

The Watchman

For all the parents. Only you can do this.

Jane writes in her new diary

September 1972 – Crete

I bought this diary today because I thought it looked beautiful and I felt happy. I love the golden butterfly against the purple background on the cover. Some people would think it garish. Not me. Bright colours and swirly patterns remind me of life – bold and complex. I thought I would write about all the beautiful things; things that I'll feel, things that I'll see, things that I have, and just about anything I think is beautiful.

I'm expecting my first baby. This is a beautiful thing, isn't it? The baby that will be mine and Pete's, whom I love with all my heart. I don't know what will happen.

We've bought the clothes, the cot and a basket for his or her clothes.

Everything is bold, of course. Purples. Greens. Reds.

Right now, everything is perfect. The sun is shining. Pete loves me as much as I love him. I'm sitting here under the Crete sky with a little life in my belly. That little life will go on and, one day, be the reason why I'm proud. As I sit and watch the ocean, I wonder what the world has in store for my little baby.

What can be more beautiful than that?

Chapter 1 – Tomorrow

Spring – 1988

Adam

It's a little while later and I think we're home. I've been on holiday before so I know how it feels when we are about to go home. Holidays normally mean walks, arshees and Dad going off at night. Then we leave in the car. The last few days have been about unpacking, sandwiches and shouting. We never have sandwiches on holiday. And we've only had one long walk.

This time we're not going home. We're home already. I'm pretty certain of that.

The day we left our old home was a funny day. I woke up to this horrible smell and all sticky bits on my face and pillow. Dad walked in and said, 'For fuck's sake, Adam', and then shouted for Mum. He went off muttering 'today of all days', but I didn't understand his words, of course - I can make my own words in my head, but I don't understand everyone else's words... I don't know why. Jake and Jocelyn poked their heads round the door, smiled, and ran off. I wasn't sure what to do, so I just stayed in bed without moving. Mum then walked in with a smile. She smiles a lot. She walked towards me in a way that made me feel a little better. Mum always does that in the morning. She helped me out of bed and gave me a cuddle.

I thought about running off and playing with her, but my belly felt a little funny, so I walked to the bathroom and started to run a bath. I took all my clothes off and sat on the toilet, watching the water fill up the bath. The sound and look of the water and bubbles filling up to the top always makes me feel happy. I don't know why.

I hardly noticed Mum walk in a few minutes later. She came into the bathroom, shut the door, put her hand in the water and stopped the water from running. She came over to me and smiled. I could hear Dad shouting at Jake and Joss. I never know if I'm going to spend an hour or a minute in the bath until I'm actually in there. I climbed in and didn't like the heat of it that much, so decided to make it a short one. After a little scrub, I got up quickly and covered Mum and the walls with water.

I felt in a much better mood now, so after drying I ran out of the bathroom and went to sit in my usual seat at the table... but it wasn't there. My seat (the one by the window, for my Watches) had gone. I felt myself begin to become upset, but I decided that breakfast was more important, so I sat in another chair by the window instead and grabbed my bowl for cereal and my cup for Pom-Pom Parlar. I thought that this would keep Mum busy for a bit.

The first strange thing about breakfast that morning was Mum – she walked off after filling my breakfast bowl and didn't even look at me or give me a kiss or anything. Normally she sits with me. That morning she just stared at something out of the window and walked off after Dad. But I had my food, and I had my Pom-Pom Parlar, so I forgot about Mum and my seat and moved the chair so I could have a little Watch out of the window.

The second strange thing about breakfast that morning was that my family were making too much noise. Jake and Joss were fighting over boxes that were full of all our stuff. Dad walked from room to room and kept going to the front door to look outside. Every time either Jake or Joss came in with a box, he'd always say, 'No! The big ones first. What the hell are we going to do with the little boxes now? The big ones go on the van first, and the smaller ones later. Jesus.' Or something like that.

I don't normally listen to what people say, but Dad looked quite funny with his serious face and hands all dirty. The others were getting a little scared of him; they always do when he's like that. But not me. I had to spit my food out so I could laugh at him. He's not as scary as everyone thinks. Mum ran in and told Jake and Joss to help her instead.

Of course, I got away with doing nothing by sitting at the table and eating my Sugar Puffs and pretending to stare out of the window – there was nothing much out there. I may have lost my seat and all our stuff may have been in boxes, but I had my cereal, my Pom-Pom Parlar and an extra Watch to think about. But my Sugar Puffs were starting to run out. I couldn't remember eating that fast. Had Mum forgotten to give me the proper amount? This would never have happened if she'd sat with me. I decided it would be OK for me to pour some more into my bowl. If anything bad happened, then it would be Mum's fault – she should have sat with me like she normally does.

So I poured. Something bad happened. It was Mum's fault.

My family stopped what they were doing and looked at me with all my Sugar Puffs on the table and all the milk on the floor. Dad stood there shaking his head, and Jake and Joss were trying not to laugh. Mum rushed to the kitchen to get a cloth, looking at the floor all the way, so she could clear up my mess.

I got up and went to my room. Everyone else carried on with what they were doing.

Morning Watch

I got there and everything was gone. No bed, no books, no toys. I wasn't surprised; just a little annoyed. If they were going to move everything out of my room, couldn't

they have waited until after my morning Watch and time with my books? Of course, now I know that they were changing homes, so it probably wasn't such a bad thing that all my stuff had gone – but at the time I found the whole thing a little annoying. I felt no rage. If Dad hadn't been in such a silly mood, I would probably have bitten Jake. I stepped over the boxes and leant on my windowsill to begin my morning Watch. This is Watch time. I do this in the mornings, when I come home from school, after tea and before I go to bed. Nobody can stop me from doing it; I don't need anyone to help me and nobody bothers me while I'm doing it. My family understand my Watches – let Adam do it by himself; he doesn't need any help; it's something he can do all by himself. It gives me time to think. Whilst I'm sat at my window, watching people do what they do, day after day, I can think about important things – dogs, bikes, cars and the sky. I rarely think of my family – they're always there anyway, so why do I need to think about them during my Watch? I also think about little things like food and baths. I sometimes wonder why I look through a window in my spare time, when Jake and Joss go out and ride their bikes, or play with their friends. It's not something that makes me sad or angry, I just wonder why. Mostly I handle it quite well. Other times my head becomes really clear and thinking becomes a lot easier. Then I'm not thinking anymore – I'm worrying. If I'm in a bad mood or nobody is listening to me, I feel rage. Normally Mum gets hurt by my rage – not because I don't love her, but because she just shuts her eyes and speaks softly and lets me do it. The others hit back and shout at me, especially Jake, but Mum just stands there and says, 'it's OK, sweetheart. Mummy's here.' I never bite her that hard. I bite Jake as hard as I possibly can.

That morning's view was the same as any other, really. The postman looked as bored as ever; the old couple on the other side of the road were looking at our home

and whispering to each other. Some kids were walking up to the playing field next to our home. The unusual thing that morning was that a huge lorry was parked outside our home. Two fat men, who I think were friends of Dad's, were carrying all the boxes full of our stuff into the lorry. Jake and Joss were fighting in the garden.

It's strange but I've been in the family longer than both Jake and Joss. When they first came and were really small, they would play with me and talk to me all the time. Now they hardly speak to me. Joss will come to my room sometimes and read to me. When he's bored, Jake will take me into the garden and try to play footie with me – but never for very long. They don't really talk to me anymore. Nobody talks to me properly. People tell me things or ask me if I'm feeling OK, but nobody looks me in the eye and actually tries to talk to me. Except Mum. But this is OK. Every now and again, Dad will come into my room when I'm supposed to be Watching through the window. He'll come up to me and sit down and start chatting. Normally I won't know what to do, so I just sit there and look at him. But he'll sit there chatting slowly and quietly and actually look me in the eye. Sometimes his eyes go a bit teary and he wipes them with his hand. I'm never too sure what he's saying, but I can make out stuff like, 'I'm sorry', and 'You're a good lad.' He slurs a bit and smells funny. But that doesn't matter. When he's with other people, he either shouts at me or ignores me. I like it when it's just me and him. He holds my hand and hugs me. He smiles more.

After a while, I got bored with Watching. That was when the two fat men closed the doors at the back of the van and drove it away. I could hear everyone downstairs chatting and everything sounded really strange – like the rooms were really big. I decided it was time to finish my Watch and go downstairs... and everything had gone. All our stuff and furniture wasn't there anymore. I wasn't as bothered as I

should've been because everyone was putting coats on, and Jake was holding my coat and trying to get me to put it on. We were going out in the car, so things couldn't have been that bad.

Special Watch – The Car

I like long journeys in the car. I normally sit at the back in silence and watch all the stuff that happens. Normally it's Jake who starts all the naughty stuff – Mum and Dad say his name loads when they talk to each other.

“You know why we're moving to the countryside,” Dad said, “because we need a quieter home. Away from... all that.”

I didn't understand what those words meant. Jake was playing with Joss and I heard Mum say to Dad, “It's not Jake's fault.” I don't know what that means. What any of it means.

“We've discussed it already. It's what we all need,” said Dad.

“What you need,” said Mum. “You're not the one who's going to have to spend every day at home with Adam for the next six months...”

I heard my name mentioned. I understand some of their words sometimes, especially names. I always get a bit angry when I hear my name because I don't understand the rest of the words, and what can I do to make them understand me? So I just sat back, Watched the other cars on the motorway, and let everyone else do their speaking.

So the car journey carried on for hours with the same conversations, arguments and games of Pub Cricket. We stopped at a café and I tipped the table over so that all the cups and teapots made a crashing noise on the floor. That wasn't the only reason I did it. I'd finished my Pom-Pom Parlar ages before and my family were just

sitting there saying nothing. Something had to happen. There was no talking. There was no eating or drinking. Dad looked grumpy and tired. So I snapped. Bang! All the cups and teapots made noise and mess everywhere. My family got up quickly and bustled all around me. I stood and laughed at my mess. Mum kept saying sorry to everybody. Jake and Dad screwed their faces up and kept looking at the people in the café who were staring. Jake shouted at one of them. Joss stood with her hands on her hips and a funny frown. After a little while, we went to leave. Dad went to the lady by the door and gave her all the money. He didn't look at her. Mum laughed her pretend laugh and said sorry again.

“I don't mind clearing the mess up,” said Mum.

“No, honestly. That's fine,” said the lady.

That was when we left. Dad, Jake and Joss walked in front of me and Mum so they could get to the car first. Mum held my hand. Back in the car I felt happy again. I'm able to Watch out of the window for as long as I like and the stuff keeps changing. All those people with all their lives going to different places for different reasons. They all seem to work so hard.

All this happened a few days ago, when I thought we were just going for a drive or even going on holiday. But we got to the new house and it was empty, and now it's full – full of all our stuff. So I'm home. Home with Mum, Dad, Jake and Joss. I get the feeling that, sometimes, it's Mum, Dad, Jake, Joss and Adam. It's hard to know that for certain when they all come and go, day in day out, and I just sit up in my room Watching out of the window.

Chapter 2 – Adinna

August 1988 –

The weather is really hot at the moment. I haven't been to school for ages. Nor have Jake and Joss. It must be the summer holidays.

We've been in our new home for a while now – and I'm starting to love it. Mum takes me for short walks and Dad takes me for long walks. All of our stuff is in the right places now. The house is tidy. Mum and Dad shout at each other a lot less. Jake and Joss are going out with other their new friends. So they're happy now.

Today feels different to all the other days. At breakfast this morning, everybody was laughing and smiling more. So today was the first day where we all felt properly happy. Dad went out really early this morning and came back with a dog. I can't remember us ever having a dog before. That's probably why Jake and Joss hugged it and kissed it so much when it ran into the room. Mum didn't hug and kiss it. She looked at it with a frown, and muttered something about hairs and more bloody Hoovering. Dad stood in the doorway with a bit of a smile. I stayed in my seat with my apple. The others wandered off after a while, so I thought I would go and meet the dog. I walked over to it, stroked it and then put my apple in its ear. I don't know why. I decided that it was probably a bad thing to do, so I ran off laughing.

After some Hoovering, bathing and more dog, it was decided by everybody that we should go for a long walk.

Morning Watch (cancelled) –

Only three things will make me happy to miss one of my Watches. Obviously a Pom-Pom Parlar. I'd miss a Watch for *Hi-di-Hi*. That makes me laugh and I love the music. I'd also miss a Watch for a walk. So when everybody decided that we were going for a walk, I didn't even think about it: the weather was hot and we were all happy. We had a dog and we lived in a place where there were lots of fields and hardly any buildings. My family call it the Country. I don't like that word. I call our new home Adinna.

We didn't need any coats because it was so hot, so we all got ready very quickly. The dog jumped around and made a squeaky noise – I think he was excited about going for a walk. My family made sure he had his lead on and that he had a drink before we went out (which was a mistake, I think, because he did a big wee on the floor after). Mum made a flask with Pom-Pom Parlar inside and some sandwiches in tinfoil. Jake cleaned up the wee. I found my wellyboots and got Joss to put them on for me. Mum put the Pom-Pom Parlar and sandwiches in a bag.

Finally, we walked out of our home and into Adinna. It was so hot, but I ran across the road anyway and pulled up some grass to put in my mouth.

“Adam,” shouted Mum. “Mind the road, sweetheart.” She ran over to me. “You’ll get hit by a tractor and hurt yourself. Bad boy.”

“And take that shagging grass out of your mouth,” shouted Jake.

“Jake,” said Dad. “I’ve told you before. You can only start swearing after your fourteenth birthday – if we can’t hear you.”

“Don’t encourage him, Dad,” said Joss.

It's funny getting Jake into trouble. I don't know why they all looked at him the way they did. I knew he'd done something bad and that it was probably because of what I'd done. Mum was wiping smelly mud off my hands.

"Eating shit already," said Jake. Dad slapped him on the leg. Jake started to cry. I ran up the road and laughed and slapped my own leg. Mum kept on chasing me. I stopped and looked round and saw the dog run off up the other road. Dad, Jake and Joss chased after it. I laughed and ran my way. Mum followed me. I got bored with running off after a while, so I stood in a gateway and looked at Adinna. The others (except for Mum) had caught the dog and walked back to me whilst Mum waited, so I could be on my own for a bit. I decided that these walks would be good for my Watches – normally I can watch everything I needed to watch from my window, but outside in Adinna I can see loads more than normal. There aren't any buildings or roads to get in the way. Everything is just green and brown. My window in my bedroom in my new home is a bit too small for proper Watches. Sometimes I have to push my face really hard against the glass to see what's coming down the road. If Jake is outside with his new friends, he looks up and shakes his head the way Dad does.

I decided to leave the gateway, but knew I'd go back to it another day. I looked up the road for my family and saw that Dad was talking to a new person. A funny-looking lady, with boring green wellyboots and white hair. Me and Mum walked up to the new lady.

"Hello," said Mum. "I'm Jane. This is Adam."

I liked the way the funny lady looked – friendly – so I gave her a big hug. The lady I'd just hugged, who was small and old (a bit like Gran) laughed when I hugged her (I was right about her being friendly). Mum laughed and said sorry; Dad laughed with

the old lady. Joss pushed Jake into some mud. The dog barked. They talked for a while. I got bored, so I ran off again. Mum didn't run after me this time, so I bit my hand and stamped on the floor. Normally this works and Mum will come and talk to me, but she was too busy talking to the old lady and ignored me.

