

With Popes in the news just recently, I thought about this short story which I wrote in 2016. In that year, was been reported in the press that Pope John Paul II, who died in 2005, had been involved in a close friendship with a married woman and that they had gone camping together. The first thing I thought was: But what about the husband?

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE HUSBAND?

“DARLING, I’VE BOOKED the site.”

“Oh really?”

“Yes. I knew you’d be pleased. It’s right near the beach at Walberswick.”

“The beach! We’re camping near the beach?”

“Yes isn’t that terrific,” Diana said.

“But...but...I mean the North Sea never gets above freezing. And there can’t be any, you know, facilities on a beach.”

“It’s a proper site. Of course there’ll be facilities. Stop fussing. It’ll be fine.”

David was at a loss to understand why Diana had suddenly wanted to go camping. And now it turned out to be a place that couldn’t possibly have good toilets and showers. He’d hoped to at least stay in a nice little hotel somewhere if they absolutely had to go to Suffolk for their holiday. But abroad would have been vastly better. He’d even at a stretch put up with a visit to Diana’s family in New England. New England was very pleasant in the summer months. And if the family treated him like they had the last time, well they could go boil their heads. He’d take Diana out for days to avoid them.

David wandered off to their small study, barely in fact more than an alcove off the hallway. Flats were *so* expensive in London. Five minutes later he was back in the kitchen.

“There’s a pub called The Anchor at Walberswick. It has *rooms*. I’ve just looked it up on the internet. Can’t we stay in a room at The Anchor?”

“No. I’ve booked the site already.”

“Well unbook it.”

“No.”

“Why not for heaven’s sake? What’s so special about the damn site?”

“Nothing. It’s just a cheap way to have a holiday is all.”

“Oh, come *on*.” He hated the way he’d started to dramatically emphasise words like Diana did in her American way, but he couldn’t help it sometimes. In fact she didn’t really have a very strong American accent at all coming from New England and having been to a good school and an Ivy League university, but she did still emphasis words. “Like we can’t afford a few days in a room in a hotel. It *is* only a few days because *you* went and booked your holiday dates off work at a different time to me.”

“You know why that was. It was to tie in with the rainy season in Bangladesh. I can’t go then. It would be just too awful.” Diana was a buyer for a big well known fashion chain. David, being a childless junior partner in a large accountancy firm had, to curry favour, to take his holiday in mid-autumn.

“You haven’t answered my question. Why a camp site not a room in a pub? What’s the problem? Is there something you’re not telling me?”

He could tell by the look on her face that there was. He waited. Diana’s face grew red and she did what she always did when she was cornered. She went on the attack.

“Why do you have to be so...so...small-minded? So *English*.”

“Well hey funny that. I *am* English in case it’d slipped your notice. C’mon. Just tell me what’s eating you all up and we can discuss it properly.”

“Well it isn't anything a *normal* person would object to. But you English are so *anal*. It's like you suck a lemon every morning before going out to face the world and...”

“Thank you for that. Just tell me.”

Diana was wringing her hands and breathing hard. She looked away and muttered something.

David said: “Sorry I couldn't catch that.”

“I'VE ASKED FATHER FRANCIS TO COME WITH US,” she bawled and slung the spoon she was using to serve mayonnaise across the kitchen and stormed out. He heard the bedroom door slam.

David sighed, took a cloth from the sink and went and dabbed at the patches of dressing on the far wall and on the minuscule table and chairs that would just about fit into their kitchen. The subject of Father Francis had come up before. She'd come across him in connection with an under-privileged women's group she helped out with that had links to the local RC church and, as he was actually an American too, they'd hit it off.

He was clever she said. He might make Cardinal or, who knew, even the Pope one day. David had never met him. OK, she was friendly with him but why the hell did he have to come on holiday with them? Why did they have to drag an American Roman Catholic priest all the way to coastal Suffolk with them and spend an uncomfortable wind-swept few days in a tent when they could be cosy in a pub somewhere on their own?

But David didn't want a fight with Diana. She always won anyway and made him feel like a lump of British suet, stupid and clod-like and impossible to form into anything elegant or intelligent. She swirled around him like a veil of transatlantic light particles, weaving this way and that and he was left mouthing helplessly.

They would just have to take this wretched catechismic sojourn on the beach with an aspiring papal candidate in tow. He'd have to put up with it. He padded off in the direction of the bedroom to make his peace with his wife, brightening at the thought that, whenever she knew she'd upset him, she always wanted to make amends in other directions.

