albion Church) or involved in any of its activities, although of course you can still meet your former colleagues socially. The yellow sheet is your agreement to move into the vicarage within the week of appointment, to

live there, to use it for church meetings, and keep a welcoming household. The grey sheet is to sign to use only Anglican forms of worship. You will also declare your orthodoxy and standard of conduct at worship services on your first Sunday. You will also become Rural Dean."

"That's a lot simpler than mine. Let's face it, she's not married. She has clients instead."

"She has a ministry to sex workers."

"Of course she does. I wonder if she will sign it with her old still present name or her new one? Remember to call her 'Princess Apostle'. I'm going."

I left via the back door. Jim Sayle was carrying a box of grass for the recycling bin.

"You've got the Right Reverend Christine Vine, Mar Werburga, Princess Apostle Divine Impactor the First."

"Is that what she is called?"

"She's worked hard for those titles. I'll walk back to my bethel."

Back there I kissed both Allie and Diana. I said, "Eeny meany miney mo: out goes you," touching Allie. "Come on Diana."

"That's racist," said Allie.

"I removed the racist bit, you Kanaka," I said to her.

In my bedroom I undressed Diana in front of me and indicated she should do the same to me.

Looking at her I said, "You're too wild in the country for me. Trouble is, Allie took all the blades. I want to get vigorous, this time. What a big hand I've got!"

"All my births were through my vagina."

I laid her down and started navigating my way through her forest and started with two fingers.

Concentrating, I heard Allie's voice next to us. "Aardse is downstairs, outside the front door, waiting."

"Better get dressed, Diana. Allie, tell him to go the tenfoot." So we dressed as Allie went downstairs ahead of us. Diana and I went together through the backdoor we used to get to the garden.

"I heard you'd be moving to the vicarage today and have her as your cleaner. But I knocked and they've got someone else."

"Because you heard wrongly. She is beside me. Why are you here?"

"The kids are pestering me."

"Can you please do more than go through your solicitor?" I asked him.

"It's why I am here. So, go on then, what happened, in Scotland? You did a disappearing stunt."

"We didn't suit one another; it was a fantasy. I don't want to get back with you - I just want to see my children."

"You're a lesbian, aren't you? Our marriage produced two kids - well lesbians can't."

I said, "My wife is pregnant. Look, relationships are complicated, Aardse. Diana is bisexual."

"Rubbish. You either ride one horse or the other. You bat for one team or the other."

"You surprise me," I said. "I didn't know you had such a narrow attitude."

Diana said, "You don't know that her father took away my virginity."

"What, deliberately?"

"It wasn't an accident," I said. "So you *are* surprised at that."

"You said it was Keith Jupitas. The father of the child you lost was Adam Magellan."

"Yeah: they are both still men. No, it was her father. I kept quiet - and later I realised it was wrong."

Diana started crying so Aardse stepped back.

I put my arm around her. "Hey, Diana! Look he's come here so that's progress."

She rubbed her eyes. "The truth is in Scotland I wasn't Sally's only lover. In fact, I wasn't really her lover at all. She seduced people like me from the Internet. She wanted me to go with a man, and the man was an aristocratic character from *The Jacobite Gap Years*."

"Lord Gordon?" he asked.

"Yeah. How do you know that?"

"First on the list of possibles, that's all. You went on about him and how magnificent he was, when you were reading this drivel."

I said, "Perhaps that's why Sally coupled you with him, the one playing him."

"Presumably. She was developing a group of people who were re-enacting the story. I got out. I escaped to the minister of religion we'd met when I thought we were lovers."

"Huh. Lovers!" said Aardse.

"Come on! We'd gone stale, you and me. Seumas Caimbeul is a nice bloke but bonkers. I didn't have a problem being naked with him, especially as his housekeeper joined in. Being naked was the true me. Linda was responsible for that."

"After her father? Ugh!"

"I was deluded, then."

"Right," he said. "I've had to explain to the kids that they know of friends with parents who've split and joined with others, and some have two mummies and two daddies as well. They think because you've come back alone that we can get together again. I've said we can't. You can tell them that you love Linda instead, even though she's married to another woman. She'll be living with you. Is she living with you?"

"Yes," I said.

"Are you divorcing Allie?"

"Nope. Allie has a lover called Andrea."

"The one who's supposed to have done lurid acts in the parish church?"

"Yeah. In the vicarage, actually."

"Blimey. You all suit each other. You've always been like this, Linda... What's your surname now?"

"Shrimpton, same as Allie."

"Do you love my wife? She won't be, of course."

"Very much."

"You always did."

"Yes."

"Do you love Linda?"

"It's not easy for me, this. I'm adapting."

"You can explain it to Ruben and Luuk. I'll go and get them. You can have two hours. We'll work out some sort of rota. Do you want to go to a Family Court?"

"Not if we can do it sensibly," she said.

"So are you the cleaner *here*, then?"

"Am I?"

"No, you are not. That was just bollocks to have you inside the vicarage. Just contribute, Diana."

Aardse went from the tenfoot shaking his head and returned elsewhere (at the front) with the two boys. I left Diana to play with them indoors. He was back two hours later on the dot, with a sheet suggesting a schedule. He stayed outside, posted the sheet and received the children.

After they'd gone she said, "I don't want sex now. I'll sit in the Consulting Room. I'll be in the mood another time, for you."

"And me for you too," I said.

"I do... Yes, I enjoy it. Thank you."

There was a knock on the door, with an hour of light still to go.

"Jeremy, Lindy!" I said, through the letter box.

"We won't come in - social distancing, not visiting, and all that."

I said, "I end up breaking the rules at times - can't help it."

Jeremy said, "Lindy and I are installed. We are holding meetings, catching up on administration, getting the technology into a few key churches. So Christine has taken up the vicar role here. I hope she doesn't try and boss us around, being a bishop too. I'm sure I can give folks something uplifting in the first sermon, on the 17th."

"She might be bossy. Tell you what. For your first sermon, let's compare and contrast. We'll do the Anglican lectionary here. We'll both refer to Ascension being uniquely Christian. Let's mention naturism - can you?"

"Yes, and advertise the other sermon. By the way, Penny Schofield works alongside Margaret McEnhill now in Anglican Wytham HQ. It's how I know the Archbishop of All England, Bill Rothach, wanted you in the Bishop of Scredington role."

"This is nuts."

"But now the diocesan has made one of his vital decisions to keep the Bolingbroke name. He hopes Christine will bring the parish here back to some sort of health."

"And yours?"

"It really is moribund. The young people that Jim Wilson attracted have all gone. We could gather everyone into one building with plenty of room to spare. So many churches and hardly any people. I might start a naturist centre in one of them. It's got boundary walls and some outbuildings. Could be a Naturist Fresh Expressions. You'd come along to that?"

"Of course."

"Pity we couldn't make it a team here."

"I had a call from Sarah Deimos telling me not to do it."

"Hot news. Margaret rang me tonight. Sarah Deimos indeed has told the acting Bishop of Tees that she is leaving. Sarah is not going to make a statement. She wants to go quietly. I wonder if she'll be joining your mob?"

"I doubt it. She is not the same as Louise."

"No. She won't have lost her beliefs, like Louise, so it's all a bit strange."

"She might have," I said. "Louise didn't, really, but found your Church to be too two-faced. Didn't you lose your specific beliefs?"

"Still religious, still recoverable. But yes to sermon comparisons. Well, we were on our walk so I'll see you around."

"Bye Lindy. You happy?"

"I've told him: after lockdown we should visit Bever Wood at least once a week."

"And I'll come with you, if you do, with Diana most likely. That would be really good."

Narrator: Linda *Those Now Anglican* (Sunday 10th May)

We heard that the Anglican parish was doing a service in the afternoon, being broadcast on the Internet and by Sea TV. Having given our service, online, Allie, Andrea, Diana and I put on Sea TV for the live relay.

She called herself, "Bishop Christine Vine, Vicar of Serninsea," but here she was co-ordinating her service with her diocesan bishop Lynton Plimpton, in Wytham, and with the Archbishop of All England, the Most Reverend William Blair Rothach, in Kent. The Archbishop was aided by his own chaplain, the Rev. Antonio Segarra. So this was one local service with opt-ins from around the country.

Christine started the sermon and how bishops are there to consider and to guide. They often turn guidance into organisation, and this is why they were often considered managers. But really others should do the tasks. But she said the guidance wasn't theirs alone, but divine and of impact through the bishops' personalities.

There was a pause. William Blair Rothach took over. I had hoped for some sort of theological exposition, but it was mostly about trying to do online what he had wanted to do personally, and how far the online could be personal. He had wanted to travel the country and listen, but now everything had to be through the screen. "God has yet more light and truth to break forth through our technology," he said, and we were able to isolate and yet communicate in the face of a disease. But he would call upon individuals and learn as much as he could remotely.

What I did not expect - not at all - was that he would want to talk to me. Of course I responded positively to his later computer call, and asked Allie to sit alongside me.

"When I saw you last," he said, "you were both attending a conference and now you two are married! "

"Yes we are," I said.

And I remember Allie for your learning of Gaelic. Recently I acquired a *Foirceadul Aith-ghearr Cheasnuighe*, not original but a facsimile as published in Edinburgh in 1779."

Allie said, "The... questioning of doctrine?"

"*The Doctrine of Questioning*. Published in Perth, translated by the Synod of Argyll. But I'm not wanting to talk about this. I was hoping that Lynton Plimpton would have persuaded you to return to the fold. I was disappointed to hear that he had not

succeeded."

"The PCC was hostile. I couldn't go through the compromises, get back inside the narrow box. I have made a lot of sacrifices to set up this independent Bethel, and am prepared to continue with its hardships because it is precious."

"I admire the avoidance of non-commitment. The new parish bishop, as she is a bishop, takes the view that you could have sacrificed yourself into the role she has now occupied. I indeed would like you to reconsider rejoining."

"She has the job now."

"We still need a suffragan bishop. Had you become Vicar of Serninsea, you might have been one of the names placed in front of the Prime Minister, should the diocesan of Wytham bolt to Middlesbrough on the basis that the Tees diocese in the northern province thinks he is a decisive manager."

"What?"

"Bishop Vivienne Space, still the Suffragan Bishop of Morchard, is standing in as diocesan temporarily. She doesn't want to move there and neither does Alan Lindsey."

"I'm afraid that, not unlike in John's Gospel, I am where I am," I said in the manner of his own speaking.

"Ah, an 'I am' statement. Very clever. No. How are you enjoying being bishop, Allie?"

"Early days. There's not much to do at the moment."

"Right, well, I'm going to talk to various other locals, also online of course, about being local. Some of those conversations, but not ours, will go out to the public. I want to show that the Church cares and does so from its bishops and clergy. Goodbye to both of you."

"Oh boy," I said, once he'd gone.

"Second chance," said Allie. "The guy at the very top wants you in, and he pulls strings."

"I am not a puppet," I replied.

"Others are, though."

It wasn't long before there was another on screen communication.

"I'm gone, we're gone. Harri and I are moving to stay with Louise. She wants me to join her mob, your mob. You gave me the motivation to finally stop the charade. But then I heard you'd turned them down. Good on you."

"I couldn't go through with it, but it seems they are persistent. Makes no difference. Did you announce your real you to the congregation you visited?" I asked Sarah Deimos.

"Nope. I preached the Gospel. I told them what the Church wants them to hear. I then said in the announcements that I was resigning and gave no reason. I wrote my letter of resignation - technically I remain a bishop here for a few weeks but I'm not doing anything more in public outreach. We're collecting our belongings and moving out."

"And, indeed, Harri?"

"She regrets it, but understands it. She might try to reconvert me, but it's a barren wicket. I'm updating my entry on the Secular Clergy Website, as one who has acted to go, serving out my notice. But no more services and I will refuse all requests for next Sunday and the Sunday after. Hey, they are trying to headhunt Lynton Plimpton to get him in as our - their - diocesan. What utter plonkers they are, as he'd

be a right disaster. And he's a dirty bastard too."

"The new Vicar of Serninsea is very expensive for things like that."

"It's why she kept one client on - Sir Sanjay Bunker. He pays her very well. She's lost all her other clients as part of her self-sacrifice, ha ha. I'll be sad to lose all the gossip. Heard the other stuff going about? A certain disruptive individual?"

"No."

"Rhiannon Fleetwood is yet another one to change her name. *Everybody's doing it,*" Sarah started singing."

"To what?"

"Sara, without an aich, Buckingham."

"What, another Fleetwood Mac name?"

"Changing her stance too, because she's always been a fake."

"She once slagged me off with all that crap from Oliver O'Donovan and N. T. Wright about transgender folk indulging in Gnosticism - she got also it wrong by applying it to us intersex - and she used the *Nashville Statement*. Allie heard her, didn't you?"

"Yeah."

Sarah said, "She won't peddle those views again. They're no longer helpful to her."

I thanked Sarah for her friendship, wished her the best, and would welcome her and Harriet to stay with us if she came down our way.

Anglican versus FLE Sermons (Sunday 17th May 2020)

I had a message from Lindy Peacock.

Linda. I view today with sadness. I'm not leaving or anything, but I wish I was stuck in Bever Wood, even with no one there. It was my spiritual home. Now we have a bunch of clapped out churches and Jeremy has been tricked that he can re-live his dreams. But there is nothing here. He knows it. He says he will stamp his freedom on to the pulpit. So what? For what purpose? Yes, sadness. I'm pleased you avoided becoming the Vicar of Serninsea. Jeremy will work with Christine. All the best to Allie. All support to Diana. Love you. Lindy.

I watched his output. Jeremy was back in Anglican gear, to use *Common Liturgies* and what seemed now its dogmatic and stodgy sentences. He advised the audience, wherever they were, to have ready a piece of bread and drink of wine that they had to finish in the context of the service. The Eucharist was his only service going online today. His one present member of the congregation was Lindy. Anglican Eucharists cannot be sole affairs, unlike for Independent Sacramentalists.

The readings were Acts 17: 22-31, read by an out of view remaining churchwarden, Harold Shapley; 1 Peter 3 13-22, read by Lindy; and John 14 15-21, read by Jeremy himself. Then there was his sermon, and he seemed to have some key notes.

"The Gospel reading is part of what is called *the Farewell Sermon*, and this is where we get to the unique part of Christianity. *Resurrection is not unique to*

Christianity: it's Jewish, as is a messiah. It's the second coming that's unique to Christianity, and thus the necessary end to the resurrection experiences. To have a second coming means a first going. He'll come back. And he says we won't be left without assistance in the meantime.

"It's very clear that Jesus says *the Father will send the Spirit*. The Filioque clause, that the Spirit also proceeds from the Son, is added later in the Western tradition. The Orthodox don't have it, but we do. The Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in Persia in about 410 CE may have been its first introduction. The controversy is elsewhere in John's Gospel as well: In *John 16: 13-15* Jesus also says of the Holy Spirit: *'he will take what is mine and declare it to you.'* Is that proceeding from? Then we have *John 20: 20-22*: *'He breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit".'* Is that to proceed from? Elsewhere there are other texts about the spirit of Christ and similar.

"Perhaps this strikes us as angels on the head on a pin stuff, but did Churches split over this matter - at least ostensibly. There was more to it; there always is. But the Eastern Orthodox said goodbye to the Western Catholic on this basis.

"Sorry, but I give it to them, and yet later I'll read a creed that says otherwise.

"Doctrinal games, you might say, but the doctrine isn't there. Neither is the Trinity. The Bible doesn't exclude the potential of the Trinity, but the *Trinity doctrine isn't developed there*. Indeed, if you make the Bible a doctrine book, then the Trinity gets denied. I have an independent colleague in Serninsea. Check out her sermon today. I'm not sure if she upholds the Trinity, at least in some form, but she is part of a group that can have it or deny it. Jesus does get deified in this later Gospel of John, but he isn't God the Son yet.