I found another gateway – it wasn't as good as the other one, but it was good enough. I stood there and watched Adinna again, and started to think about why we'd left our other home. The others seem really happy that we aren't there anymore. Our new home is a lot bigger than our old one, and has a big garden with trees and a car with no wheels. Are we here for the dog? Maybe they want a dog here, but not in our old home. They moved here with me so they could get a dog. They all seem to like the dog. Except Mum.

The dog got bored with all the talking and came over to sit next to me. I looked at the muddy ground and saw a small apple with lots of brown bits that looked like poo or chocolate. Mum hadn't opened the sandwiches yet, so I bent down and picked up the apple. Should apples have little worms in them? I decided that this was Adinna and everything must be good, so I ate the apple and the worms. It tasted horrible so I spat it at the dog. The dog didn't like that. It looked at me with its teeth showing and made a grumbling noise. I didn't like that and felt a bit frightened. I turned round and walked away slowly – I made sure that I looked like I wasn't scared. I shouldn't really have bothered, because it walked back to Jake and Joss anyway and rolled onto its back. I felt less scared and threw what was left of the apple at the old lady. She was still talking to Mum and Dad. I decided to go over there and stand with Mum.

“It's absolutely beautiful,” said Mum.

“I know,” said the old lady. “Ize bin livin yer all me life an I cooden live nower else. Ne'er e'en bin on oliday way from Debon. Famlee all live yer, ya see.”

I don't understand a lot of what people say, but the old lady sounded really funny. She talked the way Dad does when he comes home at night. That's probably why he smiled so much when she spoke.

“Yeah,” he said. “It's perfect for the kids.”

“Ohh ahh,” said the old lady.

They carried on talking like this for ages. The old lady looked at me and smiled while Dad spoke. But I was bored now and wanted to eat my sandwiches. I tried grabbing my bollocks to see if that would stop them all talking, but it didn't. After a while, Joss and Jake ran up the road after the dog, and that made Mum and Dad say goodbye to the old lady. But I'd already run away – why hadn't it worked for me? But at least we were walking again. Dad and Mum walked together in front of me with Joss, Jake and the dog further in front of them. Dad started to smoke a cigar. Ackee!

I wasn't sure I liked walking on my own, but Mum kept looking back and checking on me, so I started to enjoy myself. I like being on my own, but I like being with other people as well. I don't think other people understand this, and think that I must be with other people all the time. I know school think that. My family knows when I need to be on my own. It was nice that they were letting me walk on my own. But I started to worry. I knew that I wasn't hungry, but I would be soon. Mum hadn't mentioned anything about food. She had all those sandwiches and all that Pom-Pom Parlar, but we were still just walking along. Dad had finished his Ackee cigar, the dog seemed tired and Joss and Jake were looking a bit tired. I grabbed Mum,

dragged her to the gateway and rubbed my teeth with my finger – she understands how this means I'm ready to eat.

“In a minute darling,” she said. “If we walk to the next field, we can all sit down and eat lunch together. We'll have a picnic.”

I knew she meant that we weren't going to eat now – my worry turned into a little bit of rage. So I bit my lip, pulled her head towards me and pressed hard against her cheek. I wouldn't have done that to Dad.

“Adam,” shouted Dad. Mum smiled. “Sorry,” she said.

I didn't like Dad shouting, so I let go of Mum and ran off. I shook my head from side to side really fast and bit my hand. I quickly caught up with Jake and Joss and the dog and walked with them for a while so I could calm down. Joss is always good to be with when I need to calm down. Her voice is nice and quiet. It makes me feel better and rage goes away.

“What's the matter, Ad?” said Joss.

I looked at her and rubbed my teeth again.

“Is Mum being tight with the grub? If the three of us and the dog go into this field now, then by the time they get here, we'll be sat on the grass having a sunbathe. Then they'll come in, and I'll say, 'let's have a picnic here'. Then Dad'll say, 'Oh no! This field is too green', or 'Oh no! That tree is too treelike.'” She said this in a funny voice and made me laugh. “But I'll say, 'Dad. Get it together, fatty. Ad has a bursting hunger and is on the point of having a major Benny. We will stay here and eat 'till we burst.' How's that, Ad?”

I sniffed hard and grabbed Joss's hand. I pulled her towards the nearest gate. She laughed as I pulled her, and Jake laughed as he chased after us both. The dog tried to chase us but a bird flew in front of him so he chased that instead. We

reached a crumbly, wooden gate that led into a field with a big tree in the middle. Without stopping, we ran to the thing next to the gate – a step made of a few pieces of wood stuck together; we had to lift our feet on to it to climb over. By the time Joss had helped me over, the dog had lost the bird and jumped through the gate. I jumped off the wooden thing and landed straight in a muddy puddle. I splashed the dog and I splashed Jake. I thought this so funny that I laughed, stepped in some smelly mud and fell over. There was another big pile of smelly mud (the biggest pile I've ever seen) next to the one I'd stepped into. I jumped up and fell straight into it and got my face and clothes all covered. I laughed even more and shouted, "Ackee." Jake and Joss were laughing really loudly. The dog was getting excited and started to bark right next to my ear. I couldn't stop laughing. The dog stopped barking and started to lick the smelly mud off my face. This made Jake and Joss laugh even more.

"Shit-faced. Adam's shit-faced," shouted Jake.

"Adam," shouted Mum. Her and Dad had just walked in through the gate. "Get up out of the mud. Now."

We all stopped laughing. Mum grabbed my hand and pulled a tissue from her pocket and started to wipe all the smelly mud off my face. Dad shouted at Jake for ages. Joss 'stayed put' (as Dad sometime says) and put the dog on the lead. Ackee! The smelly mud wasn't that nice after we'd stopped laughing. I really needed a Pom-Pom Parlar. I couldn't understand why Mum didn't laugh as much as we all did. If it had been Dad, Joss or Jake, she would've laughed.

"How can you eat your picnic with poeey fingers?" Mum said.

Dad had stopped shouting at Jake and was staring at me. Jake tried not to cry. I didn't like this very much, so I grabbed Mum's hand and started to walk away from

them all. Everyone followed and we ended up walking to the big tree in the middle of the field. We all sat down in a circle on a bit of grass, and breathed heavily. The air tasted so nice, almost sweet - I think you have to breathe heavy sometimes and just enjoy the air going in and out - and at last Mum got all the sandwiches wrapped in tinfoil out of her bag and gave us one each. She then got some cups from her bag and gave one to each of us. Then, one by one, she filled our cups with Pom-Pom Parlar. I felt very thirsty, so I drank the Pom-Pom Parlar in one gulp. Dad hates it when I do that. He always looks at me with frowns if I eat and drink too loud – but I never get scared of him. I blew him a kiss and poked out my tongue. I then got my sandwiches and ate them really quickly. I did this because Dad hated that more than me drinking my Pom-Pom Parlar too fast. I blew him more kisses. Dad shook his head. This made me laugh.

We were all sat there feeling happy. We were all eating our food and enjoying the green underneath us. We were all drinking our Pom-Pom Parlars and smiling at the warmth around us. The dog hadn't been seen for a while. It made up for that by running right into the middle of our picnic and spilling all the Pom-Pom Parlars – and Dad had got angry with me for finishing mine too fast. At least I'd drunk a whole Pom-Pom Parlar – I reckon I was the sensible one. I suppose he understood this, which is probably why he got angry.

Mum got angry and shouted 'Shoo'. Joss stood up and shouted at Jake.

"You got it too excited, dickhead," she said.

Jake shouted at the dog. Dad shouted at Mum – something about not bringing a bloody cloth. I understood that bit. I sat there chewing my last bit of sandwich and watched as everybody else got upset. I decided to hurt the dog if I got a chance later. It wasn't Jake's fault that the dog had disturbed our picnic. But everybody was

shouting at him. Nobody shouted at Dad, and he'd brought the dog home. I felt sorry for Jake because he's always in trouble. Normally I laugh at him for being in trouble, but he'd made me feel good when I fell over in the smelly mud earlier on. So I decided to hurt the dog for him. Later on. If I got the chance.

My family cleaned up the mess made by the dog and calmed down a little. So we carried on with the walk. I suddenly felt really happy that everybody else had got upset about the dog and that I'd managed to stay calm. I also got this feeling in my belly that made me want to run. So I ran. I knew it would be OK, because we were walking away from the road and towards the woods. So I ran faster. I ran as fast as I could and I couldn't stop myself from laughing. Apart from my laughter and the wind in my ears I could also hear the dog barking. I looked around and there it was running next to me. Not only that, but it was jumping up at me. Before I knew it, the dog had jumped on my leg, pushed my feet together and made me fall over. Bad dog! I decided to really hurt him later – if I could.

Mum walked over to me and held my hand.

"Oh Adam, poor baby. Did the bad doggy hurt you? Bad doggy," said Mum.

"He's not a five year old," said Dad.

Mum tried to help me up, but I didn't feel like being helped, so I jumped to my feet and ran off again – it'd felt so good last time. The dog ran up next to me again. But he didn't try to jump up at me this time. It just ran next to me. How stupid. He must have known that he'd been making me angry all day and that I wanted to hurt him. He didn't. So I hurt it. Ha ha. What I did was to run in front of him and stamp on his paw with my wellyboot. He screamed and barked and stopped running next to me. I laughed and stopped running as I came to another wooden thing to climb over next to a gate. Over the gate were some woods and a river. I decided to wait for my

family who had stopped – they were stroking the dog and holding his paw. Dad looked at me and shook his head. So did Jake, but it wasn't quite as bad as Dad's shake. Mum just looked at me, but I couldn't tell if she was angry with me or not, and then she smiled quickly and looked back at the dog. I reckon she loves me the best – I can do anything to my Mum and she doesn't stay angry with me. Joss just looked at the dog as if she didn't care about anything that much. I turned round and climbed over the wooden thing. Mum started shouting at me.

“Adam. Wait for us.”

I turned round and leant on the gate, watching my family walk towards me. They all seemed a bit upset and tired of walking through the field. I felt happy and funny now that I was in the woods. The dog had got what he deserved. I'd had my Pom-Pom Parlar. Joss and Jake were being nice to me. The woods were quiet and dark. The rushing river made a nice noise. I waited for my family. When they got to me they all jumped over the wooden thing, except Jake and the dog who climbed over the gate. They all seemed to feel as good as me when they were standing with all the trees. It's like being inside, but you could still see the sun above and breathe the warm outside air.

Nobody said any words. Jake and Joss went and sat on a tree that had fallen over. Mum and Dad walked together and spoke so I couldn't hear them. The dog ran away, barking. I went and stood next to Jake on the log. He seemed friendlier with the trees all around us.

I sat down next to Jake. He looked at me and smiled. Joss got up and walked away.

“You alright, Ad? Nice woods, aren't they?”

I sniffed and kissed my hand. I don't know why. I think Jake realised I was listening to him, even though I didn't understand his words. Dad got his camera out and took a photograph.

"You see that big tree there – that's a Horse Chestnut tree. That's where you get conkers from in the autumn. If you want to make really good conkers, you need to soak them in vinegar or bake them in the oven. That's what I did last year, but the teachers took them all off me."

I picked up a stick and bit the end off. Joss walked back over to us with something hidden under her T-shirt.

"Ignore William Brown over there," she said. "Tea?"

A flask full of Pom-Pom Parlar! She took the flask and cup from under her T-shirt and poured me a Pom-Pom Parlar. She poured one for Jake as well.

"...and that bird singing is a blackbird. They've got a beautiful song. If we sit here long enough and keep still and quiet, we might see some deer."

It's nice when Jake speaks to me properly, but sometimes I just want him to be quiet. This was one of those times. So I put the stick in his ear. Not hard so it would hurt him. Just enough to stop him from talking. He laughed and stopped talking. Joss laughed and screwed the top back on the flask. The three of us sat there and were quiet. After a while I got a bit worried because I hadn't seen Mum for a while. I looked round and said, "Ma-mummy". She was only a little distance away, walking slowly with Dad and holding his hand.

"It's alright darling," she said. "Mummy's only walking with Daddy. I'll come and see you in a minute. Love you."

I never normally see Mum and Dad holding hands. It made me feel really happy – them being close together and touching and laughing properly. I also felt really

happy sat there with Jake and Joss. We weren't saying anything, but I don't think we needed to. That's why I put the stick in Jake's ear – he was talking when he didn't need to. We just needed to be together quietly. But then the dog barked.

After tea Watch

We stayed in the woods for a bit longer, and then realised that the dog had disappeared. After loads of searching we found him in a field chasing lots of cows. We went home after that.

The big garage in our new garden is where the dog is staying. I can still hear him barking. After I had my bath I got into my nightclothes and Mum made me more sandwiches and Dad went out for the night. That made things a little nicer – like always. Mum smiles more and talks a little slower. Jake and Joss smile more and talk more loudly. Mum sits down more. I went for my Watch, but the night was too dark – there aren't any lights in the street in Adinna. At nighttime, all you see are the stars. I'd never really seen stars properly. You could only just about see them in our old home. Adinna makes them really bright. Joss and Jake were being happy and loud, so I went downstairs to be with Mum. She made a Pom-Pom Parlar and it tasted really nice – when Dad's at home they taste a little different. I pulled Mum's hair to say thank you. Joss and Jake ran around and made loads of noise. Mum didn't seem that happy with all the noise, but after a while she smiled and said something.

“Do you want to watch *Hi-Di-Hi*?” she said.

I only understood '*Hi-Di-Hi*', but when she walked to the telly I knew she was going to make it come on. That made me really happy. Normally I clap when *Hi-Di-Hi* comes on, but after our fun day I felt extra happy, so I decided to bounce up and

down as well. Mum always laughs and claps when *Hi-Di-Hi* comes on. So I clapped and bounced even more and laughed so much my throat hurt. I kept laughing and clapping, and Mum sat next to me on the settee and hugged me. I felt funny in the throat and stomach. I laughed a bit more and then for no reason I started crying. I felt really odd. I wanted to laugh because *Hi-Di-Hi* was on and Mum was laughing and Dad wasn't there shouting, but my throat felt funny and made me cry. My face was covered in tears. And Mum was crying as well. I couldn't stop it. I felt like laughing one minute and then I had to cry the next. Mum tried to hug me but it didn't help. She was crying too much. *Hi-Di-Hi* was on the telly; the music that sounds funny played, and Mum looked happy but cried as well. I felt happy, but the tears still came. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't think of anything to do. Joss and Jake were standing in the doorway. Joss looked at us and smiled.

"What's wrong?" said Jake.

Joss looked like she was going to cry and walked over to us. She knelt on the floor and put her arms around my waist and started to cry. Jake looked at us all crying, and his lip started to wobble.

"Stop it," he said. "Just stop."

He stayed in the doorway and started to cry. But he tried to pretend that he wasn't crying. But we knew he was. Peggy pushed her trolley into one of the chalets and sang a funny song. Spike said something to her and all the people laughed.

Night Watch –

We all stopped crying after a while and watched *Hi-Di-Hi* together and drank a honey-milk. Then we went to bed. I have this Watch that none of the others know about. I do it after Mum has tucked me in and kissed me and said goodnight.

