

EXT. COACH STATION - EVENING

Allison clutches a coach ticket. She scrapes her shoes against the pavement.

PETER (O.C.)
Fancy seeing you here.

Allison turns around. Peter approaches her, smiling brightly.

ALLISON
Peter!

PETER
I almost didn't recognize you out of uniform. Where are you off to?

ALLISON
Oxford. Well, Binsey.

PETER
No, that can't be true. That's where I'm going.

ALLISON
How about that? Here I was, afraid of traveling on my own. I'm glad I found a friend.

PETER
I travel a lot. Sometimes alone. Sometimes with friends. It's always better with friends.

Allison nods. A short, awkward silence.

PETER (CONT'D)
Business or pleasure?

ALLISON
Business. Family business. You?

PETER
I'm looking for some friends of mine. They're more of a pair of nomadic spirits.

ALLISON
Globetrotters?

PETER
I suppose you could say that. But they haven't exactly left Britain.

ALLISON
I haven't, either.

PETER
You already have something in
common. I think they would like
you.

ALLISON
You think so?

PETER
As sure as ferrets are ferrets.

Allison looks to Peter in shock.

ALLISON
What did you say?

PETER
"As sure as ferrets are ferrets"?
It's just something my mentor used
to say.

The coach pulls up. Allison stares at Peter. He pays her no
mind.

PETER (CONT'D)
Do you want the window seat or the
aisle seat?

ALLISON
Aisle.

They board the coach.

EXT. BINSEY, OXFORDSHIRE - NIGHT

The coach stops at the rural English town of Binsey. Allison
and Peter get off the coach.

Allison looks around. She sets on a path. Peter follows her.

ALLISON
You're going this way, too?

PETER
To the church, yes.

ALLISON
Are you religious?

PETER

Not particularly. I don't have time for much things, especially lately.

ALLISON

There's a lovely story about the church and the well. It's religious in nature. Do you mind?

PETER

No, I don't mind.

ALLISON

Saint Margaret was a Christian during the time of the Romans. There was a prefect who wanted her to renounce her faith and marry him. She refused, and he had her tortured and decapitated.

PETER

Gory.

ALLISON

Some centuries later, an English princess found herself in a similar place. The King of Mercia wanted her hand despite her vow of celibacy. She ran away, and her people refused to tell the king of her whereabouts. She sought solitude and prayed for a well, which she dedicated to Saint Margaret. Her name was Frithuswith.

Allison watches for Peter's reaction. He's caught off-guard for half of a second, but returns to a calm demeanor just as quickly.

PETER

An interesting name.

ALLISON

The well was said to have healing properties, as if the water had treacle in it. That is why in the old days, medicinal wells were often called "treacle wells." Just like the one in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

She stops.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

I need to ask you something, and I want you to be honest.

PETER

All right.

ALLISON

Is it a coincidence you met me at the pub? Did you seek me out?

Peter takes a step back.

PETER

Sorry?

ALLISON

Please, I want the truth.

Peter swallows hard.

PETER

Believe me, I didn't want to keep the truth from you. But where I'm from, dumping things like that on someone is considered rude.

He smiles.

PETER (CONT'D)

You look so much like your mum. But you have your dad's willowy build.

He tears up.

PETER (CONT'D)

Allison Leigh-Elles.

ALLISON

Peter?

He wipes his eyes.

PETER

Sorry. They talked about you all the time. I feel as if I know you.

ALLISON

Know...? You've met my parents?

PETER

Met them? My mentor and I worked with them closely for the better part of a year.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

And when we didn't work, they told stories. Most of them were about you.

ALLISON

When did you last see them?

His face falls.

PETER

A long time ago. They set off and never returned.

Allison's shoulders slump.

ALLISON

What kind of work were they doing?

PETER

An investigation.

ALLISON

Phantoms of smoke?

She turns her head and points to her ears.

PETER

You're a lucky, lucky woman to have survived that.

ALLISON

Is now a good time for the truth?

PETER

Is there ever a bad time?

