

Extract from *Waltz With Me*

TODAY

Iris, in adulthood now reconciled with her mother, Aggie, reads an email sent by her brother, Luke, who has not forgiven her for leaving them as children when she divorced their father.

Iris: So..right....(Reads) "I've told you more than once that she's as good as dead to me. I meant it. I still do. I don't have anything more to say about her. That's it. Done. It's been done for years. Do what you like. Get on with your life the way you want. I used to think it would be easier if she had really died. But now I don't honestly think it makes any difference. You keep telling me that people need to be free to make their own choices. Well we know what hers was. And we know what choice we ever had. So this is mine now. I'm happy with it. I've moved on. But whatever happens you're still my sister. You went through it too. And Pearl - despite all her rewriting of history since then. The three of us went through it together. So we're connected by more than blood, by having to deal with the crap she dumped on us, the mess she left behind. I don't blame you for what you're doing even if I do think you're letting dad down. Which you are. And kidding yourself that it's okay now. Some things can't be made better no matter how much we want to pretend they can be. But I understand why you might fall for the "time heals" routine - and God knows Pearl has. I can see why you go along with some story justifying what can't be excused. But you'll always be my sister. You both will be. None of it's your fault. You've just fallen for her big act. And she's good at tricking people into falling for her little game. Like dad says - faithless to the core. I'm afraid it doesn't wash with me. I know what bad news she is. Sorry. But that's the way it is. So, if you must turn your life into a performance, don't just tell her side. Keep in touch, Luke."

Silence.

Iris: You okay?

Aggie: Are you?

Iris: I guess."

THEN (19th century)

Pierce Connelly, now a Catholic layman, having left his Protestant role as a vicar, and Cornelia, his wife, mother of their two children, are on board a ship from their native USA, travelling to Europe to visit Rome.

"Pierce: You do realize that when we arrive, it won't be the end of our voyage, barely the beginning.

Cornelia: As we continue to follow our true nature.

Pierce: Nature....yes..... and out here I become aware that my own true nature....well has it not always induced me....to...to...well...to..separate myself.....?

Cornelia: Separate yourself from what?

Pierce: From anything....not consistent with my real purpose.

Cornelia: Of course.

Pierce: And I have no wish to betray this purpose. Indeed, leaving the Protestant path has ignited it more keenly within me.

Cornelia: Well the next step....

Pierce: Yes, I'm fully aware, that the next step.....

Cornelia: Which I have already taken....

Pierce: Of course.... the next clear step that I must take is to be received into the true faith.

Cornelia: And then we may be confirmed alongside each other...in Rome. Imagine it!

Pierce: But beyond this.....

Cornelia: More steps. Purposeful steps.

Pierce: Remember, Nelie, that the responsibilities that have always been crucial for me are those of the sacred life.

Cornelia: I'm aware that you miss your office.

Pierce: Each day....each furlong of ocean we leave behind us....the horizon calls me to rise, to greet it fully. It becomes clearer and clearer...that once I'm admitted into the Catholic faith, I must seek my place therein....consistent with my purpose....the place of a true ecclesiastic.

Cornelia: How can a married man become a priest?

Pierce: This is why..../

Cornelia: How could a priest remain a married man?

Pierce: I must consult with those who can advise and direct me.

Cornelia: Is this truly what you seek when we reach Rome?

Pierce: It is what I seek.”

THEN – YEARS LATER (19th Century)

Many years after Cornelia Connelly took vows to become a nun and her husband Pierce alienated her children from her, claiming that she had abandoned them, her daughter Adeline, now an adult, makes a rare visit to see her at the school she has founded in St Leonard's, on the south coast of England.

“Cornelia: Would you like me to show you around?

Ady: Please don't go to any trouble.

Cornelia: We have fifteen acres...the cloister is very pretty....The church newly built...Let's walk together. Then we can visit a rehearsal perhaps....There is a production of The Frogs by Aristophanes in the making - I gather that there's some very eloquent Greek to behold.....The choir may also be rehearsing a little later.....And if we're lucky enough to hear a piano playing maybe we can turn our toes to a little waltz.... as long as you don't tell the bishops.

Ady: This is not as I remember convent school.

Cornelia: Stiffness and rigour will not bring forth love, and are not the spirit of the Holy Child. Would that you could have spent your school days here.

Ady: How could that have been so?

Cornelia: After looking around would you care for some lunch?

Ady: I would appreciate it. Thank you.

Cornelia: You're most welcome to stay tonight. Tomorrow we're making an excursion. Would you like to join us?

Ady: I am expected in Brighton this evening for dinner with some acquaintances of Papa's.

Cornelia: Then we must make the most of the time we have.

Ady: Where are you going tomorrow?

Cornelia: We'll climb aboard some carts and be whisked off...well, most likely trundled...to an old palace that is all but ruins, I gather, and our plan is to picnic there.

Ady: Is it far?

Cornelia: A number of miles. Some singing will pass the ride.

Ady: It sounds quite enjoyable.

Cornelia: Maybe you'll come again and we can go together to Mayfield.

Ady: Perhaps.”