"First the resurrection belief encouraged an 'adoptionist' and 'exaltation', theology - God adopted Jesus as divine at the resurrection and so Jesus was a human who became God. Then Mark has it that divinity started with baptism, and so Jesus was always divine and human in his ministry. But then others said he was born divine and thus the Spirit impregnates Mary. Paul in 2 Philippians regarded Jesus as being in the incarnational form of God and self-emptying in the flesh. And then John's Gospel says in the beginning Christ was incarnate divine - a God who became human, and thus no need for a Virgin Birth.

"We clergy in training confront these issues, so why shouldn't you who are viewing and listening now?

"The question of *resurrection is often posed as a last remaining miracle*, the one that must stay. We recall the *late Bishop of Middlesbrough*, Dafydd Jersey, who retired to Boroughbridge. He used to refer to the guiding work of God as full of signs and wonders in the New Testament period, whereas we seem to be bereft because we are scientific and secular. They had belief and miracle and we have regularity and doubt. And he asked, Why are we not guided like them? Why would God do this to us? His questioning was thus the other way around to what most people thought - he was doubting about us now, not doubting their guidance from God. He believed in the resurrection, when people said he didn't.

"So what do we do? We were left to the risk of faith (and belief) as he often called it. His main theologians were Barth and Bultmann. He understood the limitations of doing history and so it was all about we secular-deprived today having to live in the effort of faith and wrestling with the revelation. We do this prompted by

the Spirit, the guide: that which we were promised in the Farewell Sermon.

"Bishop Jersey. wasn't quite right. We have chaos as in the butterfly effect, but then deep chaos produces mathematical patterns. These patterns interact and produce equilibria. Chaos operates itself but who knows what nudges an active God can make. It just seems superfluous to many and history doesn't do miracles or divine intervention as explanations. History does do institutions and its people that believe in miracles and divine interventions and are motivated to act according to such beliefs. History seeks out documents that record such actions; the New Testament contains potentially records of early Churches' beliefs.

"But, whatever I might think, my task here is to *represent the guidance of the diocesan bishop*. Personalities matter, persons matter, and the bishop matters. He's here to protect the faith. I'm one of his extended hands, not one of his critics. From exaltation to Incarnation, it's all about persons in Christianity. So the Spirit activates through persons and personalities starting with the eternal Christ who was also fully human. As many of you will know, the *symbol of this part of the world, the goose*, is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the part that relates to surprises. But it is we who express the surprise.

"So much of Christianity seems to be guided by *the genius of Saint Paul*. Actually, I think Paul comes across as a bit confused and inconsistent, in part thanks to others writing in his name what they *thought* he might have written. He says the Spirit it isn't found in shrines and human hands but then he says it is. Acts and Paul's letters don't exactly always agree, and only seven letters are reliably by Paul. It's the Pauline Church that succeeds, and who succeeds writes the interpretation that matters. Paul influences the Gospels, except that Paul was uninterested in the life of Christ and the Gospels are, instead, history-like and biography-like.

"I'd like to think that the Spirit prompted the diocesan bishop to promote *my appointment here*. So let me talk about this. You know that I was caretaker and my fiancé was a receptionist at the naturist club where we are still members. It's called Bever Wood on land of a former colliery. At the moment it's out of bounds to many. Had we not come here we'd have been one of four as a household there. There are just two people resident at present. You can see Lindy and me as naturists by searching on the Internet. Don't worry: we only do *naturism at appropriate times and in appropriate places*. My aforementioned independent colleague in Serninsea, with her wife, and her friend, are naturists too. Of course Lindy and I have met them, as naturists: they are our friends.

"You also know that I was divorced by my ex-wife, also a naturist. The *relationship with Lindy and divorce from Emily* was such that I was denied Permission to Officiate. But this water is under the bridge and Lindy and I shall marry. The bishop has acted with compassion and perhaps timing. My naturist friend, however, is married to a woman, and to have come over to us she must have avoided sexual relations with her own wife. It's daft. I support equal marriage and blessings. I reject the view that we could end up as an institution blessing sin.

"You will note that I'm theologically liberal and have returned to a more or less liberal diocese, although down in the south we have an evangelical charismatic stronghold. While I was away in my exposed flesh communing with the world, I examined some of my core beliefs and became *more liberal*; I became more panentheist, seeing God in everything but still distinct. There was a liberal of sorts bishop, sometimes called a radical, who was notorious over twenty years before

Dafydd Jersey. John Robinson had a personalist understanding of God. He disliked systematic thought. He, however, always said we must start with Christ, and end with Christ, the heart of our faith. But Christ was a man, truly a man, starting at the other end.

"The Bible writers, and Jesus for that matter, *didn't have a clue about evolution*, or the various species of humans, of which only one is left. But which human species was Adam? Homo Erectus? Homo Sapien? Jesus was as genetic as the rest of us. If he's fully human, as claimed, then at death the brain rots fast, and isn't recoverable. The miracle of the resurrection, which history cannot do directly, must therefore be immense.

"To me, Easter faith is about him, written by others, because the texts are theological and say most about expectation of change, of authority through persons who saw Christ: through communities and ritual identity using real, material people and happenings. The texts say the resurrection appearances stopped and Christ himself says you won't see these any more, and thus after ascension we instead have a Spirit for guidance.

"As a naturist I find God in nature, but also in people and personalities. When you're naked, there really is just that person in front of you, and you're denied the creative deception of clothing. But, whether clothed or not, we engage with one another, and we have time to stop and stare and reflect. Sunday is a time to stop and stare and reflect, and engage, even engage online. Christ ascended into the heavenly realm.

"Amen."

Harold Shapley, as a server, boomed out his voice from somewhere and said, "I report to all viewers and listeners that I have asked the Archdeacon, The Venerable Radclyffe Solsbury, if he believes that the Reverend Jeremy Symes, the appointed Vicar of Serninsea Marshes, accepts the Creeds and observes the historic formularies of the National Church in England. He has left me this message. It states: *He has demonstrated to me that he believes the Creeds and observes the historical formularies of the National Church in England.* I asked the Archdeacon if he is of good character, who strives to live the godly life in the context of being an Anglican minister, and is faithful to the Gospel? The Archdeacon, The Venerable Radclyffe Solsbury, has also written to me, *I have examined the Reverend Jeremy Symes, and he is of good character, who will strive to live the godly life as an Anglican minister and will be faithful to the Gospel.*"

The Creed did follow, and soon he presided over a Eucharist and hoped others would join in at home, guided by the Spirit.

Well, to me there was a gap between what he said and those creeds, and not just on a clause about whether the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son.

Here was my sermon, with a few notes too, that also went online:

"I could have become Vicar of Serninsea. I'd have said 'farewell' to here but hello to the Anglican parish as extended south. But I stayed independent. If I had have moved, I'd have preached on Jesus giving his Farewell Sermon. Jeremy Symes has given that sermon in his new parish of the Serninsea Marshes. Well, let me talk about the Farewell Sermon from a Free Liberal Ecclesia perspective. You might like to compare mine and his sermons.

We've also done the Bible readings the Anglicans have been doing today.

"The Father, asked by Christ, sends a Counsellor, and this is the notion of the

Holy Spirit as the active guide, and also why the resurrection of Christ was a closed, rounded-off period of forty days, to explain to early Christians why Jesus should no longer appear to them.

"They lived in signs and wonders, but they *weren't going to be visited any more* - so to speak.

"In the story the resurrected Christ had done his job, conferring authority and fellowship by appearing. The communities had been expectant of the coming Kingdom, but by the time we have John's Gospel people are still waiting.

"Thus we get in the annual calendar the uniqueness of Christianity which is not resurrection but the second coming. To have a second coming needs an ascension, coming up ritually this Thursday.

"Personally I don't think there ever was a Farewell Sermon, but then there wasn't someone going around after Jesus had died. Once you're dead you're dead.

"Captain Kirk and the others used to go into the energiser. They got munched up, transmuted and came out reconstituted at the other end. What came out at the other end had all the memories and attributes of the originals, but the people who went in were finished off. When they went in they were destroyed. They died. Even on the strongest 'event' basis of the resurrection, even if Jesus truly died he cannot be continuous with anything going around afterwards.

Far more likely at a time of expectation, beaten men had to conclude Christ was either a messiah to return or was nothing, and some, maybe a few, had visions of him after his death and so their leader was still active after death. From this theological explanation a whole load more theology came about, much of it initiated out by Paul who, of course, claimed to have a resurrection encounter.

"The resurrection is writing, literature, faith in words, about authority and sending forward, about expectant charismatic messianic Jewish and non-Jewish early Christian communities. It's mythology.

"Bishop Allie here is a sympathiser of radical art with radical theology - what is called, sometimes, 'the mystery of things'. And it is about things. She is nodding. The idea of that art provided idealised transcendent meaning has been overtaken by the subjectivity of viewing paint on the canvas from different viewpoints. Also, the Spirit, like energy, has to be in some container. The mystery of things is about, specifically, applying paint as paint, and the mystery of doing art. Yes? She says, 'Yes.' And the transcendent meaning is lost to the painting act that has to be resolved by the subjective viewer, and that is a bit like the observer resolving quantum science. I give you chaos and interacting systems.

"So it is your resurrection, your life ahead, and what you make of everyone you encounter.

"The Spirit is also in the materiality of things. This is seen within what Allie has taught me about gift-exchange through rituals in communities: people making an effort to exchange with others to make added value. It's a theological economics. Just as we buy and sell to increase wealth, so we see benefits in other exchanges. We talk but we get conversation, we have sex but we make love, we give and receive tokens of presents but we get connection with others.

"I'm puzzled," said Diana nearby.

"Well, you put material effort in and get a spiritual reward, although the Spirit does manifest itself in the material. I said this sermon wouldn't relate to people's lives."

Allie said, "No, it does. People get closer to other people all the time by putting in effort."

"So there's a danger of getting all spiritual as if with sensations of things that go bump in the night. The clever part of resurrection is that it is about bodies and supposed realities. Culture and biology go together.

"Just to remind everyone, as I guide you: this is the Free Liberal Ecclesia, as represented in this parish, and there is one altar table here, so when you sit at home with your bread and wine you are crossing space and time to here. It's not woo-woo, but practicality. Beyond this ritual understanding, no one has to accept any creed and you can think your own thoughts. It is you as a subject that realises, resolves, the objective reality. It's your art you are viewing or even making. Your deity is the deity; because the many becomes the one through you, and this applies to everyone's pattern in their own situations. In the end the guidance you receive is your own in interaction with others: your conscience, your situation, yours to work out along with others, yours to gain and yours to lose.

"Amen."

Lindy had a message afterwards.

Jeremy tried to make his statement free and honest, but it wasn't and yet he's had a furious message from Harold Shapley because he says it made him and the Archdeacon look like an idiot. I viewed your service and that was free. Shapley may resign and go to Christine's church but won't only because everything here is so weak. I've told Jeremy. Nine months and if things aren't settled he should consider something else.

Lindy's message told me that I had done the right thing. It won't be easy but our small refuge of organised religion from organised religion will continue to be where I live and function.

Chapter 39 Much Later Reopens

Narrator: Diana *Experimental Worship* (Sunday 23rd May 2021)

Today was the grand reopening of ordinary physical worship on site. Allie wanted it to be experimental and so there were flashing coloured lights and always some minimalist dance music in the background. Some folk were invited.

Roger and Marie chose to excuse themselves; they wanted to remain withdrawn. Kathryn had the children with her: little Diana Sally Shrimpton, Solange Lott and Simon Peter Marshall. The three kiddies were growing up together. Yes, Allie and Linda named their child after me, because my stillborn had been called Linda.

Hans Meyer was invited, whom we'd met distributing meals. He was an older chap who knew Linda's naturist family at Saxiclite. He'd now ventured outdoors.

Naturists Louise Saraga with James Saraga, Sally Torrance and Paula Campbell came along and asked about the Gymnology group. Linda told them and Hans Meyer it was happening very soon and would involve Anglican Jeremy Symes. They'd all seen Linda and Jeremy's very recent video from Ingle Upper Drain - the naturist vicar and herself as an independent bishop.

Rose Barnes of Wytham Unitarians came instead of invited Charley Darley, who was busy. Paula Mason, the previous Liberal Democrat MP for Wytham City, and known to the Unitarians, was also invited, and so came with Rose. (She'd since been replaced by a Conservative MP.)

My newish friend the Reverend Georgie Smith came along, unseen during Covid isolation. I made sure I kissed her on both face cheeks regardless of Novel Covid, despite Andrea Lindsey shaking her head.

Allie asked her to consider attending with us more often and even volunteering. She expressed an interest in the Gymnology meeting, adding, "I'm still Christocentric."

"No problem," Allie said.

"I don't like Christine's services. Charism is derived from ecclesia and fellowship, it doesn't formulate it."

Alfred Burger and Sally Morgan, residents of the Titansea Grand Hotel, had come along. I wondered if this experiment in worship would suit them.

Doctor Cyprian Laney and Doctor Chaudhry Gujjar were invited by Andrea Lindsey, and they attended with nurses Yvonne Curzon and Mabel Thorp. I think they were curious to see inside.

Linda's contacts who came along included James Taylor, Executive Director of Sales, Andrew Hindley, a long time expert in semiconductors, and lately flat screen technologies, and Lesley Francis, understanding the quantum computer, all at Fast East Electronics Ltd (FEEL). They'd seen Serninsea Liberal Bethel videos. Another of her contacts, Furqan Ahmed, of ConnectSernin, came along with curiosity.

The Reverend Caitriona Williamson arrived and said that she was still interested in chakras. Allie gave her some literature about the Free Liberal Ecclesia. She seemed a bit weirder than her colleague, the soon to be Vicar of

Serninsea, the Reverend Anna Ozga. Linda knew them both at the Wytham's Anglican female ordinands' retreat, and so did that turncoat Christine Vine, thus enabling herself to become, as soon, the Bishop of Bolingbroke.

Linda was pleased to see Andrew Walter, disabled ex-firefighter and amateur psychoanalyst, with Laura Kingswood. They'd followed Christine Vine and Linda out of the Anglicans, but Christine going back into the Anglicans again probably confused them.

Labhaoise Vlahos and Ann Dromeghda came along, also invited. Earlier in the week, they had brought in new replacement seats including two sofas, more than replacing those they had taken.

Adam Magellan brought Jenny World, who had just returned from hospital to move in with Adam. Was her secularity like mine? Still, this was a place to socialise. Jenny seemed passive and quiet.

The Reverend Fatima Tamuuz, independent now, was in town again with young daughter Akemi and came to us rather than Christine's church service. They lived in Tamworth. Thus Allie met her distant cousin. Fatima found Jenny for a quick pre-service chat.

Sarah Deimos came with brand new wife Harriet, her brother the Reverend Duncan Deimos and her sister the Reverend Louise Deimos. Sarah also found Jenny for a chat. The three were staying at Yojana's Maa Skelter Guest House - her parents had now put Yojana in charge.

Yojana Asthana herself - Linda said she was very welcome - sat with Annie Fenwick and Marie Healand. Their webcam display had seen them gain consistent and growing income. They were one of the more popular webcam presentations on Goosechat, still owned by the outgoing Vicar of Serninsea.

I overheard Allie agree to be a naked guest to paint Munch's *The Scream* on Annie's body and Klimt's *The Kiss* on Marie's. Andrea wasn't too happy, mentioning getting paint in their vaginas and anuses. I bet it would end with *The Kiss* fucking *The Scream*.

I imagined Georgie and me painted like that, but there was no money in it.

Mr. Jerry Grant, a customer of the massages, was told by the Reverend Kathleen that massages would not resume for some time. The Reverend Winnie joined her from seeing Kathryn with the children.

Allie's hairwashing friends Klärchen Sisse and Megan Furley had left Dieter and Stoke for a maximum hour and a half next door.

There were four others present we did not know, some of whom had watched services online.

