

The Traveller

Author's Note: The idea for the story was inspired by a TV program and made me wonder, what if...? Having read and re-read it, I can't decide on how well it works. So, I thought I would let the readers decide.

The sun beat down mercilessly as Adam trudged the narrow country lane. It was far too hot he had decided, perspiration making his hair damp and causing his t-shirt to cling to his body. He needed to find some shade, and quickly before he caught sunstroke. Taking his backpack off for a moment, he climbed the steep banking on one side of the lane hoping to spy somewhere to shelter. The left side, when he reached the top of the bank, simply gave him a view of open fields stretching as far as the horizon. From his vantage point, he looked across to the other side and spied a wood off in the distance, at least it would offer some shade he thought as he scrambled back down into the lane and retrieved his backpack before climbing the opposite bank.

It was further than he had first thought as he crossed several fields, heading slightly uphill all the time as the wood and the promise of shelter drew nearer. At one point he did not think he would make it, the heat becoming unbearable and oppressive but then suddenly he was in among the tree's and under its canopy. Immediately he felt cooler as he took off his backpack again and retrieved a bottle of water, gulping half of its contents down before lowering it from his lips. There was a second bottle in his bag, but he would have to find somewhere to replenish them soon if he were to venture further in this heat. Hoisting his pack once more he moved further through the dense foliage, the temperature dropping substantially the further he moved into the wood. Off in the distance, he could hear the sound of water tinkling and splashing as headed in its general direction.

Finding the small stream, he followed it, trying to keep it in view as he weaved his way around tree and bushes, the undergrowth in places quite dense. He was so intent at following the sound of the water that as he approached the daylight ahead, he nearly walked off the edge of a small cliff. Standing stock-still and keeping hold of a sapling, he looked down into the clearing, twenty or thirty feet below. The rockface formed a semi-circle and he seemed to be stood at its highest point, the stream becoming a small waterfall as it ran from a crevice in the rock, falling into a hollow below and forming a natural pool. Looking left and right, the ground sloped steeply downwards into a clearing and then opposite the land rose again slightly and was covered by tree's but at least he could see more daylight beyond. Carefully he worked his way down, keeping hold of trunks and branches as he descended, an accident now was the last thing he needed.

Down in the clearing, the temperature was humid but pleasant; dumping his backpack, he went over to the pool and scooped handfuls of cold water, splashing it over his head and face and immediately feeling refreshed. Leaving his rucksack below, he climbed the slope opposite. As he reached the top and moved twenty yards through the trees, he came out into the daylight again at the top of a high hill and looked down towards a hamlet settled in the valley below. The scene was idyllic but for some strange reason, it resonated in his conciseness as though he had seen this vista on other occasions. He knew he had never been in this part of the country before but had seen similar views where he had lived and so thought nothing of it.

Walking along the ridge and following the treeline, the hill seemed to curve slightly as he stopped and looked down at a farm situated about halfway down. Further down was a large house set in its own grounds, at one time it had probably been the squire's or landowner's home he imagined, his eyes suddenly attracted to a middle-aged woman down at the farm below, herding cows through the farmyard.

Scanning all around him, apart from the woman below, he seemed to be the only person about as he re-entered the treeline and went back down into the clearing. Looking at his watch he saw it was mid-afternoon and decided that this would be a perfect spot to spend the rest of the day, he was quite used to sleeping rough, his backpack containing everything he needed.

On impulse, he went back to the pool, looked around and then stripped off and immersed himself in the clear cooling water. The pool was only about four feet deep in places, the excess water slipping over the surrounding rocks at the far edge and disappearing somewhere underground.

Getting out of the pool naked, he went to his backpack and firstly got his bottles of water; he emptied their warm contents, refilling them from the small waterfall. Next, he grabbed a towel and a bar of soap before returning to the pool and washing. It felt good to be clean again he thought as he lay back against the rocks and relaxed. He had his eyes closed and even though the water was cold the sun was warming his upper body as he listened to the sounds of the birds and insects in the clearing.

He had just gotten out and dried himself, pulling his clothes back on when his reverie was interrupted.

'Who are you?' A female voice enquired.

Adam looked up to see a young girl, probably fourteen or fifteen watching him as she came down the slope into the clearing. She kicked off her shoes and sitting on the rocks at one side, dangled her legs and feet into the cool water, her smile radiant as she continued to stare at him but completely at ease considering he was a stranger.

'My names Samantha but everyone calls me, Sam,' she said, introducing herself, 'This wood is on the edge of my parent's farm and you must be the first person I've ever encountered here. 'What's your name?'

'I'm sorry, I didn't realise this is private land,' he said, 'I just needed somewhere to cool off and it looked so inviting.'

Adam introduced himself shaking her hand when she held it out with a mischievous grin. She was extremely pretty with her blonde hair fastened in a ponytail, the vest top and shorts she wore showing legs and arms tanned from being outdoors as she continued to chatter away merrily. 'Did you know this is called "Adam's Wood" and is supposed to be full of magic? What brings you to these parts?' She asked inquisitively

He explained that he had finished college and was not yet ready to settle down and so had packed his belongings and just set off one morning. She asked about his family but there was nothing Adam could tell her.

'I haven't got one,' he said, 'I grew up in orphanages and with occasional foster parents, but I have no idea who my real mother was or even where I come from.' He finished, suddenly looking sad for a moment Sam decided

'I was watching a woman down in the farmyard, was that your mum?' he asked when she went quiet for a moment and he managed to get a word in edgeways.

Sam laughed, 'Yeah, that would be mum probably bringing the cows in. There is just me, her and dad. How old are you?' She asked and then she was off again, one question after another and completely happy to be sat there chatting.

'Where are you staying tonight,' she asked.

He told her he had planned to spend the night here but as it was private property he would move along shortly and find somewhere else to camp for the night.

'Don't be silly,' Sam laughed, 'Stay here, nobody will mind. Anyway, I'm only just getting to know you.' This again was said with a mischievous grin.

She stayed for what was left of the afternoon as they talked and she told him about herself, at one point she took him to the edge of the treeline and pointed to what looked like a headstone, it looked old and had an odd inscription.

'In Memory of Sarah & Adam'

'Travellers amongst the Stars'

'It's supposed to be magical,' Sam told him in a whisper, 'Strange things happen if you touch the stone,' she said, pulling his hand back as he reached out to touch it and making him jump as they both laughed hysterically.

It was time for her to leave, 'Mum will be wondering where I have got to, promise me you'll stay the night here. Promise me you'll still be here in the morning.' She seemed loath to leave him until he had promised and then with her now-familiar smile, she had learnt in and kissed his cheek before climbing the slope and disappearing into the trees.

Creating himself a shelter in the clearing, he got out his stove and some rashers of bacon. Firstly, he collected some water and put his kettle on and then set about rummaging for kindling which he used to build a small fire over which he fried his bacon and made himself a sandwich. With his hunger satisfied and a hot cup of tea, he settled back and watched as the evening drew in.

He was awake as the sun came up the next morning and after boiling some water, quickly washed and shaved; just because he was out in the countryside was no reason to look like a tramp he thought.

He had put his belongings into his backpack and had cleared away the remnants of the fire when Sam appeared again. She seemed a little disappointed when she noticed everything had been tidied, 'Not leaving already?' She asked, 'Please stay a little longer,' she pleaded incessantly until Adam gave in and nodded his head.

He explained that he needed to pick up some supplies and asked if there were any shops in the small village. Sam said that she would bring him some milk and eggs from the farm and that she would walk down into the village with him and show him where the general store was situated. She made him smile and laugh as they walked towards the village, it seemed impossible for her not to talk, speaking constantly as they walked along. She was fourteen she told him and when she wasn't at school, she helped out on the family farm. In the hamlet, she knew everyone by their names as they strolled through the main street.

Sam told everyone that he was camping up in the woods as they headed for the general store where he picked up all the bits and pieces he needed before they set off for the return journey, Adam finding it harder going back up the hill than he had when they had come down it. They had spent the day together as Sam showed him around the local area until late afternoon when they had returned to the wood's, Sam continuing to follow him like

some puppy dog. Normally he would be getting ready to move on, but for some reason was happy to stay a little longer which delighted her.

She had disappeared again as tea-time came around and Adam had settled down to spend another night in this magical place. The evening was exceptionally warm, and he was laid on his waterproof groundsheet and sleeping bag when he heard the sound of someone approaching through the trees. He saw the light of a torch first and then Sam entered the hollow once more.