THE WEATHER WAS set fair for the next few days at least and David found he was quite looking forward to this forthcoming camping trip actually, priestly presence notwithstanding. They were lugging camping equipment down to the parking lot in the basement. Living in London, they hardly ever used the car but it was handy to have one when they wanted to get out of the city occasionally.

David peered into the car boot which was nearly completely full. Diana had done much of the packing the previous day.

David wondered why he was seeing two tents in the boot. “Why are we taking two tents?” he said. Then: “Oh. I get it. One of them's for all our stuff. Or perhaps one is for Father Wotsiname.”

“No. Peter's gone on ahead yesterday.”

“Peter?”

“Yes. That's his real name silly.” She laughed.

“So why does he have to have a pretend name then? Oh never mind anyway. It's a good idea of yours to take a spare tent for all our stuff.”

“Well actually,” said Diana, “one is for me and one is for you.”

David straightened up too quickly and hit his head on the boot roof. Rubbing it, he said:

“We're having separate tents?”

“Yes. That's right.”

"May I enquire why?"

"Well obviously so that Peter doesn't feel out of it."

David drew a breath and tried not to get angry. Or at least not sound angry. "Sorry. You'll have to speak more plainly. We're married. We're going camping. OK with a third party. Why does that necessarily mean we have to sleep separately?"

"Well. Obviously. He's a priest. They don't ... you know."

"Yes but what if, while we're there, I happen to want to ... *you know*?"

"You can wait until everyone's asleep and come to my tent then."

"Well I'm sorry but I'm not creeping to my own wife's tent in the dead of night so that I can shag my wife just to pander to the sensibilities of a would-be pontif."

"David. Don't be so uncouth. You're just being childish."

David hated it when she said that. And in *that way*. That American way. She always managed to put on this haughty voice. God, when her rich American East Coast friends occasionally came over it was hell on earth. They just *so* looked down on him. They laughed at everything he said and did as though he was a quaint sideshow put on especially for them. And they looked so neat. Not a hair out of place. They even went around with their superior knitwear slung casually over their shoulders and tied loosely at the front as though they were appearing in a scene from *The Great Gatsby* while they sniggered and joked about the British.

"Look. Have you got the hots for this guy? Is there something going on between you?"

"How could you say such a thing! He's a man of the cloth. A celibate priest."

"Well that didn't stop Casanova from shagging anything that moved."

"I'm not listening to this. You finish packing."

"But we are finished."

Diana wasn't listening. She was storming off across the open parking lot.

"Who's being childish now?" he yelled after her. Then he stood reflecting on his last but one sentence. *But we are finished*. Perhaps the words were prophetic. They did argue a lot for a couple who'd only been married two years. He didn't want them to be finished. It was just she was so ... *American*.

He had nothing else to take with him.

Lock up and come on down, he texted her. *I'll drive us there*.

DIANA sat beside David poring over one of her books as they drove along. She had a yearning to go back to university and do a Masters, perhaps a PhD and if possible become an academic. Her degree was in fine arts but her specialist subject was fashion and attire through the ages and the work in front of her was about clothing in the medieval period, liberally littered David could see with drawings and diagrams.

"You should do more drawing yourself, you're so good at it," he said, thinking of the large charcoal drawing she'd done of him the first night they'd slept together, actually the morning after they'd met. He'd woken up in the New York dawn to find her sitting over by the open window, net curtains fluttering, a shawl draped around her, feet up on the chair, legs forming an easel for the sketch pad in front of her. Having opened one eye, he had started to raise his head.

"Stay still just one more second," she'd said, so he did, conscious that there was only a corner of sheet half covering one foot, the rest of it trailing down the end of the bed and puddled on the floor. Apart from that small corner, he was completely naked.

The second had turned into fifteen minutes in which he'd recalled their meeting the previous day, he and the stag group he was with having been unceremoniously ejected from a bar after drunkenly blundering into one of the more up-market areas of the city.

He was the last one out. He'd stayed back to remonstrate with the management. Consequently his mates were already walking down the street when he'd landed on the sidewalk just as Diana's elegantly shod foot had been about to tread the same area of pavement. She'd all but fallen over on top of him.

He'd got up immediately, suddenly sober and full of apologies. He'd led her to some tables and chairs further along the road and sat her down, worried she'd twisted her ankle. It turned out not. He was glad he was facing in the direction his mates had walked as they had turned and made various gestures seeing him seated with a female. Diana was facing the other way. Ignoring his friends, they had talked and talked. The meeting, their evening and night together and especially the morning drawing ranked as the most romantic episode of his life, ever.