For her sermon, Allie decided to ad-lib somewhat. First of all she said, "We're moving worship onwards today. We are modernising it and make it more connected to contemporary culture. You're seeing this already with our background meditative music, using new coloured lights and then a selection of hymns as songs, really. But the Communion will also be different - you'll see.

"Genuinely, some of us have worried whether small churches will continue after the lockdown and closures with the Novel Covid pandemic. But this is a good turnout! We still have our building, which is secure, and we have had our newer garden in good use. We have good financial supporters, even among our clergy.

"We'll stay online, but physical presence is preferred. Our friend Bishop Christine, briefly the Vicar of Serninsea, taught us the theory of one Church and one

altar table: when online we have the divine eternity of the Eucharistic act to overcome space and time. We were thus ordained, but directly we had the chance we were then ordained in physical proximity *sub conditione*. We thank Bill and Pauline and Margaret Lindbeck for their consecrating actions; unfortunately Christine could not be with us. She very soon will be Bishop of Bolingbroke, as their Reverend Anna Ozga takes on full duties up the road. Sorry that Cait Williamson didn't get the job, who seems to be floating around these parts. What are you living on?"

"I inherited rather well. I like your worship."

"And still we must take precautions. You all came in carefully through the double doors but for social distancing reasons I will ask you to leave in single file by the single door beyond the staircase, that was our private doorway; it's also the way out if you to want visit the garden because you will only be able to come in through the Conference Room door.

"At our re-opening I state that in this denomination and in this bethel it is not for Bishop Linda or me to tell you what to believe."

"Hey," said Caitriona. "Have you with all this far-out innovation thought about using AI in this bethel?"

"We could..." Allie said, puzzled.

That's a joke, by the way," Cait added.

Linda said, "Book of Joshua, I think."

That was one up on Professor Allie!

"Okay. Our coherence is around our practices. Nevertheless there are theological pointers. We agree that there is beauty and we find it in simplicity, but fractal mathematics says that from iterated simplicity can come complexity in a combination of asymmetry. Social empathetic care and attention enhances the quality of life. Such examples form what Peter Berger, a sociologist of religion, called 'signals of transcendence'.

"Ritual is orderly. It's like art. It has multiple viewpoints and stays within its own action. You'd expect me to promote art and creativity, and this is what I want to do in renewing worship. Divinity is actually about beauty and life-quality, assisted by some prophetic figures in history.

"In this denomination we have a plurality of inputs: Christian, Humanist, Pagan, Jewish, Sikh, Eastern. You are free to agree or disagree. We have open discussion. You can change your mind and that's in any direction. But what we do is practice simplicity and beauty, care, and creativity, and we still ritualise food and drink to suggest transformation. We are Free Catholics or High Protestants by our selection of symbolic actions.

"By the way, we do biblical readings but your view of what is Holy Scripture is up to you and your study. We also read from other books of religious identity and depth: we will use the Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita, the Qu'ran, and so on. We certainly will use the fifth Gospel of sayings. We have forms and structures but we don't have boundaries. And that's where I'd like to leave this short homily - with you."

There followed slides to the music on the screens containing slogans like "Spirit", 'Mystical Christ', 'Buddha Dharma', 'Way, Truth, Life', 'The Beauty of Holiness', and 'Transcendence'. There were various images and patterns including several of geese. There followed the Eucharist Service element, with simpler text versions of the various stages observed.

*The bread be broken.
The bodies of those broken for us
Our sacrificial living is our Dharma.
Present our bodies as a living sacrifice.
The wine be outpoured.
Forgive others.
Forget yourself for a moment.
This is my body, the material substance .
Remember, remember.
This is my blood, the dynamic energy.
Meditate!*

There was distribution of pieces of bread, and red wine from a central goblet with red fruit juice from another central goblet to individual glasses. Linda, Andrea and Peter offered pieces of bread, Winnie and Allie offered wine, and Kathleen offered fruit juice. It did not take too long. I partook as a friendship thing. However, there were nearly fifty adults in the building, needing those added seats - including comfy sofas.

The rapid feedback for the service was that it didn't quite work. (It did for Caitriona!) The 'liberal Charismatic' approach certainly did not attract charismatics.

This church had not only survived the pandemic but had shown its potential to thrive. Yes, many of them were invited guests and would not be back, but videos made showed the crowd to surely encourage further enquiries.

Linda and Lindy announced not only the Gymnology Group meeting but a brief summer mission to Bever Wood naturist Centre. All would be explained, but resident numbers would be severely limited because accommodation was in demand.

We had refreshments afterwards, trying to sit with spacing, with kitchen crockery used to capacity. Then spontaneous demands happened. I'd have stripped off and joined a naturist quarter, so Linda, with genuine regret, persuaded them to wait for the Gymnology session; some wanted to have mikveh sessions, but again Linda referred to Novel Covid restrictions. So a number of folks were disappointed, and the police did pay a visit as we socialised.

The place had a future!

Narrator: Linda *Gymnology Resumes* (Monday 24th May 2021)

Late afternoon I showered with Diana. We helped each other dry and she did like to use the hair dryer across her full body. We added a little talcum powder for a minimal scent. But it was clothes on for travel purposes.

Little Diana was asleep with Allie, so we four took her to Peter's, now back at the Investigations Agency site with Kathryn, to join the two children he had fathered (although he was daddy to Simon only and not Solange). Kathryn, Kathleen and Winnie joined us in the SUV and with a full load we now headed north to the Serninsea Marshes vicarage.

"Clothes off!" Lindy said, as the six of us walked in. Now as naked as her, carrying one of their small towels, I said to her (only), "You'll be glad you're both going back. Is it a month or so to go now?"

"26th July we leave here for the last time and we're back as caretaker and receptionist. We gave it a go, here, but he could not get back into this glove. Anna Ozga gets the lot, and she's welcome to them. Christine is going to shut all but two of the churches; she runs rings around disappointed Lynton, a bit like Barman did with Derek Imperial."

"Which is the other one staying open?" I asked.

"St. Peter's at the northern end. All nine in between are finished. Heritage England are interested in only one of those, St. Cyprian, facing out to sea."

Lindy had been hairy at Bever Wood. She was flat chested with incredibly long nipples, and strong, large thighs. But now she (and he too) had shaved below, revealing her pubic meanness. Jeremy was pencil thin in the penis department and thin anyway. I did wonder if it mainly lengthened or thickened when aroused. When I met him placing crockery in the lounge, we hugged and I pressed my breasts into him because I knew he felt a sense of failure as well as relief.

"From that very first sermon it did not work, and not just contrasting the sermon with yours. The pastoral side was dead, and those remaining did not approve."

I was also sensitive about Caitriona Williamson's arrival among us. "I'd have done Serninsea Marshes," she said. "Linda, I dyed my pubes silvery-white. Was that right?"

"Not necessarily," I said. "White hair on your head does match dark below."

"Black."

"Yes."

"You're so bare, smooth."

"I'd suggest one thing or the other."

The long lounge taking Jeremy's attention had two six foot trestle tables laid out with cloths, cutlery and crockery added on to them. Now there was another table deposited outside, but by whom I did not know. There was a fire going, using a modified coal product and processed wood. We needed to keep us naked folks really warm!

He said, "I'd like to talk to you and Allie about actually opening a chapel at Bever Wood."

"Oh what a brilliant idea!" I exclaimed. "Not just a mission again, then. You'll actually join our denomination?"

"Absolutely. Yes, I've been paid a good salary here but we will both have paid jobs again at the centre."

Brand new to us, Mel Tin and Heather Well, females, turned up as arranged. They were older middle aged, unmarried partners of some ten years.

Also new, and in touch before as a single male, was Marshes resident Adrian Street.

When he introduced himself he asked me, "Why are you smiling?"

"Adrian Street was a glam wrestler. My dad hated him, but I rather liked him when I saw my father's collection of wrestling videos. His wife was Miss Linda."

"Glam? He wore make up?"

"Yeah."

"I hate to disappoint you. I am a completely straight up and down heterosexual."

"You don't disappoint me."

The actual dining room was turned into a kind of waiting area, its table folded down and pushed to a wall. I returned to those waiting there, sat on their towels. Louise Saraga with James Saraga, Sally Torrance and Paula Campbell were in there. They'd heard about Bever Wood re-opening, and the same was true of Saxiclite. I spoke with them of the limited accommodation space there, and they thought they might make a day visit during our mission.

The risky invitee entered: Emily Symes. She was keeping that surname. In a way she was making peace with Jeremy and Lindy. Indeed her attitude had helped Jeremy become a priest again. Emily, however, attended soon to be Anna Ozga's church down at Caffenmere, after finding a new (absent here) partner, now part of the huge Serninsea and Serninsea Marshes joint parish.

I said, "Unfortunately, naturists get divorced too. I did. Reconciliation is the name of our game so it's great to see you here."

"I won't take the blame for anything," she replied.

"Quite."

"The Symes name is as much mine as his. Unless I remarry."

Both Kathleen and Allie were dealing with some drips from their breasts. I insisted that natural events were to be expected and accepted. It was amazing how all three women were restoring their bodies, but I'd noticed how Allie's stomach was softer to the touch when we made love. Allie's solution was for me to go into the kitchen and drink from her breasts, so Winnie did the same with Kathleen in the kitchen to relieve the pressure. Lindy asked if she could have a taste, so two glasses were produced, and Lindy got to compare them. She declared that they were both pretty much the same taste.

I had attended Allie at the birth, in the Serninsea clinic where there was a small maternity unit. I was the mother, as she was. It was a huge experience for me, to see our baby emerge through Allie's sweat and effort. Diana we called her from the beginning, and she was soon given to me to hold, and then passed to Allie to go straight to her breast.

Three who'd enquired and were welcomed into the Seninsea Marshes vicarage were a gay couple, David McCormack and John Jackson, with rather many tattoos each. They brought in the third table, to go in the lounge acting as the dining room. Alec Cheyne, a man of some wealth, was a cousin of Jeremy, creating endowments for good causes, and rather well endowed himself. He kind of made up for Jeremy's shortfall, ha ha.

Reaffirming her confidence among those she trusted, the (retired) Reverend Georgie Smith arrived. Her testicles were low, and I knew now that for forty years she'd never worn knickers or underpants. This seemed to me so risky, but she'd managed it, sitting and standing in front of her congregation at the UPCC chapel, now abandoned.

Jeremy came in to tell us that extra food was being ordered in. The high numbers were unexpected. Hans Meyer came in and said hello, and went out again.

Belinda Jack again brought along her mother Madge and Flòraidh MacLean. Also visiting was Annie Fenwick and Marie Healand, also with a penis of course, but now Megan arrived with Klärchen. I'd seen Klärchen in the shower, with her redhead

hourglass body. I was delighted to hear that Salome Lichtblau was looking after three dogs, that Salome was back on the scene as a friend.

The numbers meant that Lindy and Jeremy's cooker and microwaves had been bursting full of food. Two slow cookers had been on the go, and a couple of box ovens were busy too, but a phone call brought more food in via a very surprised pizzas delivery man, whose expression suggested he'd walked into a stereotypical porn film.

"I won't stay," he said in the crowded house, with so much flesh on display. With him gone we gathered at the tables. I stood, with Diana sat to my right and Allie to my left and Andrea to her left.

Gymnology Session

I said, "First, I'd like to thank Jeremy and Lindy for hosting this Gymnology session, and providing the coming meal. This is quite an ecumenical gathering, with many gender and sexuality varieties here. Just a reminder: the naturist ethic is not to stare at the apparently unusual. Folks who've come back after first exposure are showing bravery once again and we do have some local first timers."

Adrian Street said, "I've had a visit to Saxiclite and the hosts here checked me out."

Lindy said, "It has to be done. But you came to see us and indeed attended our services."

First was a vegetable soup Lindy had made; Lindy and Jeremy served. "This now is a broth for people of the bethel and beyond, a soup of God from a house of God," said Lindy, who then smiled a lot.

I said to Georgie, "Pity Charley couldn't come over."

Georgie responded, Linda: Charley was not a relationship. Yes, it's a shame he's not here."

Diana said something slightly shocking, even concerning: "The great thing about naturist gatherings is seeing what I've been missing: I've been missing some cock."

"Diana," said Georgie, "Marie and I here have breasts with our penises, so does that put you off?"

"Nope..." she replied.

I said, "So let's develop this. This is supposed to be gymnology? Well, perhaps we can do some gymnosophy about our trans and intersex breasts. Jeremy? Lindy?"

Jeremy then said, "This would be an excellent contribution. Let's put you on the spot, Georgie."

Georgie thus stood up, revealing again such 'cock' that might interest Diana. "So males and females are born with the same breast anatomy, and, basically, oestrogen grows breasts in women and mainly testosterone prevents the growth of breasts in men. Breasts are usually smaller on trans women due to our broader shoulders and the width of the rib cage. I'm fifty-nine and I developed breasts from my early twenties. My libido reduced then my body fat redistributed. I was very pleased as this happened. What about you, Marie?"

Marie stood and said, "I started younger than you, but I am not yet thirty. I have had enhancements, and my webcam work is to pay off the loan that let me have them done."

"My muscle mass decreased, my skin became softer and then I noticed the breasts growing. My hair thickened too and it is a decent head of hair at this age. I've taken phytoestrogenic herbs, such as fenugreek, fennel, wild yam root and red clover; but even with their use, Hormone Replacement Therapy has always been my steady method. Progestin shapes breasts, helping develop milk ducts, so I've had that. People who take HRT should be aware of the dangers, as in maybe mood swings, possible deep vein thrombosis, gallbladder disease, even breast or liver cancer, nausea and even vomiting. But I've taken oestrogen for so long now. I've avoided all operations except I've had electrolysis and laser treatment for the removal of facial hair. I had voice coaching to raise my voice."

Marie said she had taught herself to feminise her voice.

Georgie concluded her speech. "I suggest I sit now and we continue with the soup. Neither of us two here look like blokes in frocks. I've convinced people in close proximity of my femininity."

Marie said, "Annie and I now live and work together. She's just a mate. She's always fancied *you*, Allie."

Andrea commented, "Everyone fancies Allie. Anyway, thanks to Linda's generosity, I've got her close."

Emily then said, dangling her soup spoon, "So you have some sort of four-way thing going on?"

I said over to her, "Not quite. Allie and I are married, and it is undiluted, but we have lovers."

Emily continued: "Well, let me be bold too. As Jeremy and Lindy well know, I kicked up a stink with their affair. Barman suspended him and Jeremy left the ministry, and then it turned out that Bishop Barman was utterly two-faced."

"Completely," I said.

"Now they've dragged him back, and he doesn't like it anyway."

"Barman?" I asked, puzzled.

"No, Jeremy."

"It's both of us," said Lindy. "This place has failed and we don't fit. We're lucky to get our jobs and the naked life back."

"What's Christine doing about all her other matters?" I asked.

Jeremy said, "Marie? You seem to know most about Goosechat."

Marie said, "Because I organise Goosechat now. Sara Buckingham is the bishop's personal chaplain, after he was not accepted for the Tees diocese. Christine's playing a careful game as about to be suffragan bishop and she's asked Sara to look after above the casino. I get a salary now as well as perform."

I said, in reaction, "Just a minute. You mean Christine is employing Rhiannon Fleetwood to organise her orgies?"

"I think those orgies are dead. The space might be organised for other events."

Lindy then said, "Don't choke on your soup, Linda. Most people seem to be finishing theirs."

"Okay. I suppose Christine's set up some theocratic society."

"Theocratic Guidance Society for the English National Church," said Jeremy.

"Simplified from what it was. It's more like a think tank now. I ignore it and most people do."

Andrea, not Allie, said, "Something like: *Ductu pro Societate Anglicana National Ecclesia Theocratic.*"

"Ductu Soup," I said. "Marxism, isn't it Allie?"

Allie said, "I swear she's gone crackers since taking Diana as her lover."

"Don't blame me," said Diana. "She was always this way."

"I'm a citizen of Freedonia," I said.