'What brings you back?' he asked, 'You really shouldn't be out alone at this time of the evening,' he told her, concerned for her safety.

'I just wanted to make sure you were still here,' Sam said, Adam, worried that she had become a little too besotted with him.

'Tell you what,' he had said, 'I'll walk back down with you and make sure you get back safely, and I promise to still be here in the morning.'

She asked what he did for a living as he escorted her home and he explained that he had just finished horticultural college and had as yet to find a job. Excitedly she asked if he wanted her to have a word with her father, 'We always need help on the farm at this time of year.'

Sam had never had a brother, and to her, Adam felt like he should be part of her family. She loved being around him, he didn't treat her like a child and never complained about her non-stop chattering, 'Yes,' she thought to herself with a wry smile, 'He would make a perfect brother, all she needed now was a sister.'

'We'll see,' he said noncommittedly, not certain that he wanted to get tied down with a job just yet.

Returning to his encampment, Adam felt the wind picking up and reckoned they were in for a storm that night and so back in the clearing, he had moved his shelter nearer to the rock face giving him a little more protection as he battened down the hatches, watching the broiling sky as the storm approached.

Under his tarpaulin, he felt the wind which had been gusting, suddenly drop as the heavens opened and unleashed a torrent of rain, thunderclaps starting to roll in. They sounded extra loud in the clearing as they reverberated off the cliff face, just before the hollow was lit up white for a second as lightning flashed overhead. Under his covering, he was at least dry, but with each crash of thunder, it felt as though the ground shook and he hoped there were no loose rocks above him that may suddenly come crashing down. He had just decided to move when there was a lightning strike which lit up the clearing, hitting the ground at its very centre, followed seconds later by another and hitting the very same spot.

And then, as though by magic, the storm was gone, and the clearing fell eerily silent except for a faint vibration that Adam could feel through the soles of his feet. Slowly, the darkness of the clearing seemed to recede as a dim light grew in magnitude until all-around was bathed in a blue flickering glow. Leaving his shelter, he walked into the middle of the clearing to the spot the lightning had struck but to his surprise, there was not even a burn mark in sight. As he turned, he could see that the strange light was emanating from the pool; cautiously he approached it, staring down into the brightly lit fluorescent water.

Adam bent down, he was finding the colour of the water mesmerising as he reached out and dipped his fingertips into the surface. It was as though the shimmer from the water ran up his fingers and then his hand; he felt sick for a second and suddenly the world swam in front of his eyes as there was a flash and he was hurled backwards after which everything went black.

It was daylight when he opened his eyes, the sun quite high in the sky. He felt a little groggy as he inspected his hand but could not find any marks and overall, he had no aches or pains, just a bit of a thumping head. Everything about the clearing seemed the same at first glance and he was beginning to wonder if he had dreamt it all. Climbing the far slope, he moved through the tree's, coming to a halt at the edge and looking down towards the hamlet, again everything looked normal. As he returned to the clearing, he noticed that the inscription on the headstone had changed, it now read,

'In Memory of Sarah'

'A Traveller amongst the Stars'

Back down in the clearing, he heard the sound of someone approaching, sure that it would be Sam, as a young woman came out of the treeline carrying a towel and then stopped suddenly as she spotted him. Staying where she was, she called out to him, 'Hello, can I help you, do you realise this is private land?'

From where he stood, she looked a little like Sam, only much older and he wondered if this was her mum.

'Hi, are you Sam's mother, I thought it was perhaps her visiting again. That was a hell of a storm last night and I'm sure something strange happened.'

She sounded a little fearful as she called back, 'Who's Sam? 'My name is Annie, and this is part of my parent's estate.'

He started up the slope towards her as she began to back away looking a little scared, 'I'm sorry, I thought you were someone else, do you know Sam?'

'She is fourteen, her family own the farm, she said that this was on her parents land,' he told her.

'I can assure you, I don't know any Sam, the people who work the farm are my father's tenants and they don't have any daughters,' she called back slightly haughtily.

Suddenly Adam felt sick and the last thing he remembered was the ground rushing up to meet him. When he came to, Annie was kneeling over him and was dabbing his face with the towel which she must have moistened in the pool. She helped him sit upright as he stared around him, feeling confused.

'I've been here for the last few days and I got to know a young girl called Sam. Strangely, she looks a bit like you. You haven't got any sister's, have you?' Adam asked.

At last, she smiled and apologised for not having any sister's as he told her of the storm last night and how he had touched the water in the pool and then blacked out.

'I'm sorry, whatever your name is, but I was here yesterday, and I certainly didn't see you, and there was no storm last night, we haven't had rain for the last two weeks.' She said it with a small amount of concern but at the same time, it seemed she was humouring him as if he was slightly imbecilic.

From the look she had seen on his face, Annie could see that he was worried, no, more than that, he seemed to be scared. He was a good-looking young man, even if he did seem to dress strangely, she wondered if he was a foreigner, because she had never before seen the type of clothes he wore. Adam buried his face in his hands, try as he might, nothing made sense; shaking himself he stood, 'I'm sorry, I'm forgetting my manners. 'I was just about to brew up, can I interest you in a cup of tea?'

Annie smiled and seemed to relax as she nodded her head. Filling the kettle from one of his plastic bottles, he popped it on the stove as Annie picked up the bottle, turning it in her hand and looking at it strangely. It was the same with the plastic cup he handed her, she stared at it as though she had never seen one before. With a hot drink inside him, he felt better, even quite peckish, 'Would you like some breakfast?' He asked as he went to his shelter and produced eggs and bacon.

Annie shook her head, 'No thanks, I've already had breakfast. 'Anyway, it wouldn't be fair for me to use your rations.'

Now it was Adam's turn to look at her as though she was mad, 'Rations? 'Since when?' He asked her with a laugh, expecting her to suddenly break into a grin.

'Since the end of the war, of course. 'Where have you been, abroad?' Now she did look at him as though he was a madman.

'What year is it Annie?' He asked hesitantly.

'1952, of course.'

When Adam came to, Annie was kneeling next to him once again and this time she really did look concerned. He managed to sit upright wondering if she, in reality, knew Sam and they were playing some kind of a practical joke.

'I can prove it!' He said suddenly, 'Sam and I went down into the village yesterday to get provisions, she seemed to know everyone we spoke to, they will all remember me.'

He had finally managed to persuade her to accompany him into the village, but to his dismay everywhere they went he was met by people he did not recognise and who did not know this young girl called Samantha. The day was warming up nicely and in the general store he asked if Annie would like an ice cream cone, she held them while he produced some coins from his pocket.

'That's just a shilling, please.' The lady behind the counter said as Adam stared at the money in his hand.

'I'm sorry Annie, you couldn't lend me a shilling, could you?' he asked embarrassingly.

Outside, they sat on a bench around the small village green as Adam forgot about his cone and stared into space.

'What's going on Adam?' Annie asked, 'are you on the run or something? 'You keep acting very strange, it's a little frightening at times.'

Coming back to reality, Adam became serious as he tried to explain his predicament. He asked her how old she thought he

was with Annie guessing that he was about the same age as she was.

'I'm twenty Annie, and I was born on the first of January..... 1976!' He said, staring at her intently. He could tell by the look on her face that she was now convinced he was some kind of lunatic

He stood so that she could look at him properly, their trip through the village had made him stand out and he had noticed all the strange looks he was getting, 'Truthfully, have you ever seen anyone dressed like I am?' Sitting back down, he pulled the money from his pocket and held it out in front of her.

'Take a look, it's English money, it even has the queen's head on it. 'And that won't happen until 1960,' he said, trying his best to convince her.

Annie stared at him, her ice-cream now forgotten, on the one hand, she thought he was mad but when she looked at him she had to admit that what he said about his clothing was true and the money he showed her certainly looked similar and everyone did have a picture of the new queen's head on them but they were nothing like she had seen before and the queen's image on the coins was that of an older woman.

Together they made their way back up the hill, heading for the wood's and the clearing as Adam continued trying to convince her. At the top of the hill instead of entering the treeline, she asked him to accompany her along its edge a few hundred yards

as at last, she pointed to the farm halfway down the hill and then further down to the large house and gardens.

'That is Crompton Hall, where I live, and Crompton farm. 'I know the couple well, and they have no children. 'If you are looking for work Adam, I am sure I can have a word with my father. 'We always seem to be looking for gardeners nowadays, have you any experience?'