He'd had to catch a plane back that day but they'd remained in touch. Totally smitten, he'd bought twenty four hour clocks to hang on his office wall and at home which he'd set to New York time so that he could imagine what she might be doing at any given moment of the day – or night.

The following spring they'd married in New England, a lavish affair at which it was gradually borne in on him that he was marrying way above himself, a fact of which his new East Coast relatives and their friends were at pains not to leave him in ignorance. Diana was having to give up a prestigious well-paid job in fashion on Fifth Avenue to move to England to live with her new husband, a dull accountant with a minor position in a large firm.

The drawing was framed and placed on the wall above the bed in the new flat on which he'd managed to scrape the cash together to place a deposit before the wedding. Better above the bed than opposite where Diana had wanted to position it. He didn't really want to look directly at his own naked form every time he went to bed. The clocks were altered to British Summer Time.

"So why don't you? Do more drawing?" he asked now as they bowled along the A12.

"You know there's no time."

"Well perhaps you could find some time while we're camping."

"I suppose," she said. "Peter likes sketching. He said he'd be doing some while we're there. I expect he'd lend me a pad and some pencils."

David shut up after that.

DAVID WANDERED DOWN to the beach as Diana put up the tents. In the fair exchange of marriage, he'd driven here so she got to put up the tents. David was hopeless at it anyway. He always ended up flailing around and the result was a tangle of long limbs, nylon material and fibreglass poles all in the wrong order. Though had he attempted one of the tents, he could have damaged it so badly that they'd have had to sleep in the other one together. It was an idea definitely, but probably not worth the days of aggro that would have resulted.

Father Francis/Peter wasn't anywhere in evidence. Diana wasn't sure which tent was his as the pitches weren't marked that clearly.

It was actually a very hot day indeed. He hadn't noticed the temperature rising due to the air-con in the car. The sea looked so inviting though no doubt it would in fact be ball-freezingly icy. There were a lot people on the beach, families playing on and with the sand, fishing nets out in the shallows, quite a few brave souls in the water. One of them was emerging now. A youngish man, about his own age, tall and muscular, dark-haired. No trace of a dog collar. But David knew instinctively that it was *him*.

And *he* seemed to instantly recognise David. He came straight over, very friendly smile, arm outstretched to shake hands. David managed a leer and a weak nod as they shook hands.

"Hi David. Pleased to meet you."

"Hello Peter."

Peter picked a towel off a beach mat and dried himself off.

"Water OK?" David asked.

"Just divine. You should try it."

"Er. Yes. I suppose we'd better go and see how Diana's getting on."

"Yes. Of course. It was extremely nice of you both to have me along. It's just what I need to relax before I have to go to this crappy conference on Thursday."

Did priests use words like 'crappy'?

But they were at the pitch already. Diana's backside was disappearing into one of the tents and David called to her that he'd found Peter. She emerged at top speed and beamed at Peter.

God I hope she's not going to come over and hug the bastard, thought David.

But she didn't, just beamed at Peter and he beamed back. It was more than enough for David.

"I'm going to be at least another thirty, forty minutes," she said. "Why don't you two go to the Anchor and grab a beer together. Get better acquainted."

"Great idea." Peter looked questioningly at David.

"Yeah. Of course," he replied.

"Wonderful," said Peter. "I'll just go and change into shorts and a shirt."

"Stop sulking," Diana hissed at David as Peter disappeared.

Not sulking.

"Well you are. Darling." She came up to him and wrapped her arms round his neck. "Kissy, kissy better?"

"Ohhhh...oh all right," he laughed and they toppled onto the grass together.

THE PUB WAS cool in comparison to outside. David felt he'd better pay for the first round. He'd been assured by Diana that Catholic priests earned almost nothing which is why they'd had to take a camping holiday apparently, to keep the cost down.

Did priests drink beer? David wondered. It seemed so. Well, they probably swigged the sacrificial wine on the quiet, so why not beer? They both chose a pint of Adnams. David savoured the first mouthful and briefly closed his eyes. Opening them, he saw Peter doing the same. He was very confused.

David wanted to ask Peter why on earth he chose to manacle himself in this way to the Catholic Church with all its restrictions, most notably the ban on sex and marriage and therefore family life, for something as nonsensical as religion, a man-made fantasy, when you had just the one existence to try to enjoy. But, knowing it would seem intrusive, critical even, instead he asked:

"So what's the conference about later this week?"

