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The characters and incidents portrayed, and the names used herein, are fictitious and any similarity to the name, characters or history of any person is entirely accidental and unintentional.

"Friend

What you are about to see is not an idle tale of people who never existed and that that could never have happened. It is a PARABLE.

Do not be alarmed: you will not be bored by it. It is, I hope, both true and inspired. Some of the people in it are real people whom I have met and talked to.

One of the others may be YOU.

There will be a bit of you in all of them. We are all members one of another.

If you do not enjoy every word of it we shall both be equally disappointed.

Well friend: have I ever disappointed you?"

From 'Major Barbara' 1941

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Geffrye Belovice
Gunvor Nelson
Guy Green
Jean Paul Belmondo
John Lennon
Michael Cimino
Michael Wilding
Muriel Box
Pier Paolo Pasolini
Peter Greenaway
Peter Lilienthal
Richard Attenborough
Robert Newton
Roman Polanski
Stan Brakhage
Sybille Semrine
Terence Davies
Terrence Malick
Ursula Andress
Werner Herzog
Yoko Ono

FOREWORD

ISABELLA SHURE

When my father passed away, it was revealed to me that I had been nominated as his executor. No-one was more surprised than myself given we had been estranged for a number of years.

I can only assume he had no-one else in his life who he felt could take on the responsibility. This, I believe, demonstrated both the parlous state of his personal relationships at the time of his demise and, in particular, his ambivalent attitude towards other members of my family who might have expected to take on a leading role in ordering his affairs.

I took up the task with a heavy heart, but also with a certain amount of curiosity about what I might find.

My father – or Daddy as I knew him - had never been very forthcoming about his past, or indeed about his present, and I wondered innocently whether I might at last unlock the riddle of his personality through the personal papers, photograph albums and business documents that he left behind.

I found much more than I bargained for. Yes, the personal papers, photographs, postcards, bills, contracts were there in abundance. There were also many letters written to Daddy – from my mother, my brother, from me, from his agent Martin and from various fellow actors, artists, directors, producers.

Missing were the set of diaries dating back to the 1930s - although these came to light at a later date - proving Daddy to be a regular and somewhat aspirational writer

I realised quickly there was something of value here, that a publisher might be interested in. And, lo, a rather public auction for the publishing rights took place very quickly (with indecent haste, I know some might say). This offered the very pleasant prospect of raising funds sufficient to cover the cost of executing Daddy's will, and to pay any outstanding taxes.

Once it had been agreed with a publisher that a book about Peter Shure was of some interest, the question arose about who might be the author of said book. Various names were mentioned – Philip Norman, Craig Brown, Janet Maslin, Claire Tomalin, Martin Amis. I was an admirer of them all (except one) – and yet none of them seemed quite right.

It should be mentioned at this point that Martin Chielzowicz, Daddy's long-time agent, would have seemed like the perfect candidate. But, alas, Martin had been diagnosed with dementia some years previously and had already all but forgotten who Peter Shure was. (Perversely he remained full of anecdotes about Noel Coward right to the end.)

Daddy's personal assistant, another Martin (Chambers) was considered briefly, but he had announced, very soon after the funeral, that he would be writing his own memoir, including his own somewhat partial view of various events, including the peculiar circumstances of my father's death.

In the end it was the publisher who came back to me with the surprising suggestion that I should consider writing the book myself.

I have been a writer all my adult life. Unlike Daddy, I have not confined myself to diary- and letter-writing, having published a number of novels, plus a biography of Mary Shelley, which was well received at the time. But to take on the task of writing about my own father was initially very challenging.

Could I write the book without veering too far into the realms of a personal memoir? Could my own role in some of the situations that I would inevitably have to describe allow me to remain dispassionate, unbiased, accurate?

It turns out the answer was no. In my defence, when I first sat down to write, Daddy's death was still very fresh in all our minds. There was a certain amount of noise around the manner of his death. And frankly I was burdened – if not overwhelmed

- by a rigid sense of duty when it came to handling and editing the material that had been handed over to me as his executor.

I must confess too that I had a misplaced and somewhat evangelical idea of my own rightness when it came to telling the story of Peter Shure that ultimately hindered me when it came to setting the story down in a fair and accurate way. I have since discovered there are always two sides to a story – if not more.

Several years passed and no book appeared. It had become clear to both my publisher and myself that I had become stuck – or rather unstuck.

Matters were made worse by the lengthy legal dispute between myself, as the guardian of Peter Shure's estate, and Martin Chambers, my father's former PA and agent.

Martin's book – *'No Sleep For The Wicked'* – was, I believed at the time, not something he should be allowed to publish or profit from. It was based on taped conversations and other materials belonging to the estate of Peter Shure that were kept by Martin after my father's death, without the family's permission.

The distraction of trying to reach a reasonable settlement with Martin, made the prospect of publishing my own book even more unappetising.

And when my brother very publicly walked away from the family, I decided with a heavy heart to abandon any idea of writing Peter Shure's life story. The moment had passed and become too complicated.

That was 1996. Cut to 26 years later. I am now in my 60s. My mother in her 80s. Martin Chambers is dead. Who knows where my brother is. The world has all but forgotten about Peter Shure.

Enter Tim Wright, who has been quietly amassing his own research materials over many years, including acquiring the rights to Martin's book and all his source materials, thus ending years of rancorous dispute that I now regret.

Tim hardly needed my input, but such is his generous spirit that he sought me out and asked for the opportunity to collaborate.

God knows why he thought he needed me. I have no doubt he could have put together a marvellous book all on his own. But after I had shown him the unfinished manuscript of the book I failed to complete all those years ago, it was his magical suggestion that there was something there and that it might be incorporated into the book he had planned.

His proposal was for him to write the bulk of the biography, whilst I would contribute elements of creative memoir (making it a memography? a biogoir?!)

His stroke of genius was to suggest including a collection of other voices to tell not just Daddy's story, but the story of the Shure family in general - and indeed broaden the remit of the book still further to include a general critique of the film industry in the second half of the 20th century and throwing a spotlight on how cinematic media can effect both individuals and society at a deep level.

I was trepidatious at first about letting my words be part of a chorus of voices and of such a grand plan. But I have been learning these last few years to 'go with the flow' as they say here in New York. I cannot tell you what a relief it was to me to be free to deliver only the more personal passages of writing and leave Tim to piece together the other elements. This felt like a much more honest approach to the remembrance and honouring of Daddy than my previous attempt could ever be.

The nature of biography has changed a great deal since I first agreed to write this book. (Is it really more than 30 years ago?!)

Writers now have licence to be more imaginative about how to present a life. Readers, too, are a bit more accepting of an approach that allows for subjective expression and imaginative projection.

It is often asked of me whether I ever did get to the essence of an understanding of Daddy's remarkable talents. A few years

ago, I would have said categorically 'No'. But with this new edition, with its radical new approach to the presentation of a life (several lives!), I am hoping tentatively now to say 'Yes'.

Thank you, Tim, for helping me to complete this writing journey and perhaps achieve some kind of closure. I dedicate my contributions in this book to Martin Chambers– who was I think a better friend to Daddy than I gave him credit for - and to Christopher Shure, who has become for many a cult figure in recent years, but for me remains still my annoying little brother.

New York 2025

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I was fully expecting Isabella Shure to say no to the idea of collaborating on a book about her father. But she was generous enough to see that a better book could come from the two of us putting our heads together and sharing our knowledge and our materials. Thank you Isabella.

This year will be the 75th anniversary of Peter Shure's entry into the world of cinema, appearing first as a silent extra in 'Highly Dangerous'*, but soon after as a screen actor with a peculiar talent.*

Both Isabella and I felt it was the perfect time to revive interest in this most intriguing of screen actors.

The happenstance of me managing to acquire the rights to Martin Chambers's 1994 memoir certainly gave the project momentum, and I thank the managers of his estate and his publishers for agreeing to that transaction.

I am also indebted to the University of Hull for giving us access to the archive of photographs, films, essays, interviews and letters donated to the university by the filmmaker, artist and critic Devon.

I have taken the liberty of assembling this book as something more akin to montage than a formal biography, allowing others to speak directly to the reader in order to provide context and a

range of perspectives. It's also an attempt to bring something of a cinematic quality to the story of Peter's life and death

By bringing together extracts from Isabella's and Martin's writing into one volume – alongside my own humble contributions, as well as those of other people who knew Peter well – I am hoping we have managed to create a rich multi-faceted portrait of the greatest actor ever to sleep on the silver screen.

Peter Shure liked to claim he never had any dreams he could remember, apart from the nightmares caused by his time in the war. Let this book be the dream of a life that Peter could have rested easy with.

INTRODUCTION

IVRE DE LA VIE. GELÉ DANS LA MORT.

"Peter Shure è un vero contadino... Quando dorme, dorme come un contadino dopo un lungo lavoro, o come un muratore seduto esausto al bar, o come una vecchia che ha cucinato, lavato e pulito per molti lunghe ore. Il suo sonno è il sonno del contadino onesto e ignorante che non si preoccupa della letteratura accademica o del prodotto del cinema capitalista ed è interessato solo alla fantasia segreta e alla spiritualità della vita reale.

Peter Shure preferirebbe dormire piuttosto che impegnarsi con la macchina da presa, perché nel suo subconscio sa che il cinema come è conosciuto nel mondo occidentale è morto!"

ATTRIB. PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

Sleep is something we all do. Some of us better than others. But we all sleep. Peter Shure slept like a baby. Like an angel. He slept the sleep of the dead. He was the ultimate sleep artist.

He was first caught sleeping on film in *'Runway Fog' (1955)*, as one of several passengers at London Airport delayed by the weather. It's a forgettable film – *"the background and setting are more interesting than the characters"* wrote one reviewer.