I can hear Jake and Joss talking through the walls to each other. I walk quietly to the window and look out. Nothing. I can't see anything. In our old home, I still see people walking about and talking at nighttime. All I see out of my window in Adinna are the stars being really bright. I didn't know they were as shiny as that. I can hear Mum downstairs, walking around and cleaning up the cups. I can hear Joss and Jake talking less and less. I then hear the front door go slam. Dad's home. I know because Mum has stopped cleaning the cups and Joss and Jake have stopped talking and started whispering. I hear Dad talking to Mum and laughing. So that's OK. I can go to sleep now. I can't go to sleep until Dad's home. I can't sleep unless all my family are at home and in bed. It doesn't feel right otherwise. It feels more right if Dad laughs. It's not nice when he is really late and starts being all grumpy – it makes me tired for the next day.

With Dad home, I walk quietly to bed and get in. I like Adinna and I like our new home. Today was fun, even though we all cried and laughed. I'm going to like the walks, and I'm going to like drinking Pom-Pom Parlars outside. I'm not sure about the smelly mud. I don't like the dog. I like Dad and my family more. It's definitely Mum, Dad, Joss, Jake and Adam. At the moment. I hope things don't change. I hope things never change.

Morning Watch –

I got up and my head and body felt bad. I had my bath and everybody was making too much noise. Dad was smiling a lot and Mum was rushing around. Jake and

Joss were wearing their school clothes. So the summer holidays must be over. Dad took the dog out this morning for a walk, but forgot to take me with him. Even though Jake and Joss were wearing their school clothes, I knew I wouldn't be going to school. They had their coats on and their bags packed. Mum was putting my shoes on, so we must have been going for another walk in Adinna. This was good, but my head and body still felt bad. My Pom-Pom Parlar didn't taste nice this morning.

We actually went out with Jake and Joss for a walk. They were still in their school clothes. The dog came with us. We walked up a hill that we hadn't walked up before. It was very steep and made my legs hurt. Jake and Joss walked in front of me and Mum. We didn't walk for very long, and we came to a place with some houses. It wasn't very big. The road split and went in two different directions. There were some houses and a shop next to the road. All the houses had grass roofs. And smoke was coming out. I know in winter people light fires to keep warm, and fires in houses means smoke coming out of the roof. But it was warm already. Why should people want to light fires in the house when it's warm? Adinna's a funny place.

Me and Mum stopped with the dog. Jake and Joss walked off and waved to us. We just stood in the road, watching them walk towards some other people who looked like Jake and Joss. They were wearing school clothes as well. The other people looked at Jake and Joss and then looked at me. One of them laughed and whispered in the ear of the person next to him. I smiled and blew him a kiss. I was starting to feel a bit better now the air was fresher and we were outside. Even the dog was being good. We waited for a while and then a big bus came along. All the people were in school clothes, and Jake and Joss got on the bus and drove off. I wasn't expecting that. Mum wasn't looking at me, so I trod on the dog's paw.

Mum waved at Jake and Joss as the bus drove away, so I stuck my tongue out and scratched my arse to say goodbye. Joss stuck her tongue out back at me. This made her smile. I wonder if Jake scratched his arse? I sniffed at him anyway. The bus made loads of noise in that quiet place in Adinna. After it had gone, it seemed even quieter than normal. I could hear the dog breathing. Mum's eyes were red. I think she might have cried a little. I bit her really gently on the hand – that always makes her feel better.

“Come on then, darling,” she said. “Let's go and see the village shop and buy Daddy his paper and Mummy her stamps.”

It was so quiet – I wondered how loudly I could shout. I don't know why. So I shouted as loudly as I could. A fat, old man sweeping his step looked at me and muttered something we couldn't hear. It felt good. My bad head and bad body were starting to feel better.

“Adam,” said Mum. “Quietly. You'll disturb people.”

I think Mum was a bit unhappy with me for shouting, so I slapped my arse and squeezed her hand. I think she understood. We got to the other side of the road and tied the dog to a wall and went into a shop. It was smaller than my bedroom. All the sweeties were right next to me, and I couldn't move away because Mum was next to me and she was standing right next to the vegetables.

Ackee!

There was nobody else in the shop. We waited until I was getting bored and my bad head and bad body started again. I took a sweetie and put it on the wooden thing in front of us. The wooden thing had a metal thing on it as well. You could see through the metal thing.

“Take it off the counter, Adam,” said Mum. “You can have sweeties after Mummy has bought her stuff.”

I didn't like this. Mum took the sweetie and put it back from where I'd got it. I shouted and pressed my face against hers. She slapped my hand. So I pressed my face against her face harder and for longer. I wanted the sweetie.

“I'm sorry, my love. Oh dear,” said a little old lady behind the counter. “Are all the men and ladies old in Adinna?”

I let Mum go.

“Oh, it's alright,” said Mum. “He's just angry because he can't have a Mars bar.”

“That's OK, moy dear,” said the little old lady. “Bin a' hart summer inem?”

The old lady behind the counter was nice. Next to the wooden thing I'd put the sweetie onto was a gap. Next to the gap was a door, and in the door I could see a chair and a telly. Because the lady was nice, I was sure she would let me go and sit in there. Mum had annoyed me because she had put the sweetie away. I pushed past her and ran through the gap and through the door. I knew Mum would try and stop me, so I ran. I knew I was being bad so I couldn't help laughing – and I knew the little old lady wouldn't mind. I decided that I must give her a hug. And a kiss.

“Adam. This is a stranger's house. You can't just run into their living room. Come back. I'm so sorry...”

“Oh, that's fine, my love,” said the little old lady. “Let 'im a lone and watch some telly. I'll make uz a nice cup of tea.”

I sat in the chair and grabbed my balls and sniffed hard. I'd done it. I didn't care that I couldn't see the telly – I'd been naughty. I waited for Mum to come in and shout at me. I got bored because I had to wait. I waited a bit longer and got more

bored. I was just about to get up and find Mum, when the little old lady gave me a Pom-Pom Parlar and a sweetie.

“Thur you go, moy dear,” she said.

Mum came in and sat opposite me. When the old lady turned her back, Mum screwed her face up and said something without saying it. When the old lady turned back around, Mum stopped her face being screwed up and smiled at the little old lady. I think she was angry with me but happy with the little old lady. Mum can be funny sometimes.

I liked this. I could come to this shop and do something bad and get given a Pom-Pom Parlar and a sweetie. It didn't make Mum happy. She kept frowning at me and pointing when the little old lady left the room. I poked my tongue at her and blew a raspberry.

“When Mummy gets you home...” she said. I laughed, turned around, and guffed in her face. I used to think it was called a smelly arse burp, but Jake taught me the right word.

Mum and the little old lady talked for a long time. The telly was boring. So I got bored. Mum, the little old lady and me had finished drinking our Pom-Pom Parlars so I got up, got all the cups and ran into the kitchen. I hate empty cups. I have to finish them off and put them in the sink. I ran into the little old lady's kitchen and put the cups in the sink. I saw a small cake on the side next to the sink. I ate it and I laughed. I ran back out of the kitchen and sat down next to the old lady.

“Yoom a good lad, Adam,” said the old lady, smiling at me and touching my hand. I decided earlier on that I would hug her and kiss her. This seemed to be the right time, so I hugged her and I kissed her. She laughed. Mum smiled. Not properly.

My Mum then jumped out of her chair and stood up.

“Oh my God,” she said. “I’ve left the dog tied up outside. We have to go. I’m so sorry – you’ve been so nice.”

“That’s alright, my lover. Thanks for drapen boy. See ya, Adam.”

I knew we were going, so I kissed the little old lady on the cheek and hugged her again. She smelled funny. Funnier than Gran, but a little bit the same.

Morning Watch (resumed) –

We walked home. Mum was angry with me all the way. I was happy to go home because I’d missed out on most of my morning Watch. I thought that when we got home, I could at least have a later Watch. I enjoyed my time with the little old lady in the shop. Everyone in Adinna seems too old and little. Except the people who got on the bus with Jake and Joss. So I got home and I was happy to start my Watch late... but no. We got straight in the car with Dad and drove off. That really annoyed me. I was happy to miss my Watches yesterday because of the walk. I was happy to miss my Watch on the day we came to our new home because we had a long car ride. Those times we had something special to do. But I didn’t want to miss another Watch just for a drive in the car with Mum and Dad. We weren’t going to be driving that far anyway.

I got a little worried. I refused to put my seatbelt on. Dad clenched his teeth and pulled that funny face that’s supposed to be scary. He was serious about driving this morning. After a while he really did become a little scary, so I let Mum put my seatbelt on. When Dad turned to face the front, I stuck my tongue out at him and blew.

So we went for another drive in Adinna. We went in another direction – one I hadn't been in before. It made me a little less angry because it was all new stuff to look at. I could have a special Watch.

Special Watch (a fair compromise due to Dad's scary face) – The Car

It was still very green with hardly any buildings. Or people. Cars had to squeeze past us. It was pretty much the same as where we had walked. My bad head and body were coming back. I didn't like anything much at that moment. I didn't even want my special Watch. I wanted to be in our home so I could Watch out of the window. I wanted to go back to my old home. They only moved here so they could have the dog. We couldn't have a dog in our old home so we moved here. If we never go back to our old home, then we will never see the people that I know ever again. The people at my school. The people who lived in the house next to ours. Gran. I will never see Gran again. How am I going to see the people that I know? Am I going to have to meet new people? How do I do that? I suppose I've already met the old lady in the road. I also met the old lady in the shop. They were both really nice and they both like it when I hugged them. Did they really like me? I don't think the people who got on the bus with Jake and Joss liked me.

“Are you alright, darling?” said Mum.

I don't know what she said. I put my hand on her shoulder and blew her a kiss. I wanted her to make me feel more happy. I'd felt so happy yesterday. Today felt bad. I didn't want to drive. My head and body felt bad. People had laughed at me. Dad had given me the scary face. Mum wasn't being as friendly as normal. The only person who'd been nice was the old lady in the shop. Mum smiled at me and faced the front again. She carried on talking to Dad. I had nobody to talk to me. I

don't like being with just Mum and Dad. I like being with just Mum or just Dad – that's always nice and fun. All three of us together isn't always very nice. They both treat me in a different way to when they are on their own with me. They shout at each other as well.

I guessed that we must have been going somewhere special. I know that when we are going for a drive and when we are going somewhere for a reason – I know the difference. Dad is different. He talks more and looks more serious. He screws his face up at me, Jake and Joss more.

I was getting bored.

After a little time, we were driving through a place a bit more like our old home and less like Adinna. There were loads more buildings, more cars and more people. I felt a little better because there were more people. And a river.

“We must go to the market. Tavistock's got this really nice little indoor market, apparently,” said Mum.

“And lots of good pubs,” said Dad.

I recognised 'market' – that meant sweeties and cake. I felt a lot better about the idea of sweeties and cake, so I clapped my hands and shook my head really fast.

“Alright, darling,” said Mum. “We're going to go and park the car and then we'll go and see the new school.”

Yes. We were definitely going to get some sweeties. I heard her say school. I don't know why she said that. It was too late to be going to school. I'd eaten my breakfast ages before. I haven't got one anyway. Dad is far too grumpy to drive me to my old home every day so I can't go to school there. Maybe she said that I wouldn't have to go to school. I hoped not, although I do like school.

We stopped the car in the place with lots of other cars and got out. The air was warm again and the cars and people made it really noisy – we'd been in Adinna for so long now that I'd forgotten how noisy it could be in a place that had more people and more buildings. We walked along the river and passed a big building with lots of windows and a big gate. I held Mum's hand. Dad walked in front of us.

"If you want to go this school, then you'll be able to ride in a big bus like Joss and Jake," she said.

"For God's sake, Jane," said Dad. "Do you have to talk to him like a two year old all the time?"

I couldn't stop thinking about the idea of sweeties. We were walking along the river as well and it was rushing really fast and making lots of water noise. I felt a lot better than I had done in the car.

"Oh, piss off," said Mum. "You don't have to moan at everything I say."

After a while, we turned up a little road. We were walking away from the noise. I slapped my arse and shouted 'allaow'. I felt happy. Dad looked at me quickly and then looked away again. I didn't like that – he always does that when he's annoyed at me. I wasn't as happy after that. We walked along a little road and away from the noise and the river. I didn't think that meant that we were going for sweeties. My Mum held my hand really tight.

We stopped at another big building with big gate and walked through.

"Try and be good, Adam. Don't blow it," said Dad.

"Oh, shut up and leave him alone," said Mum in her angry voice. "Just get this over and done with; then we can go home and you can go to the pub. I'd hate it if Adam's schooling deprived you of beer."

We walked through the gate. Mum and Dad were talking to each other like they did when they were angry. I didn't like that. We were walking into a place that didn't sell sweeties – I could tell by the way it looked. It looked like a hospital. I didn't like that. Why were they taking me to hospital? We walked to a main door up a thing where steps should have been, but there were no steps – my old school had one for the people in moving chairs. We walked in through the main door, and then I realised what was happening – we were in a school. The smell of sick and cleaning soap gave it away. I knew that this school was a bad school because the cleaning soap smelt horrible – it didn't clean away the smell of sick and old cabbages. We walked up a long corridor. The walls were painted a really dark colour, and there weren't any pictures on the walls. It was really quiet. The windows were closed and the glass all dirty. There were lots of doors leading into rooms. I pulled away from Mum and looked in the window of one of the doors. I saw lots of people, some in moving chairs, all looking really sad. They weren't doing anything. Just sitting around looking like I feel when I'm bored and unhappy.

“Come on, Ad,” said Mum.

She held my hand, and we carried on walking along the corridor. Still no pictures. We got to a big door and knocked. A lady in glasses opened the door. She didn't smile. She just looked at Dad and sniffed and said something mean. There were some chairs next to another door so we sat down. It was quiet and dark. There was no colour. It smelled so bad. The chairs weren't comfy. The lady wasn't very nice. I went to say hello to Mum and kiss her, but Dad looked at me and shushed me. I didn't know what to do, so I just stared at him. My bad head and body were coming back. We just sat there for ages and said nothing. I could feel my legs wanting to walk. I wasn't bored even though the room and the school were boring. I felt worse

than bored. I tried to stand up, but Dad grabbed me and pulled me back. I just wanted to go home. But nobody would let me. The other door opened up and a smart man who looked fat was standing there with a frown. He said something to Mum, shook Dad's hand and then we walked into his room. This room was just like everywhere else we'd been, but colder. We all sat down next to a desk and the fat man sat opposite us. He started to talk at my parents and they spoke back. I didn't understand any of the words. They were talking very quickly and I started to feel very sad and a little worried. I didn't want to be there. I never wanted to go back there.

"How would you describe your son's general behaviour? Only the majority of the pupils here are quiet and prefer a peaceful environment. Any disruption causes antagonism amongst our pupils. A report from your son's previous school suggested he might be displaying signs of challenging behaviour. I must admit that this causes me some concern."

"He's a bit lively at times, yes. He's clingy – he likes constant contact and stimulation, but I wouldn't say he has challenging behaviour. He just a sixteen year old with lots of energy," said Mum.

I was feeling really bad now. The smell, the colours. I didn't like the fat man – he was upsetting Mum. I could feel Dad getting angry. I felt cold. The chairs weren't comfy. I hated it. I hated being there. I hadn't even been given a Pom-Pom Parlar. The other people in the rooms looked so unhappy and sad. They weren't doing anything – just sitting there looking out of the window. I look out of a window when I want to, not when there's nothing else to do. They had nothing else to do. The fat man never smiled. He didn't make Mum or Dad smile. Mum looked like she was going to cry. That was what made me feel worse than anything else. I felt so sad,

so angry, so bad. I got up out of my chair and screamed. I screamed as loud as I could. It was all I could do. Nobody had made me or Mum or Dad feel better. So I screamed and bit my hand. I bit my hand until it hurt. I screamed even more. Mum and Dad got up and tried to get me to sit down and be quiet.