"We're debating celibacy, why shouldn't we marry. In this day and age it's an anachronism. We have former C of E priests who've joined because of female priests in the C of E – and incidentally I think they're wrong to object to that – and they have wives already. It creates an imbalance. Celibacy is just highly unnatural. Not God's will at all I would say. Though this conference, like all of them, isn't likely to produce anything concrete."

This outpouring didn't actually make David feel in the least better regarding Diana and Peter. He was sitting next to a man who looked nothing like a priest and who was

talking about having sex. It was deeply worrisome. He could think of nothing polite to say therefore he let Peter ramble on about the Church, and feigned interest.

At length, Peter stopped and looked at David.

"I'm so sorry," he said, "I haven't asked you anything about yourself. I know you're an accountant. That must be...er...quite exciting and...er...absorbing?"

David leaned back on his bar stool and sighed. "Have another pint," he said.

THAT NIGHT ALONE in his tent, David couldn't sleep. He kept hoping Diana might creep to his tent and wriggle into his sleeping bag, but instead he heard faint snoring coming from the next door tent. She'd never admit that she snored but she did. Finally he gave up trying to sleep, pulled on his swimming shorts and a jumper and went out for a walk on the beach.

The pub having shut an hour or so ago and all the cars having driven off, it was wonderfully quiet, except for the soft breaking of the waves on the shore. The air was marvellously fresh. The moon was up, the stars clear and bright all over the cloudless sky and the sand dunes obscured the campsite and the pub the other side. The sand was soft between his toes. He could see along the coast for miles though it was a bit of a blur since he hadn't put his spectacles on.

He found the walking therapeutic and he started to feel more optimistic about his marriage, his job, this holiday. The job was of course OK really. He was progressing up the career ladder. It was just that it was perceived by people to be so boring and mostly he didn't try to disabuse them of the notion. They'd no idea how complex corporate tax law was. So complicated he'd given up trying to explain in any detail to people what it was he spent his working hours doing. Quite well known in his own circle, it was actually possible that he might start to be called upon soon to comment on the BBC about financial matters, though he hadn't told Diana yet.

As to his marriage, hopefully the Peter thing was just a temporary blip. As the thought crossed his mind, a figure suddenly rose from the sand dunes to his right and loomed towards him. Without his specs, he couldn't be sure who it was but the priestly transatlantic tones reached him soon enough.

"Couldn't you sleep either? It's a brilliant night isn't it. Mind if I join you?"

David could hardly refuse. They walked in silence for a while.

"You know," Peter finally said, "I look at couples, with or without children, and I just feel I'm wasting my life. And that in itself must be a sin. I look at you and Diana for example, see how close you are. It's what we're all meant to do. You're so lucky."

"Yes but I don't tie myself down with duty and vows for the sake of a completely theoretical concept. Religion is something dreamed up a couple of thousand years ago for reasons that have no relevance or meaning now."

"Actually, I haven't told anyone this but I'm thinking of jacking it in. You know the priesthood."

"Oh?" David said.

"Yeah. It's the celibacy thing that's so hard to cope with."

"Why don't you just go over to the C of E then?"

"Oh, I couldn't do that. I couldn't leave the Roman Catholic Church. I was brought up in it. I'm steeped in it. It's etched into me. Even if I lost my faith, I'd still have to stay in the Church. No. I'm just talking about leaving the priesthood, not the Church."

"You really believe in all that stuff do you? I can't actually see that it's likely there's a God at all, certainly not one that loves and cares for us as individuals."

"I have studied theology in depth you know," said Peter, his tone a little haughty.

“And does it answer your questions? Celibacy aside, does it in any way justify all the pomp and ceremony that organised religions go in for. Not to mention the drain on resources and contribution to global warming caused by all the running around holding services and debates and things. Where’s this conference being held for example?”

“In Toronto.”

“So. What? Are you going to row there? No of course not, you’re going to fly there and contribute to CO² production. And so are all the other delegates. And by the way, having kids does that too. Go forth and multiply. It was a bit short-sighted for an omniscient being.”

“Don’t you want any children?”

“I didn’t say that. But it’s true that the population’s one day going to be more than the world’s resources can support. Probably already is actually if you consider all the deprived poor people on the planet.” David hadn’t expected an in depth discussion about life and religion when he’d left the tent and was starting to feel a little uncomfortable with it. “But anyway, I suppose we’d better go back now. If Diana should wake up, she might be worried not finding me there.”