They parted company as he watched her heading downhill towards her home and he re-entered the treeline and back to the hollow. Annie's towel was still lying on the floor where she had left it and he picked it up and hung it over a branch to dry. Sitting on his groundsheet he tried to make sense of his situation as Sam sprung into his thoughts. He wondered what she must be thinking of him, surely, she had returned today to find him gone, it was not really fair on her after he had promised to stay a little longer. Mostly his thoughts centred on how he was going to get back to his own time.

For the first time in his life, Adam felt lonely, in the past, he had been considered a loner, he was used to looking out for himself and had never needed other people's company. It was a strange feeling, something he had never experienced before and he desperately wished Annie would return, his problem had not felt as insurmountable in her company. The afternoon turned into evening and then night, as he slept uneasily, waking frequently as Sam entered his dreams and he called her name in his sleep. Even the daylight brought no respite as it seemed he was somehow stuck in the past.

True to her word, Annie had got him a job working in the gardens, but his modern ideas did not always go down well with the other gardeners. It was nearly six months now that he had been there, and she had also arranged accommodation for him in one of the attic rooms over the stables. Despite their strange beginning, their friendship had blossomed especially as one weekend he was doing extra, and she had come across him naked to the waist and dressed in shorts and boots. His tanned skin contrasted with her pale complexion as she watched him discreetly and felt a stirring between her thighs as she admired his muscled and toned body.

She sensed that he was different, he had no understanding of social conformity, his words and actions strange for the times and completely out of step with everything she knew. She accepted that times were changing but it appeared that Adam was so ahead of the pack that he was out of sight. All the other staff were deferential to her, but he treated her as if he were her equal, speaking to her and saying things that under normal circumstance would see other staff dismissed. She could not fault his work ethic and she knew her father was impressed with his knowledge.

She caught him one day singing a song to himself, some tune she had never heard before and when she pressed him about it, he explained the concept of pop music to her with a wry smile.

'Next thing you know you will be listening to Al Martino topping the charts,' he said bursting into laughter.

Christmas was miserable, more so than usual, he was used to being alone and Christmas meant truly little to him, never having had a family to share it with. On top of that, as the end of December approached, he began to feel queasy, he was not ill, he just didn't feel right, it was like he was suddenly feeling restive. New Year's Eve was particularly bad, leaving him feeling as though he was being torn apart and spending most of that day and the next in his bed.

It was the third of January when Annie came up to his attic room.

'How did you know?' She asked, staring at him most strangely.

Adam hadn't a clue what she was talking about as he grinned at her and told her so. Her face had changed, it was no longer disbelief that he saw, but a reappraisal of what he had been trying to tell her for months.

'I listened to him on the radio, Al Martino was number one over Christmas?'

It took him a while to stop laughing much to her irritation and then he suddenly became serious, 'I've just remembered something. 'If I show you, you must promise me not to ever say anything to anyone, promise?'

Annie watched as he grabbed his backpack, pulling items out and pushing them to one side as he rummaged in the bottom of

it. He pulled out a little rectangular box and what looked like a telephonist's headset, only smaller. He plugged the headset in and pushed a button, hoping that the batteries would still be ok as he ran the tape back looking for the track he wanted and keying it up ready. Passing the headset to Annie, he asked if she was ready. She nodded her head as he gave her a taste of his favourite artist, David Bowie singing 'Life on Mars,' on his Walkman.

Annie's eyes went wide, she had never heard music like this and for the very first time, started to perhaps believe him, wanting to know what was going to happen in the future. Whilst he gave her glimpses of what it was like, he refused to give her details, 'For all I know, I tell you something and you change the future, don't forget, I won't be born for another twenty-four years yet.'

That night it was Annie who could not settle, Adam's strange words and stories reverberated in her head as she tossed and turned until eventually she got out of bed, put on a robe and snuck from the house, heading for the stables. Climbing the stairs, she was nervous; she opened the door quietly before slipping into the room, Adam breathing softly as he slept. Easing herself down onto the edge of his bed, she gently rested her hand on his bare chest. Her breathing was hard to control and she had that familiar feeling between her thighs. She watched as he stirred, his eyes coming open in surprise at her presence. She shivered slightly; the night was chillier than she had presumed.

'Can I get under the cover's?' She asked, a look of surprise on her face when he told her he was naked.

On impulse, she decided it suddenly did not matter, 'Very unladylike,' she thought to herself.

Adam moved over and made room for her as she slipped beneath the covers, instantly feeling the heat of his body. As she stared into his eyes in the dim light, she wanted him to kiss her, but that kind of thing was just was not done. As if reading her thoughts, he spoke quietly but she could hear the amusement in his voice.

'Young women are used to being assertive in my time,' he said, 'They don't hang around waiting anymore.'

Plucking up the courage, she moved her face closer and found that he had met her halfway as their lips came together. She didn't want to tell him that this was her first time, but somehow he seemed to know as he kissed her softly and gently, building her passion and arousal little by little until her mouth was grinding against his and she felt his tongue exploring her lips and then her mouth. As she warmed, he helped her out of her robe and then her nightdress and as she lay back down, pressed against him, she felt his erection pushing against her belly and mound.

Adam kissed her lips again and then her neck, he worked his way down to her chest as he slid under the covers and arrived at her breasts. They were a good size, full and firm as his hand caressed and fondled them, his fingers teasing her nipples as he brought them erect and then his mouth and lips were sucking and licking at each one as his tongue circled her areola and his

teeth nipped at her teats, causing her to gasp and moan pleasurably. As he worked his way across her flat stomach, Annie could not believe what he was about to do but waited with bated breath as he opened her legs and slid between them.

She could feel his hot breath on her fanny as he carefully spread her lips and then the most exquisite feeling she had ever experienced happened as she felt his tongue and lips slide across her quim. She was unable to stop herself from crying out as uncontrollably she pushed her pussy against his mouth and felt his tongue penetrate her and take her breath away.

'Oh my God Adam, that feels so good, I never knew it would feel like..... fuuuck!'

She never finished the sentence properly as his fingers exposed her clitoris and his tongue flicked out to tease and lick it. Her hips bucked wildly as sensations flooded her body, rippling through her and taking her breath away as she closed her eyes and allowed the feelings to overpower her. When she finally came back down to earth she found him knelt between her thighs, his shaft gently rubbing against her vagina.

'Tell me to stop whenever you want,' he said, 'I'll try to be as gentle as possible.'

Annie felt his cock pushing against her opening and then inch by inch and ever so slowly, he slid his manhood into her. She felt her insides expand to accommodate him and he paused once

he was inside her so that she could get used to the feeling before he started to fuck her. She wanted to scream, not because she was in pain, but because of her arousal and the sensations, she was experiencing. He bent and kissed her breasts, his momentum increasing a little at a time until he could tell that she was close and then he fucked her hard, having to put his hand over her mouth at one point lest the noise she was making woke up everyone in the house. As her head went back and her body arched, he slammed his cock into her, rewarded with her climax as his shaft sent spurt after spurt of cum deep into her passage.

Laying side by side as their chests rose and fell in unison, they gulped in much-needed oxygen until Annie, at last, turned on her side and kissed him, 'I love you, Adam,' she whispered.

Time seemed to fly by, and Adam estimated that it must be nearly two years since he had arrived; in that time, he and Annie had become close, to the extent that he knew he was in love with her. Whilst he still dreamt of returning to his own time, he had reconciled himself to the fact that he was probably here for the rest of his life. Nowadays he looked just like everyone else, Annie had managed to beg some old clothes from her father and the clothes he had arrived in were packed securely in his backpack, ready for that day if it ever came.

While her parents treated him well, he suspected that her father was not over enamoured as their relationship developed; certainly, he would have forbidden it if it had not been for Annie's mother. Though she never socialised with him, nevertheless, she was extremely kind to him and he got the feeling that something

in her past made her look at him differently. He and Annie were sleeping together regularly though never in the big house, many were the nights that she would sneak up to his attic room while they made love.

It was a Sunday and the weather was hot, Annie had made some sandwiches and drinks which he had placed in his backpack as they set off up the hill to woods on its summit heading for the clearing and the pool within. In the nice weather, they would visit their sanctuary at least once or twice a week, during the summer they would go up there nearly every evening. No one else ever visited and they could be together without any disapproving stares, on each occasion they would do the same thing, Adam would spread his groundsheet out and they would get naked and make love. Afterwards, they would bathe in the pool, cleansing each other as he held her tightly until they chilled and then it was back to the groundsheet as they allowed the sun to warm and dry their bodies.