They resume walking.

ALLISON

I dreamt of a woman in a well, and of my childhood stuffed rabbit. That's why I'm here.

PETER

I am looking for my friends. But they're not globetrotters. We call them the groundtrotters.

ALLISON

Because they travel across the underground.

PETER

Precisely. They too disappeared. They had an interest in your Saint Margaret's Well. If they're not in Wonderland, they're likely here.

ALLISON

What were they looking for?

PETER

They didn't say. Here's to hoping we find out.

He mimes a glass in his hand. Allison plays along.

ALLISON

Cheers to that.

EXT. SAINT MARGARET'S WELL, BINSEY - NIGHT

A rural church, headstones, trees, and of course, the well.

Allison and Peter approach Saint Margaret's Well, a small space surrounded by three walls with a short, weathered staircase, and just enough space for one person to stand.

PETER

I expected it to be bigger.

Allison jumps into the small space. She peers into the well.

ALLISON

How deep does it go?

Peter squats on the ground above her. He hands her a stone. Allison drops it in the well.

Peter stares off into the middle distance. Allison looks at him expectantly. They sit in silence until they hear a faint slash.

PETER

Deep.

ALLISON

Insightful.

PETER

Maybe we should look around.

He helps Allison climb from the space.

ALLISON

What type of things would we be
looking for?

Something crunches under her shoe. They freeze, and look at the ground. Allison readjusts herself. She stepped on broken glass. They investigate.

PETER

Something like that.

He picks it up.

ALLISON

Careful! It's sharp.

Peter purposefully and dramatically scrapes the glass on his palm. He doesn't bleed.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

How...?

PETER

That's not all. Hold that.

He passes it to Allison. He takes a lighter from his pocket.

PETER (CONT'D)

See that? It doesn't refract, only
reflects.

ALLISON

Curious.

Unbeknownst to them, a trail of black smoke billows from behind the gravestones.

PETER

To you, perhaps. This is common
where I'm from. You've met Tuddy.

ALLISON

I have.

PETER

Tuddy made the groundtrotters a set
of potions and medicine for their
journey. You know the type. "Drink
me."

ALLISON

To change size?

PETER

That, among other things.

He takes the small bottle from his coat pocket.

PETER (CONT'D)

Tuddy found this on the London street. It just confirms that they've come here. But why, I don't know.

The smoke releases a quiet, distant wail, despite its close proximity.

Allison and Peter jump to their feet. Peter shields Allison with his arm.

ALLISON

Is that...?

PETER

It's in its weakest state. Don't worry.

ALLISON

What's it doing here?

PETER

I don't know.

It moves closer to them like a snake. Peter grabs a lighter from his pocket and switches it on. He holds it in front of him protectively.

The smoke stalks Peter and Allison like prey. Peter keeps his arm out in warning. He and Allison back away slowly.

The smoke abruptly darts down the well. Silence.

ALLISON

Did you scare it off?

PETER

That's not normal. Even for me.

A wail echoes from the bottom of the well. The ground beneath Peter and Allison rumbles, like a bird hatching from an egg. They lose their balance.

The smoke trail emerges, melded with the water from the bottom of the well, more animalistic than phantom-like. The monster drags itself across the ground like its missing its back legs. It zeroes on Peter.

Allison pushes herself backwards from the smoke creature. She spots Peter's lighter and the piece of glass by her leg.

Peter grabs a rock. The smoke creature strikes him and he rolls on his back. It looms over him. Peter hits the smoke creature in the face, and only succeeds in waterboarding himself. He sputters.

PETER (CONT'D)
Healing waters, my arse.

Peter covers his ears as the creature winds up to wail into his face.

The piece of glass flies to the creature's head and breaks.

ALLISON (O.C.)
Hey, you slithy slag!

The creature, completely bewildered, freezes over Peter. It turns around. Peter cranes his neck to look.

Allison stands. One arm behind her back, hiding Peter's lighter. The other outstretched, but her hand shakes with fear. She looks behind her at the church.