Shure's role is a small one. He only has one line - 'Good night, miss' – which he delivers in a gruff growl of a voice. As a bit-part actor he fails to shine, even when everyone around him is mediocre at best. But he dominates as soon as he drifts off.

In a number of scenes we see him laid out in the background on a row of airport seats, whilst a series of B-list actors and actresses attempt to hold our attention with their rows, reminiscences, their kisses, tears and laughter. But it is Shure we can't take our eyes off, his head resting on a coat, his face well-lit, eyes-closed, posed like the facsimile of a medieval knight one might find atop a tomb in Westminster Abbey.

He repeated the trick in a low-budget British war movie that did mysteriously well at the box office. The somewhat primitive market research team at British Lion put the success down to the appeal of two relatively unknown young actors who supposedly stood out – Michael Caine and Stanley Baker. (Shure remarked on his own role: "I had eight lines in that picture, and I screwed up six of them.")

It was only when Shure appeared again as a drunken crew member in a second-rate pirate movie, that producers and directors started to notice his effect on audiences.

They were helped by an article in the influential French magazine *'Cahiers du Cinema'* which dedicated half its word count to analysing one scene in which Shure is passed out from too much rum and his general (Yul Brynner) is forced to admit that all his men are more than likely doomed to death in battle the next day.

"In a more realised version of this scene, the camera would focus less and less on Brynner and draw in on the prone figure, lying on the deck, his body thrown into a shape that prefigures what is destined to happen the next day. The sleeping drunk is the essence of the scene, the only real thing in it that a contemporary viewer can relate to. Brynner is a symbol of the past, starchily reading out his hero lines, his false concern about his underlings, the dummy belief in their sacrifice for his honour. Even his peacock buccaneer outfit with tall boots and flouncy sleeves places him in a world that is dead to us. Meanwhile the man playing dead on the floor vibrates with meaning. He is dressed in plain colourless clothes. He is

splayed out with arms and legs outstretched as if he has been falling in air. He is the everyman. Drunk in life. Frozen in death. Despite the grossity of Technicolor he withholds an inner light. We see him peaceful in his cups, serenely lost to the world, but held well in his dreams. For us who look up to the screen, he is a captivating example of a moment in all our lives when we are both stuck with what has been handed down to us and yet also free internally to roam the new mental universe of the future. As the camera holds on the sleeping pirate, we consider our own moment of rest and respite, and wonder how thoroughly and effectively an actor can communicate a moment of humanity without actually doing any acting at all!"

[translated from the French by Tim Wright]

The author of this lengthy encomium was a young French cinéaste called Francois Truffaut. Only a year later he would give the world *'The 400 Blows'*, with its own important sleeping scene - sadly cut from the international release of the movie and only shown for the first time in Britain 20 years after Peter Shure had died.

The Sleep Artist

Although he died nearly 20 years ago, before the Web was even invented, the work of Peter Shure was made for YouTube.

His performances are nearly all short cameos rather than starring roles. His most memorable scenes are never long, always intimate, often involving intense closeups.

One can imagine a channel with dozens of short videos, each one from a different film, possibly without audio, every time with the camera falling inevitably and obsessively in love with Shure's stillness and mysterious power. The library would contain contributions from many of the world's most famous film-makers spanning several generations.

From the mid 1950s onwards, Shure was rarely out of work and was often sought after by directors who wanted to take on the challenge of capturing the essence of the actor's method.

Each performance by Shure inspired someone else to invent a role for him or, in one famous case, to undertake a complete rewrite of a film, in the hope of securing his talents.

He appears in any number of roles – the prisoner, the pirate, the kidnapper, the jilted lover, a servant, a warlock, businessman or cowboy, Christ or corpse.

And yet he was not what one would call a versatile actor. Many might say he was a bad actor when required to speak and perform. But in one mode he was ethereal, magnetic, much lauded. Peter Shure was always peerlessly magnificent when he was asleep.

HOW DOES HE DO IT?

In days gone by, it was simply accepted that a Marilyn Monroe or a Cary Grant had something mysteriously magnetic about them that was beyond categorisation.

But in today's world, increasingly governed by money, metrics, focus groups and film school seminars, the actor's ability to connect with audiences is constantly put under the microscope.

Many tricks of the trade are already known – different lighting setups, filters, lenses. Sometimes it is the presentation of a particular aspect of the face (*Claudette Colbert*), a catchphrase (*George Formby*), a signature expression or body movement, (*Bela Lugosi*) a timbre of the voice that is immediately recognisable (*Jerry Lewis*).

More recently, there are specialist microphones for distorting the voice (*James Earl Jones*), voiceover artists for replacing the voice (*Andi McDowell*), specialist makeup that might take hours to apply (*Helena Bonham Carter*), prosthetics (*Steve Martin*) and wigs (*William Shatner*), body doubles (*Morgan Fairchild*), digital avatars (*Brandon Lee*).

Actors have a growing arsenal of techniques they can apply in order create a recognisable screen persona that audiences can't help but be drawn to. In more recent times, various 'methods' of character immersion have been adopted famously by the likes

of Marlon Brando and Dustin Hoffman, all of which one can now learn from a book.

In the 1980s, Michael Caine offered masterclasses in how to be Michael Caine on screen. And Oliver Reed memorably gave away the secrets of being an effective screen villain (*straight, short hair, very little mouth movement when speaking and no blinking*).

But just how Peter Shure secured his hold over the viewer, through the simple act of being asleep, has never been fully explained. And most directors he has worked with can't tell you his secret either.

One might assume it was the result of things Shure himself had learned along the way, working with particular directors or DoPs.

For example, from the early 1970s onwards, Shure would often lobby for revered cinematographer Jack Cardiff to be on board for any project he agreed to. Producers quickly learned to laugh this off as a delusion of grandeur on Shure's part. Cardiff was far too successful and famous to be associated with the kind of movies to which Shure was attached. Cardiff himself only learned of these requests much later, after Shure and the director Michael Powell had become friends. There is no evidence, in fact, that Shure ever actually met Cardiff, and certainly never worked with him.

Where there are clues about Shure's secret method (if indeed there was a method) is in his diaries. From these, we do know for certain that Shure was a great admirer of Powell and Pressburger films, and it's safe to say that '*A Matter of Life and Death*' was an important point of inspiration for Shure.

He mentions going to see it during the Christmas holidays in 1946, accompanied by his motor racing pal Robert - later Roberta - Cowell:

"Cowell was rather upset by it. I calmed him down aftertimes with a few scotch and sodas in a pub just off Piccadilly. For my money, the film was of exceptional merit. Niven is marvelloso, tho' he spends vast expansions of time just lying about. The whole extravaganza is fantastical. I don't know why, but it recalled 'The Wizard of Oz', a strange comparison to make about a war film. Cowell couldn't see it that way. It reanimated thoughts of burning planes and motor crashes, I suppose. And it conjured up demons from Barth, too - the less said about that the better."

For Cowell and for many others who watched '*A Matter of Life and Death*', the film must have triggered appalling memories of bomber raids gone wrong. Yes, the tone of the film is unnervingly light, with a soundtrack which is for the most part rather jaunty, and characters that speak in a quick and quippy way. But the backdrop to the whole film is the hundreds and thousands of dead men and women queuing up for the afterlife. They laugh and backslap each other on their way to eternity. But the sheer number of the dead, turning up every day every hour, can't help but be sobering. And for Cowell it was a difficult watch.

Like many who went to see that film in 1946, Cowell was almost certainly struggling with an undiagnosed stress disorder. As he sat in the dark cinema with his friend Shure all the trauma and pain of war must have washed over him, threatening to drown him in a wave of horror and helplessness. The attempt of

an upbeat romantic ending, with Niven's final line being 'We won!', would have been no consolation. In 1946 many like Cowell would have seen the victory as hollow.

For Shure, there was no such emotion. Something else awakened in him – not just the possibility of becoming a screen actor, but the foundation of a new mythology about himself.

He watched David Niven, the lead actor, floating unconscious in the shallows on a beach, then sat sleeping in a library chair, then laid flat out on an operating table, and he must have instinctively understood that screen acting wasn't just about hitting a mark and remembering lines.

Many of the other main actors in the film spend time as frozen figures, suspended in a moment of time, whilst various angels and other inhabitants of the world beyond argue the case for whether Niven should be allowed to live or die. It must have occurred to Shure at this moment that it might be possible to become the lead actor in a big film and yet spend most of one's time on screen either asleep, unconscious – or dead!

Other elements of the film will have chimed deeply with Shure.

Niven's character is called Peter. He is a poet of some promise and a squadron leader who has flown over 60 missions. Shure was a navigator who flew 29 missions before being shot down. He counted amongst his friends several poets, some of whom he'd befriended during his time as a 'kriegie' (the terms PoWs liked to use about themselves).

The film opens on 2 May 1945, the exact same date that the Russian army arrived at the gates of Shure's POW camp to signal the end of the war and the start of a new life. And the film is inspired by the true story of a bomber pilot who jumped from his burning plane from several thousand feet without a parachute and survived. Records show that Shure was in a compound at Stalag Luft 1 in 1944/45 with someone who did exactly that.

Later in life, Shure would refer to '*A Matter of Life and Death*' as one of his all-time favourite movies. But he'd always remain deliberately cryptic about where his sleeping powers came from, and he never let on about his preparation before shooting a scene. In later years he enjoyed the idea of his own mystique and came up with several different stories about how he had come to develop his unique skill.

He wasn't averse, either, to mythologising his own wartime record, with several tall stories about incidents that took place during bombing missions. He once claimed that he and the rest of his crew had been temporarily knocked unconscious by a blast of flack on the way back to Britain from Germany, but they had all survived because the plane had miraculously flown itself across the North Sea without once getting knocked off course.