"There's fruit later," said Lindy, an announcement lost on most people. (At the end of *Duck Soup*, Mrs. Teasdale begins singing the Freedonia national anthem in her operatic voice causing the Marx Brothers' characters to throw fruit at her instead of at Trentino.)

After the soup there was a vegetarian nut roast for everyone, a huge thing Lindy had made and cooked in sections, with potatoes and carrots and peas with a vegetarian gravy. Some could have vegetarian pizza without nuts as brought in. In fact this choice made up the numbers. So I helped by choosing that, whilst having a taste of Allie's portion.

After much chat and distribution of the fruit, we arrived at the scheduled high brow Gymnology conversation, led by Georgie as intended, and her second contribution.

"I gave a lecture at my retirement at the Bethel. I was very critical of both Christine's top down ecclesiology of ministry and lack of doctrine at the Bethel. I promoted a free and full faith as promoted by Bernard Lord Manning.

"I was much criticised and told, I suppose, that I lacked a philosophy or even a strategy of the theology. Was I dialectical, like your brother Alan, Andrea, or was I promoting a postmodern identity - the evangelical route? So I went back to Manning during lockdown indeed, and decided that he was confused. He had no basis for saying what he did, other than it was the right result. He was a supernaturalist, but the right result was what these Church fathers and Reformists had produced. One should arrive at it freely, to avoid diluting it like the Unitarians or getting the order wrong regarding the fellowship of the Ecclesia.

"Manning said history can be used to prove anything, but Christ was historical because he was there. I don't think any of us doubt that much. But he meant the Gospel was historical, and revealed then, and in the texts, and in the Reformation, and in the simpler obedient Ecclesia in Word and Sacrament."

I had to say, "History cannot do miracles, only documents showing belief in miracles."

"But I think the issue for him was arriving at and keeping that full faith, and personal confessions that added into the fellowship. So it really was about identity, and in a way the focus on identity leaves the supernatural to either be there or not be there. I suppose it is there. But the importance is identity, I think, in maintaining the recognisable faith. It is about performance. So I have shifted to a postmodern Lindbeck-Frei position.

I'm more Frei than Lindbeck, I think. Funnily enough, his 1974 book, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, was hot when I started training, and I rejected it for its surveying and dodging the supernatural. Hans Frei preferred the Quaker Meeting to Anglicanism when in England, and became a Baptist minister in America and was then drawn to Anglicanism! His Ph.D took nine years to complete, under the

sociologist of religion Richard Niebuhr, on Karl Barth and his views as they formed on revelation. He came to oppose human-based anthropocentric theology."

The doorbell rang.

Lindy asked everyone to be super quiet and went to answer the front door by putting on a dressing gown. A local undertaker, Brian Lee, wondered if he could arrange a funeral regarding a sudden death. He apologised and said he'd return early next morning if they were in bed.

Lindy said, "I don't think he believed me. He looked at all the parked cars and there was quite some heat coming out of the house. It's not as if I'd been upstairs! Sorry, Georgie."

"In 1975 his adult education course was published as *The Identity of Jesus Christ*; this thus coupled with *The Eclipse*, a survey of the drift of theology in the former two centuries. So it is about identity. But also it was about Churches - and in his heart he was still a Quaker, but for the most part his theology didn't match that as he stayed awkwardly Anglican.

"Like many, he solved a theological problem by dealing in history, whilst seeing that history was infused with theology. It gets complicated, this stuff. His historical focus became more social and thus we get similar to Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic understanding - that we are what we express. So there is history there, and also in the popular identity given to Jesus from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. Thus we get to the Bible and theology as being Christian self-description.

"So that's where I am."

"But he is anthropological," I said, "because it's about how people understood this identity. It's like Lindbeck rejects general culture with its individualism and then produces one of the most cultural of approaches - he freezes Christian culture as collective Church identity. And this is what we do *not* do at the Bethel. We deny what Allie calls 'indexicality' or the frozen expectations of what constitutes Church. We do something different. We have enough, as minimal, for identity and shape, and then we let it all hang out."

It was clear that we weren't reaching everyone with this discussion. It was good to get Georgie's update, but that is all what it was.

Jeremy then said, "So what she's saying is that her lecture on expressing a free and full faith has behind it an a-historical institutional position of recognition, despite this Bernard Lord Manning claiming history in this Gospel material."

"Yes," said Georgie. "I'm sorry for those who didn't understand it. I'm pleased now I talked about breasts."

After some chatting Jeremy said he would reserve some accommodation for a Summer Mission at Bever Wood, Friday night at the end of July until Monday morning.

"I have a surprise for Linda," Jeremy said. "I've been thinking. I'd like to join the Free Liberal Ecclesia, like Louise Deimos did, and like Linda and her team did."

"Wow," I said.

"I did chat to Louise, just to see."

I said, further, "Louise here joined it when it was the Free Liberal Church. You can join us, Georgie."

"With my beliefs?"

"Absolutely."

We all thanked Lindy and Jeremy for their efforts at making such a pleasant

evening event. I also said that we did not always have to discuss theology but appreciated Georgie's orthodoxy explained.

There followed some movement about the house, with chatting, some going into and out of their sitting room and unused dining room.

Diana and a few were helping to clean pots in the kitchen. But Jeremy, Andrea and I told Madge and Flòraidh that there were quite a few naturist clergy, a well-kept secret in some naturist vicarages.

The meeting wound down. There were some smaller group conversations and people drifted away. This wish of Jeremy's meant a likely base for the Free Liberal Ecclesia at Bever Wood.

Narrator: Diana *Georgie Joins Us for a Swim* (Wednesday 26th May)

Georgie Smith called in and had a late breakfast from the kitchen.

"I don't think my talk made a lot of sense to people at the dinner."

Linda said, "You never know what people pick up. They'd have learnt that theology today has to take into account ordinary secular ways of thinking. That was the problem with your original talk, upon which you reflected. It seemed to be anchored nowhere, the free and full faith notion."

I then said that Georgie was welcome to join Linda and me on a trip to the dykes.

"Dykes to dykes?"

"You could say that - a bit."

Linda drove her SUV to the corner of the road nearest Ingle Under Drain. Georgie, Linda and I walked down the footpath with our towels to the bridge, and sat down on its bank, using the arch of the bridge for a modicum of privacy as had been done before. We three left our clothes and towels under the footbridge and went for a swim south west before returning.

I liked Georgie. Her talk didn't just fit the prevailing wind. I liked her female form but it came with that attraction below. Far from striking me as strange, she was just right.

Laying on the grass of the sheltering inner wall of the dyke, picking up the sun, I said, "I meant what I said. I miss cock."

"I happen to have one," said Georgie, "And your lover here allowed me to experience its use, because I'd never experienced it before."

"I hadn't told her," Linda said. (Maybe not: it raised the possibilities!)

"I'm very sorry," said Georgie.

"I'm not shocked at all," I responded, tapping my thigh. "That's Linda,"

"Retirement has turned out to be quite a surprise," said Georgie.

"Taking advantage of us heathens," Linda said, as I nodded vigorously to Georgie.

Linda looked away as I put my hand out to feel her penis.

Linda muttered, "Forty years of restraint and you're off your leash."

I said, "Shut up, Linda." I put my mouth to her partial erection, and looked up into Georgie's eyes.

"We *are* in the open," Linda said, and so we returned to the bethel.

I took Georgie upstairs and Linda stayed downstairs.

I told Georgie: "We're not messing about here. Aardse, my husband, knew what I needed, and I want it now. Fucking, Georgie: I want fucking."

She wasn't as efficient as Aardse, of course, but once she got going she enjoyed it, and the point is so did I. For all Linda's hand work and tongue effort, she couldn't beat a good old determined fuck.

Chapter 40 Much Later - Expansion

Narrator: Linda *Summer Mission to Bever Wood* (Friday July 30th 2021)

The need to deposit the children - Diana Sally Shrimpton, Solange Lott and Simon Peter Marshall - in the care of Kathryn and Peter (working with Adam) meant that we were slightly late in leaving Serninsea for Bever Wood in the SUV.

Lindy assumed that I'd have a room with Allie, which was fine, but there was an additional bed, to add Andrea. Georgie Smith was going to share with Diana. When Allie, Andrea, Diana and I finished at reception (removing clothes), Jeremy Symes, back in his job there, told me that my father was resident. So Diana and I moved our luggage to our room and then I said I would "disappear" for a while, leaving behind my pectoral cross.

Going to see daddy, I was surprised to meet the Reverend Caitriona Williamson. She had made her own way there. She had white hair on top and now wild black and white around her crotch. She was happily Anglican but was trying out, "A spirituality of the dancing body."

Whereas Cait was sleeping in her vehicle, daddy had a small cabin in the woods. It turned out he had looked at Bever Wood's reopening timetable of events, spotted the launch and reckoned I would be there. He soon told me, inside, "Your mother is with Leila in Llanidloes and says they're not returning to the farm." He came forward and cupped and pressed my breasts, first my left and then my right.

"Daddy, you shouldn't do that."

"I'll do what I want with my own daughter."

"Do you want me to help try and get the family back together again. I'd go to Wales."

"You could try to persuade your mother. Anyway, where's your daughter? When can I meet my granddaughter?"

"We're lucky to have so many mums and the children growing up together. They're in Serninsea."

"I'm told you're more with Diana the elder these days and that Allie your redhead is all over someone else."

"Daddy, you deceived Diana. You told her things about naturists that weren't true."

"Which she's since discovered, but I made her into a woman that very moment."

"You disturbed her sense of self. She became pregnant from Adam Magellan, which would never have happened had you not done what you did. The damage you did has gone on and on."

"Rubbish. She's been fine: married and kids. If she's with you now, she and I can go over old times."

"And getting divorced - not as fast as me because they're sorting out the future for their children."

"When are you going to give your father back some of his cuddle time?"

"Never. I think this has to stop."

"You'd better change your attitude soon, young lady, because I'm likely to sell

that Welsh farm and come over to Serninsea Marshes again. You can start living with your dad and leave the rest of them in Wales."

"I have a life in Serninsea and it is in that Bethel. I don't want you to come again to Serninsea Marshes."

He made a movement to grasp my crotch. I stepped backwards quickly enough.

"No, daddy, I mean what I say. In fact, I'd like you to leave us all alone. I was envious of Lucinda but I was naive."

"Not how you're going to solve family problems."

"Please leave us all alone. I know you've come a long way but you're not a part of what we are doing."

"My *own* daughter."

"Well, mummy is protecting Leila and Dyfed is keeping Lucinda from you, obviously."

"Make it worth my while and I'll bugger off."

"What?"

"You know what I mean."

"So long as you then leave."

"Should I? You can definitely come to me in Wales soon, to see if you can help repair the family."

"If you don't leave, I'll tell everyone here with me to ignore you. I'll warn the management. So where do you want me?"

"Not enough. I'm seeing me old mate Krzysztof, staying at a pub because you lot grabbed all the beds. Add him in, and I'll tell him I'm cutting it short."

"He's seventy-five. And we didn't take all the beds."

"Ageist, are we? He's always admired your body and Lucinda's. He's always wanted an opportunity, knowing I took Lucinda to a far room in the farmhouses."

"Call him over, then; let's get it done. You will go?"

"I keep my word."

So it was that the fat, hairy, retired farmer came into the small cabin.

"We meet after a long time," Krzysztof Stäblein said to me. "Open access is it?"

I nodded to meet my side of the bargain.

Daddy lay on a single bed in the cabin, and thus I leaned over him and took him into my mouth, this while Krzysztof groped me from behind.

I said, "I've always thought the two blokes together with a woman should all experience each other."

This meant I sat on daddy's erect upward penis and separated my backside for Krzysztof.

"You don't need gleitmittel in there?"

"No."

He struggled to get up on the bed around daddy's legs, and went into my backside. "I see what you mean," he said. "It's a bit odd, this, feeling Len's like a couple of gay boys. How deep can I go?"

"As deep as you like."

Daddy after a time declared his enjoyment at the scene, but wanted to swap.

"Time I experienced my daughter's arse, Krys."

"Spongey and soft, Len; go for it."

So they got up and switched positions and I resumed my position.

Soon Krzysztof Stäblein ejaculated up into me. Daddy asked me to look around at him, the result of which he kneeled on the side of the bed and I took his sperm into my mouth.

Daddy then insisted that I stand between the men and hold them to direct their piss into the toilet. I was pleased that was all they wanted.

After this I washed my face and my thighs of sperm, and rinsed my mouth with glasses of water. The two discussed their success with me.

Daddy then announced he'd leave the locality, but Krzysztof Stäblein also said he'd check out but only to return to the pub.

Half an hour on daddy and his friend went to reception, and both drove off once their bags were in their respective cars.

I attempted to shake away the experience, wearing the cross again. I saw Louise Saraga with James Saraga, Sally Torrance and Paula Campbell arrive in the Saragas' camper van. They had special permission to drive it into the woods as a place to stay. It meant a reduced fee. They still had to go to reception, and so I went with them, and received some updates.

First of all, daddy and friend were going to leave anyway. Secondly, my mummy was expected and she and daddy had not wanted to meet. Third, Gretta Cox-Jenkins was on her travels.

Bishop Margaret Lindbeck and Bishop Dominic Himalia arrived together at the Bever Wood car park. I went out with Allie and Andrea to welcome them in.

"Oh my goodness," said Dominic. "The moment has arrived."

"Me too," said Margaret. "If I say I've got cold feet, they're lower down than my real concern."

"What?" I asked.

"About these tights and knickers coming off."

"You'll warm up," I said. "And what about the Deimos clan?"

"We left them on the A1(M). They fancied a longer break, having come over from the A19, and perhaps to pluck up courage."

Some of us had a quiet chuckle outside reception, as did Lindy, Andrea and Allie, when Bishop Lindbeck and Bishop Dominic Hilalia emerged, both wearing bishop's crosses like me. "Margaret, Dominic: you cannot cover yourself up with your hands! Carry your towel; sit on it before you sit on anything else. You both look fine, and we have every shape and size here. You can wear a mask over your mouth and nose if you want."

"I want to wear one over my fanny."

Andrea told her, "You can't catch Novel Covid up your fanny," offering medical advice.

"My pubes are a mess."

"No they're not," Allie said. "The natural look is prized among naturists. Mine are only developing back."

"I'm tiny," said Bishop Dominic. "Have some sympathy for first timers, Linda."

I said, "Honestly. Ten minutes among similar company and you'll wonder what all the fuss was about. Your other lot are here."

Dominic said to Margaret, "Come on, Scarper!" They ran off, outside. They'd booked a newly installed glamping pod out in the wood, with twin beds.

Allie, Andrea and I went only into the car park. Here we met the Reverend

Louise, the Reverend Duncan and the inactive Bishop Sarah with her new wife Harriet Deimos.

We each kissed each one of them on the cheek.

Sarah held Harri's hand. "Well, here we are. We go public, you and me, big time. Who'd have thought it? If we end up in the Hartlepool press, it matters not a jot."

"Rather not," said Harri.

The three siblings and the wife went through reception, guided by Lindy. They soon went to their rooms, rather directly.

Back outside Salome Lichtblau drove a white van in, and from the front seats also emerged Klärchen Sisse and Megan Furley. Megan opened the back doors so to see Hendrik, a golden labrador, Dieter, a German Shepherd, and Stoke, a cocker spaniel jump out.

Salome stayed with the dogs while Klärchen and Megan went through reception. Emerging naked, Salome then went via reception.

Klärchen said to me, "I hope it helps improve things further, us coming here. We have been told the dogs must behave or go on leads. But we like being as naked as our dogs outside. We have a glamping space in the woods and must find it."

"I think it's great all three of you have come here," I said.

"All six of us," said Klärchen.

"But the dogs are discriminated against," said tattooed Megan. "They're not allowed in the main building and so we'll miss some inside events. People are the problem, not dogs."

I split from them, and found Allie and Andrea coming along. We three found the stream in the woods. Sat there, Kathleen and Winnie approached us with news that they'd agreed to split up at night, so that Duncan could be with Kathleen and Louise with Winnie. These were the only two rooms inside with twin single beds.

