

More Than an Actor: The Story of Peter H.

Prologue: “Peter heaved a big sigh of satisfaction, closed his eyes, and fell instantly to sleep in that spontaneous way that childhood allows. His mother continued holding him, while the room became quite dark but for the firelight. She took such comfort merely from the feel of his legs curled in her lap under the blanket. Through the window she could just see the workmen leaving in their truck, and hear the crunch of its wheels on the gravel. They were building a bomb shelter onto the house. England had been at war with Germany for over a month.”

Chapter One: “Later in his life, Peter referred to his great aunts as “very elegant old darlings,” and so they must have been on the day of his christening. Though it was not yet winter, Aunt Jessie was already in her sable coat and hat, the subtle dark brown of the fur shimmering in the clear, cold air beneath jet black tips. All three wore pearls, long ropes of pearls, in keeping with a very special occasion. Jessie embraced her niece, who felt the cool softness of fur against her cheek.”

Chapter Two: She had pulled the car off the road, lain her forehead on the steering wheel, and sobbed. The thought going through Elizabeth’s mind was that it must be a cold day in hell for her to have left her baby at such a place. But no, it was only a cold day in January, 1947, and she had just dropped off her youngest boy, Peter, at Eton. The school had been perfect for John; Michael and Patrick had managed, but this one, well, he was vulnerable. Like many women, she had learned to drive a car during the war. Now as she sat by the roadside alone, a constable pulled up and got out of his vehicle. “Is everything all right, Madam? Do you need help?” he asked.

Chapter Three: If anything was loosed by the death of his mother it was the instability of an emergent mood disorder. Reliable sources do not link Brett with a gay partner until 1969, and that was fellow actor Gary Bond. Who then was the man in Montreux? What became of him? For all we know he might have been Victor from Yorkshire, an older man introducing Jeremy to his unexplored potential.

Chapter Four: Before leaving for Barbados, he had borrowed the two volumes of Sherlock Holmes mysteries from his brother John, who was happy to loan them, but confounded. “You can’t be Holmes, Jeremy, you don’t smoke a pipe!” he had exclaimed, “and you are nothing like him.” But then he went on to offer his advice on how to play the part; so Jeremy came away with some reassurance, and along with the two books, the card of John’s favorite tobacconist in London. Now he was devouring the Conan Doyle stories with fascination...

...The courage and confidence it must have taken for producer Michael Cox to go forward with this series can hardly be exaggerated. Setting the stories in the original Victorian era meant creating Baker Street on a lot at the Manchester studio as authentically as possible. Cox would brook no anachronism, and his commitment to his choice of a star was in a word, gutsy. What clinched it for him, as he told Davies for his book, was the reaction of his wife Sandra, who was initially against yet another rehashing of the genre. But when Michael suggested Jeremy Brett, she said, "Ah, well that's different!"

There in a nutshell we have another secret to the success of Granada's Sherlock Holmes