In one interview, Shure talked about transcendental meditation as something he adopted well before the Beatles and others started to extol its benefits. In another he mentions astral projection. Another story involves him suffering from insomnia at his prep school and being sent to a sleep expert by his headmaster.

His wife and children have gone on record about a certain amount of drug use, which Shure always vehemently denied. Shure was a drinker – which actor of that generation wasn't? – but there are no stories of Shure turning up on set drunk.

Certainly, Shure was a man of ritual and his P.A. of many years – Martin Chambers - has described in his own memoir a routine that involved listening to specific pieces of music (notably Benny Goodman), a fairly strict diet regimen before filming and – intriguingly – time spent silently looking through a series of personal photo albums and scrap books.

Whatever his secret was, from 1958 onwards, film directors and multimedia artists were queuing up to secure Shure, even for just one day or one scene, not only because he was guaranteed to boost the audience for any film he appeared in, but also because they were keen to discover his secret. They'd hire him

in the belief there was a definite technique or a trick. But nearly all of them came out of the experience talking about Shure's abilities as something unnatural, unmannered and, in the end, unknowable.

"I guess I was thinking there might a load of preparation and technique in what he did, but no. He was quite un-prepared. And I don't mean that in a derogatory way. If anything he taught me that you can prepare too much. I realised that a lot of the other scenes I was planning to shoot were too premeditated. I was trying too hard to actively 'present' them rather than just let them be. Peter was great at that – just being. I'll always remember his catchphrase just before he settled down to a take. "Just keep it rolling," he'd say. I made a note to steal that as my own mantra."

- ATTRIB. TERRENCE MALICK

"My memory is that we barely spoke at all. Peter was serenely quiet. He didn't need any words. He just lay down and told me I should start filming whenever I thought the time was right.

And as he drifted away, I couldn't stop watching through the camera. I remember seeing his eyelids twitch and noting that his breathing was rather artificially steady at first – in through the nose, out through the mouth sort of thing - and I was worried it wasn't going to work. But slowly and surely his face relaxed, and I want to say he started to shine from the inside, except the more you watched the more it was like the life going out of him, of the light escaping him and leaving him dead to the world. A

chilling effect - because it felt exactly like watching someone you love die. I was so shocked I almost forgot to roll the camera and whisper 'action'. And all without any reference to lines, or any dialogue or script. Just a human being in time and space and light…

… You see, it doesn't matter whether you're Godard or Almodovar or Scorsese, what you're so often battling with is text, text, text. Everything begins with the text, and this was always a great source of anguish to me. What I always wanted was for cinema to get on with doing what it does best, which is expressing ideas in visual terms. Working with Peter was one of the few times I thought I was really getting somewhere with that."

- **PETER GREENAWAY**

PART 1

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DEATH

THE RAPTURE 1992 (89 MINS)

The filmmaker and artist known simply as ‘Devon’ claims that *‘The Rapture’* is to be his last ever film. This is a shame, given it feels very much as if he’s ending on a low rather than a high.

‘*The Rapture’* is a deliberately messy affair, full of the director’s trademark effects - amateurish improvisations by actors who should know better, campy costumes, abstract Super8 footage, a fruity voice-over full of classical allusion, doomy sounds of industrial squalor and the coming apocalypse.

Do not expect anything like an engaging plot, sparkling dialogue or charismatic characters. This film is designed as a spectacle of sound and light, a deliberately painterly work that offers a range of representations of people preparing to take leave of this world and seek out what may lie beyond the pale.

If this all sounds rather gloomy, arty and obscure, then you’d be right. By now, most people paying to see a Devon film will be prepared for this and will almost certainly feel like they’ve got their money’s worth. True Devon devotees (Devontees?) who endured/enjoyed his all-nighter art movies of the 1970s may wonder why, at 89 minutes, the film is so short. The rest of us will be happy to walk away from an 8pm showing knowing the pubs might still be open.

The major complication that dogs this movie, and which prevented it from being released until a good two years after it

was completed, is the presence of Peter Shure. For those with short memories, Peter Shure was the cult British actor who passed away whilst on the set of *'The Rapture'*. I say 'passed away', because it was a matter of some tabloid interest as to the nature of Peter Shure's demise – was it an accident? (*the Mirror*) was it murder? (*the Sun*) did he ever really die or just disappear? (*the National Enquirer*).

The film has been mired in any number of legal disputes. Devon and his production company were subject to a detailed health and safety investigation that led to a hefty fine, but no prosecution for negligence, manslaughter or worse. Shure's family pursued a claim against Devon for control over the right to use Peter Shure's image in the film. Everyone, it seems, sued or at least threatened to sue Peter Shure's agent and personal assistant, Martin Chambers, who to this day denies all allegations of mismanaging his client, doping him, administering unlicensed medications to him, falsifying contracts and financial records about him, and even tampering with the dead body. It has been quite a media circus.

With the film finally securing a release date – with Shure scenes intact – Chambers has managed to pour more flames on the fire by announcing the imminent publication his own 'exclusive' memoir. The distributors have played their part by releasing the film on the anniversary of Shure's death.

The result is that a large group of people may well be going to see this movie hoping to see a dead body - or at least to come away with their own smart theory about why it is not a corpse they've seen.

My own view of the Shure saga is that his are indeed the best scenes in what is otherwise a distinctly average arthouse movie. He is the only actor who makes you believe that he is preparing for the rapture of the title. Everyone else looks like they're attending a rather ropy warehouse party from the 1980s. Shure's last scene on a remote pebble beach, waiting for a gleam to

appear on the horizon, and then laying down to sleep, gently singing his way into a welcomed oblivion, is genuinely moving. It is also the one scene that is beautifully filmed, bathed in natural light with the gentle gushing sound of the sea.

FROM 'NO SLEEP FOR THE WICKED' BY MARTIN CHAMBERS:

To be fair I don't think Peter really understood why he was there.

It didn't help that Devon had a very casual, social approach to film-making. You might even call it haphazard. And at this late stage of their life, it was always going to be a low budget - rather home-made - affair.

Then you have to understand how ill Peter was. He hadn't let on to anybody, not anyone. The travel was always going to be an effort for him, and then to find there was nowhere to rest at the other end, no trailer or private dressing room, it was too much. The long walk to the house across the shingle alone was a challenge for a man of his age.

There was no-one there to greet him. Devon was busy in the garden filming two friends dressed up as rather raggedy angels, and everyone else seemed to be just sitting around chatting and drinking. It was a bit like turning up at a party where you didn't know anyone.

I plonked Peter down in a chair and went to find to someone I might recognise. No joy. In the end I just stood by the back door, surveyed the motley crew and raised my voice somewhat imperiously – "Excuse me… Excuse Me…."

A few of Devon's mob stopped their chat and looked round.

"Hi," I said. "Peter is here."

Blank looks all round.

"Peter Shure!"

Whether Shure is actually dead when the camera closes in on his sun-rosed face is a question than no-one can answer, and, to my mind, it's a question that takes away from the power of Shure's performance rather than lending any kind of ghoulish thrill to it all.

If you want to be kind to the memory of Peter Shure, you might do better to pass on *'The Rapture'* and seek out some of his earlier iconic performances in such films as *'The Privateer'*, *'Una Brutta Morte'* or *'Mary Magdalene'*.

If you really feel compelled to see this film all the way through, be prepared to do what Peter Shure did so well throughout his career – fall asleep.

"NOTHING OF HIM THAT DOTH FADE/BUT DOTH SUFFER A SEA-CHANGE/INTO SOMETHING RICH AND STRANGE."

1 JUNE 1990

The world had seen Peter Shure playing dead so many times in his career, that it was hard for anyone to accept it could happen in real life.

From the various accounts that have come from family members, people working on the film at the time, and from Martin Chambers, Shure's PA and agent, we can develop a fairly clear timeline of what happened to Peter Shure on that fateful day, 1st June 1990.

He and Chambers arrived at Devon's studio/cottage on the Kent coast at around 3pm. The plan was to film Shure on the beach in the late afternoon/early evening with a view to capturing a decent sunset. Weather

reports had been consulted - an unusual example of forward planning from Devon.

Shure was kept waiting for over an hour, whilst Devon was finishing another scene. In that time, Shure had a costume fitting, did his own hair and make-up (he'd grown a beard and shaved his head for the part) and allegedly drank two large rum and cokes offered to him by two extras dressed as angels.

When Devon finally appeared in the cottage, he announced that he wanted to shoot Peter all by himself, with no other crew around him. Martin Chambers objected to this, but Peter agreed, pointing out that he and Devon had discussed this approach at a previous meeting.

Devon had planned ahead – again, something he rarely did. Microphones and sound recording equipment had already been set up on the beach. There was to be no artificial light apart from a couple of burning braziers. The only prop was a wooden staff that Peter was to hold.

The two men left the cottage at approximately 5pm, knowing that it wouldn't be completely dark until 9pm. This gave them ample time to rehearse, improvise and try a number of takes as the light changed from cloudy blue to a series of golds, pinks, purples and oranges. It was a warm day, so Shure took no blanket or overcoat, but simply strode out in costume.

The next thing we know is that Devon returned to the cottage at approximately 7:30pm, alone, expressing huge delight with what he believed he'd filmed.

He tells Martin Chambers at this point that Peter has continued to rest on the beach, and he suggests it best

not to disturb him. A celebratory bottle of fizz is popped to mark the end of another successful day.

Chambers elects to go out and check that Peter is OK.

The crew and cast that remained at the cottage that afternoon - all personal friends of Devon – had not much to do except eat, drink and take drugs. By 8:00pm everyone still on set was sozzled and high, by their own admission. Nobody remembers being very concerned about Shure. It was a warm evening. They perhaps supposed that he'd decided to take in the last of the sunset. Perhaps it was part of his method to continue his sleep after the cameras had stopped rolling.