“Come on, darling. We’ll go home now if you want,” said Mum.

“Alright mate. Let’s go for a bit of cake and a cuppa. Let’s get away from here,” said Dad.

I didn’t want to sit down. I didn’t want to sit there. The fat man was horrible. I saw all the stuff on his desk and I pushed it onto the floor. I wanted to make him feel bad and make his room look untidy. He didn’t like having his stuff touched. He jumped off his chair and walked to the corner of the room. I looked at him and screamed louder and bit and my hand. Dad was trying to grab my arm and Mum was trying to stroke my hair.

“We’ll go home darling,” said Mum.

“You won’t have to stay here. It’s a dump,” said Dad.

I didn’t want him to grab my arm and I didn’t want Mum to stroke my hair. I wanted to scream louder and go home, but they were trying to take me somewhere else. So I pulled away and fell on the floor. I screamed even louder. I started crying. I screamed until my throat hurt. I laid on the floor and kicked my legs and banged with my fists. I was so angry and I was so sad. My head felt bad and my body felt bad. This place was horrible, and all the people were horrible except for the little old lady in the shop.

I stayed lying on the floor screaming. I couldn’t see what the fat man was doing. Mum was crying and saying sorry. Dad was kneeling next to me, holding my arm gently.

“Come on Adam. You won’t have to stay here. Not if you don’t want to. We’ll go and have a nice walk along the river and drink some tea and eat some cake. Then we’ll go home and relax. Then we’ll find you a proper school. Not a place like this. Let’s go home.”

Dad was being nice. I still felt really bad, but I stopped screaming and stood up. We then walked out of the room, along that horrible corridor and out of the school. As we walked out of the gate, I got the smell of chips and felt loads better. I sniffed and grabbed my arse before rubbing my teeth in Dad’s face. We went to place by the river and I drank a big cup full of Pom-Pom Parlar. That made me feel much better, especially as Mum and Dad were smiling at each other.

*

Chapter 3 – Adam’s Gran Falls Down Holes

December 1988 –

Mum put up the Chrimbo decorations weeks ago. Now she’s putting up the Chrimbo tree. It must nearly be Chrimbo.

This isn’t our new home anymore. It’s just home. It’s so long since we came here from our old home that I don’t even think about it anymore. I’ve made some new friends. The little old lady from the shop is my best friend. She always gives me Pom-Pom Parlars and sweeties and lets me watch telly. Mum takes me to see her friend Cath. She’s really nice and makes Mum feel good. I don’t go to school yet, so I don’t have any friends who look like me. But that’s fine – they say their own words in their own ways and I never understand what they mean. Jake is a lot happier than in our old home. He smiles more and doesn’t get shouted at as much. He takes me out for walks sometimes, and we sit in the woods or under the big tree in the field. He doesn’t talk to me that much. He doesn’t talk as much as he used to. He’s much quieter and smiles a lot more. And that’s better. The nee-naw men haven’t been here once since we moved from our old home. He never talks to the nee-naw men in Adinna.

Joss has changed loads. In our old home, she stayed in the house all the time if she wasn’t at school. She never comes home now. She goes to school in the morning with Jake and comes home late at night when Jake has been home for ages. She paints her face and wears clothes that show her belly button – sometimes

she looks like the ladies in the big book with no clothes on and makes my willy feel funny. She comes home smelling the same way Dad does when he comes home at night. Mum shouts at her a lot. Dad shouts at her, but not as much as Mum. He shouts at Jake. Mum shouts at the dog as well. I hate the dog. If Dad is in a really bad mood, or Joss has made everyone shout, they all go to see the dog. They won't come to see me anymore – not like they used to. When we go for a walk, the dog always runs away and we have to find him. When the dog comes in the house, Mum ends up doing loads of cleaning and then I have to put everything back in the right place. Sometimes when it comes in the house it goes into my bedroom. I go in and I pull its ear really hard. It grumbles and goes away then. Mum shouts more and cleans more than she did in our old home. Dad's always home in the day, but he's never home at night.

Morning Watch –

I never miss a morning Watch now. I stay at home a lot of the time. Me and Mum don't walk with Joss and Jake to the bus anymore – not since Joss started shouting at us. So now I start my morning Watches by watching Joss and Jake walk to the bus. They don't talk to each other anymore. Jake walks behind her. I felt happy this morning. Dad was still in bed. Jake and Joss were happy to be going to school – Joss smiled a lot when she walked up the road to the bus. Mum stayed calm and didn't cry. I didn't see the dog. It snowed last night. The whole of Adinna was made white. Jake threw a snowball at Joss, so she pushed him into a hedge.

I like it when it snows. Walks take longer; the air feels nicer. I like putting the snow in my mouth – it's almost like an arshee, only not as sweet. The snow makes Adinna look bigger. It looks much nicer than in our old home. Everything in Adinna looks

nicer than in our old home. It would be better if I had some more friends, but not ones who look like me. I like Chrimbo as well. All the decorations are on the walls and ceiling. Most of them are in the right place, but sometimes I have to move them back to the right places. Mum gets annoyed when I try and move them to the right places. I don't know why.

I remember Chrimbo being better when we were all younger. Mum and Dad smiled at each other more and Jake and Joss were smaller and happier. Jake used to make everyone laugh by eating too much and getting really excited and making himself cry because he was so excited. Dad would be home more. People used to come and visit us at Chrimbo. Mum's friend Valerie. Dad's friend Auntie Margie. Gran used to come all the time at Chrimbo. I don't think anybody will visit this Chrimbo. My family shout at each other too much – why would anybody want to visit us when my family shout all the time? Nobody would enjoy themselves.

I was just about to take a break from my morning Watch and ask Mum for a Pom-Pom Parlar when I saw Jake and Joss walking back down the road. They weren't going to school. They seemed very happy, laughing and pushing each other. Joss didn't get angry about the snowballs this time. It would make Mum a bit happier, them being home. She doesn't seem as happy with just me and her together all the time. She's always nice to me. But her smiles are a bit pretend. She has proper smiles when everyone is here.

Jake and Joss walked up to the house and stamped their feet. I ran downstairs to tell Mum that they were back.

"Adam," she said. "I just want five minutes of peace and quiet before your Dad gets up. Go back to your room and I'll make you a cuppa in a minute."

I pointed at the door and said 'arbwuv', which means brother and sister. Mum just told me 'no'. I bit my hand – she didn't understand. I heard the door open and Jake laugh. Now she would understand what I was telling her.

"What are you doing back?" said Mum. She looked really tired when she said this.

"We're allowed to come home if the bus doesn't come by half eight," said Jake.

"We waited for ages, and then Fat Jeff came out of the shop and told us to fuck off – the road was blocked and the bus got stuck."

"No more school for two weeks," said Joss. She looked at her fingernails and frowned. "Christmas Eve party tomorrow night. Gran and a lorry load of presents. I'm getting out of these clothes and going for a walk."

"Wonderful," said Mum. She sighed and looked at the floor.

Mum sat back down and rubbed her head. I was confused. Why did they walk to the bus and then just walk home again? My plans for the day were going to have to change a bit. I like my plans to stay the same unless I want to change them. I decided to go back to my Watch and think things over. To show them I wasn't happy, I stuck my finger in Joss's ear.

"Get off me, you prick," she shouted.

"Don't you dare talk to your brother like that." Mum shouted really loud. I'd never heard her shout that loud before. She got out of the chair and pointed her finger in Joss' face.

"You may think you can get away with most things at the moment, but you treat your brother with respect. You do not speak to him like he was a piece of shit. Do you understand?"

Mum shouted so loud that I had to leave the room. Joss had given me a funny look when I'd put my finger in her ear – the sort of look that makes me feel bad. It always

makes me feel bad when people give me that look, like I'm stupid. When Mum shouted really loudly I went upstairs to finish my Watch, but I felt worried. I kept thinking about their shouting and their faces. They carried on shouting, even when I got to my room. My worry got worse and I got the bad feeling in my throat and stomach. I started to cry. Then Dad came in. He looked tired. He didn't say anything. He stood in the doorway and just looked at me crying. I wasn't crying loads – just a little bit. He came over to me and hugged me. It felt a bit strange being hugged by Dad. He never normally hugs me. He holds my hand sometimes on walks, but hardly ever hugs me. It felt good and stopped me from crying. I didn't want to be hugged for too long, so I pushed him away after a bit. He smiled, so I kissed the part of his head that didn't have any hair. I laughed and slapped his head too. He laughed and tried to tickle me. I tried to get away, but he caught me and tickled me even more. That made me laugh. I tried to pull away from him, but he is very strong. In the end I fell on the floor and he stood over me and tickled me.

Dad laughed really loudly. After a while he stopped tickling me and said something. "Don't ever take the piss out of my bald head again. It's hereditary anyway – you just wait until it happens to you."

After Dad had gone, I felt really happy. I'd forgotten about what Joss did and Mum shouting. I went back to my Watch and found my big book with pictures of ladies. I decided to Watch Adinna and look at the ladies until my willy didn't feel funny anymore and I needed food. After my Watch, I went downstairs and sat in my chair in the living room. Nobody else was there – the house didn't make any sound. I looked up at the decorations and saw that Mum had got it wrong again. We play this game every year. Mum always puts some of the Chrimbo decorations in the wrong place. I always pull them down again and try to put them in the right place. By the

time I've pulled them down, somebody has seen me and told me off. It then looks as if I've pulled them down on purpose. But I haven't! All I want to do is put them in the right place. And my family tell me off for it.

I looked at the decorations in the living room and wondered whether I should start putting them all in the right place. I supposed I should – it was going to take a lot of work. I got up and walked to some tinsel hung on completely the wrong side of the room and pulled it down.

“Adam,” shouted Mum. “Leave that bloody tinsel alone. You been fiddling with it all over Christmas.”

Every time I try and make it better somebody stops me. I picked my nose and ate it, and blew Mum a raspberry. Mum made me a Pom-Pom Parlar and watched me the whole time I drank it. I was only looking at the tinsel. I wasn't going to try again – I just get told off. Nobody understands me sometimes. Mum put up the Chrimbo tree last night. I noticed that she'd finished it. All the shiny bits and hanging bits and wooden bits were in the wrong places. I went to have a closer look. I tried not to think about the little sweeties that Mum always hangs on there. I didn't try that hard. Before Mum had come back into the room to stop me, I'd found two little hanging sweeties and eaten them. I hadn't meant to. Mum shouldn't leave a room where I'm alone with lots of sweeties, but she still shouted at me.

My Mum shouts at me for another thing. Every Chrimbo, she puts prezzies under Chrimbo tree. Whenever I try to take the paper off a prezzie, she shouts at me. That's what the paper on prezzies is for – to rip up and take off. Why put it there in the first place if I'm not allowed to rip it off? After Mum had gone out of the room again, I saw some prezzies under the Chrimbo tree. I got one out and unwrapped it. Mum walked back in and shouted louder than ever. Her face went really red. This

left me all confused again. I don't even like the prezies in the paper. I just like ripping the paper off and making a mess so that I can clear it up again. Everyone else pretends to just like the prezies and not the paper. Why don't they just let me take the paper off when I want? They still get their prezies. They spend ages on Chrimbo Day just taking the paper off the prezies and putting on pretend smiles. If I did it all before Chrimbo Day, it would save them all loads of bother. But Mum just moans. I don't understand my family sometimes. Maybe Mum is just moaning because she's not happy with me at the moment. We spend all of our time together, and she's tired all of the time. Do I make her tired? When we lived in our old home, we didn't spend all of our time together and she wasn't tired all of the time. She was always happy with me then (except at Chrimbo). Now she's only happy with me for some of the time. I know she still loves me, because sometimes she hugs me and cries and tells me stuff. I think she's unhappy the most when we just sit at home not doing anything, but that's when I get unhappy the most as well. I get bored too. I wonder if she'd feel happier if I went to school every day. Even though I love Mum, I don't want to see her all of the time. I like to miss her sometimes. Our time would be better if we had our own things to do.

Dad walked into the living room after Mum shouted at me, put my shoes on me and gave me my coat. Mum came in looking a little less upset. She had her coat on. I started to feel happier, because we were almost certainly going out. Mum gave me a little tree sweetie – she always does stuff like that after shouting at me.

“Sorry I shouted, Adam. I'm just very tired at the moment. I shouldn't take it out on you,” said Mum.

She kissed me on the cheek and hugged me. I felt much better and loved her more.

Special Watch – The Car

We were driving far away from Adinna. I don't know why, but Jake and Joss didn't want to come. We drove for a long time. I saw lots of different parts of Adinna, and then we drove on the motorway for ages. I like driving for a long time – it gives me time to have a proper Watch and to enjoy the sound of the car. I love the sound of the car – it makes me feel less worried. Mum and Dad didn't say much to each other. Mum turned round and spoke to me a few times. I was more interested in Watching. I thought a lot about Chrimbo and all the sweeties I was going to eat, but I felt a little upset that nobody had come to visit us for Chrimbo. It would have been nice to spend time with somebody else apart from the people in my family. I like going for walks with other people – they are more interested in all the sticks I find. My family don't care about all the sticks I find. People who visit also read to me and give me sweeties without Mum knowing. They also give me prezzies to unwrap. I do like Chrimbo, but it's better with my family and other people.

After driving for a long time, we started seeing loads of buildings and kept stopping at traffic lights and roundabouts. A really big river ran along by the road, and lots of people walked in the snow next to the river. I pushed my face hard against the window so I could see the people by the river more clearly. A man in a big coat and a silly bobbly hat waved at me. I poked my tongue out at him – not to be mean; I just thought it would make him laugh. And I was right. Dad slowed the car right down and turned into a big car park. I helped Dad get the ticket and we walked into the hugest, biggest building I've ever seen. I could hear trains. I love trains. They make loads of noise and lots of people get on and off them. Sometimes people I know get off them. Maybe somebody I knew would get off a train today. I got really happy

really quickly and started shouting 'alloow' over and over again. I say this when I'm really happy and when I really want to see someone. I slapped my arse as well.

We walked into a place that sold Pom-Pom Parlar. We sat down, and Mum bought me a big Pom-Pom Parlar and a cake. I love cake. I get a little sticky and mucky when I eat cake – and that's fine. I don't like it when Mum cleans me up afterwards, though. I wasn't sure if we really were there to see someone we knew, or if we'd just gone for a Pom-Pom Parlar. I said 'allaow' quietly to Mum and touched her face gently to see what she'd say.

"In a minute, darling," she said.

I didn't know what that meant, so I just carried on with my cake. It tasted so nice. It had cream. And cherries. I thought so hard about which part of the cake to eat next that I hardly felt it when somebody touched me on the shoulder. I ignored them, though, because my cake tasted so nice. Somebody touched my shoulder again. The cherries...

"Look who's here, Adam," said Mum.

I wanted to be left alone. My cake tasted so nice. The cherries were really sweet. Then I smelt a smell that I knew really well. A nice smell – I always felt happy with that smell. I felt another touch on my shoulder. The smell was really strong. It smelt like the flowers in the wood and the burnt logs from our fire – both at the same time. I put my special spoon down and turned around to see the person touching me. Gran! My Gran! She'd got off a train and come to see me. My Gran. A little while before I wasn't sure if I was ever going to see her again – and then she was stood right behind me. My Gran.