The creature slowly turns to face Allison. It growls. Allison backs away. She doesn't watch her step, and she falls across a grave. The creature makes a dash for her. Allison scrambles to her feet. She dashes to the church.

PETER
Allison!

INT. SAINT MARGARET'S CHURCH, BINSEY - NIGHT

A small English church dating back to the Saxon era. It still sports kerosene lamps. A baptismal font sits near the entrance.

Allison bursts through the wooden door and locks it. She checks her surroundings and sees the hanging kerosene lamps. She stands on a pew to yank the chain from the rafters.

Allison throws the lamp on the floor. Kerosene spills across the floor. Allison crouches to the floor with the lighter ready.

The creature wails from the other side of the door. Allison flinches with every scratch and scrape. The hinges rattle and collapse. The creature breaks the door into splinters.

Allison flicks the lighter. The kerosene ignites. She presses herself against the wall. She covers her ears and shields her face.

The creature bursts in. It wails and writhes in pain upon touching the fire. Allison peeks at the creature. Peter stumbles into the doorway.

The fires flicker and die. The creature regains composure.

ALLISON

Oh, but that's a gas fire! That's not fair!

The creature pounces. Allison scurries out of the way, stumbling over church pews. Peter rips a candlestick holder from the pews. He chucks it at the creature. The creature throws Peter against the baptismal font.

The creature corners Allison at the altar. It pins her down with one of its front limbs. She tucks her head into her chest, covering her face with her arms.

Above them, the stained glass window breaks. Shards shower them. A black-clad figure tumbles in. He lands clumsily.

BERTRAM "BERTIE" DOUGLAS, late thirties, sweaty and disheveled, cracks a pair of chains like whips. He successfully gets the creature's attention.

BERTIE

Hackit, howlin' tallowcatch!

Bertie hooks a chain whip down the creature's throat, pulling it to him. They grapple along the church aisle.

Another figure, much more gracefully, climbs through the broken window. CALLUM CADDELL, late thirties, in steampunk-style getup and a cape, lands next to Allison.

CALLUM

What's happening, love? Catch me up.

ALLISON

It wouldn't burn!

CALLUM

Well, that's less than ideal.

Bertie climbs on the creature's back. The creature slams Bertie onto the stone floor.

BERTIE
Fecking cunt bastard!

Allison looks at the altar. She rummages underneath it. She grabs a bottle of communion wine.

ALLISON
Do you have empty bottles? Cups?
Any kind of container?

Callum raises his cape. He has empty bottles, cups, and every kind of container.

Peter, winded with a busted lip, slumps over the baptismal font. He tries to ignite the lighter. It creates only sparks.

BERTIE
Now would be great, Peter!

PETER
I can't!

BERTIE
God damn you!

The creature pins Bertie down. Bertie wraps his hands around its throat, turning its wails into gurgles.

Allison and Callum flank the creature with empty bottles, cups, and every kind of container. They separate the water from the smoke. The creature looks between them and howls. It falls apart at the seams. It shakes in a temper tantrum.

The smoke darts for the exit. Peter finally gets the lighter to light. He dives for the doorway, catching the smoke at the very last second. It bursts into flames and dissolves into ash.

Allison collapses in front of a pew, exhausted.

CALLUM
That was brilliant, love! What made you think of that?

ALLISON
(breathless)
If you put wine into water, you don't lose the wine, and if you put that into wine you don't lose the water. The molecules are still there.

BERTIE
What are you on about?

ALLISON

I don't know. It made sense in my head, but it's just madness.

CALLUM

Madness? Love, we're all mad here.

PETER

Mates? No time for idle chatter.

A pair of headlights shines into the church from a distance.

Peter points to the broken window. Peter jumps out first. Callum and Bertie help Allison climb out. They follow suit.

EXT. SAINT MARGARET'S CHURCH, BINSEY - NIGHT

The car draws closer. Callum jumps out last.

CALLUM

Safive!

They run off into the night.

FADE TO BLACK.