At 8:20pm, Martin Chambers rushed into the cottage in a flustered state and asked loudly if Peter had turned up. Nobody was in a fit state to answer him.

Chambers went round every room, announcing to all and sundry – in various states of inebriation and undress - that Peter was missing.

Martin is asked if he's looked in the right place on the beach. He insists that he has, having found the abandoned mic stands and the burning braziers.

By 8:40pm, the news has hit home. One of the extras has sprinted down to the beach and back and confirmed that Peter is nowhere to be found.

Panic, fuelled by booze and powders, sets in.

"THERE IT IS AGAIN! THERE!"

Author's note: At this point, we refer again to Martin Chamber's version of events, as set down in his 2010 memoir: 'NO SLEEP FOR THE WICKED'.

It was pure chance that I decided to take a walk down the beach. I needed to get away from the mayhem.

Seated on one of the many driftwood benches in the garden, an actress had started keening ostentatiously (or was she part of the make-up team? or both?!). I wasn't even sure she knew Peter was missing or, indeed, who Peter was. She may as well have been weeping about the state of the production and her decision to be in it.

The actors dressed as tarty Renaissance angels were shrieking too. Someone senior – one of Devon's boys - was pushing and shoving technicians around, trying to prevent them from packing up their kit and scarpering. A row was developing in the outside studio, easily heard through an open window. 'I'm dialling 999 right now. I'm dialling 999 right now," Devon was intoning over and over again. The creepy posh brogue of the exec producer was urging Devon in a semi-menacing tone to 'think carefully'.

So much for Devon's theories about the making of a film being about the creation of a community, and the production team being both his family and his audience.

Yes, there are some families I've met that this particular crew might have resembled. The Manson Family, perhaps? Devon

should have kept his beloved Super8 running and captured the moment of a family falling apart. I'm guessing that might have made a better film.

As it was, the absence of any footage, or indeed any proper record of what happened that day, simply fuelled the conspiracy theorists. Personally, I don't think anything particularly untoward happened, and I was there – a central witness. But perhaps that makes me part of the conspiracy.

The logical explanation is that Peter did wake up, and then walked along the beach some way before collapsing. Many believe he was caught up in the tide like flotsam, drifting in the shallows like a sodden piece of timber or an untethered buoy, occasionally flopping up onto the land, only to be tugged back into the shallows, then bobbing a bit further along the coast.

I'd walked for about fifteen or twenty minutes before I found him curled up on the shingle, like a big dog in a tiny manger, looking for all the world like he was still asleep. He wasn't bedraggled or bloated. Yes, he was damp. But not sodden. You wouldn't have said he'd been tossed in the ocean for an hour. Rather he looked like a man who'd decided to sleep off a heavy liquid lunch and was too out of it to let a little bit of wind and spray disturb him.

People often ask me why I didn't take out my phone and take a photo of him. They forget it was 1990. No mobile phone. No YouTube. No social media.

*It's perhaps hard these days to imagine what reaction you could have to finding a dead body on a beach that didn't involve a panicked video - perhaps not of the corpse, but of you emoting in the middle of nowhere, big fat face to landscape camera telling the world about how you *feel*.*

Back in those days, you were on your own. My own father rigged up his car on a beach in Norfolk and gassed himself from the exhaust. I often wondered about the dog walker who found him and what she'd had to deal with. Was the motor still running or

had my father had the good grace to run down his petrol, so the rattle of his crappy Renault has ceased at about the same time as he did? And did the dog walker ever get any thanks, or a chance to vent her emotions? We never got to find out. I guess I could have pursued the matter with the police. But you don't, do you? But weirdly, as I stood there staring at Peter, tucked up in his pebbly bed, that was what I was thinking about.

To be fair I was also mesmerised. I was the last person to take in what Peter did best. Last chance to see! So freshly dead that he still retained his aura. A private show. It was that time in the late evening on the British coast when the energy of the wind winds down, the heat of the day wains, thin clouds cluster on the horizon and shift in colour from yellow to orange to purple, and the choppy water becomes smoothly metallic and starts to lap rather than crash. The light goes out of the stones.

There I stood, staring down at the man I'd served for the last seven years or so. God, he was good. He looked so very far way and yet almost in me, dreaming but dead. It gave me some kind of hope of how I could be when I was asleep – serene and creative without the blast of the world upon me, and still with the prospect of awakening to a better world, a better me.

I thought of the fishermen who had retrieved Shelley's body in that Italian lake (Peter had taught me to love poetry). The myth is that, after the storm, the water was so clear that they found Shelley easily. Looking overboard they could peer down through the greeny-blue and see him there in foetal position, entirely at home in the deep, like a dozy water baby incubating his next great verse.

The truth is very different - it took ten days to retrieve Shelley, by which time he was only identifiable by his clothes and a book of Keats's poems he kept about his person. His face and hands had been eaten clean off.

Peter, here in the shingle, was perfect. If I were any kind of painter I would have tried to capture it in oils. It's as powerful for me in my mind's eye as any painting of Marat or Chatterton,

or all the other romantic images of genius struck down, the beauty of that moment when a mesmerising personality passes from the living to the dead.

And yet here I was having to walk back into that pool of second-raters and announce what I had found. Can you blame me for pausing? They call it the missing half hour. But what would you have done? You had that one moment where your friend, your mentor, your boss, your tormentor, your father-figure, your paymaster, your child-in-care – that man – was yours and yours alone. And I knew that the moment I turned and trudged back to the madhouse of Devon's set, the spell would be broken, and Peter wouldn't be mine anymore, and wouldn't even be him.

He'd be the body bag of everyone else's desperate thoughts and dreams. Instead of that lovely peace he could instil through his performances there'd be the noise and brouhaha of everyone else's egos, desperately seeking their moment in the sun.

I looked out to the sea and imagined the hordes who'd come to feed over all this. All the voices that would crow and want their say. With every step I took away from Peter, I had a premonition that I was stepping away from a quiet life. I wasn't wrong.

A STATEMENT FROM DEVON, FILMMAKER & ARTIST SEPTEMBER 1990

Why have I chosen to speak out now? Well, my dears, as far as I am aware this is still a free country – Liberté, Fraternité, Cuppatea!

Not as free as it should be, I grant you, but still a country where I am free to pronounce my piece, as 'twere, irrespective of whatever investigation is underway. This whole matter is hardly *sub judice* is it? Every man, woman and his dog has been having their say– and most of them have never made a film in their lives.

I am in no way claiming I am the victim here. Inasmuch as anyone is a victim, it is *pauvre Pierre*, though I would say he didn't suffer in the end, as far as anyone knows. For all we know, his time had come. Could I be so bold as to suggest that the precise situation in which we find ourselves at the hour of our death becomes somewhat irrelevant ultimately? By which I mean - does it fucking matter?

I know - I know! - the family don't want to hear that. I would have liked to say we should ALL wait for the outcome of the health and safety investigation before commenting. But nobody else is waiting, so why the bloody heck should I? I'm the one *seulement* who the mob points at – and I'm the one *seulement* who is likely to be damaged both financially and reputationally if this investigation uncovers any obvious wrongdoing. I will never work again, whilst others will be free to pursue whatever grubby business they choose.

Peter's family are very upset. They're angry. Perfectly natural. One of the stages of grief. I suppose we all live in a world where we expect certain things to just be - until they aren't. The sun must come up. The sun must set. But I cannot stop someone

from dying. And I can't bring him back for them. Except perhaps on film.

When I agreed to meet them - the kids, I mean, I never met with Helen - Isabella, the daughter, did just keep saying: 'No, that's not right, that can't be right' - to everything I had to tell her. The boy said nothing. Apparently, he didn't speak for three days after Peter's death, although whether his sister would let him get a word in edgeways is another matter.

She was in denial. Another stage of grief. And, frankly, I could see she was rather desperately trying to find her own way through the storm. It's turned her into rather a bitter person I feel. And an angry person too. I'm angry. I'm angry that I should have to shoulder so much of the personal responsibility for something that, well, just happened.

Now it appears I'm about to be held up to standards that I simply do not accept. It is a clear attempt to impose a set of rules on me that I have always been very public in saying are not for me. I refuse to work or live conventionally. That's known about me. And by 'convention' I mean the practices that have been established over the last few decades by a film industry that is capitalist in structure, materialist in nature and bound by outmoded corporate employment practices designed to benefit the bean counters rather than the artist. It's as if one tried to impose the rules of a corporate office on an artist studio. Nobody sane thinks that's an appropriate thing to do.

The health and safety standards as currently set out assume a model of film making that is essentially hierarchical and systematic, with every role on a film carried out by one person given a specific job title and a tightly prescribed set of responsibilities.

My way of making a film is so profoundly different that it can't operate under the rules that have been established for the mainstream industry. It just can't. When I make a film, I do it with a group of people who all trust each other implicitly and who are all working for the same goal. Filmmaking at that level

can be one of the great collaborative processes in the world if you let it. It's a unique environment – everyone there is someone I know, and I know they know what they're doing.

We all work very hard. And, yes, we play very hard. That's part of the culture - to enjoy ourselves. The newspapers like to tell stories of nakedness and drug-taking and dancing on the tables. I'm not denying anything, because it really isn't anyone's business. That's why I choose to film at home, to open up my house to everyone who is making the film and create a safe space where people can relax and share ideas and be free. I imagine if we sniffed about the home of other so-called respectable film-makers we might uncover all kinds of shenanigans! Did the press ever go to Ken Russell's house and ask him what he was up to, for example?!

To try to apply the rules of, say, a Hollywood blockbuster to what I do is frankly idiotic. And it's not like it's a new thing for me. I've been very open about my practice. I stopped making films on a purely commercial basis many years ago, precisely because I refused to be constrained. I wanted to be creative rather than spending all my time signing off paperwork and talking to people who either wanted to spend money or make money or both.