“Yes. Of course.”

In unison, they turned and started the trudge back to the campsite. Looking at the blur of beach ahead of him, David realised they’d walked a lot further than he’d thought.

Peter eventually broke the silence.

“May I ask you, does it bother you, me being on this holiday with you? Diana said you wouldn’t mind but, well, I’m just wondering.”

David wanted to tell the truth and say he absolutely hated having another man tag along, but if Peter hadn’t actually detected his antipathy already, David’s English reserve wouldn’t allow him to tell Peter straight what he thought.

“No, it’s fine,” he said. “It’s just a few days away. We’re glad to have you along.”

Peter looked relieved. “That’s so very kind of you,” he said. “I’ve really enjoyed it so far. And it’s good of you to listen to me. It’s helped me straighten things out a bit.”

“Happy to have been of assistance. Well, here we are. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

David went and had a pee in the sand dunes and then walked back and crawled into his tent. The sleeping bag however wasn’t as roomy as when he’d left it. Something was in the way. Diana grumbled in her sleep and he unzipped the bag and lay down. Diana put her arms around him. He sighed, contented at last, and was asleep in two seconds.

THE FOLLOWING DAY was wonderfully warm again. They all went and had a swim, sunbathed, shopped in the little supermarket and then decided to go for a meal at the pub. Diana went off to powder her nose and the men got the drinks in.

“So. Are you going to tell Diana about your plans to maybe leave the Church?”

“I doubt it.”

“She seems very taken with the idea of you being ‘a man of the cloth’. I expect she’d try to dissuade you.”

Peter laughed. “Yeah well. That’s the thing with women. They find it sexy that you’re an apparently normal man, but they can’t have you. I imagine my attraction would quickly fade away if I ceased to be a priest and suddenly became available.”

Perhaps, thought David, that’s what celibacy did to you. Made you obsess about sex and women.

“So it’s not just Diana then?” he said.

Peter laughed again. “Not by any means.”

“Have you ever considered,” said David, “that you might give it all up, but still never find someone to love. Diana and I only met by total chance. A few minutes either way and our paths would never have crossed at all. Frightening really.”

“I think about it all the time. But then I think all the time about a lot of other things that might not work out right if I left the priesthood.”

Suddenly there was Diana alongside them. “You two look very serious?”

“Oh,” said David, “we were agonising over whether to have soup of the day or pâté.”

“Well. It’s great to see you guys getting along so well together.” Though she didn’t actually look or sound altogether pleased.

It occurred to David that she thought *she* was supposed to be Peter’s special buddy, and that *he, David*, was muscling into her territory. To distract her, he suggested that they have their meal outside as it would be a shame to waste such good weather. He offered to stay inside and give the order while Diana and Peter went and grabbed a table in the garden. That way, he thought, Diana could get some Peter time to herself.

They resolved what wine to get. A bottle of red and a bottle of white, though David and Peter also wanted a pint of Adnams to start off with. Diana frowned at this expression of male comradeship. The frown was directed at David, he felt.

Off the two of them went outside while David didn’t try too hard to be attended to very quickly. Let them have their private little tête-à-tête. Eventually, though, he ordered and ambled outside. He had assumed he’d find the pair of them gassing ten to the dozen, but in fact they were looking in opposite directions, Diana towards the sea and Peter somewhat desperately he thought towards the pub.

Oh God, thought David, I really don't want to spend my shortest of short holidays walking on eggshells.

“So,” he said heartily, “what shall we do this afternoon? There’s a footpath from near here to the White Hart at Blythburgh through woodland. I looked it up on Google the other day. It’s quite a way but it’d make a nice walk. Do you want to try it? Walk off our lunch and have a little tippie at the pub when we get there?”

“D’you know? This is the thing about England,” said Peter, perking up, “the way you can walk from place to place because they’re not hundreds of miles apart. And through wonderful countryside as well. It sounds delightful. Diana?”

“Yeah. Why not.”

David sat down beside her. She wound her arm through his and leaned on him. Her warm body next to his was familiar and very comfortable. He loosed his arm from hers, put it around her shoulder and smiled down at her. For two pins he’d have gone back to the tent with her right now and stayed there the rest of the afternoon, and lunch, a walk and Peter be damned. But far quicker than he’d expected, their meal was approaching and they straightened up to receive it. No one had much to say as they spread their butter and pâté on toast or broke their bread into their soup as the case may be.