Kathleen also said, "Kathryn is worried that she's using more of her milk up than Allie or me.

"That's not how it works," said Andrea.

Nevertheless, by the stream, I took one breast and Andrea the other for drinks and to relieve the pressure Allie felt. Kathleen was just going to dispose of excess milk among the trees.

Later coming our way, Sarah was the most hirsute, mass black haired throughout, up to her belly button, and under her arms. She was the polar opposite of me. Harriet was hairless, most like me and so unlike her missus. Stubby Duncan seemed to be neat. Louise was a light brunette with a pubic landing strip.

He said to me, "Do you realise, this is the first time my sisters have seen my wotsit since we were young children?"

I said to Louise, with a smile, "Don't stare at your brother."

Sarah said, "Do you realise I've shared a bath with all of them - as a kid with them and these days with Harri."

Allie and Andrea started to cackle.

Later, inside, alone, I found Diana with Georgie playing cards in the games room. "How goes it?" I asked Diana.

"Showing Georgie the ropes, yeah. People keep staring but you knew this would happen."

"Yes, and Marie Healand has the same issue here."

"Er, your father?" asked Diana.

"He's gone."

"Oh. Was he easy to persuade?"

"Em... Er..."

"Can't say I'm unhappy that he's gone. Sorry."

"My mother will be arriving."

But when I walked into the dining area, who should turn around and see me but the rather rounded five foot woman using walking sticks. (She wasn't wearing a cross.) "Yeah, I was right," she said. "I quoted your name and why they let me in - rules of nudity and so on."

"Gretta."

"Yup, I'm on tour and looking for various places to stay and I saw about your launch online. And I see you're wearing the pectoral cross I gave you."

"Of course I am. Are you still a Lutheran?"

"Nah, I'm touring again. I met your dad; and now I hear he's gone!"

"Back to mid-Wales."

Allie and Andrea came in. "Allie, Andrea, this is Canadian Bishop Gretta Cox-Jenkins, whom I knew a while back and she was pretty clever at detecting my preferences and orientations."

Allie said, "Linda's mentioned you from time to time. Disgusting theology and the like."

"*Absolutely* disgusting," said Gretta. "Now if I can't share a room with one of you, I'm going to have to find a pub or something pretty quickly."

"Gosh. Allie and Andrea are with me; Diana is with Georgie for overnight moral support."

"Is that what you call it?" commented Gretta.

"Yes, actually. Andrea, can you sleep between us two, or Allie sleep between you and me? That would release the single bed for Gretta."

"I don't get to sleep with you, Linda?" asked the Canadian.

"The maths doesn't quite work out."

"Well, with a bed here, come and be my witness at reception."

Lindy was buzzed over from the kitchen and was now able to charge Gretta a fee for staying over.

"You don't wanna fuck now?" she asked me at the room.

"Well, thank you for the offer," I said back to her. "It's tea time. Dinner. And you paid for dinner?"

"Oh I paid for all meals before. Actually, Lindy first allowed me to sleep in the hire car. A few people are going to be sleeping in their vehicles these nights."

The dining room was busier than I'd ever seen it. Louise and James Saraga were smiling and Sally Torrance and Paula Campbell found a table in the far corner.

"We've had differences," Gretta said to me. "My Lutheran congregation supported my more radical theology but not the sexual theology. I advocated non-monogamy and sexual touching and toilets that were open to view."

I said, "We are a little bit more reserved than that."

Then it emerged that, to be lovers, Allie and Andrea would have Diana and Georgie's room, so Diana and Georgie came in with us, and Georgie would take the third bed. That meant that Gretta and Diana would be either side of me.

For the rest of the day we could relax. The business of the Free Liberal

Ecclesia would begin the next day.

However, there was one more person to greet, who'd responded to a message sent days back by Allie and Andrea. It was the Reverend Seumas Caimbeul, all the way from Tigh na h' Iobairte. Because he expected to stay in a nearby pub, we were naked and he was clothed as we greeted him in the car park. We'd see him tomorrow. However, the cabin my father had stayed in was already occupied. So we had to let Seumas go to recover from his long journey.

Narrator: Diana *Spells* (Saturday July 31st)

I didn't want to miss seeing again my one-time refuge man performing with Andrea and Allie. Seumas Caimbeul was beyond the car park and in the woods. He'd registered as non-residential.

Geogie was less keen so I said, "Come on let's see these silly sods do what they do."

Allie and Andrea ahead carried blunt if shiny athames to where the stream flowed. On our way Anglican the Reverend Caitriona Williamson asked if she could join us.

"More the merrier."

Caitriona knew that it was the Caol Loch Ailse Coven and members of Serninsea Eclectic Coven.

First they created a circle of divination. It was done with the three of them moving their arms in an imaginary circle. There were no candles or representative objects.

Seumas raised his arms, and called out: "*The Circle is cast. O Queen of magick, gather the sprites of nature, to bring about good influences, and bless this place and all that happens here.*"

Then Seumas paused. "This fresh stream," he said, "could so be coupled with a virgin man or woman, to really represent the new, the untouched, the clear and bright... But, alas, virgins are difficult to find these days."

"I'm a virgin," said Caitriona alongside us. "I've exposed my body and surrounded myself by other exposed bodies, and I talk about the chakras, and the body, but I'm still a virgin."

I muttered to Georgie, "And I'm here to see cock and have cock, all right Cock?"

Seumas commented, "It's amazing how the Goddess provides, don't you think? Would you stand bare footed legs apart in the flowing water of the stream? By the way, I love your dark and light pubes."

"Yes of course."

So we and a few others watched this Anglican participate.

"Face downstream. Yeah. So I think we draw upon freshness using our virgin here and call for fruitfulness, including for our virgin."

Allie said, "Caitriona. Take and bless our athames in the water for us, and touching each one on your pubic area, so that we can do a ceremony of insertion."

"Don't you want me to insert?"

"Well you can but it is a big ask when you are not used to our levels of

activity."

Allie offered her athame. Caitriona said, definitely into it, "I cleanse and purify this athame in the purity of the water and into my virginal sex." She said this three times, washing, inserting and handing back the three blades.

Seumas dropped to a squat and placed his blessed athame between Allie's pubic lips, saying, "Goddess, cleanse and refresh your priest in this forest." He removed it.

So Allie used these words for my athame in and out of Andrea, and then Seumas separated his backside for an insertion and removal by Andrea.

Caitriona started doing a dance with her hands together above her head like in a Hindu chant, her feet splashing in the water.

I said to Georgie, "I swear that these people are bonkers."

Seumas said, "*As Maiden of the forest, the laughing God of the greenwood, may the strength of the new work upon life thrusting ahead. Bring us refreshing rain, bring us warm sun, for the lifeforce to direct its arrow, evident in flowing water and all the greenery, and bless all the sources of our nourishment.*"

All four sat of them in the stream. He said, "*The Circle is dissolved.*"

Caitriona rejoined us two and said, "There goes my chance again."

We went into the dining area, at which I spotted Charley Darley, with his healed chest and bare vulva. He came over, saying, "Hello everyone. I don't know..."

"Caitriona," I said. "She's an Anglican."

"Found you at last, you reverend wizard," Charley said to Seumas. So the two Unitarian ministers went off to parley and confer at their own table.

Narrator: Linda Assistance (Saturday July 31st)

It was after breakfast and Allie came in and told me about Caitriona's situation. Allie went off to find her plus Georgie, and soon there was a knock on the door and they came in.

Caitriona said that my pectoral cross between my breasts was shining into her eyes. (I was sat in a chair.)

"Your hopes among nudity are not being met."

"Story of my life, bishop."

"Hmm. And with all that you've said about the chakras, and inner sexual strength, the yoni centre... Whereas in fact you lack experience."

"Georgie, we'd like your assistance, as you realise. I first met Caitriona when we were both ordinands, before being priested. She's still looking for a parish."

"Not surprised. I didn't speak well towards Anglicans."

"She is very heterodox for an Anglican. Can you help her? Roger, my friend, didn't come this time."

"How did I get to this? I used to be a respectable minister, the last UPCC in Serninsea, and since I've known you and Diana I've turned into some sort of a whore."

"Neither of you need tell anyone. Self-sacrifice time, Georgie? I'll make it worth your while."

"Well, why don't you join in?"

I wasn't sure if Georgie was being sarcastic or not. I decided to take her at her word. "I'll assist. Caitriona, take hold of Georgie's penis and really feel its both softness and its resistance."

As a result Caitriona walked closer to Georgie and both stood close together facing each other. Caitriona grasped Georgie's penis and explored the feeling in her grip.

I said, "Not too hard a grip. Manipulate."

"Ooh it is getting larger - thicker and longer."

"Good," I said.

I indicated that both should go to the double bed.

Georgie said, "I've never seen black and white before. I'm just boring brunette, I suppose."

"Show Georgie," I said to Caitriona.

Caitriona had plenty of stretchy labia and fleshiness for Georgie to investigate, and Georgie opened her up for a full, deep inspection.

I said, "Do the deed, Georgie. Best ejaculate on the outside."

So with me watching, Georgie climbed aboard Caitriona, and developed a good rhythm. It wasn't too long before she withdrew and spilt her sperm on to Caitriona's double-coloured pubic hair.

I said, "Wow, Georgie, you've come such a long way so quickly."

After finally rubbing her penis down Caitriona's thigh, Georgie asked, "Are we done?"

"Yes. But can you hold on?"

"Hold on to what?"

"You know what I mean. Caitriona - come close."

She came close such that I licked around Caitriona's dyed hair to consume and clean.

"Coming to Allie's lecture? One and a half hours' time."

"Yes, of course. I will shower first. Strange sensations inside me."

"Yeah, they're unusual at first. It's how you develop them, really, as you experience them again and again, and with different people. See you later. Georgie, show me."

I cleaned her penis in my mouth.

"It's such a pleasant mixture of flavours," I said. "Her and you. You're not up to having a second go?"

"Blimey, Linda. Not long ago I wasn't even sure I could use this at all."

"I want you to have really good experiences, Georgie. See you later."

Narrator: Diana *Theology of Naturism Lecture* (Saturday July 31st)

I should be interested in this - maybe ideology rather than theology. Not counting Gretta Cox-Jenkins, nor Seumas, nor Charley, also not counting those known from the Durham area and Serninsea, we had sixteen other people listening, sat on their towels on seats. Linda seemed to have a smile on her face.

"I'm Bishop Allie Shrimpton of the Free Liberal Ecclesia based in the Serninsea Liberal Bethel, and I've been asked to lecture on *A Theology of Naturism*."

"Nudity is something we explore in the bethel itself. We are often nude: in the building and in the new garden. But we also embrace sexuality, and we do not maintain that nudity is nothing to do with sex."

Yeah. I was wondering how often I'd been stuck between Linda's thin thighs.

"At Serninsea we do uphold a *consensual, loving intimacy, often non-monogamous, of sharing sexual pleasure*. It is more intimate than 'swinging' or recreational sex because it's more about relationships."

You don't say!

"We deliberately chose 'bethel' to name our church because it sounds like 'brothel' - except our brothel is about gift-exchange and not contract.

"So much Christian theology on sex is fixated on binary opposites. But that's not the only biblical mythology. The other is Eve out of Adam as continuation - at least indicating a movement by which one gender can become another. Our Bishop Linda is intersex, if outwardly wholly female, and we have here two friends of ours who are transgender. Marie Healand presents herself online as in between, and Georgie Smith has presented herself as female despite going to school as a boy called George. Georgie initially transitioned at university, and presented herself as female at theological college, and in effect set them a challenge - which they accepted in, really, a groundbreaking way. Except no one said any more afterwards. Georgie's ministry was as a female, when if you didn't ask you didn't tell, and if you did ask she didn't tell. Her venture into naturism, however, has opened up all sorts of questions long suppressed. Doctrinally we're very different.

"The unfamiliar in between is there to see - I'm thinking of theologian Susannah Cornwall's approaches to dynamic families and identities. Georgie when nude cannot hide behind her skirt any longer.

"Let's give them a round of applause!

"My latest painting is *The Madonna and her Female Lover*, mystical and queer. It's on my phone so look at it if interested.

"We are pleased here that we have here denominational representatives from the North East of England as well as ourselves from the County of Foss. But they are all trying out naturism for the first time: Bishops Margaret Lindbeck and Dominic Hilalia are exposed like never before, and the Reverends Louise and Duncan Deimos are brother and sister. I'd add that ex-Anglican bishop Sarah Deimos is also here with wife Harri Deimos, and we've never seen them in the bare flesh until now.

"Let's give *them* a round of applause!

"Naturists do tend to be more liberal about sexual matters. We note the high rates of Novel Covid transmission in some of the major naturist resorts abroad. But now, here, reopened, restrictions are personal and optional; some of you are wearing face masks.

"The Reverend Jeremy and Lindy Symes work here and he's opening a chapel of our denomination. I'll talk theologically about naturism specifically.

"We are supposedly in God's image, and, if so, God made nothing more beautiful and dignified than the human body. If we see ourselves nude, then we see an insight into divine joy. It's not about looking perfect: we have it revealed who we are and who we are not. We are not for this fashion or that, and you can't beat what's underneath any clothing.

"I go further than this. Self-pleasuring and social pleasuring enhance the body's functions. We do, however, recommend preparedness and emotional

intimacy before any observation of or participating in physical intimacy.

"At Serninsea we have done massages and these are about to resume. They are what they are, but they can be interpreted sexually as well as stress-relieving. We do include clitoral or penis stimulation for clients. These massages are enclosed and private within the bethel. We have not had massage parties.

"In fact we have split from someone who includes orgies as routes to divine sex. She's become an Anglican again, so good luck with that one.

"Naturism may be one means to enhance intimacy. By the way, pubic hair is not a coat: if your vulva is able to be visible, it should be visible. Let the dogs see the rabbits.

"Myself: I'm known for wearing leathers and PVC and they are sexy. Transport me back to the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries, and they'd consider me nude. They'd see my arse, my curves, my breasts. For them, I may as well be wearing nothing.

"I follow my wife in that I don't wear a bra and I don't wear knickers. In fact, I did skip them often before I knew her. Sometimes I will wear knickers during a heavy period. Being CAIS intersex, she doesn't have periods.

"I recall my mother, aunt and same-age male cousin accompanying me when I was measured and fitted for a bra for the first time. It's a rite of passage.

"It was a bad move. Let me refer to these notes. *Wearing a bra might actually make breasts sag because the pectoral muscles are relaxed, resulting in greater breast sagging. A bra won't reduce back pain. Having no bra on helps circulation thanks to no straps. Bras affect our circadian rhythms so they should not be on at sleeping time. Bras trap sweat against the body and might assist infection.*

"And as for knickers, I claim there is a danger of bacteria travelling from your back passage to your vagina. Knickers cause me irritation especially rubbing against my vulva. Nothing is causing irritation now! PVC or leather provides some all-round support, I think, out there in clothes land.

"But I am here to talk theology and naturism. Eden was visioned as a naked paradise, including the vegetarian ideal. Then, with the supposed fall, it was said that God provided animal skins and furs to clothe us against the cold as well as meat to feed us.

In Genesis 2:25, 3:11, God never even told Adam and Eve they were naked. Adam, after sinning, noticed that he was naked and afraid. From then on biblical texts view clothing as part of modesty and being practical, but sometimes nudity was associated with prophecy.

"In Micah 1:8, prophets were identified in the nude. In 1 Samuel 19:23-24, Saul, Samuel and others prophesied naked "all day long" after the Holy Spirit of God came on them. In Isaiah 20:2-4, Isaiah was commanded by God to be naked for three years as a sign.

"The word of the Lord came through Ezekiel chapter 16 verse 7 regarding Israel, and a bit of intersex going on:

"You grew up and became tall and arrived at full womanhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare. (New Revised Standard Version)

"But then God gets angry as God says, in verses 10 and 11:

"I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric. I adorned you with ornaments: I put bracelets on your arms, a chain on your neck..."