Back in the early days I still adored making movies, but as time went by they became more and more of a chore. Until I found my proper tribe and worked out a new way of doing things, I was entirely happy with the idea of being, say, a painter, or a gardener rather than a filmmaker. If anything this incident has taken me back there. This will almost certainly be my last film whatever happens.

I'm not saying we didn't have safety meetings, by the way. Of course we did. Maybe not five times a day like you'd see on a traditional set, but we did talk about what we were planning to do each day before we did it. I distinctly remember talking with everyone over dinner about how exciting it was going to be to have Peter with us the next day. And there were discussions

about the best – and safest – way to do his scene on the beach. The very fact that we'd waited 'til the weather had calmed before calling him shows we were being careful.

Were we cutting corners? Of course we were cutting corners. It's a tiny low-budget arthouse film. Were we 'stretched'? Hell, yes. Everyone's stretched on a film otherwise it's not worth making. But I don't go around every day asking everyone: "Oh darling, are you stretched? You look a bit stretched."

You ask any producer or director about whether they want to save time and money, they'll say yes. I don't care who it is. Spielberg probably counts the pennies as much as anyone. It's part of the job. Anyone who says otherwise doesn't really know how a film gets made. The question is: were we reckless? And I'd reply: what is reckless?

One newspaper has already claimed we were in breach of something like 17 safety practices. In another they wrote that some of the crew had walked off the film in protest at not getting reasonable rest, leading to accidents. And a failure to recognise a union. Total nonsense. There was no crew! There was no union! They were all my friends. Or friends of friends.

It's hilarious to me that the same newspapers that have always crowed about Mrs Thatcher's union bashing laws are now trying to bash the likes of me for not recognising unions. Or deriding 'red tape' and general bureaucracy, whilst crucifying me for not attaching a load of health and safety gobbledy-gook to every call sheet. If anyone working for me had wanted to go on strike I'd have happily respected that. But these days it's almost impossible to strike anyway!

I even saw on the local TV news that they were asking the general public what they thought about us here making a film. We were portrayed as something akin devil-worshippers. Lots of talk of strange lights and sounds at night. Naked men cavorting in the sand dunes. Deliveries of suspicious packages at odd hours. People from 'London' turning up at the train station.

It has come to the point that I no longer feel safe, even to go out to the local corner shop. I'm still expecting a mob with pitchforks and torches at any moment.

And, of course, my fellow filmmakers have been suitably disloyal. As if nothing ever went wrong on a Greenaway set. Or anyone else's set for that matter. It goes all the way back to Ben-Hur, doesn't it? Extras expiring in the chariot scene. You know who first told me about that? Peter! He was there! Not in the movie. But he was working in Italy at the time at the same studio and he knew the producers. Were they bankrupted or hauled off to prison or even judged in the court of public opinion, as is happening to me? No, they were not.

Peter was an old pro and absolutely knew all about the risks associated with filmmaking. And so did his agent Martin. And both of them were happy with the way we had set things up. When I suggested the final setup should be just Peter and me with handheld cameras, they were entirely comfortable with the idea. In the end it's the actor who is your last line of defence. He or she has to make the call. And I wanted – absolutely needed - my time alone with him. It was a crucial part of the film.

When I came back to the house I said to Martin he could relax, Peter was just having a quiet moment and Martin told me that Peter might often fall asleep for real on the job. He was 70 years old after all. No-one was in a hurry to go and disturb him. And when Martin eventually did toddle off to find him and didn't return for a while, I thought nothing of it.

Even when people started to fan out and go hunting for him I wasn't overly concerned. Perhaps I should have been. But no, I didn't call anyone or raise any kind of alarm. This kind of thing goes on all the time in film. And actors can be erratic. We know that.

My only regret is being photographed watering my garden instead of helping to find Peter. That was a mistake. But I never

really thought anything horrible had happened. And the garden was dry. It had been sunny that day.

But that's the image that everyone now sees: me with an old hose giving my sea-poppies a libation whilst Peter lies dead on the surf half a mile away. If it wasn't so bound up with the investigation and the general public furore, it's an image I might easily use in my film. Perhaps I should! Use it for the poster. You see? If I truly was a hard-bitten cynical movie person that's the kind of thing I would do. But I'm not.

I'm an artist. A humble artist simply trying to make a work of art. And when I'm not doing that, yes, I like to tend my garden.

Am I to be crucified for that?

Interview with Clem Media of The Fuggers, SPUN magazine Sept 1990:

“Yeah I’ve watched all the conspiracy crap. There’s nothing you can teach me about Brian Jones or Jim Morrison or Bigfoot or Global Freemasonry. I’ve watched it all. I don’t even care if it’s a bunch of crap.

The point is, it’s possible. All that shit. I mean, it’s not *im*possible. Somewhere in your mind you know: if someone can tell it to you like that, then it could happen like that.

I mean, nobody goes outta the way to put on a TV documentary about Bigfoot like it’s something that *isn’t* true, y’know what I mean?

Like, with Brian Jones, you only kinda bother wondering about how he died if you *don’t* accept the bullshit that feds and coroners and all the others feed you. You only start looking if you *don’t* buy it – and you don’t buy it that Brian could just snuff it. You have to believe he was taken from you, that someone somewhere felt threatened by his brightness and felt the need to do him in.

It's the same with my Pa. You basically start with injustice; the injustice of him not being there anymore. And then you look for someone to blame, someone that isn’t just the dead person.

So it starts from it feeling plain wrong that someone that talented, that beautiful can be taken. Who starts out trying to prove everything was ok? You want something to be wrong.

And when it comes to the police reports and coroner reports and witness reports and newspaper reports, and all that official bullshit, well… it ain’t hard to find the cracks, y’know what I’m sayin’?”

PART 2

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FAMILY

WHEN DEATH OCCURS

ISABELLA SHURE

"As soon as the Pathologist sends through the result of the post-mortem examination, we will phone the next of kin to explain the findings."

From 'Understanding the Results of a Post Mortem'

Mother and I went to see his body at the mortuary. She stroked his hair – it had grown out a bit since death. She wept. But mainly she kept repeating 'Poor Peter. Poor, poor Peter' in a low croaky voice, pitching it somewhere between the Queen at an investiture and Fenella Fielding in *'Carry On Screaming'*.

'You finally did it.'

I looked around for cameras and then realised this performance was presumably for me.

The night before, my best friend Don had advised me over the phone to pinch Daddy quite hard, just to make sure he was really dead. "Perhaps they should have done that on the set," I said. "Instead of leaving him on that beach all on his own."

"Sorry," said Don. "That was supposed to be funny."

My mother was trying to force out tears.

Her hand fell slowly away from Daddy's hair. "Poor poor Peter…" She took a step back, knowing that the grimy light from the window would catch her highlights. No final kiss goodbye then. Just this budget Gertrude show.

"The drink! The drink" – oh there'll be drink alright. There's probably a couple of miniatures in her handbag. And before we set off home she'll have a funny turn and ask me, "Isabella, dear,

do you think perhaps we could sit down somewhere? What about that pub across the road?" It's not like she wouldn't have clocked it when we pulled up. The thought of a double VAT probably fuelled the performance.

"I'll never know why he cut his hair so short."

She self-consciously touches her own hair, stiff and crispy from the lacquer.

"He's better looking with his hair longer. But then he always wanted to scare people a bit."

She lowers her head than peers up across the corpse with smudged mascara eyes, widening them slightly like she's Nancy Reagan pretending to be sad at an amfAR fundraiser.

"Shall I leave you to say your good-byes?" she asks.

"No, I'm good… I just wanted to see him."

"Check he was really dead?"

"That's not funny, mother."

He did look different, though. Sure, I'd seen him when he wasn't performing. Drifting off on the sofa watching the rugby. Out for the count on a deckchair in the garden. Passed out drunk in the back of a car. Waking him up with a cup of black coffee on a Sunday morning. This was different.

His PA had brought a decent suit for him to be dressed in. Makeup had been applied, presumably to disguise his pallor. He was on show, but something had gone. The inner something that tells you he's still here, even as he's moving through a dream that you can only half-imagine. A dream with me in it? I always hoped so.

You always understood he could wake up, and that somehow you'd shared a journey with him as he slept. He'd take you somewhere. But here in the mortuary with its off-white plasterboard walls and glaring strip lighting and the hum of an

ageing Mitsubishi air conditioner, he didn't take me anywhere. I was stuck right there.

With Mother.

INTRODUCING: HELEN GROSVENOR

Helen Grosvenor is a successful actress who has worked across film, television and theatre for more than half a century. Over the years she has been nominated for many major awards but has never won. As she herself points on, she shares this accolade with both Harrison Ford and Marlene Dietrich.

She made her first film in 1950 aged just 14 (as a precocious, somewhat brattish, character, know to the British public for her famous line "I shan't eat it. I won't eat it.")

Helen's parents - both involved in the world of London art dealing and up-market auctions - pushed her into show business and micro-managed her career, until veteran French filmmaker Julien Duvivier came along and – in Helen's words – 'cut the cord'.

She made three films with Duvivier whilst in her teens. She was also closely linked to the actor Michael Wilding, described as 'a friend of the family', but talked about in the gossip columns as one of the reasons for tensions in Wilding's marriage to Elizabeth Taylor*.

Controversially, Wilding put Helen under contract to make films with him, but Hollywood lured him across the Atlantic before any film could be made (perhaps wisely Taylor encouraged her husband's move to LA).

Hitchcock is said to have considered her for '*The Trouble With Harry'* before giving Shirley Maclaine her screen debut.