I screamed, jumped out of my chair and gave her the biggest hug I'd ever given anybody. I kissed her on the cheek and looked at her. She had my cake stuck all

over her face. She laughed quietly – she always laughs quietly. I hugged her again and said all the words I knew so that she knew that I was trying to talk to her. I said ‘alloow’, ‘tomorrow’, ‘Pom-Pom Parlar tomorrow’, ‘MaMummy tomorrow’, ‘toylou’ and ‘dinnaow’. I put them all together and kept laughing. Gran stroked my cheek and said something.

“Oh, you’re a lovely boy. Give me another hug.”

She hugged me again. I squeezed her really tight. I felt so happy my Gran had come to see me. I kept talking to her and hugging her. She carried on laughing quietly and I grabbed her hand. I could see her little suitcase on the floor by her feet – the same suitcase she always brought with her. Next to that was a bag with prezzies. She’d come to stay for Chrimbo. That made me feel even happier, but just to make sure she stayed and didn’t get back on the train, I let go of her hand, picked up her suitcase and gave it to Dad. I then picked up the bag with the prezzies and gave it to Mum. I then grabbed my Gran’s hand and started to walk her back to the car – this way we would all be at the car with all Gran’s stuff. I didn’t care about the rest of my cake. The quicker we all got in the car, the sooner we’d be at home in Adinna, and I’d be sure that she was definitely staying for Chrimbo.

In fact, I went back and finished my cake. I kissed her again and got cake all over her face. She smiled and pulled a tissue from her sleeve.

“Are you alright, Mum? I don’t know why he’s being so boisterous,” said Mum, laughing.

“Oh, he’s fine dear. Just make sure he isn’t too rough with the presents. There’s breakables in there.”

I laughed and kissed the air and shouted 'allaow' as I pulled Gran towards the car. Mum walked next to Gran and Dad followed behind us carrying all the bags. When we got to the car, Dad said something.

"Do you want to go for a walk round Exeter before we go home?"

"I think Adam's already decided what we're doing," said Gran.

Dad smiled and unlocked all the doors. I made sure Gran got into the back seat of the car so she could sit next to me. Dad took ages putting Gran's stuff in the boot of the car, which made me feel a little annoyed – what if Gran changed her mind and decided to get back on the train? I bit my hand and snorted with my throat. Gran held my hand and looked at me.

"It's OK, Adam," she said, smiling. "I'm coming home with you."

I felt a little better.

Eventually Dad closed all the doors and started to drive home. I made sure Gran held my hand the whole time. She started speaking to Mum, so I looked at her wrinkly face for a while before starting a Special Watch out of the window.

Special Watch – In the Car with Gran

I don't know why I love Gran so much. When she visits us, she doesn't talk a lot. She either sits in the chair watching telly, or helps Mum clean in the kitchen. I love the way she's so small and wrinkly. She smells so nice and always makes me Pom-Pom Parlars and gives me sweeties. But I think it's because she makes me laugh that I love her so much. It started a long time ago when we went to watch the fireworks. We drove for ages and it was nighttime. When we got to the place with the fireworks, we got out of the car and started a walk in the dark that lasted for ages. I wasn't really enjoying myself, because we had to walk in the mud on a dark,

cold night – this all happened before we lived in Adinna, so I wasn't used to the mud. We walked for ages and then all of a sudden we noticed Gran had disappeared. At first I didn't find it funny – everyone got really worried and started looking for her and shouting for her. She just wasn't there. I'd known my Gran for ages, and had never seen her do anything like this before. Where was she? She'd just gone off and not told anybody. I walked back a little bit and saw this big hole in the ground. I looked at the hole and saw the top of Gran's head. She said something really quietly –

“Help. Help me.”

I stood there for a little bit just looking at the top of my Gran's head and listening to her. Then I just started to laugh. I don't know why. I felt this funny feeling in my belly and started to laugh. Seeing Gran's head in a hole and listening to her speak but not being heard seemed like the funniest thing ever. My family walked over to where I stood and saw the hole in the ground. When they saw Gran's head, they didn't laugh. Dad jumped down into the hole and helped push Gran out. Mum held her hands and pulled her. I laughed even more. Watching my Gran being pulled out of a hole by my Mum, all of them slipping in the mud and getting covered, made me laugh even more. Jake had to sit me on a log because I laughed so much. Jake and Joss were much smaller and asked me why I kept on laughing. I understood their words a lot better back then. Pretty soon they started to laugh as well. We all laughed really hard while Mum and Dad got Gran out of the hole.

When Gran finally climbed out of the hole, she stood in the mud and frowned. Mum and Dad looked at me and tried not to smile. This made us all laugh even more. Especially me. My belly ached loads because I laughed so much. Gran looked all dirty and her hair was messy. I don't know how, but this made me laugh so much I nearly did a wee. Seeing her all dirty and standing in the mud and then

remembering her head in the hole, and her little voice made me laugh harder than ever. I couldn't breathe because I laughed so much. Joss and Jake made more noise than I did with their laughing. After my Gran had cleaned up a bit and made her hair more tidy, we got to the fireworks. I didn't look at the fireworks. I looked at my Gran and laughed. I spent the whole night laughing while everyone else looked at the fireworks. I laughed in the car all the way back home. Even when I tried to get to sleep that night, I could only think of one thing – a big, dark hole in the road, my Gran's head poking out of the top and her little voice saying, 'Help. Help me.'

I smiled when I thought of that. I looked at Gran sitting next to me and remembered her head in the hole. There is another reason why I love her so much – she never gets hurt. Anything can happen to her and she never gets hurt. That night when she fell into the hole, she was fine and hadn't been hurt. Which meant that I could do anything to her and she would never get hurt. I love her for other reasons. Hugs. Smells. Prezzies. Sweeties. But I love her most because I can do stuff to her and she smiles. I try to hurt her and she doesn't feel anything – she just says 'Oohh' and she's not hurt.

This is going to be a fun Chrimbo...

Me, Mum, Dad, Gran, Gran's suitcase and the prezzies all got home in the car. I didn't have to hold Gran and pull her anymore, so I ran around the garden slapping my arse. Mum and Dad got all the stuff out of the car and Gran stood there chatting. The dog barked from inside the garage (he's not allowed inside anymore), and Jake and Joss came out to say hello to Gran. They walked up to Gran and gave her a hug and a kiss. Joss put on her pretend smile. Gran chatted to them and gave them something from her purse. She hadn't given me anything from her purse. I didn't care because I knew she would spend the whole of Chrimbo making me laugh. Dad

told everyone to get inside quickly – it'd started to snow again. We rushed along the path to the door and I saw a bit of ice just in front of Gran. Before I could think about it, Gran had stood on the ice, slipped, and fallen straight on her arse. Everyone stopped and tried to help Gran and make sure she was OK. I was too busy laughing to help. I felt really happy stood there in the snow – we weren't even in the house yet, and I was laughing because of Gran's jokes. My family looked at me and frowned. This made me laugh even more. Jake tried to stop himself from smiling. Gran pushed herself to her feet and walked more slowly towards the house. I kept laughing and slapping my arse. She got to the door and walked in. Mum made a Pom-Pom Parlar, and I went to my room while Joss and Jake talked to Gran. Dad went out. I sat at my window and looked at my big book with ladies...

Before Tea Watch –

Even though I felt happy because Gran was visiting, I wanted to be on my own for a while. Everybody would be really noisy now. Joss and Jake would be excited because of Gran. Mum would be cooking tea. Gran would sit in the chair for a while and then go and help Mum finish the tea. Joss and Jake don't like going in the kitchen when it's busy, so I decided to wait until then before going downstairs again. Dad had gone out and would probably be home for tea. I was still really excited about Gran being here. The day had been so normal before. The tinsel game with Mum had been quite fun, but Gran being in our home made me happier. I sat in my room and wondered what to do next. I drank my Pom-Pom Parlar really fast and laid on my bed. I didn't want to Watch. I decided to wait until Joss and Jake had gone and Gran had gone in the kitchen to help Mum before I went downstairs again. But I felt too excited. And I had an empty cup. I went downstairs...

Gran sat in the chair with her funny smile. Joss and Jake were sitting on the floor talking to her. I could hear Mum in the kitchen banging the pans so I took my cup into the kitchen.

“Thank you, darling. Tea won’t be long,” said Mum.

I rubbed my teeth and gave Mum a kiss. I felt happy but didn’t know what to do next. I walked back into the living room. Gran was still talking to Joss and Jake. I could feel myself starting to get bored. Everybody did something apart from me. I should have been Watching in my room. But I didn’t want to. I picked up a cushion and threw it at Gran. It hit her in the face and made her glasses fall off. I laughed. Joss and Jake put their hands over their mouths and tried not to laugh.

“Ooh,” said Gran. She rubbed her head and put her glasses back on.

I laughed and ran back up to my room and laid on my bed. I carried on laughing and I shouted out ‘alloow’ a few times. I would stop laughing and then remember what I’d done. I’d start laughing again. I did this a few times. I got quieter and quieter, and then really tired. I got really tired and fell asleep. When I woke up my head felt bad and my body felt bad. I could smell the food from the kitchen. I couldn’t hear anyone talking. Jake was in his room listening to his music. I don’t like his music.

- don't push too far your dreams of china in your hand -

Joss was in her room listening to her music. I like her music.

- I would go out tonight but I haven't got a stitch to wear -

I walked downstairs and sat in the chair Gran had been sitting in. I could smell the food being cooked. I could hear the plates being put out ready for the food. Mum would say something to Gran. Gran wouldn't say much back.

"We're going to have to wait until he's seventeen before he can go anywhere," said Mum.

"Oh dear," said Gran.

"So that's another three months," said Mum.

"Oh dear," said Gran.

"Shall we put the gravy on now or leave it in a jug so that everyone can help themselves?" said Mum.

"Ooh, I don't know. What do you think?" said Gran.

I sat in the chair and tried to feel a little better. I noticed how close I sat next to the Chrimbo tree. A little sweetie hung next to my head. I couldn't be bothered to pull it off, so I just leant towards it and let it go into my mouth. I had the whole sweetie in my mouth but it was still stuck to the tree.

"It's nice having him home so much, but it's not fair on him. He needs to go out and do things with other people."

"Oh dear."

As I pulled the sweetie with my teeth, the tree bent towards me. I didn't care so I pulled a little harder.

- loa ww! A jumped up country boy who never knew his place -

"I love him so much and I don't want to lose him. I don't want him to hate me and think that I'm all he's got. I ask Pete to help but he just goes to the pub."

“Oh dear.”

- It was a dream she had of a scheme he had told in a foreign land -

I pulled again and the whole tree bent towards me. The sweetie stayed stuck really hard to the tree. I couldn't be bothered to use my hands. I moved to the edge of the chair and pulled a little harder...

The door slammed and I jumped back...

“Pete's home... What was that noise?” said Mum.

“Ooh.”

- This charming man -

- don't push too far... -

-

“Is that you, Dad?”

(Move following text to here)

I found myself lying on the floor; the sweetie had come off and into my mouth. The Chrimbo tree was lying on top of me, and all the little decorations had gone all over the floor. Mum and Gran ran out of the kitchen and stood in the doorway, looking at me. Dad stood in the other doorway looking at me. He moved from side to side like he was on a boat. Joss and Jake had run downstairs and were stood staring at me with their mouths open. Jake tried not to laugh. I lay on the floor with the Chrimbo tree on top of me and a sweetie in my mouth. My bad head and bad body felt a lot better. I waited for them all to start shouting at me.

“Oh dear,” said Gran.

I ate the sweetie. The metal paper made my teeth feel funny. Only Dad shouted at me, but I didn't care.

Everyone helped tidy up the tree and stood it in the corner again. Gran took me into the kitchen and made me a Pom-Pom Parlar. I gave her a hug and stuck a potitot in her ear. After everyone had cleared up the mess made by the tree, Mum and Gran finished making dinner and we ate. Dad fell asleep afterwards. I went back to my room, and Jake helped Mum and Gran wash all the plates and pans. We didn't do much for the rest of the night and all went to bed quite early. The next day Mum took us for a walk with the dog so Gran could see Adinna. There had been more snow during the night. Everything looked really white and sparkly. We didn't go too far – just to the field with the big tree and back again. After that we just sat around doing nothing for ages until Mum started cooking dinner. Gran helped her from the start this time. She set the table up while Mum made loads of noise with the pans. She put all the knives and forks down, a big sheet with purple flowers painted on it, glasses with flowers in, loads of empty glasses for cold drinks and loads of crackers. I love crackers. They make a crack noise and I get a hat to rip up and a toy to put up my nose. Everyone else wears their hat. I don't like wearing my hat. Everyone else looks silly and I don't want to look as silly as they do. People try to make me wear one, but I just pull it off and rip it up.

I started to get excited and happy. The day had been quite long and boring, and I'd spent most of it watching through my window or hugging Gran. I hadn't hurt her yet. After she'd set the table and Mum had peeled lots of potitots and cooked loads of meat, Jake and Joss got a little louder and laughed a lot more. Dad hadn't gone out at all. He'd spent the whole day at home. He only sat and watched telly, but at least

he stayed home and not shouted. He wasn't being too scary. Mum and Gran were getting closer and closer to finishing the cooking, and everybody got more and more excited. I reckoned the dinner was going to be the biggest dinner ever. Dad and Jake had a pretend fight – they hadn't done that since we moved from our old home. Joss took the dog out for a walk and smiled more than she has done for ages. It went really dark outside, so we couldn't see the snow properly. But I found a problem – Gran had set the table up wrong. She'd put flowers next to some glasses and they were nowhere near the right place. I moved them to the right place. Gran came out when I wasn't there and moved them back to the wrong place. So I moved them back to the right place and stayed in the room in case Gran tried it again. She came out and moved them back to the wrong place. I followed her into the kitchen and slapped her arse, like people slap my arse when I do something naughty.

“Ooh,” she said.

I ran off laughing to my room. On the way I moved the flowers back to where they needed to be, and pulled another sweetie off the Chrimbo tree.

Before Tea Watch –

I ran up to my room feeling really happy. The fire in the lounge made our home really warm. I'd had loads of Pom-Pom Parlars and a walk with Gran. My whole family were laughing and talking to each other. They don't normally do that. They shout at each other a lot, but they don't just sit and talk to each other and laugh at the same time. I Watched out of my window and could see Adinna covered in snow – the light from the moon shone off the snow. I kept looking for ages and started to see more. I could see trees made blacker than the sky by the shiny snow and the bright moon. Everything looked nice. It made me feel happier. My family were

happy. I felt really hungry but didn't mind, because we were just about to eat lots of food. I waited for Mum to shout, but she didn't, so I walked downstairs. The table was covered with meat, potitots, veggies (ackee), gravy and cold drinks. Mum made me a Pom-Pom Parlar instead of a cold drink. Everyone sat down and started pulling crackers. Dad sat at the top of the table. Gran sat next to Dad and not me. I don't know why – Dad doesn't talk to Gran whereas I talk to her loads. Mum showed me my seat and started to put loads of food on my plate and cut it into little pieces. She gave me my food and then got a plate for her food and filled that up and sat next to me. Joss and Jake were sat opposite me and next to Gran. Jake tried to put a paper hat on Joss, but she did what I always do and ripped it up. I'd not seen her do that before. Gran looked funny in her hat. Dad pretended he wasn't wearing his. Mum put two on her head. She kept singing and smiling. Mum loves Chrimbo. I think she loves it because everyone is happy.