"But you trusted in your beauty, and played the whore because of your fame, and lavished your whorings on any passer-by. You took some of your garments, and made for yourself colourful shrines, and on them played the whore; nothing like this has ever been or ever shall be. You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and my silver that I had given you, and made for yourself male."

"God commanded Isaiah to be both naked and barefoot for three years. King David danced naked in the City of David to celebrate the return of the Ark. Michal criticised him for dancing nude and so she was rebuffed and was childless until her death (II Samuel 6:20-23).

"Touching the testicles of a revered superior was how a subordinate accepted the validity of a statement or vow, according to Hebrew, Greek and Roman custom. Testify, testimony, and testament relate to the word testes.

"We arrive at Jesus, who thought the body more important than concern with clothes, as in Matthew 6:25 and Luke 12: 22-23.

"The last supper with Jesus has this in the *New Revised Standard version* at John 13: 4-5:

"...so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him."

"Christ was then not only naked on the cross but he also left the linen cloths in the tomb when he rose (John 20:5).

"In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus associates his return with a time when nudity carries no shame.

"Further on in time, in John 21:7, Peter, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, fished naked. In Galatians 5:16 and Titus 1:15 a transformed and purified heart is seen as stronger than clothing to prevent lust and sinning.

"So the theology of clothing is: minimal clothing to stop lust, simple clothing, modest clothing, and when it is right to have embellished clothing. Nudity was and will be again.

"Time for some history to get to naked groups. The early Church baptised men, women, and children together nude. For baptisms, Saint Hippolytus of Rome (c.200 CE) demanded total nudity; women were to remove even jewelry and combs. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (c.350 CE) addressed those to be baptised:

"You are now stripped and naked, in this also imitating Christ on the Cross."

"Saint Chrysostom (c.400 CE) instructed that the priest stripped off the candidate's clothing before leading them into the water. Theodore of Mopsuestia (c.400 CE) said:

"Adam was naked at the beginning, and not ashamed. This is why your

clothing must be taken off as baptism restores right relation to God.

"Ordinary mixed nude bathing did take place among Christians until the late 300s CE.

"Well, these practices didn't last. Western Christianity after Augustine of Hippo developed notions of original sin, and the naked body was seen as encouraging lust, especially Christian naturists displaying themselves among non-Christians. Eastern Orthodoxy, like Judaism, doesn't hold with original sin. It's not directly biblical but a tradition via interpretation.

"By the 400s CE, St. Jerome considered it immoral for a Christian virgin to bathe in the nude at all.

So we can see how nudity was regarded as an ideal state, lost into the complications of living, and then frowned upon as the religion became traditional.

Then we get to the Reformation and Jan Hus, the radical Anabaptist based preacher and his Hussites. The 15th-century version of the Adamites emerged from within the Hussites and particularly with the Taborites. In 1421, the Adamite leader, Peter Kanis, was expelled from the Taborites. The few hundred that left are said to have removed their clothes and perhaps were a bit sexually free. The Taborites had the upper hand in exercising power and the naturist religious didn't last long.

"Other Anabaptist related Christian Naturists were the Naaktloopers or naked walkers. On February 11th, 1535, Eleven Anabaptists stripped and ran naked through the streets of Amsterdam proclaiming the 'naked truth'. They were later executed.

"Let's jump forward. In the 1920s, New Jersey Dutch Reformed minister Ilesley Boone was the leader launching American Christian Naturism.

"A number of theological writers have brought Christianity and Naturism together. The best known Anglican, arguably, was the Very Reverend William Ralph Inge, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral. He was narrowly liberal in theology, because he was also anti-democratic, gloomy, a eugenicist. Alive between 1860 and 1954, he was pro-naturism, and supporting the publishing of Maurice Parmelee's book, *The New Gymnosophy: Nudity and the Modern Life*. Parmelee was a sociologist who went in depth regarding the cultural, aesthetic, ethical, philosophical, and hygienic aspects of naturism. It's also of interest to feminists and those interested in censorship. Parmelee rejected Platonism in that he states that the aesthete seeking beauty is not a genuine gymnosophist, even though aesthetics comes into naturist considerations. Religious rites in the nude aren't a clear gymnosophy either, he thinks, because symbolic or mystical meaning goes beyond the simple basis for nudity.

"We even have slight revision among the Roman Catholics. Pope John Paul II in *Love and Responsibility*, published in 1981, stated:

"Nakedness itself is not immodest... Immodesty is present only when nakedness plays a negative role with regard to the value of the person, when its aim is to arouse concupiscence, as a result of which the person is put in the position of an object for enjoyment.

"I've focussed on Christianity, I realise. In Buddhism, having a pure mind without desires matters, not clothing as such. Buddhists want to avoid craving, including for the flesh. What about simplicity via nudity? In all honesty, there is a bias

against nudity. There is in Islam where Paradise is not on earth; the female body tempts the male mind, so the female covers herself in loose, body-concealing material. Judaism wears clothes based on general social norms, and perhaps slightly more conservative, but the Mikveh is private nudity in a religious setting. Hinduism and Jainism is more mixed, so we have naked holy men renouncing everything, some nude sensual aesthetics, and celebrating sex as holy in art. But the West went more secular.

"However, naturism is, in our age of the diffusion of the sacred, one of those transcending values that can be regarded by some sociologists as a substitute religion of its own.

It has its own temples: naturist clubs where the sacred rules apply and removal of clothes is compulsory. You become a member and are entitled to privileges, such as accommodation, meeting places, facilities. You put material effort in, and get the idealised benefit of being naked together. Nakedness is a transcendent value. We have practices and manners: the use of the towel, for example, towards cleanness for others.

"Children are still raised into naturism in a setting that has become nervous of adults, children and sexuality. There is and was opposition to naturism, as indeed I have mentioned coming from traditional religions. Naturism was Darwinian before religions could adapt themselves. We embrace the environment of which we are a part.

"More specifically and historically, naturism has become is what Gymnosophy used to be, a practice with philosophical intention. It includes the spiritual, political and health aspects.

"In Germany, sociologist Heinrich Pudor said nude athletics and communal nudity in sunlight and fresh air contributed to both physical and mental health. The French promoted naturisme at the same time. This was in the 1920s. It combined with free thinking, vegetarianism and more radical political thought.

"But, then, what about beauty? We have to be careful with Platonism; it holds with the perfect heavenly, classical, nude body. Platonism does thus have a negative side - body fascism, to be avoided.

"Now we would say - and we do in Serninsea: 'Nude when possible, clothed when practical.'

"What we don't want is nudity to sell products. We don't want sexualized nudity for profit. Clothes do this.

"Bizarrely, we can say, 'When everybody is naked, nobody is naked.' It is a statement of normality and egalitarianism. It is not a reversion to the savage, or idealism, nor is it like the naked Hindu ascetic. We want to be middle-way, ordinary, the usual. Civilisation indoors does not need clothing as an essential.

"It's good to quote Maurice Parmelee from his book, ending chapter 1:

"Gymnosophy stands for simplicity, temperance and continence in every walk of life. ...it connotes a thoroughgoing change in the outlook upon and mode of life.

"Theology links nudity with hope from pure origins and restored destinations. But nudity is really not to be noticed. It is only noticed because others do differently. In the context of them, we are us, and we choose to be naked.

"Thank you very much."

Our Professor Knowall received a decent applause.

Questions and Discussion

Suddenly, on finishing, Gretta Cox-Jenkins said, "You mentioned Cornwall. You are aware of the Argentinian Althaus-Reid and Indecent Theology?"

"Yes, Linda introduced her work to me."

"Okay. You seem to be hedging your bets. She says that the Religious Left has failed to stand for sexual freedom. I think you are too. You married to have a child, instead of saying we can raise children outside marriage and have full reproductive rights."

"Well, actually, our child has two mothers by legal necessity but there are three children growing up together. They have various mothers and breast feeders too. Back at Serninsea now, Kathryn has two breasts but three kids to satisfy."

"It's just that I didn't hear much liberation theology, queer theology, feminist theology, and postcolonial theology. Big deal regarding mythology of one sex range versus two sexes."

"I was addressing naturism and I thought I was tackling the thorny subject of sexuality among naturists. So often people deny naturism has anything to do with sex."

"You've obviously not been to the wilder beachers of Cap-d'agde."

"But I did mention high rates of Covid transmission and was I thinking of Cap-d'agde in France."

"Just that naturist people masturbate and fuck in public."

"And catch Novel Covid."

"Are you being censorious?"

"No, I am being realistic."

"What about Middlesbrough and Hartlepool?" Gretta asked.

Suddenly Sarah Deimos spoke up. "It's all closed down, that behaviour. It wasn't properly consensual. Vivienne Space, calling herself Bishop Vivienne Lindsey after the marriage, has been discovering just what's been going on. After all, I didn't know what was happening under my nose. What was unpleasant in our area hit Linda in Serninsea like a bus at full speed."

"You resigned," said Gretta.

"Different reasons. I wanted out anyway. I was on the Secular Clergy Website. I'm here but only because of my brother and sister coming along. We are a family."

"You hid Harriet."

"Yes I did, but we're married now."

I suddenly said, "Marriage is broad. Mine was outwardly conventional but my background wasn't."

Allie then said, "Thanks Diana. Gretta, we would rather stick to the topic, which is naturism and theology, not marriage. Indecent Theology was introduced."

"You don't do orgies."

"No, because they were not properly consensual and too surface based. We have orientated towards people to people as relationships, one way or another."

Linda stood. "We are not promoting, say, the prostitution that is rife in our

area."

"Wow," said Caitriona Williamson. "It's all happening."

"Well, I'm sorry," said Gretta. "It's not happening. You all disappoint me so much. Christine has sold out."

Marie Healand stood up. "I value these latest friendships. It's why I've taken the risk of being here, despite performing on a webcam."

Allie said, "And I have performed. Full-blown pornography, actually."

I wasn't surprised people in the audience gasped.

Kathleen stood up. "There's a now Anglican ministry to local prostitutes. But three of us here are in the Serninsea Vestal Virgins, a woman's group that keeps a flame going for local concerns."

Gretta said, "Groups like yours broke away from Anong's group. Anong was a Thai-style Buddhist in her Danadeha Group. Her name means Beautiful Woman and the group name derived from 'Giving of the Body'. She'll be sixty-two now and breaks every taboo going."

Kathleen continued, "We constantly learn about local sex workers and pray for them, and from time to time do something practical to help."

Sarah said, "Hartlepool had and has a prostitution difficulty."

Gretta, walking on her sticks, said: "I love that woman, Anong. Christians can affirm the dirty materiality this Buddhist promotes. She and I deconstruct and break down oppressive sexual regimes. Your ethos is otherwise. Goodbye, everyone!"

Then Georgie next to me stood up. "I think you've got Indecent Theology wrong. Yes, it includes sexual liberation but it is a thoroughgoing for the purposes of social justice. I've spent a whole career in ministry, hidden. I've worn skirts with a hanging penis out of sight. In the end, once retired, I then had to redeem myself. That's why I approached Charley there, a Unitarian for goodness sake, and asked Marie about her experiences, and asked Linda and Diana here for assistance, so that I could lay myself bare. Literally. They, who were in the UPCC congregation are not best pleased. They think I was a secretly sexual immoral deceiver. But, firstly, the UPCC institution was a deceiver. Behind my skirt I delivered heteronormality, and everyone thought I was the real deal woman. I was fooling my congregation to meet the institutional requirement. My one inner knowledge was that I never wore knickers or underpants - and I was a virgin. But I am a virgin no more. *Not* thanks to Charley. Sorry for having to state that. And some naturists do find me threatening."

I thought she was going to mention me for a second.

Charley Darley then said, "Marcella Althaus-Reid considered Church on the lines of betrayal until she joined the Metropolitan Community Church and that restored her inside the Christian communion."

"Yes?" Allie asked, to a man with his hand up.

"I'm Henry Hull. Men get excluded. Men have to come to this in pairs with a woman, whereas women can come alone. I don't know about a trans woman."

Jeremy stood up. "It's been an issue of contention in naturist settings for a long time. We are changing the policy. If two men are married or have a civil partnership we will take them as members. We will look at single male applicants but we have to get them to open up their history with evidence. We accept psychological tests. We have to be so careful these days. Children are another contentious area where we accept them but everyone is nervous these days, and maybe with good reason."

Another, a woman, said, "Many of us here are post-menopausal anyway. We still have sex but naturism isn't directly part of it."

"You are?" Allie asked.

"Julie Fremont."

Allie said, "Sex is part of naturism. It is for teenage naturists, those seeking a partner, those who are fascinated by erogenous zones. We introduce a Church to this mixture."

Charley Darley had a contribution. "Seumas Caimbeul over there and I are considering setting up a Unitarian Naturist Association. It'll be interesting to see who 'comes out' and joins that."

I asked, "Does naturism have a theology if, like me, you're not religious?"

Allie answered. "It's a good question. My answer is yes."

"So is mine," said Linda. "It's the sacred quality of what we do, derived from intra-subjective empathy."

Allie had an announcement. "Tomorrow we incardinate Jeremy and establish a branch of the Free Liberal Ecclesia here. It means, basically, there will be a chapel and ministry available. The pattern will be an Open Table Eucharist - everyone can partake - which is a religious practice you can interpret in entirely your own way. Bishop Linda will preach tomorrow. It's great that this place is open again. But Covid is still around so mind how you mix."

Caitriona said, "Practise inner healing."

I said, being secular, "I don't know what that means."

"The inner sacred. Meditate and let the chakras do their work."

Narrator: Linda *More for Georgie* (Saturday July 31st)

I asked Georgie to come to my room, shaking off Diana.

I said to her. "I'd have recommended you learn a lot from Gretta Cox-Jenkins but she's walked out disappointed."

"Learn what, precisely? What do you want, Linda?"

"She would have taken you to places unknown. I want to play with you now."

"I'm not some sort of play-thing."

But on arriving at our room, with a huge smell of shit from the bathroom opposite, Gretta was in there.

I said, "I thought you were going."

"Well, I had needs, and then I thought, while evacuating, why should I deny myself either of these gender-bending beauties?"

"But you should be as good as your word," I suggested.

"Not one of my strongest points," said Gretta. "I like to be flexible. So what do you say?"

Georgie said, "I'm being so different here. I don't know."

"Then I suggest you stay with her. It'll be new," I said to Georgie.

Gretta said, "Give me an hour and a half. By then I promise I'll be gone. You can collect Georgie here."

When I later saw Diana, I said she should avoid our room for the time being.

It was more like an hour and a quarter when I went back, accompanied by

Diana.

We found Geogie laid out on the double bed as if she'd been like that for a while.

"Let me look at you," I said, for her breasts were red and her penis looked sore.

I lifted her penis carefully, and it was also a bit weepy.

"Oh crumbs," said Diana.

"Teeth, mouth," said Georgie. "My balls are emptied. What we did I daren't say."

I asked Georgie if she could turn over on to her front. I then separated her bottom cheeks and the redness repeated.

"Is your hair wet?" Diana asked.

"She's disgusting," said Georgie. "Disgusting all round. Who *is* this Anong?"

"A filthy Buddhist, yes," I said.

So I decided to move Georgie more to being on her side and got close, with Diana on the other side.

There was a knock on the door, and it was Annie Fenwick.

"I've just seen my mate Marie. Someone called Gretta who's scarpered in a taxi."

I left Diana with Georgie. I found Marie Healand similarly laid out on a bed. She had all the same red areas, as I inspected them.

I said to Annie, "I think I've made a mistake."

Narrator: Linda Sermon (Sunday 1st August 2021)

My sermon was written out. "What I'd like to do for my sermon is discuss our notion of equality of ministry, particularly gender. It relates to Allie's lecture yesterday.