Grosvenor first met Peter Shure on the set of the film *'After The Fall'* in 1957. A year later they married, and in 1960 a daughter was born: Isabella. The couple spent much of the next few years living apart, due to Peter spending much of his time hoping to forge a career in America. A son, Christopher followed in 1967. In the same year the couple divorced.

Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, Helen Grosvenor split her time between film roles – often historical figures such as Mary Queen of Scots, Lady Hamilton and Mary Magdalene – and an extremely successful British TV sitcom series *'Oh Helen!'*.

In her later years, Grosvenor has become as well known for her

interest in spiritualism and the occult. She is a strong believer in the power of premonition through dreams and talks regularly on the subject at public meetings and in specialist magazines.

Grosvenor has, in some quarters, been portrayed as a figure of fun with regard to her spiritualist beliefs, having had the honour of being lampooned as a regular spoof columnist in *'Private Eye'* and also as a puppet in the satirical TV programme *'Spitting Image'*.

Even her own father famously made fun of her in a newspaper interview, when it was revealed she'd paid a sizable sum to buy a set of tarot cards allegedly designed by Aleister Crowley.

Author's note: Taylor and Grosvenor, curiously, remained good friends for life, corresponding regularly and sharing their woes about men, movies and children.

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BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH HELEN GROSVENOR 2020-21

Men in the midst of a table d'hote heard/ Men drinking beer with the foam afloat heard

In the dream I was hovering high above the world. *Ou plutôt*, I was seated on a cloud like a Greek goddess looking down on the human world.

I was, *en effet*, in an ancient Greek movie one time, playing a minor goddess. Trevor Howard was Zeus with an ornate bird-bath type thing full of cloudy water – I'm sure there's some fancy word for it, but that's what it looked like to me – a birdbath.

Trevor was always required to peer into it. The cloudy waters would part and Trevor spied from above on anyone he cared to keep track of – Jason, Perseus, Theseus, Icarus et al. My dream was so much like that. I could cast my eye down on the world and pick out any individual person or group of people from across time.

I had a extra power too - the power to control the person I was spying on. Rather it was more like becoming *une marionnettiste*. Imagine - *si vous voulez* – the sacred Julie Andrews performing her lonely goatherd skit in '*The Sound of Music'*. There was a control freak, let me tell you! Thank the Lord I turned down *'Thoroughly Modern Millie'*, that's all I can say. *Mais c'est une autre histoire* …

Anyway, I could imagine holding those criss-cross sticks in my hands with long, long divine threads spindling down to whoever I wished to capture. Thus, I could drag them up and about like a marionette *précisément*.

It was quite a kick I can tell you. One tug and I could force someone to jerk up out of their seat at a dinner table or stumble straight through a door. I could drag my fellow actors across a stage and force them to block out a scene in unwanted ways. Men could be forced to leap over walls, women could dance violently in public places. It was exhilarating. *Stimulant.*

I remember particularly focussing on my mother in one dream and toying with her like a cat, allowing her to nearly have that inappropriate fling with a younger man, to buy the bag she had lusted after, to book a cruise. And then I'd whisk her away, pull her *jusqu'aux cieux* and clack her around, jingle jangle, helpless.

I became quite artistic in the use of my powers, taking control of a friend or fellow actor and devising a dance *improvisée*, pulling on the lines as if I were playing a river trout. I'd force them to flail in mid-air and then drop to the ground, see their legs bend and bounce as they landed with a bump. In one dream I was convinced I had invented Donald O'Connor's *'Make 'Em Laugh'* routine for him.

In more violent modes, I'd drag my enemies across fields or dip them in the sea, with their heads lolling, their arms and hands engaged in a St Vitus dance. So many involuntary actions that I could force on people for my own amusement. And yet in the dream, it never felt I was forcing anyone to do things they did not wish to do. *Plutôt l'inverse*. Every manipulation was always the right choice for that particular person. Something they were supposed to do. *Destin*. It always felt right.

So the moment I picked up Peter and dragged him along the beach, it seemed exactly right. *Comme une poupée*, he was. And that dream would come to me repeatedly from about 1965 onwards. I wonder if it was something to do with my growing sense of control over my life, the sense that I no longer had to

do what others expected of me. I could play any part, go anywhere, eat and drink whenever I wanted with whomsoever I wanted.

It is only recently that I ever wondered whether there were celestial threads attached to me, and perhaps somebody up there might be moving me around. *Mais qui serait-ce?*

It's a grim thought as one gets older to think that every moment once considered to be an act of free will was, in the end, the decision of someone else. I know my children rather resent my drinking. But I find that if I allow myself to get a bit hazy - *pompette* - I can feel much more relaxed about the thought of somebody up there dragging me around and leading me through this embarrassing dance that is modern life.

FELL ASLEEP

ISABELLA SHURE

With the coroner hinting that the body would be released within a few days, we were finally ready for a family pow-wow about what to do with Daddy.

We gathered around Mother's kitchen table in her Kensington apartment. It was decked out like a Provencal cottage (if the cottage happened to be quite near a John Lewis) - a grand cauchemar of gingham, reclaimed wood, wicker and patterned tile. Combined with Mother's painfully strong bitter coffee, it was migraine-inducing.

Chris had flown in from New York that morning. He looked thin and pale and unwashed. His leather jacket smelt of patchouli oil and Germanic train stations - that peculiar gas cocktail of hot dog, brake fumes, burnt rubber and body fluids. God knows where he'd been.

I felt sad looking at him. He'd been a rather beautiful little boy: light olive skin, deep brown eyes, thick eyebrows, slightly

bucked teeth that plumped up his top lip and made him very kissable, and a thick shag of black-brown hair, like a mop-top gone wrong.

Now he looked like a drowned dog. His once lustrous mane sagged off his head in long slicks. One of his front teeth was chipped. His lips were cracked and coloured, evidence of a lot of cheap red wine having been chugged on the plane. For our pow-wow he'd put on some basic old school NHS glasses with thick lenses. Perhaps he thought this made him more grown up and serious, a proper mourner, but to me they just amplified the sense of a boy gone wrong, of various bits of him giving out and giving up.

Mother, with her busy little hands, was twisting her coffee cup round and round, whilst trying to fix me with what she must have thought was a haughty gaze.

"Well, it's very nice to have you both here at the same time. Every cloud, and all that."

"Someone had to die to make it happen," said Chris, eyes down, grinning to himself.

"Shall we just get on with it?" I said snippily, heaving a bulky lever arch file out of my bag and banging it onto the table.

"Gosh, you have been busy," said Mother.

She had a rather brilliant way of turning even mildest observation into a nasty little put-down. No wonder Chris had self-esteem issues.

"Yes, there is quite a lot of admin."

Both of them sipped their coffee sulkily and said nothing.

"But I'm ploughing through it."

Still silence.

“The only big thing we really need to agree on today are the funeral arrangements. Depending on what we decide, I can start to tot up the cost and take it out of what Daddy’s left behind.”

“We’re on a budget then,” said Chris grinning again. He knew as well as I that Mother would have plans. She may have even had one of her dreams about how she expected things to be. Personally, I was never very convinced these dreams were even real. They were useful solely for dictating what must be.

“I’ve been advised by the police that cremation would be best.”

“Police?!” gasped Mother, unsure whether to be shocked or thrilled by this revelation. She'd always loved showing off to the police.

“Apparently it’s not a good idea to have him buried.”

“But…”

“There’s every possibility that some idiot will want to dig him up or even steal him.”

“Good grief.”

“Couldn’t we just keep it secret?” piped up Chris.

“What do you mean?”

“We could bury him in a remote location. Not tell anyone.”

“And how long do you think that little secret would be kept? I’d give it two weeks before the papers found him.”

Seemingly from nowhere Mother produced a scrap of paper and placed it on the table.

“I had rather expected a headstone,” she said faux meekly. “I’ve prepared an inscription.”

She pushed the paper towards me with both bony hands. I flipped it over and affected to read it with the seriousness and respect one would expect from an executor.

PETER SHURE

Actor

Fell Asleep 1 June 1990

Aged 70

"One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more."

"Well, that's charming," I said, pitching my own lack of charm carefully.

"Let me see," said Chris, leaning over and grabbing the paper, scrumpling it a little as he did so. He lifted up his glasses and screwed up his eyes. Perhaps he couldn't afford varifocals.

"This is neat," he said. "Well done Ma."

Mother beamed at him.

"Well, we could have a plaque, I suppose," I conceded. "We could choose a crematorium with a suitable memorial garden."

"Or we could put it somewhere special," replied Chris with some excitement, as an avaricious idea popped into his head. "We could hide it in – like – Dartmoor! Somewhere miles from anywhere. Or… or up a Scottish mountain! And it could be a kinda game or puzzle for fans to try and find it."

"What are you talking about?"

"Kinda like that Golden Hare book. You remember that? It had all kinds of drawings and poems in it with clues for finding a golden hare buried in a secret place. We could do that! Make a book about where Pa's memorial stone is. Maybe we could scatter the ashes there."

"Chris…" I paused.

Count to five, I told myself. Don't say what you're actually thinking. What the hell was wrong with him? We hadn't even disposed of the body and he was already dreaming up some hare-brained publishing scheme.

I guess he's as broke as he looks, I thought. I should try to be kind.

"A plaque would be nice," said Mother, reaching across and taking back her piece of paper. "But I'm not sure I could get up a Scottish mountain, Christopher."

Of course. Mother was looking for a piece of her own theatre. Where would the press photographers be? Who would hear her eulogy, apart from me and Chris? She already had a particular outfit in mind, no doubt, and it probably wasn't designed for a hike across Dartmoor. While we'd been speaking, she was almost certainly trying to conjure up the name of the most glamourous crematorium in Britain.

"All I'm trying to avoid is some crazy trying to dig him up to prove he isn't dead - or taking photos of him 'sleeping' and selling them to the tabloids."