I gulped down my food and everyone talked, but I was far too interested in my food to listen to what they were saying. Mum would sing 'Jingle Bells' if nobody talked to her. Everybody talked to her. Joss was the only one not talking. She looked a bit annoyed.

"Mum. Will you stop singing bloody Jingle Bells?" said Joss.

"Sorry love," said Mum. She started to sing 'Little Donkey'. Everyone laughed – even Joss. I ate.

I finished my food before everyone else. Mum took my plate and put on loads more potitots and meat and cut it all up. Gran hadn't said very much. Dad talked to Jake like a grown up. Joss and Mum were talking and smiling. They hadn't talked and smiled for ages. They normally shout at each other. Joss started to look a little less annoyed than normal. I ate. When everyone had finished, Mum and Gran took

all the dirty plates and went to the kitchen. Dad and Joss started talking but I didn't listen to what they said. I just stared at the Chrimbo tree and I stared at the decorations. I felt so happy. I picked up a bit of potitot off the table and ate it. I hadn't felt so happy for ages. Dad and Joss were talking loads, but they weren't smiling. Dad looked really annoyed and Joss looked like she was going to cry. I wasn't bothered about them, though. I felt happy with everything being so good.

"Talk to me like that again," said Dad, "And you'll be walking to your party."

"But Dad," said Joss.

"No," said Dad with his teeth gritted. "It's got nothing to do with you."

Joss looked all upset. Jake looked at the floor and went quiet. Mum and Gran came in with pudding. It smelt really nice, all sweet and sugary. Joss, Jake and Dad pretended that nothing had been said. Everything felt a little funny between them, but I didn't care – Mum had brought in the custard. After we'd eaten our pudding, the funny feeling went away. Dad seemed a little less annoyed than earlier. It was getting late and Jake and Joss were laughing and being really excited. Gran got some prezzies and gave us all one each. I tore the paper off mine and threw it on the floor. I picked it up and tore it a bit more. My prezzie was a pair of slippers. I like slippers. I always wear them when I'm at home and my old ones were really old. I put my new ones on and threw my old ones at the Chrimbo tree.

"Go and say thank you to your Gran," Mum said to me.

I understood what she meant, so I walked up to Gran and gave her a big hug and big kiss. I picked up the prezzie Mum had given Gran and ripped the paper off for her to say thanks for the slippers.

"Adam. That was your Gran's present. You've spoiled it for her," said Mum.

Mum shouted at me. Dad looked at me and shook his head. Even Gran looked annoyed with me. I only did it because other people don't like ripping the paper off like I do. I was only helping my Gran. I sniffed at them all and sat back down. After everyone had unwrapped their presents, Mum and Gran started clearing up. Dad and Joss got their coats on and went out. Me and Jake sat in the living room and watched telly. Then Joss ran back in crying and threw her coat on the floor. She ran up to her room and slammed the door. Dad walked in just after her with a funny smile on his face.

"What's up with her? Aren't you taking her to the party?" said Jake.

"The car won't start," said Dad.

"Shit. All she's talked about for the last week is that party," said Jake.

I picked my nose and rubbed it on the wall.

"What can you do? Anyway, the pub beckons. You can walk there, you know. TTFN," said Dad.

Dad went back outside and closed the door. Joss came down after a while with really red eyes. She went and talked to Mum for a bit, and then came and sat with me and Jake. After a while, when it had got really late, Mum and Gran came in and sat with us. We were all really tired and nobody said anything. We were all happy. Except Joss. But she looked a little happier than earlier. I felt hungry again so I went to Mum and rubbed my teeth.

"Do you want a sandwich?" she said. I understood.

I rubbed my teeth again and blew her some kisses. She got up and walked to the kitchen.

"Sit down, Mum," said Joss. "He's eaten loads already tonight. You haven't stopped. Just leave it five minutes."

“It doesn’t matter. I’ll get it over and done with now and he’ll be happy. I just want everyone to be happy,” said Mum.

I ate my sandwich and got more tired. Everyone got really tired. We were watching telly, and Dad came back late. Everyone woke up a little bit. Except me. I felt really tired. The whole family were here. I gave everyone a hug and a kiss and went to bed. Mum came with me and tucked me in.

Secret Watch – Cancelled

I feel really excited because it’s Chrimbo, Gran’s here, it’s snowing and everyone, except Joss, is happy. But she’ll get happier. I’m so tired I can’t really be bothered with my Secret Watch. I just lay in bed and think about Gran and prezzies and Pom-Pom Parlars. I smile a bit when I think of her slipping on the ice, then I laugh a proper laugh when I remember the night at the fireworks. I shout out ‘allaow’ a few times and think about getting up again. But before I know it, I fall fast asleep.

All Watches cancelled for Chrimbo Day and prezzies –

I went downstairs with no clothes or pyjamas on, but everybody was still in bed except for Mum who I could hear doing stuff in the kitchen.

“Merry Christmas, Adam. Come and give your Mum a big kiss... Oh my God. Let’s go and put some clothes on, shall we?” said Mum.

She got me dressed and brought me back downstairs. She made me a Pom-Pom Parlar and I sat in the kitchen with her. I said ‘allaow’ a few times and drank my Pom-Pom Parlar. Mum chatted quietly to me while she cleaned and peeled. Gran came in after a while, so I kissed her and went back to bed. I waited for while and

Mum came in with my sock prezies. I started to get excited and ripped all the paper of my sock prezies and made a big mess on the floor. Mum had brought a big black bag for the ripped paper. I left all the prezies on the bed and put all the paper in the bag. When Mum had gone Jake and Joss were awake so they came in to say Happy Chrimbo. They looked at my prezies, chatted and laughed a lot. I followed Joss into her room and she opened her sock prezies. She gave me a couple to rip open. She showed me her prezies (boring clothes and records) and gave me a sweetie. I then went into Jake's room to look at his sock prezies, but he shouted at me. I took one of his prezies and threw it down the stairs. He shouted at me more. I laughed loads while he shouted at me. I like annoying Jake. I went downstairs to see Gran but the dog ran around under the table and around the kitchen. Why had the dog been allowed to come in? It ran around and banged into things and made everyone really angry. Dad had woken up by now and sat by the table, smoking his ackee cigar. Gran made everyone a Pom-Pom Parlar, so I sat by the tree and picked up another prezie. I ripped it open.

"Adam, you mong," said Jake. "That's my present. Bloody spastic. Mum – will you tell him..."

I laughed and threw it on the floor.

"Don't call him that," Mum shouted. Her eyes were red and she looked tired.

"When everyone has had their breakfast we'll open all our main presents. Adam, the presents under the tree are for after dinner. Don't touch them yet."

"But Mum. Adam opened one of my presents," said Jake.

Dad said something to Jake who then sat down in the other chair and crossed his arms with a frown. I laughed and shouted 'dinnaow'. I felt so excited and I wanted

to get Jake into trouble and play games with Gran. I wasn't going to do it yet, though. I decided to wait until later. I wanted to rip open my prezzies first.

Everyone ate their breakfast and then we all opened our prezzies. Everyone, even Dad, seemed happy and excited about opening their prezzies. Prezzie paper covered the whole floor. After all my prezzies were open, I got all the paper on the floor and threw it in the air and threw it at the dog. The dog didn't like that, so I pulled his ear. The dog got angry and barked and tried to bite me. Dad shouted at the dog and took it back outside. I hadn't expected that but I liked it anyway, so I laughed and shook my head from side to side.

Joss and Jake were smiling and laughing loads and showing each other their prezzies.

"How can you be happy about getting a Wet Wet Wet album? They only write simpering love songs, and the guitar solos are rubbish," said Joss.

"Yeah, so what? They're better than The Cure. The Cure are all gay and sound like the dog having a shit," said Jake.

"What do you know about music, dickhead? The Cure are loads better than Wet Wet fucking Wet, twat," said Joss.

I didn't know what they were talking about, but I started to worry about Gran. She'd opened her prezzies really quietly and then just sat in the chair under the Chrimbo tree with a little pretend smile, not speaking to anybody. I couldn't decide if she looked unhappy or not. Joss walked over and gave Gran a big kiss that made her do a proper smile.

"Thanks for the present, Gran," said Joss.

"That's alright, dear," said Gran. "I'll knit you another one for your birthday if you want."

“Great,” said Joss after a little pause. She pulled a face at Jake as she walked back to her chair.

After a while Mum came upstairs and helped me get dressed. Afterwards I went downstairs and the living room looked much tidier. Everyone had their coats on. We were going for a walk. I ran around the room, shaking my head and hugging people. Gran laughed when I hugged her, but she still looked a little unhappy. I knew I'd have to find ways to cheer her up on the walk. Dad and Jake went to get the dog. Me, Gran, Joss and Mum met them at the front door. It hadn't snowed the night before, so the roads were looking normal. The rest of Adinna was still really white. I ran off up the road shouting and shaking my head. Nobody chased after me, so I stopped after a while and put some snow in my mouth and pretended it was an arshee. Mum shouted at me. She doesn't understand that I love putting snow in my mouth. I don't know why. Jake and Joss chased each other and threw snowballs at the dog. They were laughing loads and getting covered in snow. It was nice to see Joss laughing and enjoying herself – she doesn't play like she used to play when she was smaller. I put my finger in her ear. She kissed me on the cheek.

“Jake. Joss,” said Mum. “Be careful with those snowballs. You might hit someone.”

Jake threw a snowball and missed Joss by loads, and hit Gran right in the face. Her glasses fell off. The dog barked and disappeared through the hedge.

“Ooh,” she said.

I laughed so much I fell over. Mum and Dad shouted at Jake. This made me laugh even more. Gran had snow melting and turning into water all over her face. Dad picked up her glasses and gave them back to her. I got up and laughed and ran up the road. I stopped when I got to the gate I always Watch from. I saw all of

Adinna covered in snow. It looked really different – not at all like my normal Adinna. Everything seemed bigger and softer. I still felt excited, but the quiet and white of Adinna made me feel different to excited. I felt happy but also less worried with everything. I never wanted anything to change. Except the dog.

Everyone else caught up with me, and we carried on walking. Jake and Joss weren't laughing and running now. Everyone was just walking and talking quietly. I held Mum's hand. We got to the field with the big tree in the middle and turned to walk back home. I started to feel really cold and a bit wet, so I felt happy to walk home. I held Mum's hand and Gran walked just in front of us. She wasn't laughing and talking as much as everyone else. She just walked along, her hands in her pockets, looking at the ground and groaning every now and again. I decided the time had come to cheer her up. I noticed how Gran walked very close to the edge of the road. Along the edge of the road ran a little ditch. Some of the snow on Adinna had started to melt into the ditch. The ditch looked very wet and very muddy. I decided the best way to cheer Gran up was to get her very wet. And very muddy. I knew it would be funny. So I went to give her a little push...

"Oh no you don't," said Dad.

As I was about to push Gran into the ditch Dad grabbed my hand and pulled me hard towards him.

"Right then, Adam," said Dad. "It's time for you to see what it's like to fall on your arse."

He put his arms around my waist and picked me up off the floor. He started laughing and shouting and carried me over to other side of the road.

"Ooh," said Gran. "Be careful with him, Pete."

"Bloody hell, Adam," said Dad. "You've turned into a right lump."

I wasn't too sure what was happening. I'd been about to push Gran into the ditch and make her all happy, and then, all of a sudden, Dad lifted up in the air. I knew he wasn't going to hurt me because he laughed and seemed to say nice words to me. I tried to laugh and find the whole thing funny, but I couldn't be too sure. I said 'allow' quietly and tried to laugh a bit more.

"Right," said Dad. "See that – that's a proper ditch. Loads of mud and dirt."

"Pete," said Mum. She looked a little shocked. "Please be careful."

"You'll be alright, won't you, Adam?" said Dad. "He's been dishing it out for long enough."

As Dad said that last bit, he heaved me up a bit higher and then dropped me straight in all the mud. Splat. The mud and water went all over me. Dad stood over me and laughed loads. All the others were standing around me and walking towards me. They were all laughing at me as well. I sat in the mud for a bit, not really knowing what to do. Should I have been angry? Should I have been happy? The dog came over and started to bark right next to my ear. I pushed him away and looked at everyone laughing. I had made them all happy. Even Gran laughed a little bit. I decided that even though I was all muddy and wet and cold, at least it had made Gran properly happy.

"Ackee. Babbob," I said and started laughing. I splashed my hands in the mud and threw some of it at Dad. But he got out of the way and it went all over Gran. That made us all laugh even more. Dad had invented a really good game. I realised how much I loved him.

After the game had finished, we all went home and got warm. I had a bath and dried off. Every now and again, I'd remember what had happened and not be able to stop myself from laughing. The more I thought about it the more I realised how funny

it had all been. We all spent the rest of the day warming up and being happy. Mum cooked another huge dinner, and we pulled more crackers. I ripped up all the hats. Mum gave us all some more prezzies so I could rip the paper off. Dad went out after dinner. We all sat in the lounge talking and laughing and looking at Gran and laughing. Gran started to talk more and smile more than she had done for the whole of Chrimbo. Dad came home early and seemed really happy with a red face. He stank of ackee cigars. Everyone behaved like they were happy. We all smiled loads and laughed loads. I kept giving people kisses and hugs and they all gave me kisses and hugs back. Joss and Jake played with their prezzies. I chewed the ripped paper and stuck it up my nose. Mum had to get the tweezers so she could get the paper out. Later we put some music on, and Mum and Dad hugged and kissed. I nearly started to cry when I saw that. I don't know why. Mum tried to sing more Chrimbo songs to the music. People just threw stuff at her. That made me laugh. As Adinna got darker, we all got quieter. Gran went to bed first. I gave her a really big hug and rubbed her face gently to show that I loved her. Then Joss and Jake went to bed. Mum then took me to bed and tucked me in.

"I love you Adam," she said. "Merry Christmas, my angel."

I laid in bed feeling so happy. I didn't think I'd ever been that happy. I heard someone get up and walk downstairs. I could tell by the footsteps that it was Gran. I heard a sound like somebody tripping and a little voice...

"Ooh."

I laughed myself to sleep.

All Day Watch –

Because I hadn't been doing any Watching over Chrimbo, I spent the whole of the next day Watching. There wasn't anything else to do. We ate loads of little dinnaows made from what we hadn't eaten on Chrimbo day. Jake and Joss argued more. Joss had a big argument with Mum and went out for a long time. Dad went out all day and came back really late and really smelly, with a red face. I didn't like that day nearly as much as the other days. Mum wouldn't kiss him when he came home.

The next day, I got up early and ate my breakfast in my chair. I went to look for a sweetie on the Chrimbo tree, but they had all gone. Mum was singing in the kitchen. Nearly all the snow had gone from Adinna, and I could see all the green again. Mum stopped singing after a while and helped me have a bath. I realised it was my first bath since Gran had been visiting. When I'd dressed, Mum and Dad got their coats and Gran got her suitcase. I thought for a while, and then realised we were taking Gran home. I felt worried about that. Gran was going home, and Chrimbo had nearly finished. I started to feel a little sad as well as worried. I hugged her and helped her carry her suitcase to the car. Jake and Joss hugged her goodbye and stayed at home.