"For Paul, turning to unnatural sex is a consequence of falling into sin. If you don't worship God, you are more likely to practise homosexuality. There's an absence of biblical counter-arguments, unlike with women leaders.

"Thus, when others wanted to reconsider me for Anglican ministry, I was expected to give a no sex undertaking even while being allowed to transfer-in when married to a woman. I said 'no' to such a condition.

"As Free Catholics or High Protestants, we do not regard the Bible as having any special privilege, or indeed Paul - or even Jesus, for that matter; the fact is that I can and will say that the biblical anthropology is wrong. We believe in human evolution and a theology that derives from actual biology and cultural practice.

"But there is a question of consistency here. The Church can change its mind, but can it do so on anything? The mainly Calvinist Thirty-nine Articles do not have the place they had, but they still indicate broad continuities such as salvation guided by Scripture. It's a situation that has tied someone like the Archbishop of All England in knots. He was very kind to me and wanted me in, but in the end I would not enter his institutional trap. My one time colleague, who was a Liberal Catholic bishop, and has inclusive views and practices on sexuality, was able to rejoin the Anglicans because she thinks the Church writes Scripture all the time.

"The priest we shall incardinate today also did what she did, but came to the

conclusion he'd made a mistake. We all make mistakes. This Church, our corner of the greater Church, learns and changes. He can practise ministry here with us, and this service is his launching pad.

"So I want to discuss who we are. We go back to April 1914 when a small group of Unitarian and Free Christian ministers attended a three day retreat at Flowery Field Church near Manchester. They formed A Society of Free Catholics. Flowery Field's minister, the Reverend John Stone Burgess, joined others nearby and one from Evesham, but the big name became the Reverend Joseph Morgan Lloyd Thomas, Minister at Old Meeting in Birmingham.

"These men were on the right wing of that denomination, in some ways, and spilled beyond. Christ was 'God's supreme gift for the salvation of the world' revealed in the 'continuity and solidarity of the Christian Church'. They wanted 'ordered worship with the due administration of sacraments' - liturgical indeed.

"The symbolic, sacramental and Catholic movements had already underlined romanticism elsewhere. We're talking about the impact of The Oxford Movement and the more moderate Lux Mundi as sacramentalist movements. Even the Church of Scotland Presbyterians introduced coloured glass and statues! Some Methodists interpreted Wesley as an early Anglo-Catholic because his method was disciplined worship around the Eucharist - the evangelical populist side came later. Unitarians had built Victorian Gothic churches and oblong preaching chapels were turned ninety degrees with added coloured windows. They adopted liturgies, adapted and yet maintained a fairly conservative direction by the Reverend James Martineau among others.

"Alongside, Roman Catholic Modernism was fashionable; but from 1907 it was condemned and identified Modernists were excommunicated. F. D. Maurice left the Unitarians for the Broad Church Anglicans. His Christian socialism was adopted by the Free Catholics. The Broad Church arguably had impetus from the nineteenth century liberal book Essays and Reviews.

"Around 1920 the Free Catholics had 300 and rising members, mainly women, of whom ninety were clergy. The suggestion is twenty-five were Anglican, eighteen Congregational, ten mostly Wesleyan Methodists, ten from the Unitarians, and one ex-Unitarian bishop, Ulric Vernon Herford, of his own Church of Divine Love. This important chap was vegetarian, cycled around Oxford (again!), often wearing a brown habit. He did ordain some folk, including the leading Congregationalist minister to priest, William Edwin Orchard, based at the Kings Weigh House in Mayfair. He joined in 1916. From the Kings Weigh House came the first woman ordained as a trinitarian minister in Britain, Constance Todd, in 1917, whose spiritual practice included devotion towards the Virgin Mary. There was a Brother Douglas, by the way, a Unitarian monk.

"But it did not last. It disbanded in 1928. William Edwin Orchard was basically a Roman Catholic in dogma and practice, and that's where he ended up. Joseph Morgan Lloyd Thomas was broader, if trinitarian, and he ended up back in education. He said creeds but the Society further promoted a sacramentalism free from dogmas and creeds.

"The Protestant Truth Society targeted the Mayfair chapel, and the socialist views of Orchard also attracted a hostile press.

"Some Unitarian chapels have retained 'high' practices, but the Christian side has since united its denominational and broader camps and the broader side

became more interfaith and humanist.

"So Free Catholicism is a 'bad memory' institutionally in that denomination because of its disruptive impact. It was divisive, possibly elitist, and its Unitarian followers often rejected Unitarian identity. Therefore Free Catholicism has moved out of that denomination and is now continued elsewhere.

"Let's consider a group unaffected by high symbolic worship. The Quakers have an identity based on practice. They worship in silence or have people stand and give spontaneous sermons or reflections. This draws on the theology of waiting on the Holy Spirit, of which the small sermons are a part. But many Quakers today are interfaith or humanist. Some meditate and take on Buddhist reasoning.

"In a similar way Free Catholicism or High Protestantism coheres through a basic Christian-plus practice, via the retention of symbolic eating and drinking at the heart of worship. The basic structure of ritual eating and drinking can be accompanied with all manner of content.

"There is a parallel with Liberal Catholics of a similar period of time, but they were associated with Theosophy and then a more magical interpretation of sacramental activity. They retain a commitment to apostolic succession. I like ordered clergy as well as ordered worship, but I don't hold to any supernatural or magical views as to its chain of continuity. It really is just about practice, and identity, and the interpretation is then yours. Amen.

"So, using a Unitarian tradition of 'answer back', because what I say is not definitive, does anyone have a comment?"

Georgie Smith did. "I still maintain that the essence of the Christian Bible - the Gospel - was first proclaimed and people gathered around it in fellowship. 'Kirk' derives from belonging to the Lord or house of the Lord - Kyrios congregation. *Ekklesia* means the assembly called together and gathers around God's revelation. 'Ecclesia' is preferred in the New Testament, and is dynamic. Therefore I maintain that you cannot have the sacramental witness and then any type of interpretation. Indeed the witness of the Word includes the acts of the sacrament - Lord's Supper and Baptism, although I accept the upper room is not the institution of the Eucharist. You're not as hardline as Liberal Catholics but you're in the same territory of error. It's why I wouldn't join you."

Allie spoke up. "We have a more anthropological view of feeding and drinking with each other. Thus, like Louise Deimos does, we can bring in Krishna and Buddha and add to the mix. We also accept all the main secular causal narratives: quantum entanglement, the relativity of space and time, evolution as a version of chaos and systemic interaction, and we add in naturism as a kind of absence of hiding places."

"For much as I like you two, Linda and Allie, you are a theological jelly."

Seumas Caimbeul had a comment. "It's like we still use the four elements and four winds associated with them in these islands. They are a means of symbolism for further reflection. We are not anti-science. We are alchemist in the sense of secrecy and self-preservation, but we are chemists like any modern person. Spells are just means of goodwill, and the important point is the practice of goodwill. So we neo-Pagans have made a similar shift, and why I can be both Unitarian and Pagan - what Unitarians call Earth Spirit as a school."

"Yes," I said, "And you folk have arrived at a place where it makes sense, and that's where I am in this grouping, and delighted that Jeremy Symes is joining us any second now."

Allie said, "The sacred is much broader now, and why naturism has a theology."

Incardination

With Bishops Allie, Dominic and Margaret alongside me, I said to Jeremy, "Please kneel before us. *Recite the Oath of Incardination* (which you signed earlier)."

"I, Jeremy Symes, fifty-one years of age, under divine grace, kneeling before you, the Right Reverend Mothers and Father, seeing you directly and touching with my hand this Holy Book, declare that I am here in good faith and good intent.

"I embrace the ecclesiastical traditions of this particular Church, the Free Liberal Ecclesia, as we profess to be part of the Church Universal.

"I recognise the place of Holy Church as the crucible for ministering and teaching the faith, and I promise and swear true obedience to the leadership forms of this Free Liberal Ecclesia.

"I shall follow the practices of this Church, particularly regarding baptism, the Eucharist, seeking renewal, performing rites for relationships, and agreed worship practices. The Sacred Scriptures are to be interpreted in good faith.

"The governance of the Church shall not take away my liberties to believe according to serious and faithful study.

"With the help of God, I promise and swear to maintain and profess this faith, and I shall strive, as far as possible, that this faith shall be professed to all who come to me.

"So help me God."

Allie, Dominic, Margaet and I all said together, "Welcome into our Church, priest, the Reverend Jeremy Symes."

Then we made our way from this meeting room to the shallow end of the indoor swimming pool.

Narrator: Linda *Launch* (Sunday August 1st)

I was stood with Bishops Allie, Margaret and Dominic, with the Reverend Jeremy and Lindy Symes ready to use the steps down into the pool and then walk until able to submerge within the water.

Jeremy and Lindy we knew had removed all jewellery, and all orifices were clear.

Margaret said, "Final part of today's service: launching the chaplaincy. *Blessed are You, Source of all Life, Who has kept us alive and sustained us, and enabled us to reach this day.*"

I then said, "*Holy Spirit, ever guide us. We have been participating, today, in a solemn act of worship and now we make our new assembly here, to go out and make disciples of faith; and may God bless us all.*

"Our swimming pool stands in for a mikveh, a holy place of total submersion where the old life is recognised but ended for a new life to begin. The Reverend

Jeremy of our Church and his wife Lindy will submerge and emerge. They'll emerge to begin the Chaplaincy of the Free Liberal Ecclesia at Bever Wood Naturist Centre.

"O God, you created the universe from a womb of water. You made us all naked in your image, pure and holy, according to your divine will. Each body of beauty has rhythms like the sun and moon, and the seasons, and the Holy Days. We bless God's sacred name and ask for a blessing on this couple as they embark on this special ministry."

"May God bless you and keep you. May God be gracious to you. May God show you kindness and grant you peace."

"Hold hands together, walk into the water until it is deep enough to submerge, and do so completely before coming up for fresh air again."

They walked down the steps into the water, Lindy going first and Jeremy with his arm on her shoulder. They walked on, Jeremy's right hand clasping Lindy's left hand, and then together went under, Lindy taking her spare hand above her head so that her long hair, all of it, went within the water. They turned under the water, and then emerged upwards, to gasp into the air above, and walk their way out, releasing their hands together for practical purposes as she went up the steps first.

Bishop Margaret then said, *"Let us give praise to God that they submerged and emerged into new hope."*

"Now let us leave here and go to a room nearby. It has been chosen to be a chapel, a space for contemplation."

So we all moved to a corridor, a room door open. Inside was an altar table at the far end and candles to light. A dripping Jeremy lit them. There was no cross.

Bishops Dominic, Margaret, Allie and myself said together, *"O God bless this chapel of the Free Liberal Ecclesia, for its service to all naked souls who may need it."*

We went in and poured bottled water on our fingers. We then shook our fingers over the altar table. "Bless this altar table and make it holy," we said together.

Wet Lindy said, "This is a ministry I can support with enthusiasm."

Jeremy said, "It's for the pastoral needs of everyone who comes into this Naturist Centre, regardless of beliefs and commitments. We will provide open table services for all here, offering inclusive content regarding both beliefs and gender. On big occasions we can use larger spaces. We will register for weddings. Lindy."

"Other religious leaders and secular people carrying out ministry will be able to use these spaces. The chapel as a whole will be added to the facilities list of the brochure both printed and online. In this spirit, perhaps the Scottish Unitarian minister can do a formal opening?"

"Tha mi a' cur an cèill gu bheil an caibeal seo fosgailte. I declare that this chapel is open."

We left literature on the Free Liberal Ecclesia in that allocated room.

The rest of the day was open for relaxation.

Lindy said they might build a plunge pool to obey mikveh regulations as at Serninsea.

More Family

The biggest surprise was the arrival of my mother and Leila. They registered, and were to squeeze into our room overnight. Mother's breasts seemed even larger; Leila seemed thinner and bare around her pubes - very unlike her mother.

Mummy informed me. "Leila and I have a place in Syerston, close to the Fosse Way. Well, the wider family has seen to it for a simple rent. We are going to view it tomorrow, after we leave here. Dyfed is selling up and he will move with Lucinda to open his businesses over in Machynlleth. Your father is staying at the farm, but I will demand my share so perhaps he will have to sell some or part of it."

"It's all very sad, really."

"I'll say to you what I've said to Lucinda. Don't use your father as a model for anything. He's not the idealist we once thought. If you've copied some of his behaviour - don't."

I'd not heard her speak like this before, and I felt a shiver of accuracy there. Perhaps I'd been domineering and even exploitative for my pleasures. It was sort of pathological; change would be slow, perhaps. At least I'd asked him to leave (but he'd got his pound of his daughter's flesh).

I felt the same about Gretta Cox-Jenkins too, that via me she'd used Georgie and Marie for her own ends, rather as did the previous Bishop of Bolingbroke.

Leila was quiet. All she said was, "No more learning Welsh. But I might go to Machynlleth too, and then I'd continue."

Narrator: Linda *Linda's Initiation* (Monday August 2nd 2021)

With a room vacated on Sunday to be taken by Diana and Georgie, Leila and mummy were able to sleep in my room. After breakfast, they left for the short trip to Syerston, in the area where our family had roots.

My wife then asked me, "Would you like to join us. We're talking about making us two completely equal in terms of inherited ordinations."

I agreed. Having signed consent documents indoors, I walked to the edge of the car park. Allie and Andrea were in open green and gold gowns, and positioned themselves either side of me as we walked into the woods and to the stream. At the stream was a cushioned and cloth-covered long table with a candle at the near end and three athames laid in parallel at the far end. Behind it was High Priest Seumas Caimbeul also wearing an open green and gold gown.

I heard someone in a small nearby curious group mutter, "Where's Angel Blake?"

Ha ha. She was played by Linda Hayden - not me! - in *The Blood on Satan's Claw* (Tigon, 1971).

The small crowd included Klärchen Sisse, Megan Furley and Salome Lichtblau with their three dogs. Annie Fenwick and Marie Healand turned up, and so did Diana with Georgie.

Allie introduced us to the gathering. "This is the Reverend Seumas Caimbeul, High Priest Seumas Tursachan, from Tigh na h' Iobairte naturist retreat centre near Ceann Loch Raineach in Scotland, and he is a High Priest of the Caol Loch Ailse Coven. This is the Reverend Doctor Andrea Adela Lindsey, High Priest Andrea Moonglow of the Serninsea Eclectic Coven, and I am Mar Bana-Bhuidseach, Bishop

Alfia Shrimpton, High Priest Alice Moonbright of the Serninsea Eclectic Coven. Today Mar Reticulum, Bishop Linda Shrimpton, already a first degree witch as Linda Bodleian, will be elevated to High Priest in the Serninsea Eclectic Coven."

Allie had to warn everyone. "So, ladies and gentlemen, normally these two intended initiation rites would be carried out within the privacy and secrecy of the Coven. Observers are at least first degree initiates, as indeed was Linda Bodleian. However, we cannot resist the lure of the outside and the woodland; but the managers insist that you can continue using these facilities. So we warn you that in elevating our candidate Linda Bodleian to High Priest, some of our rituals will mystify you, and ritualistic sexual activity will take place. If you don't want to see it, please leave. If you do observe, please use your discretion and do not spread our secrets."

Andrea Moonglow said, "This prepared table is for your initiations but it sits in a circle where, to the north we have incense smoking, to the east a simple stone, to the south candles and to the west a dish of water. If an animal like a dog drinks from there, let it."

Seumas Tursachans said, "*In your name, Maiden of the forest, blessed Lady of the water and streams, we built this circle. In your freedom among this natured setting we ask for your presence and blessing. Banish guilt and lead us to understanding.*"

Alice Moonbright then said, "Linda Bodleian, walk three times around the altar table and stop in front of Seumas Tursachan."

I did this and paused to face the Scottish minister.

He stated: "*I ask the Pure Life Force that through her power she heals to my touch and prepares you for your change to become a priest of the Coven.*"

He touched my forehead with his right hand fingers and he said, "Ateh - Thou."