Peter looked pensive as he sipped his soup. David tried to make conversation. And Diana looked frankly pissed off. Though it veered into sad as well from time to time. They had two bottles of wine to get through too. David wondered about that.

In the end they talked about work and, since Diana’s was the most understandable and involved foreign travel, they mainly talked about her job. David felt proud of her as she waxed lyrical and enthused about the challenges she faced, and about the financial and marketing complexities of the rag trade. By the time they’d finished lunch, it was gone four and rather too late to start the trek to The White Hart. They lounged in their chairs and had coffee. Somehow the two bottles of wine had disappeared and David was relieved that no tantrums or bad feeling had resulted. Diana went off again to the Ladies.

"I think," said Peter, "that I should probably leave tomorrow."

"There's no need," said David. "I think we're getting along OK. And of course if you do go, Diana will blame me."

"Oh, man!" Peter sighed.

"We could do the walk tomorrow. It'd be nice."

"Yeah, but nicer for you and Diana to do it alone together."

"Well. Maybe. But it won't kill us to walk with you."

"Yeah but. This is the thing. It's perfectly obvious that you and Diana want to be alone together. You know, like, if you were a couple who'd been married twenty or thirty year, then fair enough. But you've only been married a couple of years. Neither of you have much time. You deserve a holiday together. On your own. It's not fair of me to dump the inconsistencies and dissatisfactions of my own position on the two of you."

"Well obviously, I can't stop you. And if I'm totally honest, yes I would prefer to be alone with Diana. But on the other hand, it's nice having you along too."

"David. You're an amazing friend. So good. If I do this thing and become a lay person again, I only hope if I find the right person that I can be such a good partner and maybe husband as you are."

David was embarrassed. Overarching praise wasn't something his English psyche could reasonably tolerate.

"Well. That's so kind of you," he said stiffly.

Peter swigged the last of his wine. "Well. Now I really know I should leave. I've embarrassed a Brit back into his shell."

David didn't like this. Whether intended or not and whether or not the wine had made him over-sensitive, it felt to him like sarcasm. His eyes narrowed.

"I'll go and find Diana," he said. He got up, turned around and marched into the pub. Diana was coming out of the toilet. She came over to him smiling and put her arm through his. He paid the bill and they went back out into the sunshine.

The table was empty. They walked hand in hand to the campsite.

Clearly, Peter had been in earnest. His tent was gone and they saw his car disappearing to the road.

"Oh well," said Diana.

"You're not angry then?"

"Why on earth should I be? It was probably a mistake anyway. Coming on this holiday the three of us."

"Oh."

"I thought it would be nice. But I guess it just didn't work. Not really."

"No. Not really."

"Do you want to stay on?"

"Well yes. If you do. It's gorgeous here. Though we could see if we could get a room in the pub if you want, for the rest of our holiday."

"Fine by me," Diana said.

They booked a room for the remainder of their stay. Diana rammed their clothes into their holdalls and took them to the pub bedroom. David took the tents down. It was putting them up that caused him problems.

The walk the following day was invigorating. The walk back after lunch and wine equally so.

The rest of the holiday was glorious.

As David drove back home down the A12, Diana put her hand on David's leg and said:

“You know if you want, we could sell the flat. It’s worth so much now, we could buy a family home in Essex or Hertfordshire. And think about having a baby.”

“I thought you didn't want to yet.”

“Well. You know. That old biological clock is ticking away. We are early thirties. And I could continue studying and get some work online.”

“Father Francis wouldn't have anything to do with this would he?”

“Oh, he’s always going on about the purpose of marriage being procreation. But...well I suppose that’s right. You do still want to have kids don't you? You don't think we should wait a bit longer, do you?”

“No. I’m going to have to start trimming my nasal hair soon. Parenthood is certainly indicated. It’s definitely not too soon. Good. Let’s do it. Will you see Peter again?”

“I hope so.”

“I do too. I think he’s a beneficial influence.”

“Perhaps he’ll be Godfather.”

“Perhaps he will.”

David wondered if Peter had mentioned to her while he was inside the pub ordering their meal a few days ago that he was going to leave the priesthood.

He decided not to say anything. He didn't want to put any spanners in any works or upset the present equilibrium.

He wanted to have these children.

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The attached image is of Karol Wojtyła on a kayaking trip with students circa 1960.