They had made love and then splashed in the pool before eating their picnic naked. Stretched out on the groundsheet, Annie was as happy as she had ever been, she was excited, but her secret would keep a little longer until they were in bed together that evening. As the afternoon drew to a close Adam sensed a change in the weather.

'There's a storm coming in,' he told Annie, 'we had better get dressed and be ready to move.'

Annie looked up at the clear blue sky and wondered why he thought there was going to be a storm. The last few weeks had seen a mini heatwave with not one drop of rain and anyway, she was warm and sleepy and did not want to move yet. An hour passed as Adam scanned the sky, both of them still naked as Annie dozed on the groundsheet. His ears pricked up; was that the sound of thunder he had heard in the distance and was suddenly concerned. He stood and made his way up the slope and through the tree's, standing at their edge naked as he scanned the horizon, but the sky was blue as far as he could see.

Back in the clearing, he was just about to wake Annie when the light suddenly dimmed, looking up at the sky he was amazed to see black clouds come scudding in and heard the first rumble of thunder in the distance. Bending, he shook her awake as he grabbed their clothes and his backpack, 'Bring the groundsheet,' he shouted as he headed for the shelter he had suddenly noticed and which he had built years in the future, the first drops of rain beginning to descend.

Huddled together, he wrapped the groundsheet around them trying to keep Annie dry and warm. He could feel her trembling as the thunder now boomed overhead; just like last time the very hollow itself seemed to reverberate with the sound. In the clearing, it was as if night had fallen, when suddenly it was lit by a flash of lightning which made Annie jump. The first lightning strike made her scream, the second nearly had her in hysterics but then the storm disappeared as quickly as it had arrived leaving an eerie silence in the clearing.

'What's that?' She asked.

Adam could already sense it again through the soles of his feet, that strange vibration and humming noise that he could hear inside his head as he dashed from their shelter. He held out his hand to her, 'Come and see!' He exclaimed as the clearing was lit by a cool blue light.

Rushing to the pool he climbed onto the rocky ledge and looked down into the crystal-clear shimmering water.

This is how I got here Annie, please, come with me,' he pleaded, holding out his hand to her. Grasping his hand he started to pull her up to his vantage point, but her hand was wet and she was scared and not sure she wanted to do this, which was why she had let go and watched as Adam went flying backwards into the water. She heard him shout her name just before the flash of light which blinded her for a moment. When she opened her eyes, the clearing looked exactly as it had when they had arrived except the shelter and his backpack had gone. With a feeling of panic and dread, she clambered onto the edge of the pool, the waterfall continued to splash water down into it, but he was gone.

'ADAM!' She screamed, 'Come back, I'm pregnant, we are going to have a baby.' Annie was unable to stop the floods of tears which then came as no one answered her. Why had she been such a coward, why had she not kept hold of his hand. She dressed, still sobbing, taking a last look around the clearing as heartbroken, she made her way towards home.

Adam's brain registered that he was sat in water seconds before a piercing scream echoed around the clearing. He was concerned for Annie and was wondering why she was screaming when his eyes shot open to find, not Annie, but another young woman sat in the pool opposite him.

'Who are you? 'Where did you come from?' She screamed at him as she pushed herself back against the edge of the pool and tried to cover her nakedness.

'You're not Annie or Sam!' Adam kept repeating over and over again as he looked around in shock.

He finally got her to stop screaming at him, having drawn his knees up to his chest and raised his hands, trying to signal that he meant her no harm.

'I need to get out,' she said, and he could still hear the fear in her voice.

Promising to turn his back, he shuffled around in the water to face away from her as he heard her leave the pool. When he turned back, she had a large towel wrapped around her and was drying her hair with a smaller one.

She stared at him fiercely, "What are you doing here, do you know.....'

'That this private land.' He finished for her, 'Which does it belong to now, the big house or the farm?'

That seemed to stop her for a moment, 'Who are you?' She asked warily.

'My name is Adam. 'As in 'Adams Wood' and the same as the name on the headstone over there.' His pointed with his arm to the headstone without even turning around, he had seen it so many times over the years that he knew exactly where it was.

'What are you doing here?' she demanded.

It was out of his mouth before his brain told him not to say it, 'I've spent the afternoon up here with Annie, do you know her?'

She continued to stare at him, but at least she was not screaming anymore. Pointing to his backpack which he spied over by his shelter, he asked her to open it and get him a towel, the water was starting to feel a little cold. He could see she was about to say something but all that came out was a gasp as she turned around and saw his bag and shelter. He could hear her muttering to herself as she went over and retrieved a towel for him.

'If you don't mind,' he said, when at first she made no move to turn around, once she had her back to him he stood and

wrapped the towel around his waist before leaving the pool but still keeping his distance from her.

Adam turned his back to her as she reached for her clothes, standing patiently until she said she was dressed. Turning around, he looked at her closely and trying not to stare. Her face contained both aspects of Sam and Annie, but while they were both blondes, she was the same hair colouring as himself, a mousey brown. Now she was dressed and felt more confident that he was going to do her no harm, she relaxed a little.

'My mother is called Annabelle; I've heard some of the older folk occasionally call her Annie, but it wouldn't be her, I very much doubt she spent the afternoon up here with you' she said

'And I have never heard of a Sam, there are no young men around here called Sam,' she told him and then frowning when he broke into a smile and started laughing.

'Sorry, no, Sam, as in Samantha,' Adam said. If Annabelle were her mother, she could not be the right one and if this young woman lived locally, surely, she must have known Sam and her family. Also, she and Annie must be of a similar age. And then it hit him like a sledgehammer.

'I know this may seem like a stupid question, but what year is it?'

Her face told him it was a stupid question as she put her hands on her hips, '1973, of course.'

It felt as though someone had suddenly kicked his legs from under him as his backside met the ground and his towel came undone. The young woman got an eyeful before embarrassed, she turned around; he called out his thanks as he covered himself, but his legs felt like jelly and he was staying put for the moment, fed up with falling over. She came and knelt near him looking concerned.

'Are you ok, you're white as a sheet,' she said, 'by the way, my name is Jean.'

Adam shook her extended hand, 'I'll be fine in a minute and everything is hunky-dory,' he said, the sarcasm evident in his voice.

Collecting up her belongings and sure that Adam was going to be alright, she set off up the slope and disappeared into the trees. Once she had gone, Adam retrieved his backpack and dressed before making himself a brew. 'This is ridiculous,' he was thinking, it was still another three years before he would be born, at this rate he would be an old man before he ever got back, and Sam would be a middle-aged woman. He wondered about Annie and what would become of her, suddenly realising that she would now be in her forties.

There were still a few sandwiches in his bag which would do him for the evening but he was wondering what he would do tomorrow, the money still stowed in his backpack was from the

year 1996 and he had no idea if any of it was legal tender yet. It was an uneasy sleep that night as he pondered his predicament, at least last time he had had Annie who helped make his life easier.

He was up early the next morning and had washed and dressed in his normal clothes when he caught sight of the young woman descending the slope.

'I see you are still here,' she said, 'have you nowhere to go?' She suddenly realised that the young man seemed close to tears and that her tone had been a little unkind.

She listened as he explained that he had money but was not sure if it was legal in the shops. He also told her what he had told Sam on that first occasion that he had no family to turn to and would need to find a job. She felt sorry for him and her demeanour started to soften.

'I work at Crompton farm, though really, my home is the old hall. Mr and Mrs Timpson have the farm, but they are in their sixties now and everything is getting a bit too much for them. I do what I can and end up sleeping there most of the time.'

Adam was staring at her intently, was it possible that this young woman was Annie's daughter, the passage of time would make it about right.

'You could come and help out at the farm,' Jean said hesitantly, 'They couldn't afford to pay you, but I'm sure they would feed you each day and you could sleep in the barn.'

Adam had nothing to lose and at the very least it would put food in his belly until he could find a job that paid. Jean was enamoured by his smile as he perked up and suddenly looked a lot brighter. She asked about his money, waiting while he retrieved it from his backpack and held it out in his hand.

'This, this and these you can spend, but I've never heard of a pound coin, and I'm not sure about the notes, they look completely different,' she said with a puzzled look on her face.

On this occasion, she had turned up with a bathing costume just in case and Adam turned his back on her as she changed and got into the pool. He was singing to himself as he packed up all his belongings when Jean shouted across to him, 'What is that damned tune, my mother has hummed it for years but didn't know what it was called?'