Special Watch – The Car with Gran taking her to the train station

I sat in the back of the car with Gran and held her hand all the way to the place with the trains. I felt myself get more and more sad and worried. They were sending her home. She'd made me laugh more than ever before. I didn't want that to stop. We all got out of the car and walked into the place with trains. I felt really sad. We went for a Pom-Pom Parlar and nobody said very much. I ate the same sort of cake I had eaten on the day Gran had touched me on the shoulder and slipped on the ice. It

didn't taste as nice. I drank my Pom-Pom Parlar slowly and remembered all the funny things Gran had done since she'd come – slipping on the ice was the funniest thing; nearly as funny as when she fell down the hole at the fireworks. I nearly laughed when I thought of that, but I couldn't laugh. I felt too sad.

“I'll miss you, Adam,” said Gran.

I held her face and pulled at my clothes a little bit. I whispered ‘bath’.

“Who's going to push me over and bash me on the head when you're not around?” said Gran.

I had a funny feeling in my throat.

“Your train leaves in five minutes, Mum,” said Mum. “Shall we go to your platform now?”

“Alright dear. Carry my suitcase, Adam,” said Gran.

We all got up and Gran gave me her suitcase to carry. I knew for certain now – she was leaving. Maybe I'd hurt her too much. I picked up her suitcase and the funny feeling in my throat got worse and my lip started to wobble. We walked up some stairs and over a bridge and then back down some more stairs. We got to the place next to where the trains stop. We stood for a while and Gran didn't say much. I could feel my throat feeling funnier and funnier. Then I saw the train coming. I couldn't stop what happened next – I started to cry. I cried loads. I couldn't stop myself. Gran got a tissue and wiped my face. She gave me a hug and I tried to hold on to her. But I knew she had to go. So I let her go. The train stopped next to us. Dad walked onto the train with Gran's suitcase. Mum hugged Gran. Then I hugged Gran again. She cried a sad cry that made me cry even more. After we hugged for the last time Gran got on the train and sat in the window so we could see her. Mum and Dad both put their arms around me. Gran blew kisses and waved out of the

window. I made loads of noise with my crying. Mum cried and waved at Gran. Even Dad held me tightly. The train started to move away and Gran waved some more. We walked with the train but it got faster and faster. We couldn't keep up with it for long. As the train turned a corner, Gran tried to move closer to the window to see us and bashed her head on the window. I didn't laugh. I cried a little bit more. I almost heard a little voice say 'Ooh.' I think I may also have noticed a whiff of flowers and burnt wood in the air. I can't be sure, though.

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Chapter 4 – Arvoom

February 1989

I sat in the car thinking something good may be about to happen. Adinna felt warmer for the first time in ages, and the sun had come out. Since Chrimbo, Mum has been saying stuff that sounds different and she's been a little happier than she has been for ages. Yesterday I ripped open loads of prezzies and Mum sang 'Happy Birthday' over and over again.

After Gran went home, me and Mum were on our own again. Jake and Joss went back to school. Dad started going out in the morning in his dirty clothes and coming home after Jake and Joss. It's been just me and Mum since we came to Adinna. We do the same stuff every day. I'm always bored. We go for walks, or I sit in my room Watching. I love Mum and I like being with her. She does everything for me. But I'm always bored. Dad spends more time away from us than ever – he still goes out at nighttime.

But as I sat in the car on the first warm day for ages, everything felt different. Dad, dressed in normal clothes, drove and looked happy. Dad hasn't driven and smiled for ages. Mum laughed and sang. She would turn round and talk to me and hold my hand. I'm sure I understood 'School' in the stuff that she said. Maybe I was going to school? Adinna looked more like it did when we came here from our old home. After driving for a while, we came to the place with lots of buildings and cars where Joss and Jake come to school and see their friends – Oakee – and I started to feel a

little excited. We never go to Oakee, except for shopping. And even if we were just going for shopping, at least Dad would make the day feel a little different. But Dad turned a different way to where we go for shopping. I jumped in my seat and laughed. We were going somewhere different! We drove up a long hill and I couldn't help singing a bit. When I sing I only go 'La LaLa LaLa La', but I always feel good when I do it. Mum always sings with me and claps. She doesn't have to. Dad never does.

We got to the top of the hill next to where Dad puts smelly stuff in the car and drove down a really small road, smaller than the roads in Adinna. The car went up and down and made a funny noise. It made me laugh.

"Adam, we're here. This is The Pines. This is where you'll be coming every day," said Mum.

The car stopped making the funny noise and we drove into a big bit of road with other cars just standing there, not moving. I felt really excited now. Next to the big bit of road with the cars was this huge building that looked like a house. Behind the house, I could see Adinna far away. The sun shone really bright now and made the house look friendly. There were loads of windows in the house – plenty of places for Watching. I jumped out of the car and grabbed Mum's hand and pulled her towards the house. As I did this I shouted 'Arvoom'. I don't know why. I'd never said it before. So I decided to call the big house Arvoom. I liked the word. I could say it with my mouth as well as in my head and it seemed to be a good name for my new school. I felt so happy now that I was going to be doing different stuff every day.

There weren't any doors on this side of Arvoom, so we walked round to the other side and through a little garden. Sitting there in the shade made by Arvoom were lots of people in moving chairs, drinking Pom-Pom Parlars and eating cake. I shook

my head and hugged my Mum. Cakes and Pom-Pom Parlar. All the people in moving chairs were smiling and talking. I remembered the fat man who lived in the horrible school that smelled of sick and old cabbages. Arvoom seemed much nicer. The people in the horrible school were just sitting looking sad and bored. The people at Arvoom weren't bored at all. They had cake. I stood there with Mum and Dad. I smiled and stared at the people with their cake. I looked round at Dad and saw that he was speaking to a lady. She looked nice and had a kind smile. She stood next to a fat man in shiny clothes who looked a bit like Jake.

"Mr and Mrs Olsen? Hello. My name's Claire. We've spoken on the phone a few times," said the lady.

Mum and Dad smiled and spoke back to the lady. I ignored her and stared at the man. His hair looked funny, all spiky and stuck up in the air. I wanted to push it back to the right place. The man smiled a happy smile and stared at Mum and Dad. Then he looked at me and winked. For a moment I felt a bit funny about him, but the worry went quickly and I decided I liked the man. I liked the lady as well. But I liked the man more. I knew nothing bad could happen to me if he looked after me. I don't know why. The man's spiky hair bothered me, though – it stayed up in the air and in the wrong place. I decided I'd have to do something about it. So I slowly walked round behind Mum and Dad so that I stood behind the man.

"This is Robbie. He's an instructor here. He'll be key-working with Adam," said the lady.

I bashed my hand down on top of the man's head. But his hair wouldn't move. I bashed again but it felt really funny, like a brush or a broom, and still wouldn't move. I found this hilarious and laughed out loud. The man laughed as well. He had a really nice laugh. I decided that I wanted to make him laugh as much as I could.

“Adam’s a hair stylist, then?” said the man. I liked the sound of his voice – he sounded young but not as young as Jake. He turned away from the lady and my parents and put his hand out towards me. I wasn’t sure what he wanted me to do.

“Shake Robbie’s hand, Adam,” said Mum.

I looked at the man and smiled. I bashed his silly hair again and ran off shouting ‘allaow’ and bashing my own hair. It hurt. So I stopped.

The people in the moving chairs all went inside. The man with the funny hair went into Arvooom while me, Mum, Dad and the lady sat down in the shade. Mum smiled at the lady and laughed at nothing. Dad raised his eyes. She always does that with people we don’t know. I looked around at Arvooom and the garden.

“So Adam’s been at home for a year?” said the lady. “That must have been a strain for all of you.”

“I think it’s been far worse for Adam than it has been for anyone else. He’s got so much energy all of the time and needs to be doing things,” said Mum. “He finds it hard to cope with being stuck with me all the time.”

After a while the man with the funny hair came out of Arvooom with some Pom-Pom Parlar and cake. He sat next to me and watched as the others all talked. I started to get a little bored. But at least I was in a different place with some different people, and I’d been brought some cake. I wanted to talk to the man with the spiky hair, so I carefully pulled his face round and said ‘allaow’. He looked at me and smiled.

“This is a little dull, isn’t it, Adam?” he said. “Come on – I’ll show you around the Pines and introduce you to some of the other staff and clients.”

I finished my Pom-Pom Parlar and clapped. Me and the man got up and walked into Arvooom. Straight away I liked it. I could hear music and people laughing – and it wasn’t too loud. The inside felt nice and warm and the walls were a shiny, bright

colour. We walked up a corridor and went into a room with a telly, where people sat on the floor. They were all smiling and talking.

“That man in front of the TV is called Greg,” said the man with the spiky hair. “He’s very pleasant, but does have a bit of a wild temper. The lady sitting at the table drawing is Joanne. She likes to throw her coffee over people. She thinks it’s funny.”

I looked at all the people and felt happy. They were doing things that I like to do, and they were enjoying themselves. I thought about the horrible school we visited ages ago and how I’d be if I’d stayed there. No Pom-Pom Parlar. No cake. Everybody sad. No colours. The man with spiky hair wouldn’t be there. I felt happy being with him. I felt a little scared because Mum wasn’t there, but she was only outside so I decided I didn’t need to be too scared. I saw a man with a tashey sitting at the table. He watched the telly on his own and seemed to be frowning. I wondered who he was, so I touched the man with the funny hair on the arm and pointed at the man with the tashey.

“That’s Graham. He’s an instructor like me. Shall we go and see the games room?” he said.

I felt even better about the man with the spiky hair. He’d understood what I wanted, and I heard some of his words nice and clearly. I think he said the man with the tashey was called Grame. I didn’t really like the look of him. His tashey had yellow bits in it and he didn’t smile. I didn’t like the way he looked at the other people. He didn’t look like he laughed that much. He smelled a bit like Dad after he comes home at night.

We walked out of the room and up some stairs.

“My name’s Robbie,” said the man with the spiky hair.

I think he was trying to tell me something. I kissed his hand. He laughed and opened the next door we came to. We walked into a really bright room and the air tasted really fresh – there were loads of toys and pictures everywhere. I'm not sure why, but being in that room made me feel really excited. I walked up to the toys on the floor and smiled – they were my favourites. Lego, puzzles and drums. There were books as well (but none had any pictures of ladies that I could see). The window was really big – I could see Adinna and the road. Next to the window was a big wooden box in just the right place for sitting on and Watching. I tried it out. Perfect. I felt comfortable and I could see loads of the outside. I'd found my place for Watching.

The man with the spiky hair showed me round a few more rooms. They weren't nearly as good as the one with the big window. He showed me a kitchen. I think I saw a shelf with nothing else except biccies, crisps and chocolate. I shook my head and rubbed my teeth. We then ran out of rooms to look in so we went back outside. I stroked the man's arm to say thank you for showing me around Arvooom. Mum and Dad were standing and smiling with the lady. Dad had his car keys. Were we going already? Or perhaps Dad would go and leave Mum with me. That would be OK. Mum could sit and talk to the lady and I could go back to the Watching room with the toys. The man with the spiky hair could bring me Pom-Pom Parlars and biccies.

"Adam," said Mum. "Mummy and Daddy are going now. You have a good day. Robbie will look after you, so try and be good."

Mum gave me a big hug and started to cry a little. Dad gave me a hug and walked to the car. Mum stood there just looking at me, and then followed Dad to the car. I started to feel a little worry – would I be staying at Arvooom on my own? Yes. They got into the car. Mum waved and cried; Dad started the car and drove away. When

were they going to come back? I'd spent every day with Mum ever since we came to Adinna. Now, without telling me, they'd left me on my own in a place I didn't know. That really scared me.

I watched as Mum and Dad and the car disappeared into the little road. I saw Mum wave one last time, and then she'd gone. I stood outside Arvooom and felt really scared. I chased after the car. The man with the funny hair ran after me. I felt scared. I wanted to go home. I wanted to stay at Arvooom as well, but not on my own. If I was going to be on my own, then I would rather go home. I knew home. I didn't know Arvooom. I didn't want to stay at Arvooom. I reached the car and banged on the window. The car stopped and Dad got out. Mum cried loads but stayed in the car.

"Adam," said Dad. "I know you don't want to stay here on your own, but they're all really nice people who are going to make you loads of cuppas and give you loads of biscuits. They'll look after you. We're just going to eat some lunch. We'll be back in a couple of hours and then we'll take you home."

"Dinnaow?" I said. I didn't want them to go.

"No," said Dad, gently. I understand 'no' and usually it makes me upset, but he spoke really quietly and actually made me feel a little better. Dad is really good and making me feel better sometimes. "Robbie is going to stay with you the whole time. He'll give you dinner."

Robboaw. The man with the spiky hair's name was Robboaw. And he'd stay with me and give me my dinnaow. I understood that. I felt a little better about staying in Arvooom on my own. I still felt scared, but at least Robboaw would be there. I knew he'd be fun and happy.

Dad and Mum drove off. Me and Robboaw went inside and sat in the room with the other people and watched telly. Robboaw sat next to me and chatted to me, but I started to feel funny again. I didn't know anybody in the room except for Robboaw. Who would go to the toylou with me? Who would take me for walks? Who would make me Pom-Pom Parlar if Robboaw went away? I didn't know if I'd get told off if I tried to hug people. I felt worried and really scared. I could feel my throat going a bit funny. I didn't really know Robboaw – he seemed nice and funny but what if he got cross with me now we were alone? He seemed nicer when Mum had been with me. Arvooom had looked really nice before Mum had gone. The Pom-Pom Parlars and cake had tasted really nice when Mum had sat with me. Now the Pom-Pom Parlar tasted weird and not nice. The walls weren't bright anymore. Even Robboaw didn't look quite as nice. He carried on chatting and smiling but it wasn't the same as when Mum had been with me.

“We're going to go and eat lunch in minute, Adam,” said Robboaw.

I rubbed my teeth slowly. I looked at the ceiling and sniffed. I wasn't happy now. Not even a little bit. The other people who were sat in the room were getting up or being put in their moving chairs and taken out. They looked happy. My head felt funny and my body felt tired.

“Come on then, Ad,” said Robboaw. “Let's go and wash our hands and eat some lunch.”

We walked through the corridor and into a big toylou. Inside I saw a bath on wheels with one of those doors that swings upwards and lets you climb in from the side. I thought about filling the bath up with soapy water and getting in. I knew I'd feel happier. I also knew I wouldn't be allowed, and I didn't want to be naughty in front of Robboaw and make him cross. Robboaw helped me wash my hands and we

walked back through the house. I still felt really bad. I tried to remember how friendly Robboaw had been in the garden and hoped I would make myself feel better. But I kept thinking how alone I felt. Nobody I knew wanted to be there with me. Nobody there loved me. Mum loved me. Even Dad loved me, I think. But Robboaw didn't love me. I knew that. He wasn't supposed to love me. Mum asks people like him to look after me and try to help me feel good. But he didn't make me feel good, and I knew it wasn't his fault.

We walked into another big room packed with all the people in moving chairs. They were sitting around a table, wearing special bibs and holding funny spoons. They all laughed and smiled at me. I think they wanted me to sit down, but I didn't want to. All those people. I didn't know any of them. Mum wasn't there. They were making too much noise. Food sat in dishes all over the table and I could have whatever I wanted. But I didn't feel hungry. I'd been hungry earlier, but I wasn't anymore. The food smelt horrible. The noises sounded funny and worried me a bit. Everything started to sound like when I stick my head under the water in the bath. I felt so scared. Nobody wanted me there; nobody wanted me at home.