"Oh Izzy, how could you? C'est *du trop*," said Mother.

"We have to be realistic."

"What's unrealistic about a memorial plaque," pitched in Chris.

"OK, OK."

We're ten minutes in and they're ganging up on me. They swap a supporting look and think I don't see them. I am forced to be the grown up again.

"Ok. We have a memorial plaque. We have Mother's inscription on it. But let's at least put it in a memorial garden that is managed and unlikely to be vandalised."

We all paused to take in the idea of a compromise we could all accept.

“Charing is very pretty,” said Mother.

Of course she’d come prepared. How foolish of me. I’d forgotten that she’d been to a number of thespy funerals already. Perhaps in one of her ‘dreams’ she’d already recognised the location.

“Kent and Sussex has a garden, but the deer are always getting in,” she continued.

“I was thinking of Barham,” I interrupted whilst opening my clunky box file and digging out the prospectus. “It’s in Kent. Not so far from Daddy’s house.”

“Not far from where he died,” said Chris.

“Well that doesn’t have to be a ghoulish thing,” I replied. “He did like it down there.”

“How would you know?” snapped Chris sharply.

He tried to give me a hard stare through his stupid googly glasses but lost his nerve and looked away. Mother took in a breath as if she was going to speak, take charge in some way, or summarise what I’d decided and thus make it her own decision. But then she stopped. She was looking at Chris with what appeared to be genuine concern. I hadn’t noticed that he’d started crying.

“We can go and take a look at it if you like,” I said as gently as possible. “It’s a nice place.” I looked across to Mother. “And easy to get to.”

She’d stopped looking at Chris. She'd no doubt quickly moved on to imagining in her mind's eye the big day. The outfit. The demeanour. What flowers to bring. Where to place the photographers. The interviews afterwards. Drinks at the wake. Who to invite.

“Let’s have some more coffee and then talk about something else,” I suggested.

Chris lifted his glasses and rubbed his eyes. He sniffed and sat up. Like his mother he was quick at recovering from grief.

“Ah, time to talk about the money!” he said with enthusiasm. “Payola!”

INTRODUCING: CHRISTOPHER SHURE

Chris Shure - also known by his punk name Clem Media – was lead singer and chief songwriter in the successful second generation hardcore punk band, The Fuggers.

He was only 16 years old when The Fuggers seminal first album *‘Mother’s Ruined’* was released in 1983, with its controversial cover showing the band and a middle-aged woman, all slouched in plastic chairs outside a motorhome, swigging bottles of gin. Some believe the woman in the photograph to be Helen Grosvenor, but it is, in fact, a professional lookalike.

The Fuggers toured Europe in 1984 with Clem Media making headlines for having a very public affair with the 23-year old daughter of one of France’s most notorious bank robbers. Two more Fuggers albums were released before interest in hardcore

waned. The band officially broke up in 1988 whilst making a fourth album that was never released - and Clem Media was suddenly no more.

It was the freshly renamed Christopher Shure who turned up for his father's funeral and remained in London. For the next few years he used his extensive knowledge of the US club and music venue scene to help organise tours for up-and-coming UK 'shoegazer' and early Britpop acts.

A mazy run
A bumpy ride
We're going down
We're going down

The pilot's out
The masks have dropped
We're going down
We're going down

Brace yourself
Say your prayers
We're going down
We're going down

And out on the floor
An old man heaves
A woman screams

WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE
WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE

WE'RE GOING DOWN

WE'RE GOING DOWN

WE'RE GOING DOWN

WE'RE GOING DOWN

WE'RE GOING DOWN

WE'RE GOING DOWN

Words & Music by The Fuggers

WE'RE GOING DOWN

I grew up in the UK. Was there til I was seven, and then went back pretty regular in my teens. Punk bled into me. The second wave I mean, not the Pistols or the Clash or shit like that. The UK Exploited were big for me. Especially when I lived in the States with my Pa. I was the only guy over there who'd ever heard of The Exploited.

A life-changing moment for me was travelling on my own to D.C. and seeing them live. That was the bomb. They made a

live album out of it, so you can probably hear me screaming and yelling inbetween songs. There was other music I liked - punk, thrash, metalcore whatever - Discharge before they got shit, you know what I mean? I even got into X for a while, just cos my LA pals were into it, but I was always drawn to raw stuff, more basic - y'know? - nothing too smart.

Then round that time I found out my Pa wasn't really my Pa and my mom, well, she was having her own problems – and, like, everyone else in the world seemed to know what the score was except me. So that really kinda fired me up. 'Fuck 'em all', right?

That's really the vibe of the whole first album. I shoulda called it *'Fuck 'Em All'*. Haha. It was the record company who wanted to call it *'Mother's Ruined'* cos of that obvious link with my parents - the whole showbiz punk rebel thing. And I just let them use me as a PR prick cos all I cared about was playing live and being free to do what the fuck I liked. I mean, I'd been a good kid – sorta - played by the rules. So this was me off the chain. Leastways that's how I saw it.

Now I’m older I'd tell you no-one ever really gets off the chain. Not really. No-one gets to step out of their past or blast it off, go to sleep and wake up to start fresh. I mean, I dream of it. But it can't happen. Your past just is always with you.

FILM REVIEW APRIL 1981

Meet the diva with psychic powers

British film icon Helen Grosvenor reveals her secrets

No-one ever believes me. *Mais c'est vrai!* I dreamt the exact scene. I dreamt it when I was very small and I knew, even then when I was *un petite*, that this was a premonition of something that was going to happen *certainement*.

It has come upon me several times in my life, in fact. I have dreamt of something, in exacting detail, and later, sometimes many years later, it happens.

I remember being struck as a child when we were on holiday on an Italian island. My parents were quite wealthy, so we could afford exotic vacations. And it was a beautiful island. It had a volcano but it wasn't active - typically weather-beaten and bone dry in the hills – all sand and rock with olive trees, dry stone walls - hardly a drop of real colour anywhere, just dry and dusty ochres and sooty greens and greys. And goats, goats everywhere! And then there were these marvellous little coves, with idyllic shingle beaches, but with sand at low tide. And a sea like I'd never seen before – electric blue, turquoise, clear with delicate ripples and sunshine sparkling off every ripple. *Impressionnant*. Not like any kind of sea you get in England. It was very windy when standing up, but when you lay down, away it went - no wind whatsoever.

And so I learned to lie down. All day if I could. My family identified me quite early as a little dreamer, and they indulged me. My father would have preferred it if I'd joined with their sailing and beach games, but I was never that kind of girl.

I would scrape out a little hole for myself in the pebbles and snuggle in. It's surprisingly comfortable sleeping on stones, did you know? They massage you somewhat as you doze, but also there's that slight give, like well-manufactured bed springs. Not that anyone in England would know what a decent mattress feels like. I had to wait until I went to America to know that. Even when I come back and stay in what are supposed to be high class hotels, the mattresses are still goddamn awful. Last time, my manager had to insist on getting a decent one flown in, and I know that seems quite diva-ish, but, believe me, if you had my back problems, you'd do the same.

Amazing, though, that a curl-up on a Mediterranean beach could prove to be more comfortable than a suite at the Ritz. I always felt I was receiving a light but very pleasurable pummelling whenever I lay down in my bed of stones out of the wind. I can still remember the feeling. And it whilst I was dozing there I channelled one of the most potent, significant dreams of my life.

I was creeping away from a big house, and I was aware something truly terrible had happened. The bomb had dropped, or something equally *dévastatrice*. I wasn't meant to go out, but I wanted to see what had happened. And it wasn't as if it was a wasteland. It appeared to be a small rural town, rather like one you might see on an American TV series back in the day.

As is common in dreams, I seemed to know my way round. Even though it was strange to me, I was enjoying wandering around this entirely abandoned ghost town, walking down the middle of the road with no cars around, spying into people's front rooms, wandering through a park with no ducks or swans on the pond, no birds in the trees, no squirrels scampering about, not a single other person to be seen anywhere.

I kept walking right to the edge of the town, until I came to a farm. But there were no animals there either, and all the machinery has been abandoned in the fields. *Si paisible*.

I snooped around the sheds and barns and was just about to give up finding anything of interest when I find him, sprawled out on a giant pile of hay.

It may embarrass your readers to hear it, but is *tout à fait évident* to me now that I was in the throes of my first sexual dream. I wasn't old enough to have had any boyfriends, but I'm certain I was thinking about boys. Usually girls like me have dreams about being whisked away by a beautiful muscular horse or something similar, but I suppose my mind was *un peu plus prosaïque*. I imagined a rather beautiful man lying asleep on a bed of hay.

In the film, of course, I stop and stare at him for quite a while as he slowly wakes up and becomes aware of somebody watching him. In my dream, I think I may have gasped and made him jump, I don't quite remember. Dreams are a bit like that, aren't they? They tend to melt and bend as you try to remember them. At least that's how it is for me.

There's a basic conversation between us. I'm wary of this stranger but also rather attracted to him, wondering how he managed to survive when everyone else has disappeared. And he is charming towards me, he being equally curious about where and how I had survived.

Et c'est ça! That was all the dream contained. Me meandering across an empty town and encountering this sleeping man. I think I woke up with a rather strong sense of his physique –he'd got up and stood quite close to me and I could smell his musk and get some sense of his muscularity, about how he might hold me and hug me. I remember waking up thinking rather naughty thoughts about this man. But let's remember I was very young, so I never told anyone. And anyway, I rather enjoyed keeping those kinds of dreams to myself.

Years later, when I received the script and read the scene, I admit I had an odd feeling. I asked my agent if this was a remake, or whether there'd been a stage version, since I was so convinced that I'd experienced this sequence before in some way. When he told me it was an original screenplay by Brian Ford, I had to reflect on why I felt the way I did. And it was then that I remembered my dream.