He turned and gave her a grin, 'If it's 1973, then I'm sure you will hear it this year,' he said with a laugh and looking pleased with himself.

He had settled in at the farm, the work was different from what he was used to, but he soon learnt what he needed to do and put all his effort into getting the jobs done. Jean watched him one day as stripped to the waist, he moved bales of hay into the barn,

singing to himself as he worked. She refused to admit it to herself, but as she got to know him, she quite fancied him, 'There he goes again,' she thought to herself, singing that song, the one her mother would always hum. She thought no more about it as she got on with her own tasks, the radio playing pop music in the background.

It was more her subconscious that picked up on the DJ's words as he introduced the next record, 'And here's the new one from David Bowie. 'Life on Mars.'

She stood transfixed for a moment as the music played, refusing to believe what she was hearing. It was the song that Adam was singing before and that her mother always hummed, but how could either of them have heard it if it had only just been released. It was possible, she supposed, that Adam might just have had heard it somewhere previously, but her mother had been humming it for years, and how come he had suddenly appeared in the pool with her.

That evening, once the farmer and his wife were in bed, she made her way out to the barn and climbed up the bales to where Adam had spread out his groundsheet and sleeping bag. He seemed surprised when she appeared, but his face lit up at the prospect of a little bit of company.

'I heard that song you keep singing on the radio today,' she said casually.

He grinned and gave a slight laugh, 'See, I told you so,'

Jean watched him turn white as she asked her next question, 'My mother has been humming that song for years, she used to drive me mad with it, how would she know it. 'Do you know her Adam?'

He was in a panic, he had gone down this road before and was wondering how much to tell her, 'I met her one summer,' he lied.

She looked at him furiously, 'Adam, stop lying, too many things don't add up, please, tell me the truth.'

He could not, not the whole truth, he could easily end up out on his ear, and then what.

'Ok, although you are not going to believe me,' he started with a huge sigh. 'How old is your mother, Jean, forty?' He watched as she nodded her head. 'I'm twenty, so when was I born?' He asked, waiting as she did the simple arithmetic.

'1953 of course,' she replied

'Would you like to make some money,' he asked her cynically.

Jean gave him a withering look, 'If you are going to treat me like a child...' she began.

Adam just looked at her, 'If you have fifty pounds, walk into a betting shop tomorrow and put a bet on, put all your money on a group called "Slade" having the Christmas number one this year. 'I bet you get at least 500/1, that should net you about twenty-five thousand pounds.'

Now it was her turn to look at him cynically, 'Rubbish, you can't know that!'

Adam had a sarcastic smile on his face as he looked at her, 'Yes I can,' he told Jean, 'I've heard that song every year since the day I was born in..... 1976!'

Involuntary, she raised her hand to slap him, but he grabbed her wrist and stopped her, 'You wanted the truth. I was camping in those woods up on the hill when there was a storm one night, someone told me it was supposed to be magical up there, and they were correct.

'I blacked out and when I came too, there was a young woman there, she said her name was Annie and that she lived in the big house.

'She helped me, got me a job working in the gardens, and it was where I played that song to her. He has always been my favourite singer and I particularly liked that track.

'She must have been about eighteen at the time and I got to know her, a nice young lady..... it was 1952.

'And then one day I was back in those woods and the clearing and the next thing I know, I'm sitting in the pool with you.'

Adam let go of her wrist, if you do not believe me, go and ask your mum..... 'Only, tell her that the Timpson's mentioned my name.'

Of course, she wanted to know why, as Adam tried to explain that too many questions would be asked as to why she had aged, and he had not.

He could not tell if she believed him or not, 'I'd better go,' was all she said as she made her way back down the bales of hay and disappeared.

Adam saw nothing of her the next day, the old farmer telling him that she had gone down to the big house to see her parents. He finished work and went to wash and shave before sitting down in the kitchen and having his evening meal, thanking them both as he disappeared out to the barn, Jean having still not returned. He was tired, so undressed and climbed into his sleeping bag, sleeping soundly until someone shaking his shoulder woke him up.

As he opened his eyes, Jean was squatted down next to him, her face in shadow but he could hear her voice catch as she spoke.

'Mum remembers you, she said you were handsome, and she said my grandparents missed you when you left, they said the gardens had never looked as nice.

'She said you were there for several years, but strangely, that you never seemed to get any older and that one day you suddenly disappeared.

'If I didn't know better, I would have said mum fancied you,' she finished with a surprised laugh.

She stretched out and lay next to him, supporting her head on her crooked arm as she gazed at him.

'So, what now Adam, the man from the future!' she asked with a hint of amusement.

Adam was being serious as he told her, 'I honestly don't know, at first, I wanted to get back because I didn't want to disappoint young Sam. 'But she has probably forgotten about me now, it has been over two years and who knows, I might be here for good.'

He sounded a little despondent as Jean decided that perhaps in the future, she could help cheer him up. She could not begin to imagine what it must be like, trapped in a place where you did not belong, it was enough to drive a lad insane.

As the months passed, he often got the urge to go down to the big house and see Annie, but what could he say to her. Whilst to him it had only been six months since he had last seen her, to Annie, it had been over twenty years since that fateful day. She was married, with a husband and daughter, how could it be fair on her to suddenly have him bursting back into her life.

Christmas and New Year had come and gone, not that Adam was concerned, this time of year was very much like the last one, as again, he wasn't feeling that great and even though he'd had Christmas dinner with the farmer and his wife, he had kept himself very much to himself.

Jean had disappeared for a few days to enjoy the celebrations with her family and he had to admit to missing her. It was the sixth of January when she showed up next and snow had fallen for the last two days, the fields all around now covered with a crisp white blanket.

Adam had tended to the animals that morning and was just considering going for a short walk when he spotted Jean coming up the lane at a trot. Rushing into the farmyard and then up to him, she threw her arms around his neck, pulled his face nearer and kissed him fully on the lips. He was too surprised to do anything other than kiss her back until she released him and stepped back, her face beaming with excitement as she shook her head.

'You were right, oh my god, you really are from the future aren't you!' She threw herself at him once more and hugged him tightly.

He reckoned he could get used to being hugged by Jean but wondering at the same time, what he had done to deserve it.

'I did what you said, I put fifty pounds on the number one, I'm rich!' She was finding it hard to constrain herself as she kissed him once more.

Somehow, this time the kiss was different, it seemed to go on for longer and as their lips slowly parted, it seemed to linger.

Jean with her head down, raised her eyes and looked at him shyly, 'I'm sorry, that was a bit presumptuous of me, wasn't it?'

Adam laughed loudly, 'Not at all, it feels nice to be wanted by someone,' he said as he picked her up, twirled her around and kissed the tip of her nose.

Jean threaded her arm through his as they tramped across the fields, each step making a crunching noise in the virgin surface. She wanted to take him into the big town, which was a bus ride away and treat him, but Adam was content just to be in her company. He wanted nothing from her because subconsciously he was afraid, he had got close to Annie and then he was gone, and he often wondered what she may have gone through at the time and how much hurt he had caused. So far, he had done it

to two young impressionable women, and he was determined not to do it for the third time.

Sitting down with the old couple that night, he and Jean ate their evening meal before all four of them watched a couple of hours television. Bert Timpson winked at his wife and raised his eyes skywards, indicating that he thought it was a good idea to leave the young-uns and give them a bit of privacy. He and his wife had watched them over the last few months as they sparred with each other, but tonight he sensed, something had changed.

Laying side by side on the huge settee in front of the blazing fire, Jean snuggled up against him and felt content. In the six months, she had known Adam, she had felt herself being drawn to him and especially when he had confided the truth in her. He seemed to have some kind of inner strength she had thought, convinced that if she were in the same predicament, she would have been in pieces ages ago.

Over Christmas and away from him, she had given it a lot of thought and now knew what she wanted. She wanted a relationship with him, and she knew that she was taking a chance; from what he had told her she knew that he could disappear at any time, but she was prepared to take that chance. He had told her that he had spent nearly two years in her mother's company and if she got that long she would be happy, if she got longer, well she would be ecstatic.

It had gotten late and the fire had died down but the room was still warm, Jean had lain in his arms for the last couple of hours

but other than kiss the top of her head and occasionally her lips, Adam had made no other attempt to touch her, something she desperately wanted. She was beginning to wonder if he felt anything for her and wanted nothing more than just a casual friendship. She was not quite sure on how to broach the subject so just came out with it.

'You can touch me, you know..... if you want,' she stammered as she looked up at him, not wanting to appear as though she was some kind of brazen woman.