His right hand cupped my left breast and he said, "*Malkuth - the Kingdom.*"

His left hand touched my right shoulder and he said, "*Ve Guburah - we can say Power.*"

His right hand touched my left shoulder and he said, "*Ve Gudulah - we can say Glory.*"

His right hand cupped my right breast and he said, "*Le Olahm - Eternity in Being.*"

So I realised they were from the Qabbalistic Cross, or Kabbalah in Judaism.

Alice Moonbright called me to her and she did and said the same, and then Andrea Moonglow called me to her and she did and said the same. Interestingly, in doing these pentangles, no one had touched my yoni.

Now Seumas said, "*We are in the woods. See that tree to the east? It has a certain simplicity, and it has the beauty of form and content, for learning, art and craft, poetry, song, instrumental music. Accept the blessing of the East.*"

Now Andrea said, "*That tree to the south has its life and energy, individuality, zeal, and vitality. Here are desires, passions, and appetites. We love and hate, but we have joy. Accept the blessing of the South.*"

Allie then said, "*That tree to the west has compassion. It is for gift over contract. Here you are one for others, and their sacrifices as well as your own. Everyone is on the road to truth. Allow for failures - theirs and yours - and make progress part by part. Accept the blessing of the west.*"

It was back to Seumas. "*The northern tree stands firm; it is for obedience.*"

There are proper times when to obey, as in obeying the findings of wisdom and experience. Identify the masters of learning and wisdom, and follow them. Accept the blessing of the north."

Seamas continued: *"By the trees of beauty, life, compassion and obedience, it may be said, 'Though the world does perish and falls away, these remain."*

Allie said, "Please climb carefully on to the altar table and lie along its length, the athames beyond your head, your legs and feet either side of the light."

Andrea said, "Say: *I pledge at this circle and all it represents to be true always to the Art and its secrets."*

I responded as told.

Seumas said, *"To never abuse the Art or my own powers..."*

I responded as told.

Allie said, *"And to keep this pledge always in my mind, body, and spirit."*

I responded with her given words."

High Priest Seumas Tursachans now declared, "Linda Bodleian, you have now completed the second initiation. We can stop now. Remember that to continue does involve intimate bodily insertion and sexual contact. There will be sexual intercourse and I will deposit semen, the life force."

"I cannot get pregnant. Continue."

He said, "Then stay on the altar. I will pick up the candle and you move down to the edge making your legs wide and off the table. High Priest Andrea Moonglow, deliver the marks of the pentangle from the candle."

She first dripped hot wax on to my forehead and she said, *"Ateh."*

She next dripped hot wax on to my left breast and she said, *"Malkuth."*

She next dripped hot wax on to my right shoulder and she said, *"Ve Guburah."*

She next dripped hot wax on to my left shoulder and she said, *"Ve Gudulah."*

Finally she dripped hot wax on to my right breast and she said, *"Le Olahm."*

High Priest Alice Moonbright was instructed to do the same.

But High Priest Seumas Tursachans did not. He scooped up some twigs from the ground and lightly touched me with them from my breasts to my legs.

He said, "This is symbolic pain by ritual purification; and High Priests, let us prepare with love."

Each of them kissed my body, and all three of them picked up an athame each and each athame was dipped into the flowing stream.

There were some gasps from the observers as (not online this time!) Andrea and Allie facing each other inserted the blades into their vaginas and moved the handles clockwise.

Seumas had cause to address the people observing: "Don't worry, they are shiny but completely blunt." At this point his athame came into me, and although it was blunt its point did push where I have no cervix. So there was pressure, and might even have made a mark.

"Your vagina within is the centre of your bodily power, and the origin of all things. We adore it."

Well, was it? My vagina was a pouch, and was only ever a pouch.

Nevertheless, Andrea and Allie climbed on to my body, so that I could see Andrea's widened vulva and vagina. Allie on my breasts faced Andrea and they started kissing. Seumas stood at the table end, widened my vulva and inserted his

lingam into me, thrusting in and out.

This High Priest said, "*By sacred seed and root, and stem and bud, and flower and fruit, do I invoke you, queen of space, dew of body, in your avenue to your spiritual womb.*"

That was a neat revision!

Andrea said, "*By dew from my holy body, down the avenues, liquids of my life falling, do I invoke you with sacred sustenance.*"

I put out my tongue and received this one-time Anglican priest's juices.

Allie further said, as I felt his penis continue to thrust inside me, "*The Gods and Goddesses be praised! I knead her breasts to make her glad and glorious.*"

Seumas brought himself to a climax. His semen was coming out of me as I lay there.

Seumas said, "The ninefold kiss." He kissed around my vulva three times, Allie did each nipple once, Andrea my mouth, Seumas my stomach and then on top of each foot.

The women got off me and stood together to the side.

Then High Priest Seumas Tursachans said, "*O Secrets of secrets that are hidden within the being of all lives, you have changed Linda Bodleian ontologically for all time. Linda Bodleian, you are now a High Priest.*"

High Priest Andrea Moonglow said, "*Encourage our hearts, let the blood enrich, let the light shine, for there is no part of us that is not divine. But, Linda Bodleian, you are now special: get off the altar table and walk around it once.*"

When I had done this, Alice Moonbright, my wife, had a necklace for me. Seumas Tursachans put his hand to it and so did Andrea Moonglow. They placed it over my head. Andrea Moonglow and Alice Moonbright only said together, "*You receive this necklace as a token of the sacred circle and the continuous interaction of life. Wear it to show a sign of commitment to all the principles and purposes of the Serninsea Eclectic Coven.*"

Seumas said, "High Priest Linda Bodleian: congratulations! *The Great Rite is over. Linda Bodleian, do receive your Magickal Amulets and Talismans for magickal enhancement.*"

Andrea brought them on a tray and I took the tray. "Here is your wand made of wood, to cast a circle. As initiated into the third degree, you are now able to initiate others, either alone or with others from the second degree upwards.

It turned out Annie had recorded this on her mobile phone. We refused her wish to show it on Goosechat, but she still agreed to send Linda a copy.

Return to Serninsea

Soon we left Bever Wood, and went home. That night I slept with Allie, who told me that my lovemaking would be enhanced forever. Andrea and Diana shared a bed for one night as Georgie went home. Georgie and Diana would stay as friends with mutual benefits.

We had a betheh to develop and children to raise. The future was ours to make.

Klärchen Sisse offered to sell her end house on the basis that the enlarged betheh could be developed with extra accommodation in which she, Megan Furley

and Salome Lichtblau and their dogs would be guaranteed two rooms and full access to the garden and building beyond the dining and meeting area. This was a likely development involving financing and oversight by Ann Dromeghda, Labhaoise Vlahos and Adam Magellan.

Credits and Notices

Goodbye: THE END

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Many might suggest that the book *The Jacobite Gap Years* series of books and television is a take on *Outlander* series of books: *Outlander/ Cross Stitch* (1991), *Dragonfly in Amber* (1992), *Voyager* (1993), *Drums of Autumn* (1996), *The Fiery Cross* (2001), *A Breath of Snow and Ashes* (2005), *An Echo in the Bone* (2009), *Written in My Own Heart's Blood* (2014), *Go Tell The Bees That I Am Gone* (2021), and that Gabriëla Daffron derives very loosely from the best-selling author Diana Gabaldon. Whilst any imitation is flattery the supposed fiction within this fiction is quite different. 'Gabriëla Daffron' wrote:

Book one - *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Seumasach Nuadh*

Book two - *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Nighean*

Book three - *The Jacobite Gap Years: An Sgioba*
concerning...

Malcolm MacKenzie or Maol Choluim MacCoinnich, a laird

Simon MacKenzie or Sim Choluim MacCoinnich (Malcolm's father, Chief)

Alasdair MacCoinnich, later laird

Diarmad MacCoinnich, later laird's brother

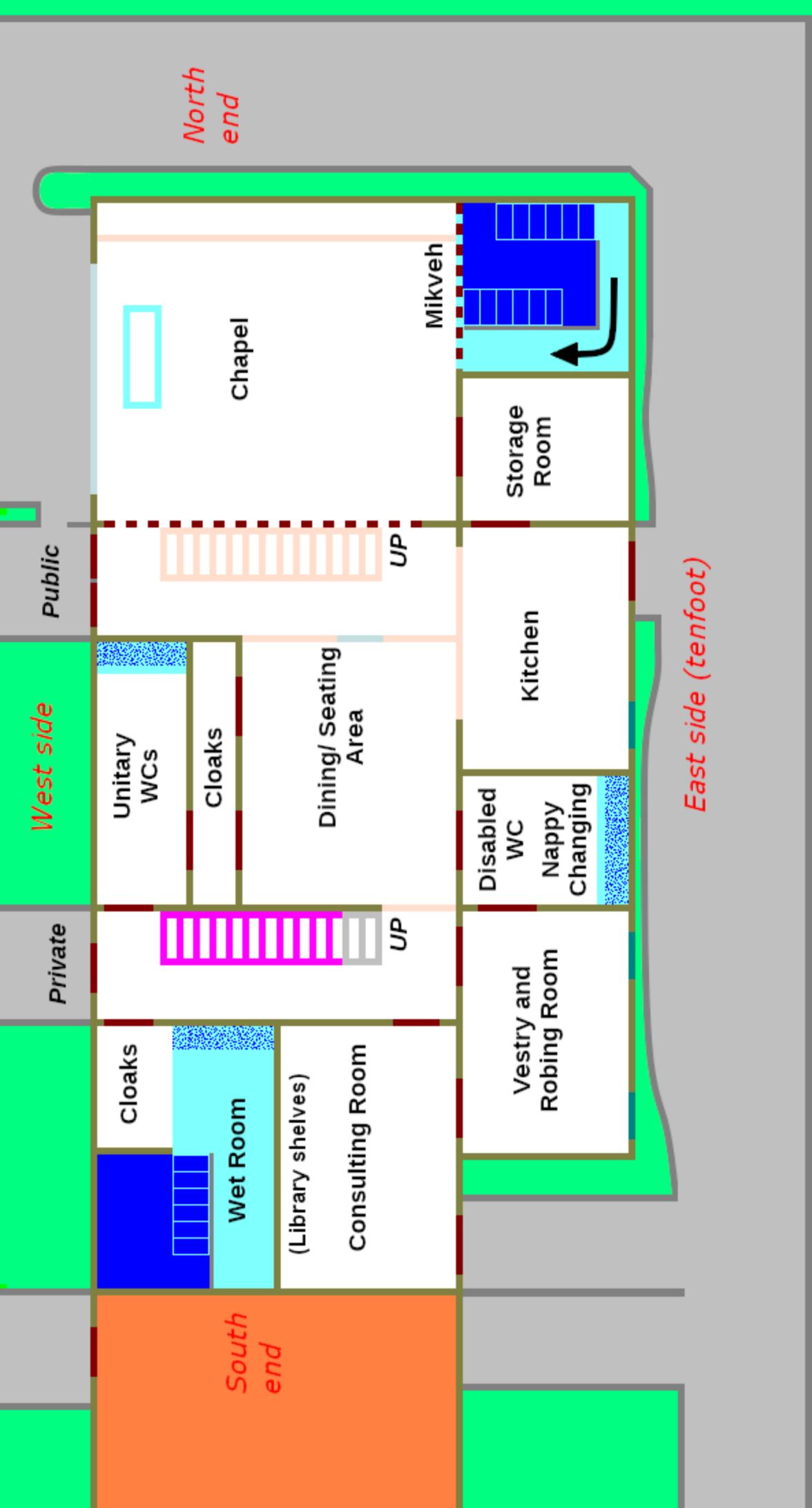
Mary Douglas marries Malcolm to be Mary MacKenzie or Màiri NicCoinnich and later is mistress of Alasdair

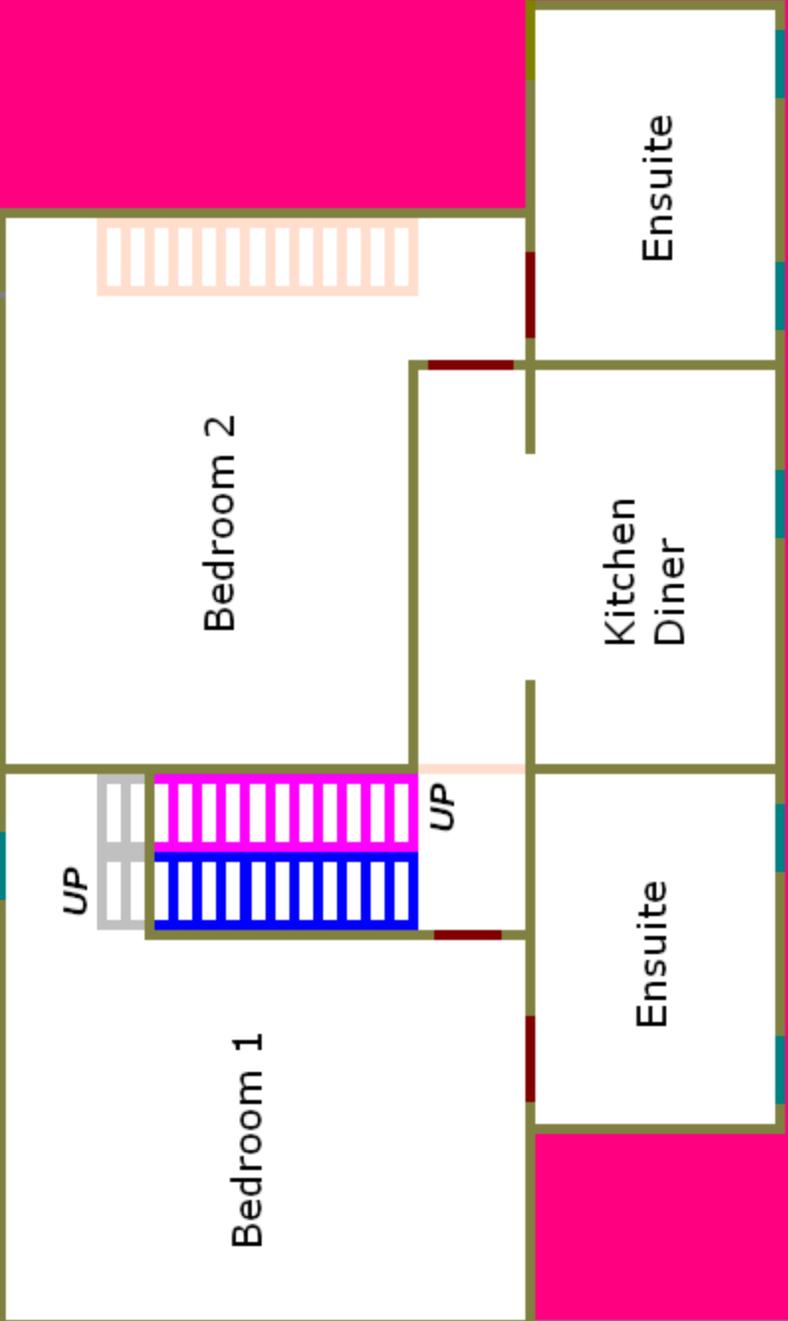
Margaret or Mairead Douglas is her daughter by Maol Choluim MacCoinnich. She marries Diarmad MacCoinnich and becomes pregnant by him.

Jack Smith is a historian at the University of St. Andrews.

Lighiche means Physician; ban-lichtne is a female healer, wisewoman, or conjure woman; ban-lighiche is a female physician or healer.

If there is a real-world Liberal Apostolic Ecclesia then there is no relation between it and the one of fiction in this story. Nor should anyone imply that denominations in reality sharing similar characteristics or same names as in this story have anything to do with each other. There is a kind of Free Catholic and High Protestant group in the north east, but I have made up the Free Liberal Church/ Ecclesia from imagination and only relating to past history of around a hundred years ago.





UP

Bedroom 1

Bedroom 2

UP

Ensuite

Kitchen
Diner

Ensuite