I'd already had dreams about future work that hadn't happened yet, like the film I made in Mexico just when Peter was heading to Hollywood. I was aware that I had this facility to foresee parts of my life, or rather foresee specific moments in my professional life. But this premonition seemed particularly *puissante*.

It was the mid-1950s and there was a lot of this type of British film about - post war gloom, worry about the end of world, nuclear war and alien invasions. But this production was peculiar in that it defied genre. I used to say that if you mixed up *'On The Beach'* with *'Whistle Down the Wind'* you'd end up something a bit like it. Of course, it was made years before those two, so I suppose you could call it 'ahead of its time'.

To get a script by Brian with a part that wasn't insubstantial was a major coup for me. I was only at the start of my career, but I certainly had ambition, so I had a good sense of this as an important stepping stone. Little did I realise how important *'After The Fall'* was going to be for me, not just in terms of my acting career but in my personal life also.

Peter and I met for the first time on set. He always says he immediately fell in love with me and tried to find ways to bump into me every day after that. My impression of him was simply that he looked a bit underfed. Not that I found that unattractive. A lot of senior men in the film world at the time were rather corpulent and… *négligé*.

Peter certainly wasn't a dresser, either, but he was always fit and clean. When he was out of costume he wore rather plain off-the-peg clothes that seemed a bit too big for him, and sometimes in vulgar colours, as if he didn't really have a clue. I suppose there

was a bit of me that thought it might be fun to take him hand, clothes-wise.

Brian noticed the chemistry between us immediately, so you'll see from the script revisions that the film turned into more of a love story. Or perhaps that was simply a commercial decision rather than a creative one. That isn't really my area of expertise.

My remembrance is that we filmed the barn scene quite early, which I was keen to do because I wanted to see how closely it might accord with my dream. And I was shocked when I arrived on set and discovered that the barn was exactly as it had been in my dream, and Peter was wearing exactly the right clothes. I suppose one might become a bit agitated about such a thing, but I found it actually helped me. I was energised by the idea that finally this day had come.

Every time one of my dreams come true, I have this incredible sense of relief somehow, and I think it fuels my performances, gives me confidence that I'm the right person to be there in the scene. In a way I have rehearsed the scene more than any other actor could do, so I don't have to worry about learning it or making the right choices, because I'm confident I know exactly how it is meant to go.

Nobody ever really believes me about that. I'm sure I sound like *une folle*. In fact, for several years I stopped talking about it, mainly because as my children got older, I could see they were a bit embarrassed by me and told me I sounded a bit nutty. But Peter believed me.

He used to say: "I'm the sleeper, but you, my darling, are the dreamer. And that's much the better thing to be."

Feeling it on the street

Feeling it at my feet

Trouble around the town

Sending it underground

Stuck in the sewer

Cooking up plans

People above

Living in a trance

It's a wake up

It's a wake up

It's a wake up

CALL!

Feeling it on the TV

Sending us all TO sleep

Troubles in my troubled dreams

Watching losers win

It's a wake up...

Noise is getting louder

It's a wake up...

Get it while you can

It's a wake up...

Can't keep us quiet

Stickin' it to the man!

It's a wake up

It's a wake up

It's a wake up

Call!

Music: The Fuggers

Lyrics: Clem Media

DOIN' NOTHIN'

I went down to Louisville in what? Eighty-nine? Must-a been eighty-nine. There was a scene there I was digging with some amazing bands.

But when I got there, they were all like 16 or 17, waaaay younger than me and I'd kinda thought they'd know about my scene from the late seventies, early eighties, cos I thought I could hear it in the music they were making, but I was just sooo wrong.

They were so young they had no idea about any of that stuff. Louisville was just a fucked-up place. Most folks there were so square, in a cute way - all clapboard houses, front lawns, front porches, trucks and Saabs and church. I went to one gig in a Unitarian church, for fuck's sake. Seriously.

They'd have the welcome blessing and the chalice and all that shit and then these four kids would get up and play some kind of thrash thing with loads of the old people shakin' their heads and walkin' out, but then the parents of the kids were sittin' there like it was a school concert or somethin', tappin' along and smilin' and even videoin' it with those big old cameras.

And all the time the kids would be smashin' it up and yellin' stuff about vampires and isolation and never seein' another sunrise, like really dark stuff. And then they'd pack up and go back home to have a pot roast with the folks. It freaked me out. I kinda hadn't realised it, but I was down there to get away from the folks, from folksiness, to get away from my mom who was really doin' a number on me and drinkin' a lot and expectin' something from me that I couldn't give.

Her and my sister were thinkin', I guess, that I needed to do better. If I try to be generous about it, maybe they thought they were helpin' me. But I was happy just droppin' out or doin' nothing. I mean, it wasn't that I didn't have focus or anythin', just at the time I would just pick one thing and try to be very concentrated about it.

And I'm not talkin' just about music. For a time I wanted to be the best cat-sitter in New York. So I'd headed to New York and I got into bein' a really really great cat-sitter. You talk to anyone I cat-sat for and they'll tell you I was dedicated, man, a bit intense maybe but dedicated. I loved cats, man.

And then I went through a time where I decided I just wanted to be the best at bakin' cakes. But not just standard cakes. I was really into makin' shapes. I kinda questioned why cakes always had to be square or round, you know? I guess that started because we'd been on a trip to Austria with the band once and there'd been one of these bundt cake moulds in one of the kitchens there, and it kinda blew my mind that you could do a cake with ribs or waves. And in my mind I often do that thing where I ask myself 'Why stop there?'. If you can do waves or ribs, why not all kinds of tubes and swirls and spirals and tree shapes - or dicks! Yeah, that was me for a while – baker of dick cakes.

So it wasn't like I was doin' nothin'. I was just doin' stuff that my folks didn't like or didn't understand, and for them I wasn't stickin' at anythin'. They saw it as me jumpin' from one thing to another. But that wasn't how I saw it – they were all connected in my mind. They were all ways of tryin' to get good without answerin' to anyone about what 'good' was. Cos you know when people say 'good' a lot of the time, what they mean is 'oh you could make money out of that' or they think 'oh I could make somethin' out of that – that would be good for me' or they think 'oh, that could fit in with what we all want to do' or - the worst – 'oh this could make Chris fit in and not stand out like an embarrassin' fuck-up all the time and we can assimilate him into our neat little world'.

So every time someone started tellin' me that somethin' I was doing was 'good', that was the time to run, to get the hell outta Dodge. I guess that's why I ended up in Louisville. Not for any positive reason, like I might be able to join a scene or hook up with some cool bands, although I'm sure I was thinkin' about that.

What I was really doin' was runnin' away and lookin' for some kind of restart. I'd had it with my family. They had not been good for me. In a way it was two extremes. My mom and my sister were just too interested in me, breathing down my neck and having all kinds of expectations. And then my Pa just didn't want to know, had just zoned out, like I wasn't even his son anymore.

I think by that point I just thought his whole sleeping thing wasn't just an act. That was him. He could just switch off whenever he felt like it. Sometimes I could see him do it while we talked. He'd be lookin' at me like I wasn't there, and he'd say he was listenin', but he wasn't hearin' anythin', and it was like I was some stranger who was just blah-blahin' while he was in a trance or just blanked out and definitely not listenin', not even acknowledgin' my presence - or best scenario treating me like a stranger. Or more like an intruder.

Let's be honest, Pa was a drunk, and I know for a fact he was takin' pills. It kinda amused me that I could get more drugs in his little English chocolate box village – in the pub there - than I could back in Manhattan – and cheaper.

You could go into any of my dad's jacket pockets and find somethin' – little orange capsules, bright yellow pills, teeny white ones, some of 'em two colours like yellow and green. I had no idea what they were, so I'd just take pot luck, try one colour every night. I'd never heard of 'Noilly Prat' before I rocked up at his place. and I'd just take some pills and wash it down with a bottle of that and see what happened.

And – you know – I never once remember him getting' mad or accusin' me of stealin'. I don't think he even noticed. It was like I wasn't there. And for a while I thought that was great cos it meant I was left alone and could do what the hell I liked. But in the end I resented it.

I did want to have some kind of relationship, and given he was the adult I reckoned it was up to him to get it goin'. But he never bothered. So back I'd go to mom and go to the other extreme of

hyper-attention, hyperintrusion – ‘So what are you going to do now? What’s your passion? What do you think you could be good at? How are you goin’ to build an independent life for yourself, Christopher?'

Question after question - endlessly needlin’ and pushin’ me. And over her shoulder I’d check out Izzy in the background givin’ me the evil eye, with her arms crossed. She always thought I was such a loser. I loved actin’ like a loser just to get up her nose.

Soon after I came back from Louisville I played Izzy a tape over the phone that I’d made with these grungy kids in a basement, and it was a bunch of music with sounds on top that we’d recorded of each other going to the bathroom.

The tape was called ‘Anal Breathings’ or somethin’ like that, and it was basically the sound of different people going to the john with guitars and drums playin’ a basic riff over and over again to the end of time. Forty five minutes of it - with farts and sloppy sounds and splashes and us all laughin’.

I was so hopin’ she would absolutely hate it. But you know what she did? She did exactly what my Pa would do. Blanked it. Didn’t talk over it or tell me to shut the fuck up or hang up or anythin’. She let me play the whole tape as if she was sleepin’, just like Pa.

And at the end of it I said, ‘What do you think?’

And that is the exact moment she told me that they'd just had a call and that Pa was dead and I should book a flight back to the UK. She’d held off sayin’ anythin’ to me. Just listened to my shitty tape and then told me Pa was dead, like it was somethin’ she was legally obliged to tell me rather than it had anythin’ to do with me.

‘You’ve gotta come back to the UK. Daddy’s dead,’ she said. And then she hung up.