He said nothing at first, the silence just continuing as she began to wonder if he had fallen asleep.

'You know what might happen,' he suddenly said, 'I like you a lot Jean, but the last thing I want to do is hurt you,' there was a long pause as he seemed to gather his thoughts.

'I may be here for the rest of my life, and in a way, I could live with that, and with you. But what happens if I am gone tomorrow or the next day, can you take that chance?'

Her answer was to slide further up the settee until her face was level with his as she took his hand and placed it on her breast. 'I'm willing to take that chance,' she said and kissed him.

This time she could feel the passion in his kiss as their lips locked together and she forced her tongue into his mouth. With one arm wrapped around her, she could feel his other hand

unbuttoning her cardigan and then the buttons of her shirt before slipping inside and pushing her bra upwards and freeing her tits. As his hand cupped her left breast, she moaned softly, the sound getting louder as he fondled and squeezed it and then he had to tell her to 'hush' as he applied pressure to her nipple which was now hard and throbbing, demanding more attention.

It was as though they had the same thought at the same time, Jean sat up and discarded her cardigan, shirt and bra as Adam removed his jumper and shirt. She marvelled at his muscled torso, her hands running over his smooth but firm chest as she teased his nipples. From her left breast, he moved to her right, giving it the same treatment and kissing her hard as he tweaked her nipple and her cries got louder. And then his hand was sliding over her stomach as he caressed her flesh, his fingertips moving all the time as though he was memorising her feel and shape. She felt the button of her jeans pop open and then the zip slide down as in her mind she urged him onwards, when his hand slid inside and then inside her panties, she hit the ceiling, her cry, reverberating around the room.

Adam found her fanny lips moist and open as his fingers slipped between her legs and traced the line of her slit. Ever so gently, he applied pressure as a single-digit slid inside her quim, finding her wet and hot inside. As he fingered her slowly, Jean's hand was frantically rubbing at the bulge in the front of his jean pants; his erection feeling hard and unyielding. They finished undressing, Jean gasping as, free of his pants, his cock jutted proudly from beneath his stomach looking large and predatory in the dim flickering light of what was left of the fire.

Back on the settee, she straddled his hips, her fanny atop his shaft as she slid back and forth along its length, teasing him. In response, his hand went to her fanny, his thumb finding her clitoris as he stroked and teased it, causing her to visibly shiver with anticipation. She knew she was ready, her arousal already substantial as she raised herself and fumbled for his shaft.

Placing it against her opening, she lowered herself onto it, her insides stretching as she took him deep inside her quim and rocked back and forth. Adam's hands went to her magnificent breasts, each one, a little more than a handful; her areolas large and covering the front of each beautiful orb and in the centre of each was a darker hard bud.

Adam caressed and fondled her tits, his fingers twisting and squeezing her nipples as she moaned and gasped in pleasure. Jean was rising and falling faster as her climax approached, grabbing her head, Adam pulled it down so that he could kiss her as his hips rose and rammed his shaft into her, Jean trying to cry out as she orgasmed, but their lips locked together kept the sound muted.

Laying against Adam's chest, his cock still buried deep inside her, she panted as she sucked air into her lungs. He waited for her to recover before he suggested they move to the rug in front of the fire. Taking the cushions from the furniture, he spread them on the rug and helped her down before spreading her legs and kneeling between her thighs. His shaft, slick with her juices, sank into her flesh once more as slowly at first and then with increasing impetus, he fucked her. She tried to be as quiet as

she could, but he excited and aroused her to such an extent that she wanted to cry out his name.

And then she was cumming again, staring at him with unseeing eyes as her head whipped back and her body arched, she felt his semen spurt inside her as he cried out and then sensations flooded her body and overpowered her brain as she floated serenely. When she came to, Adam had found an old blanket from somewhere and was lying next to her with it draped across them as he cuddled her and kept her warm. She knew at some point that they had to move, they could not spend the night here, what would the farmer and his wife say in the morning. As she dozed, she wondered how many girls in the future, Adam had made love to; while she was no stranger to sex, she had never had such an accomplished lover and felt slightly jealous of those unknown faces.

They took their pleasures where and when they could until one day Beth, (Mrs Timpson) took Jean to one side and told her plainly that they did not mind if she and Adam shared the same room, it wasn't as if they didn't know what was going on between the pair.

The rest of that year and then the next were idyllic with Adam forgetting that he had once had another life in another time. By his reckoning, his next birthday would make him twenty-five, but each morning as he looked at himself in the mirror, he was still a fresh-faced twenty-year-old. It had been a decent enough summer but as the autumn set in Adam started to feel something, it couldn't describe what it was and at one point wondered if it was perhaps something to do with the fact that on

the first of January 1976, he would officially be born and it was now only a few months away.

Jean had recognised the change in him, as Christmas approached, she would notice him stood in the farmyard or out in the open fields looking up at the hill and the woods on top. He was forever asking her to go up there with him as though something was summoning him. Christmas day she had to spend at home, but she returned the next day to find Adam subdued and unresponsive to her questions, all he could tell her was that something was going to happen.

On the afternoon of New Year's Eve, he had taken her to bed and made love to her with a passion that she had never known and then afterwards for some strange reason he had checked his backpack. Jean wanted to cry but knew she had to stay strong, she had an inkling of what was about to happen, he had tried to warn her, but she'd had two years of happiness and knew that this was his destiny.

As the evening drew to a close, she found him pacing the farmyard, constantly looking at the sky and the hill as though he could sense something that she could not see or feel.

She went out to him and took his hand, waiting until he registered that she was there and looked at her. 'Go and get your pack,' she told him, 'I'll come with you.'

It was as though he was fighting an internal battle, the urge to stay against the greater urge to climb that damned hill she thought as she forced him to retrieve his backpack. Rugged up

and with his pack on his back they ascended the hill together, hand in hand. Inside the treeline, they were sheltered from the wind and he switched on his torch until they came out into the clearing, brilliantly lit by moonlight.

According to Jeans watch, it was five minutes to midnight, the sky clear and bright with stars as she hoped that this was all a false alarm. Suddenly the moon seemed to disappear as it was covered by clouds and the wind picked up. Adam took her hand, leading her over to the shelter that she had been convinced was not there that morning when she had first met him. They had seconds to spare before the heavens opened and rain flooded down, the first crash of thunder booming overhead. It only seemed to last for a few minutes but in that time the glade had been lit by flashes of lightning and then two strikes which seemed to hit the same spot in the clearing.

And then it was gone, and the sky was clear, and she could feel a vibration through her boots. Adam stood and walked out into the clearing, holding his hand out to her as she joined him and took it. She was just about to put her torch on when a faint glow started in the pool, growing in strength until its fluorescent light illuminated the area.

Adam turned and kissed her, 'Come with me?' He asked her, but she shook her head and he seemed reticent to leave.

'You have to go, Adam, it's your destiny, not mine. You know where I am, come and see me,' she said as she let go of his hand and pushed him toward the pool, watching as he climbed onto

the rock's, bent and dipped his fingers into the water. The flash took her by surprise, and she turned her head away from it and closed her eyes, when she opened them and turned back, Adam was gone as was his pack and the shelter. The clearing looking as it always had done.

Stoically, she dried her tears as she switched on her torch and set off back towards the farm.

It was the sunlight bursting into the clearing that brought Adam awake as he unzipped his sleeping bag and got up and stretched. Looking around the clearing he was elated to see that it looked exactly as it had years before, his washed clothes still hanging over the branches where he had placed them. That was a good sign he thought, at least it looked like he was back in the correct timeline, but outside of the woods, had time moved on?

Washing and dressing he took down his shelter and packed everything away making sure that the hollow and clearing looked as pristine as it had when he had first arrived. As he climbed the slope, he went over and took one last look at the headstone, surprised to see that it had changed one more.

'In Memory of Sarah and Adam'

'Reunited at Last'

His first stop was to be the farm to apologise to Sam if she still lived there and would speak to him and then into the village to

pick up some provisions before heading out on the open road once more. At the farm, everything looked strangely familiar, there were more buildings now and things looked modernised, but it was still the farm that held happy memories of Jean.

He still wondered if time had moved on in his absence and as he approached the farm, he noticed a young woman working in the yard as he leant on the gate and called out to her. 'Hi, I don't suppose you know a young girl called Sam?' he asked.

She turned in his direction as he got his first look at her, strangely she seemed to be a mixture of Sam, Annie and Jean and with her blonde hair cascading down her back, was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen.

