

ONE STEP MORE

By
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Radius

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CAST

The Leader of the Group
Bernard
Angie, his wife
Emily, a younger fellow pilgrim

Scene One: In the College Chapel

[Enter the Pilgrimage leader, a friendly, authoritative priest.]

LEADER: Welcome, it's good to see you all gathered here in the college chapel for the last stages of our pilgrimage to the cathedral. I'd just like to add a warm welcome to Father Andrew's party who have just arrived by coach from the Midlands to join with us, please introduce yourselves as we go along.

I'll just remind you again of our route for this afternoon. We shall leave here and go to the War Memorial. Then we shall cross through the park to the Guildhall, going from there to the chapel in the old Pilgrim Hospital, now an almshouse. We shall have a little time to spare before continuing on to the Cathedral so I suggest that you might like to rest there and picnic before we assemble in the Shrine Chapel at about 4 o'clock.

Let us pray: Guide our footsteps Lord today, as you have guided Pilgrims throughout the ages. Uphold our resolution and support us when we falter, that our eyes may always be focussed upon you; knowing you will welcome us at the end of all our journeys. Amen. Now please follow on.

[He goes out. The three characters come on, Angie first, in a rush, followed by Bernard with the girl, Emily, keeping away from them but glancing across to them.]

ANGIE: We're late. Fancy not being able to find the chapel.

BERNARD: Steady on, dear. There's plenty of people here. We're not late, not late at all

ANGIE: The shells, Bernard! Where are the shells?

BERNARD: What shells?

ANGIE: Shells, you know, the scallop shells, the St James-ey things. It said in the leaflet, about them. You can't do a pilgrimage like this without the proper equipment.

And those name things. You know. You have to have them to do anything these days. So people can see who you are. And they know that it's all right for you to be part of the group.

BERNARD: Often they're too small to read and you have to peer at people's chests. Not easy for a man. Not if it's a woman's chest, if you get my meaning. You could get done for that. Peering. Harassment they'd call it, like as not.

ANGIE: *[Glancing nervously around.]* Is she still there? I thought we might have given her the slip while they did all that admin stuff on the coach.

BERNARD: You didn't mind the coach, did you, Angie dear? Only I know you wanted it to be a proper pilgrimage, but I don't honestly think we'd have managed the walk. Not at our age.

ANGIE: No, not when Father Andrew explained. Disappointing but you're right. Can't take risks. Not with your chest.

BERNARD: *[Gently mischievous.]* Not with your blood pressure.

ANGIE: *[Nervous glance round again.]* But *she* didn't need to use the coach, did she? Not at her age.

BERNARD: Perhaps she has problems, you know, disabilities.

ANGIE: She didn't seem to. Looked quite able to me.

BERNARD: Doesn't always show. You can't tell, not at a glance.

ANGIE: Did you gather who she was or anything? She was hanging around. Seemed to be eavesdropping.

BERNARD: Nonsense, dear. Just friendly, that's all.

ANGIE: No, Bernard. It wasn't. It was odd. Kind of looking at us but not, if you know what I mean. Anyway, there are so many people here that I'm sure we can keep out of her way.

BERNARD: Perhaps she thinks she knows us. You know, the way you do, but don't want to say anything and make a fool of yourself in case you're wrong.

ANGIE: Well, I've never seen her before in my life. *[Sudden suspicion.]* Have you, Bernard?

BERNARD: No, dear, of course not. It's not likely is it? That I would know someone you don't, now that I'm retired.

ANGIE: Well, I don't like it. It's not what you expect. Not on a pilgrimage. Not people looking at you and pretending not to. A pilgrimage should be...

BERNARD: *[A touch of irritation.]* I think I know by now what it should be.

ANGIE: It's all right for you, you're not bothered. You said so often enough. Not bothered. Your words. Whatever you want, Angie, you said, and then there was the spare place on the coach. I'll come along for the ride, you said. *[With the slightly martyred air of going over the same old ground.]* I can't expect you to understand what this means to me.

BERNARD: No, dear.

ANGIE: Not being a church-goer. Not being in touch with your spiritual needs.

BERNARD: I expect you're right, dear.

ANGIE: Did you remember the flask? And the sandwiches?

BERNARD: Of course, dear.

ANGIE: And the map? And the guide book?

BERNARD: You shouldn't worry so much, dear. It'll be all right. Everything will be all right. I promise you.

ANGIE: Well, it hasn't started well, has it? Not with her...

BERNARD: Perhaps she's your guardian angel.

ANGIE: Don't be flippant, Bernard.

BERNARD: *[Following his own line of thought.]* Or perhaps your guardian angel is that woman over there. The one with the binoculars and that extraordinary hat.

ANGIE: *[Annoyed.]* Bernard. You're not taking this seriously. Anyway angels are always men. It says so.

BERNARD: Really? I can't think where...

ANGIE: And I did so want it to be...

BERNARD: Perfect? *[To himself.]* You always do. A lifetime of running after perfection and the rest of us panting to keep up.

ANGIE: *[She hasn't heard him.]* Beautiful. Full of meaning and insights. Revelation... an epiphany, that's what I want. Is that too much to ask? *[She seems to gather herself.]* Come along, Bernard. I want to be at the front this time. We wasted too much time getting off the coach because you would insist on standing back to let the old biddies off first.

[They go out. Followed by Emily]

Scene two at the War Memorial

[Bernard and Emily come on, Angie is apart from them. Angie stands with a rapt expression on her face.]

EMILY: *[Very nervous, trying for an easy conversational tone.]* Have you... you know, got anyone... well, not here, I mean, but where you come from, of course, killed in the war, I mean either war? I'm sorry that was silly... Sorry... You don't have to answer. I mean well, you won't will you, if you don't want to. Answer that is. I'm sorry I can never say things the way I want. The words. . .

BERNARD: Yes, as it happens I had four great uncles who were all killed in the first world war.

EMILY: Oh, that's dreadful. You can't imagine can you? That kind of... You know... The...

BERNARD: No, it was common, of course, but that doesn't make it any easier, does it? As a matter of fact, I think it might make it worse. Just being part of a huge statistic. I suppose that's why.

EMILY: Why?

BERNARD: People come here. None of those names means a thing to most people but just being here and honouring them is necessary.

EMILY: Yes. I think I see.

BERNARD: What about you? You're too young to have had much to do with either war. Or death for that matter

EMILY: Mm.... Well, I suppose so. But death... any death is—kind of—all death, isn't it? Do you see what I mean? It's part of something that happens to everyone and so it's our death. *[Seeing that Bernard does not understand.]* Anyway, death... well, actually, I have as a matter of fact... Done it... No, I mean, it's been done to me... the loss thing...

BERNARD: I'm sorry to hear that.

EMILY: Yes, well, it was a bit... well, awful, actually... My Dad...

BERNARD: Dreadful for you, my dear.

EMILY: Killed. In a car crash.

BERNARD: A shock, the worst kind.

EMILY: No, not really, I always knew he'd do it some time.