'Are you Adam, the man that has been camping up in the woods, Sam has never stopped talking about you?' She asked with a warm smile.

'Yeah, is Sam about, I was just heading off and wanted to say goodbye,' he told her, relieved because he appeared to be back at the point that he had disappeared.

'Oh, that's a shame,' the young woman said, 'She's just out with mum, she said you were looking for work, but if you're leaving.'

Adam felt disconsolate at the prospect of not saying goodbye to Sam. He found it strange, sure that she had never mentioned that she had a sister, having made it sound as though she was

an only child. 'Do you mind if I wait around until she returns?' He asked.

'Not at all, I'm Sarah by the way,' she said, shaking his hand.

While he waited, he gave her a hand around the yard, helping her with chores, exactly as he had done for the past two years.

'You can get me some animal feed out if you will, it's in the.....'

'It's ok, I know where it is,' he said absentmindedly, going to the shed where it was kept and hoisting a couple of bags onto his shoulder while Sarah stared at him strangely.

He could hear a voice coming up the lane, smiling because there was no mistaking who it was as Sam got closer.

'Hi Sarah,' she called and then rushed into the farmyard when she spotted him, but her face turning to one of despondency and close to tears when she saw his rucksack.

'You can't go, Adam, you promised that you would stay,' she cried as she hugged him.

Sarah looked on slightly puzzled, Sam was friendly with everyone, but she had never seen her act like this with someone who really, was a stranger.

'I can't stay here forever,' he was saying when he heard another voice behind him.

'Is this your friend Sam?' The woman asked and then gave a startled gasp as he turned around.

'Hello Jean,' he said hesitantly.

The two of them stared at each other, silence seeming to descend on the farmyard as her bags of shopping fell from her hands. She wanted to run to him, to have him hold her in his arms and to kiss her, but the sight of Sarah staring at them strangely kept her rooted to the spot.

'Perhaps he has to go, Sam,' Jean was saying, 'You can't keep him a prisoner here.'

Her words were trying to get rid of him but her face told him that she wanted him to stay, she looked afraid, like a deer caught in the headlights and with her daughters so close, there was nothing they could say to each other. They stood apart, like two gunslingers facing each other until they were interrupted by the sound of a tractor returning, her husband and Sam and Sarah's father driving into the yard.

The man came over and held out his hand, 'You must be Adam, Sam said you were looking for work.' He shook Adams hand with

a firm grip and seemed a friendly sort, 'If you're still interested, we could certainly do with some help at this time of year, ever worked on a farm before?'

Adam nodded, 'Yes sir, I've worked on a farm for the last two years.' He glanced in Jean's direction as he replied.

'Well then, you can start tomorrow if you want, there's a bit of a flat attached to the house, you can sleep in there if that's ok and then take your meals with us,' Jean's husband told him.

'If it's ok with you sir, I'll carry on sleeping in the woods and come down each day, I don't want to put anyone out,' his eyes were constantly flitting across to Jean and not going un-noticed by Sarah.

After he had set off to return to the woods, this time escorted by Sam, Sarah completed her chores, but she was worried and mystified. She could have sworn that her mother and the young man knew each other. Sam had said he had only been here for a week at the most, not enough time to get to know her mother and yet the look on their faces said an all lot more. She wondered now if her mother had been having an affair, surely not, there was too much work on the farm for her to go missing regularly.

Sarah was highly suspicious when after tea, her mother packed some of the leftovers up and announced that she was going to take them up to the young man, 'He must be famished,' she said, 'It's the least I can do if he's going to be working for us.'

Sarah would have liked to have followed her and Sam was adamant that she needed to accompany her mother, both of them disappointed when their father reminded them that there were still chores to get finished.

Adam had set up camp again and it was only as evening approached that he remembered he had no food. He considered going down to the farm and begging some when his thoughts were interrupted as someone came down into the clearing.

Jean was alone as she made her way towards him, placing the bag she carried on the ground.

'Hello Adam,' she said as she moved even closer, looking curiously at him, 'My God, you don't look a day older.'

'I'm not,' he said, 'It's probably only twenty-four hours since I last saw you,' he added with a chuckle. 'You still look gorgeous, how have things been?'

'Rubbish,' she said, 'Look at me, I'm a middle-aged woman.'

'Not to me,' he replied, 'You're still the one I fell in love with,' he continued, advancing even closer to her.

Jean had not meant to, but she could not help herself as she found herself in his arms and their lips came together.

She hadn't stayed long, both of them knowing that what had happened in the past had to stay there, one part of her wanted him to leave, so that she could try and forget about him once more, the other part of her wanted him to stay, she had lost him once, she didn't want to lose him again.

Adam reported for work the next morning, the jobs he was set to do being only slightly different than what he had previously done. He worked hard and where possible, he and Jean tried to avoid each other but it was difficult when they worked in close proximity and he had his meals with them each evening before returning to his campsite. When she wasn't at school, Sam was a constant companion, following him around whenever she could. She knew she had been correct; Adam was making a perfect brother.

As that summer passed and winter started to set in, the family was adamant that he move into the flat, 'You'll catch your death up there lad,' Douglas, Jean's husband had said, 'And I don't want to lose a good worker.'

Even Sarah had begun to take a shine to him, she watched him often, he was certainly a grafter, content to do any job asked of him. There were still times when she felt that there was much unsaid between Adam and her mother, but there had never been any impropriety, not so much as a sniff. She had taken to nipping into the flat at the end of the day, chatting about things

that only the young understood. Most times she was accompanied by Sam, who seemed to see herself as Adams guardian and so it was nice when occasionally she got him all to herself.

He was settling down one evening, Sarah and Sam had left a couple of hours earlier and it was getting late when he was sure he heard the flat door open as Sarah came into the room.

'What brings you back?' He had started to say when suddenly she had clamped her lips against his and kissed him.

Adam was startled momentarily but then kissed her back as their mouths pressed together and he pulled her tight against him.

'I want you!' She whispered.

Slowly they had undressed each other until he had lifted her and carried her across to the bed, Adam stroking her smooth soft flesh as their kisses grew more passionate. His hand moved upwards as he cupped her pert breast and fondled it, rolling her nipple between finger and thumb while his other hand gripped her buttocks pulling her firmly against his erection. Sarah had rolled him on top of her, 'Make love to me Adam, please,' she had begged as she opened her legs wide and fumbled for his shaft.

Their lovemaking was sensual and exciting as he penetrated her quim, making her gasp with surprise and pleasure when he filled

her. He fucked her with slow measured thrusts, watching as she writhed beneath him, bending forwards, his mouth found her tits and nipples as he lavished them with kisses making her moan out loud while she stroked his hair. As her arousal mounted, she became more frantic, 'I'm so close Adam, please cum in me, I want to feel you cum inside me.'

His momentum increased as he fucked her fanny, her legs wrapping around him as she pulled him into her with each thrust until she screamed her release and he felt his cock twitch as he ejaculated inside her, his groan echoing around the room. They lay together spent, their limbs entangled together as the warmth from the stove in the corner, dried the sweat on their bodies. He barely caught her words as she dozed in his arms, 'Please say you'll stay forever.'

As winter turned into spring, it was obvious to everyone that Adam and Sarah were becoming an item, spending more and more time together. Whilst he still used the flat, he had taken to spending some evenings back up on top of the hill and in amongst the trees.

Jean could not miss what was happening, on the one hand, she felt happy for her daughter but remembered what she had felt like when Adam had suddenly gone from her life, and on the other hand, she was jealous.

For whatever reason, she decided one evening that she was going to take Adam some supper up to his encampment, unaware that as she set off up the hill, Sarah was following her at a respectable

distance. Adam had welcomed Jean as they sat and chatted and she shared the supper she had prepared, Sarah stood in amongst the trees, watched carefully, she had been wrong, nothing untoward had taken place. Her mother stood, looking like she was about to leave as Sarah turned, ready to make her way home when to her horror, her mother threw her arms around Adams's neck and kissed him.

Sarah was trembling, that wasn't a quick goodnight kiss, that was a full-on kiss of passion, the tears welling up in her eyes as she turned and fled, she had been right all along, Adam and her mother were having an affair.

When Adam arrived for work the next morning, everything appeared normal at first until Jean cornered him once her husband had disappeared. 'Have you seen Sarah?' She asked, 'She hasn't turned up this morning and her bed hasn't been slept in.'

Together they searched the outbuildings, Adam checking the flat that he used but there was no sign of the young woman. They were both starting to panic when the sound of the outside telephone bell startled them both, Jean rushing indoors to answer it. When she returned, she was as white as a sheet, 'She's at my mother's, Sarah saw us kiss last night.'

They both spent the day on autopilot, her mother requesting that she and Adam pay her a visit after tea. She had told her husband that her mother had not been feeling too good and that Sarah had gone to keep an eye on her. She was going to visit after their

meal, and she was taking Adam to introduce him. The journey down was sombre, very little being said by either of them.

As they walked through the village, he could see the cottage up ahead, the type that you see on the front of tins of biscuits or chocolates and typified the quaint English countryside. Jean opened the front door and entered as he followed her in and she led him into the lounge, the elderly woman getting up from her chair, 'Hello Adam,' she said, 'I have been waiting a long time for you!'

Both Jean and Sarah watched astonished as Adam and Annie held each other tightly, he looked into her face as he stroked her hair and then her cheek, both of them had tears in their eyes as he kissed her gently and spoke into her ear.

To Sarah, this was not two strangers meeting, this was two lovers coming together after many years apart. She was on her feet now, wanting an explanation; it was as though there was a secret that she was not privy to and she had a million questions she wanted to ask, feeling that her grandmother had already met him.

'You have been having an affair with him,' she accused her mother, 'And what about you gran, you don't kiss someone like that when you have never met them before. How could you mum, you knew I was falling in love with him. Did you know about this gran, have you been keeping their secret?'

'Sit down Sarah, I have a story to tell you,' Annie said, waiting for her granddaughter to retake her seat.

'Did you know that I was born in Crompton Hall, as was your mother,' she told the young woman. She described how when she was twenty, she had met a young man, a man she had come across in the wood at the top of the hill and how she had fallen in love with him. He had tried to tell her he had come from the future, but she hadn't believed him at first, but slowly, as things he told her came true, she started to trust him. They had spent two years together she had said, until that fateful day when he left, and she had never seen him again until now.

'It was my own fault, he wanted me to go with him, but I was too much a coward and then he disappeared. I was there on that day when he went, his name was Adam, and he doesn't look a day older than the last time I saw him,' she finished, a tear rolling down her cheek as Adam lifted her hand and kissed it.

All the time she had been speaking she had been fiddling with a pendant around her neck, twirling it between her fingers as she spoke.

Sarah was looking between her grandmother and Adam, 'That's impossible, it can't happen, he must just look similar to someone you knew,' she said.

Before she could say any more Jean spoke, and now it was Annie's turn to look on amazed.

'It was 1973 and I was eighteen years old. I had gone up to "Adams Wood" and the pool there to relax when suddenly a young man appeared in the water opposite me. One minute I was alone, the next he was there.'

She went on to explain how she had befriended him and how together they had worked on the farm.

'He told me something one day that nobody could possibly know unless you could see into the future.

'Anyway, he told me to put a bet at the bookmakers and he was correct, and I won a lot of money.

'By the way Adam, I gave the money to Mr and Mrs Timpson so that they could retire. When mum sold the big house, I took on the farm and the old couple needed the money more than I did.'

Sarah looked at Adam, noticing the smile on his face and the memories in his eyes as he and her mother shared a secret.

'So, to cut a long story short, just like your grandmother, I fell in love with that young man and we had two years together.

'I was there on the night that he went and if I'd asked, he would have stayed, but he was trying to get back to someone, a young

girl called Sam because she had befriended him and he didn't want to disappoint her, his name was Adam.'

Sarah was close to tears, 'It's just not possible, how could he have been away for years, if he had been with you gran, he would be your age. And the same with you mum, but he's not, he's only my age.'

It was at that point that Adam interrupted, 'As strange as it sounds Sarah, it's true, that's why I came to the farm that day, to apologise to Sam for being away so long.'

Turning to Annie he was inquisitive as he asked, 'What is that your twirling between your fingers, it seems familiar.'

Annie stopped and held it up so that he could see, 'It's a silver thruppence, I got it from my mother.'

Adam undid his jacket and reaching inside his t-shirt, he pulled out a chain and dangling from it was an identical coin. 'This was around my neck when I was found, I have always presumed that my mother left it there when she abandoned me. There is a name inscribed on the back of it, that's how I got my name, the hospital presumed that was what my mother had called me.'

The room was silent except for the gasp that escaped Annie's lips.

It was as though she was whispering as she finally broke the silence. 'I only learnt this just before my mother passed away. It was never spoken of and I never knew until the very end and by then, she suffered from dementia.'

'It appeared that my mother had an older sister, her name was Sarah and unbeknownst to anyone, Sarah was in love with a young man, his name was Adam..... Adam Thomas Newton.

My father was not best pleased when things began to develop between Adam and me, he was only a gardener and I was born to so much more. It was my mother who protected him, I used to catch her watching him wistfully.

'Towards the end, she was asking about Adam one day, I thought she meant my Adam, which in a way she was, but it turned out she also had an older brother. Her maiden name, by the way, had been Newton.'

Everyone looked at Adam.

'I just thought my mother was confused until she tried to explain, some of it not making sense.

'Adam, her brother, had gone off to war and before he went, he had bought each of them a pendant, one for himself, one for my mum and one for Sarah, their names engraved on the rear of each.

'Unfortunately, on the first of January 1915, Adam was killed.'

'My Mum said Adam had returned to her and that he was working in the gardens. I just put it down to her dementia, but she made me promise something, that if I ever had another daughter or granddaughter, she was to be called Sarah, and this pendant was to go to her.'

As she finished, she unfastened the chain from around her neck and turning to her granddaughter she handed it to her. 'This belongs to you my darling.'

'My mother told me aunt Sarah never got over Adams death, they found her one morning up in the woods, one hand hanging listlessly into that pool up there, she had taken poison, it was my mum who erected the headstone.'

The room was silent for many minutes, so quiet, you could hear a pin drop as they all digested what they had each learnt.

'So, if all you say is true,' Sarah said, 'Then in two years he is going to disappear on me as well.' She was fighting for control, her eyes full of tears.'

Her grandmother looked at her with great affection, 'I don't think he will disappear again, not unless you want him to, I think

Adam has finally found his Sarah.' From her handbag, she produced an old, faded photograph and held it out.

'I found this when I was sorting through my mother's possessions.'

Annie had been the only one who had ever seen it and there were gasps as it passed from hand to hand until it was Sarah's turn. The photo was of a young couple, the man standing to attention and looking smart in his military uniform. Linking her arm through his was an extremely attractive young woman resplendent in a dress of the time. Looking closer Sarah could see that the young woman could be her identical twin and that the young man was Adam.

Adam and Sarah had stepped outside to be alone, Jean watching through the cottage window as they kissed. There was also someone else watching, Sam had snuck down from the farm and was stood just down the lane, partially out of sight. A brother and sister, that was what she had always wanted. 'Perfect,' she thought, clapping her hands together with glee, 'Absolutely perfect.' For a split second, her fingers appeared to shimmer.

Back inside the cottage, the conversation continued. 'He doesn't look a day older mum, and I still love him,' Jean said, 'I presume you have guessed by now; Adam is Sarah's father. Do I tell her?'

Her mother shook her head, 'Some secrets are best kept,' she said. 'Adams destiny wasn't with either of us, Adams destiny is with Sarah.'

What she did not disclose, was the fact that her aunt Sarah had been pregnant by her brother when she killed both herself and the baby, and that Adam was also Jean's father.

'I still don't understand how he could be away for years but still look the same,' Jean said, puzzled.

Annie laughed, 'I've had plenty of time to think about it, imagine for every three hours in this time, one year passed in ours. Young Samantha had not seen him for twelve hours, four years of our time.'

'So why couldn't he have stayed with us longer,' Jean asked sadly.

'Because my darling, his body wasn't working on our time. Imagine if he had stayed ten years, we would both have been nearly thirty and Adam would not even be a week older. I've no doubt he loved us both, that's why he asked us to go with him, but would he still have loved us when he was a young man, and we were old women.'

The other thing Annie did not disclose and which her mother had refused to speak of, was when she had asked her, 'So if he slept with one sister, did he sleep with the other?' Was it possible

that Adam, whichever Adam he was, had fathered three generations of his own family in search of his beloved Sarah?

The cottage fell silent as both women became immersed in their memories, while up on the hill and in amongst the tree's the pool shimmered, the inscription on the headstone fading until it was illegible and then the light went out.