"Here you go, Ad," said Robboaw. He gave me a plate with food. "Sit down at the table with everyone else."

I didn't want to sit down. My head felt funny. Robboaw looked different. He didn't seem friendly any more. Nobody seemed friendly. I didn't want dinnaow. I didn't want to be in Arvoom anymore. I needed MaMummy. My head seemed full of noise and colour and rage. I threw the plate with food against the wall. Crash. Crash. Everyone looked at me. I felt angry and frightened. I didn't want the food. I had been hungry but I felt too scared to be hungry anymore. Why did they give me food? I felt really bad and the colours made me want to run away. I ran out of the room

and out of Arvroom, feeling more scared than I'd ever felt before. I screamed and bit my hand. I went outside and sat in the shade. I wanted my Mum so much. I bit my hand until it really hurt and I tasted blood in my mouth. I screamed again and got up, ran over to the edge of the garden, and sat on the ground under a tree. The rage went away a little bit and everything sounded quieter. I rocked on my bum back and forward, and soon my head started to clear a little bit. After a while, Robboaw walked up to me and sat on a seat nearby. I screamed at him and started to cry. My body shook and my hand hurt loads. Robboaw didn't say anything. He just stroked my arm gently until I stopped crying.

"It's OK, Adam. It's OK," he said.

He spoke really quietly. He sounded friendly. I felt a bit better now that I was outside and everything sounded quiet. Robboaw looked more friendly by the tree than he had done by the table. He just stroked my arm saying 'OK' over and over again. I'd cry a little bit, then stop. Then start again. I felt a lot better. Robboaw looked as friendly now as he had done earlier. My head felt really clear now, and all the rage and colour had gone away. I didn't feel as scared as I had done. I still wanted my Mum and I still felt bad, but not too bad. The lady from earlier walked up to me and gave me a Pom-Pom Parlar.

"Your Mum's going to have to pay for the plate, you know," she said with a kind smile. "That cost twelve pence at the Gateway boot fair. It had a lovely pattern. I'll never find another one like it."

Robboaw laughed. I don't know why. I liked his laugh so I smiled and felt a little happier.

"Stay with him for the rest of the morning," said the lady. "Take him out for a walk or a drive. Get him away from here for a little while."

“I’ve got to go to the garage and buy some milk. I could take him and some of the others out for a drive in the minibus,” said Robboaw.

I heard Robboaw say drive. I pulled my clothes and said ‘inyacarb’. That means that I want to go for a drive. Robboaw smiled and nodded. The lady hugged me. I felt much better now. And a little hungry.

Special Watch – Adam’s First Drive in Arvoom’s Minibus

After finally eating my dinnaow, I spent a bit of time with Robboaw as he got some of the people in moving chairs into the big car. Game with the yellow tashey sat in the big car too. He still didn’t smile. I felt a lot better. I still missed Mum, but I wasn’t as scared as I had been. I knew that as long as Robboaw stayed with me I’d be OK. He smiled and spoke quietly to me and the other people. He helped us into the big car. Game made sure everyone was strapped in, although he wasn’t being friendly. Robboaw drove and Game sat next to me. Two other people were sat behind me and Game. We went up the little, bumpy road that made the big car go up and down, and then onto the proper road. We drove for a while and I Watched out of the window. Robboaw spoke and laughed and played some music. He made me laugh because nobody could hear what he said. The music was too loud. Game sat next to me, just looking away from us all. I felt a little uncomfortable sitting next to him. I felt like he didn’t really want to be with me. I touched him on the arm to say hello, but he just looked at me quickly and then looked away again. I smiled when he did this – people like that are always more fun to annoy; a bit like Jake.

We drove around parts of Adinna I hadn’t seen before. The sun shone brightly and the day felt warm. I felt almost back to normal and my head wasn’t funny anymore – I didn’t feel worried at all. I started to think that it wouldn’t be long before I knew

Arvoom really well and I'd know the other people more. Robboaw would make sure nothing bad would happen to me. If I ever felt bad again, then Robboaw would know and he would make me feel better, like he did under the tree. He understood what I wanted when I asked for it. When I wanted to know who Game was, he knew. Not many people understand what I want. Robboaw does. That makes me feel really safe.

After driving for a while, we stopped in the place where Dad puts the smelly stuff in the car.

"OK, everyone. I'm just popping in to get some milk. I won't be long," said Robboaw.

Robboaw then got out of the car and went into the place Dad goes after he's put the smelly stuff in the car. I didn't like being away from Robboaw. The other people behind me didn't like it either. I don't know how I knew. They breathed differently. They breathed the same way I breathed. Game sat next to me, not saying anything or even looking at me. I started to feel scared without Robboaw. I pulled gently at Game's arm and tried to talk to him.

"Yeah? Bollocks," said Game. He frowned when he said this.

I wasn't happy and I wanted to be with Robboaw. He had a nice smile and he looked after me. I didn't want to be with Game, so I took my strap off and tried to open the door to the big car.

"No. Sit fucking down," shouted Game.

I hate that word. 'No'. It means I can't do something that I want to do. Another word like 'No' is 'Don't'. They are words that make me worry. Game had made me worry. He wasn't nice at all and he wouldn't let me go and see Robboaw. I bit my

hand. I screamed a little when I bit my hand. Grame screwed his face up and raised his hand in the air as if he was going to hit me.

“Don’t even fucking try it,” said Grame. His tashey wobbled and bits fell out. His eyes were nearly closed. His teeth were dirty and his voice smelled. “I’ll break every bone in your body if you try it on with me. Now sit there like a good little boy and be quiet.”

He made me feel funny in the stomach. I felt too worried to do anything, so I looked out of the window and decided to do nothing. I felt so scared that I couldn’t do anything anyway. My throat felt funny. I felt bad. I wanted my Mum. Even when Dad got really angry and shouted so loud my ears hurt, he would never scare me as much as Grame. I always knew Dad wouldn’t hurt me. But I didn’t know Grame – what if he decided to hurt me? He looked as though he wanted to. And his words sounded really nasty. His eyes looked horrible. He looked as though he wanted to hurt me. But why? Robboaw wouldn’t have done that. I sat in my seat looking out of the window and I stayed quiet until Robboaw came back. When Robboaw sat back down in the big car, everything felt different. The other people behind me started to breathe properly. My head felt better, and I didn’t feel as worried as I had done. The air felt nicer. Robboaw was smiling and laughing and talking. I felt like I’d been in different place for a while, and that I’d just come back. Grame still didn’t say anything. I decided to stay away from Grame all the time I was at Arvoom. I didn’t want him to make me feel scared again.

We drove back to Arvoom. I walked inside with Robboaw and saw Mum and Dad sitting in the telly room. I ran in and shouted ‘allaow’. I smiled and gave Mum a really big hug. I’d missed her so much. I even gave Dad a hug. I felt especially pleased to see Dad. He wasn’t as scary as I thought. He would never hurt me. I

knew that. I didn't know that about Grame. I wanted to tell them about everything that had happened that day. But I couldn't. I rubbed my teeth and said 'MaMummy' and 'dinnaow' a few times, but it did no good – they didn't understand. I kissed the lady on the cheek and gave Robboaw a big hug. Grame came out and smiled a really pretend smile. He looked at the lady and laughed a pretend laugh. I poked my tongue at him and ran outside laughing.

I got in the car before Mum and Dad and put on my strap. I was laughing and feeling really happy about going home. I'd missed Mum so much, but I felt glad I'd come to Arvoom. I'd made friends with Robboaw and knew he would always look after me. As long as he was always there, I knew everything would be OK. I like the big car for drives and I liked the room with the toys and the big window. Dad got in the car.

"You owe me twelve pence," said Dad. He smiled and rubbed my hair.

Special Watch – In the car; on the way to Arvoom.

I felt really happy this morning. Yesterday I'd felt happy, but not sure about what was going to happen at Arvoom. Now I knew. I knew that Robboaw would be there to look after me. I knew all the other people would be happy and get given loads of Pom-Pom Parlar and cake. I knew nothing bad would happen to me, although I felt a little worried about Grame. I tried to tell Mum about him, but she didn't understand. I got a little angry with her and bit her arm, which made me feel terrible. She didn't cry or shout. She just hugged me. I wish I'd bitten Grame with his silly tashey.

We drove up the little road and I felt my belly go funny. I was really looking forward to seeing Robboaw and the lady and the Watch room. I decided not to worry about Grame. Robboaw would be there. We stopped the car outside Arvoom and I got

really excited and ran out of the car and round the side to the main door. I shouted 'Arvoom' all the way. I ran in through the main door and into the telly room. I thought Robboaw would be in there. But the lady stood there instead.

"Good morning, Adam. How are you?" said the lady.

I laughed, rubbed my teeth and said 'dinnaow tomorrow'. I wanted a Pom-Pom Parlar and I wanted to see Robboaw. The lady smiled and walked out of the room. I sat in the chair laughing and shaking my head. I couldn't wait to see Robboaw. He could take me out for a walk and buy me an arshee. He could take me out for another drive. I felt so excited.

I sat in the chair for a while and the lady came back in with a Pom-Pom Parlar. Mum and Dad came in behind her.

"Robbie's not here this morning," said the lady. "He's taken a client to Exeter for a dentist appointment. He'll be back before lunch, so I've arranged for Graham to take him for a walk around the Horseshoe. It's a really nice route that goes up past the garage..."

Why hadn't Robboaw come to say hello? My Pom-Pom Parlar tasted better than yesterday. It was a lovely sunny day again, and I really wanted to go for a walk. I hoped Robboaw would take me. But where was he? I couldn't understand why he hadn't come to say hello. Mum gave me a hug and went with Dad. I wasn't really that bothered. I wasn't anywhere near as bothered as the day before. I didn't really want them to go, but not because I felt scared. I just didn't want to miss them. I had Robboaw to look after me anyway. So I felt OK about them going. I sat in the chair for ages waiting for Robboaw, but he never came. I started to feel a little worried. I'd finished my Pom-Pom Parlar. Where was he? Why hadn't he come to say hello? I decided to look around Arvoom and see if he'd hidden in another room. I went

upstairs and into the kitchen and the room with the toys and the big window. I looked in some of the other rooms, but couldn't find him anywhere. I walked into another room and found the lady sitting at a desk and writing on a piece of paper. There were loads of other bits of paper around her.

"Hello, Adam. I thought you were going for a walk with Graham," said the lady.

I pulled my clothes and pointed out of the window. I said 'Robboaw'. I was telling her that I wanted to out for a walk with Robboaw. Game walked in frowning.

"Coming for a walk then, Adam?" said Game.

I think he wanted me to go out for a walk with him. I didn't want to. I wanted to go and get an arshee with Robboaw. I wanted to go out for a walk but after what Game had done in the car yesterday, I felt scared. I wasn't sure what he might try and do to me. He smiled and held his hand out to me. He actually had quite a nice smile. I still wasn't sure about him. I knew that Robboaw must be around somewhere. If Game did anything then I'd tell Robboaw. I didn't really like Game. But he was only going to take me out for a walk. And maybe an arshee. I decided that I'd let Game take me for a walk. Maybe he hadn't been very happy yesterday but today he felt better. I knew that I hadn't been very happy yesterday, and I felt a lot better.

I got up and walked in front of Game to the main door. I decided to think about Robboaw and an arshee rather than worry about Game. He couldn't do anything too bad to me. If he was going to do anything bad then why did he come to Arvoom? He wouldn't be at Arvoom if he did bad things to people.

We walked along the little road and up to the big road. As soon as we got to the path next to the big road, Game started to walk really quickly. He went in front of me, and I had to walk fast to keep up with him. I didn't want to walk fast. I didn't

want to get too hot and I didn't want to be on my own. But then I thought if I did get hot then I would have to have an arshee. I love arshees. They're so cold they hurt my teeth – but it's a nice hurt because they taste so sweet as well. So I decided that I didn't mind walking too fast because it would mean that we would both get hot and have to get an arshee. But we walked really close to the big road, and all the cars were going really fast. Normally I like that, but then Mum is holding my hand and I feel OK. But Grame walked in front of me. He wasn't holding my hand or even looking at me. He just looked at the ground and walked really fast. I felt scared walking close to all the cars and not holding someone's hand. I stopped so that I could pick up a stick. But Grame walked so fast that when I started walking again, he'd gone loads in front of me. I felt really scared. All the cars were going fast, and there was nobody near me. I could feel the air go whoosh as the cars went past. I said 'allaow' so that Grame would stop. He turned round and said something.

“Come on. I need a fag.”

I walked slowly towards him. He frowned so that his tashey went a funny shape – he looked angry. When I got to him I tried to hold his hand, but he pushed me away and started to walk fast again. What a horrible man. I really wanted my Mum or even Robboaw. Robboaw would've held my hand and walked at the same speed as me. Grame didn't even talk to me. I decided that I didn't like the walk anymore. I saw a gate going into a field (there were moocows eating the grass) that looked really nice. I could run and play with Grame by not letting him catch me. I laughed and ran towards the gate.

“What are you doing?” shouted Grame.

I didn't care. I thought it would be really funny if I went into the field and ran around slapping my arse. Grame would have to run and catch me. Then we would both be

hot and would both want an arshee. So I ran up to the gate, climbed over and jumped into the field. I stood by the gate until Grame was on the other side.

“Get out of there right now, you little bastard,” he said.

I laughed and ran off around the field. I ran around and around slapping my arse and laughing. I shouted ‘allaow’ and ‘dinnaow tomorrow’ really loudly. It was really nice and really funny. Grame had climbed over the gate and started to chase me. He played as well and looked really funny. We would both need a big arshee after our game. I carried on running around and slapping my arse. Grame would get close to me, and I’d stop and run the other way and he’d miss me. He would shout something and I would laugh. I decided that Grame must be nice after all. He knew that we were playing a game, and he played quite well. He must have just been having a bad day yesterday.

I ran up to one of the moocows and it ran away. I slipped in some smelly mud and fell over. I laughed really loudly, because I knew that that was the end of the game and that Grame would catch me. He would then laugh and take me to a place to get an arshee. I lay on the ground and laughed. Soon Grame walked up to me and breathed really quickly. I laughed at him and pulled a funny face. He breathed really fast and frowned. I laughed even more. It had been a really good game. Grame had loads of sweat coming from his head – he must’ve been desperate for an arshee. He bent down and grabbed my hand. He then pulled me really hard on to my feet so that I was standing up. He hurt my arm. He then pushed me really hard in my chest so that it hurt. That wasn’t funny. I suddenly realised that Grame hadn’t been playing. He made his hand into a fist and grabbed my chin and really hurt me.

“You don’t ever do that again, you fucking piece of shit,” he screamed. “Any one of you little wankers who tries to make me look stupid ends up being sorted out. You understand? Of course you don’t, mong bastard.”

I felt really scared. Grame had hurt my arm by pulling me. Then he’d pushed me and hurt me again. And now he was holding my chin really hard and screaming at me. I’d been so wrong. I really thought that Grame had wanted to play the game. But he hadn’t. I’d been right about him from the start. He wasn’t nice. He didn’t want to do things for me. All he wanted to do was hurt me and make me feel bad. I wasn’t even thinking about Mum or Robboaw. All I wanted was for Grame to stop hurting me and take me back to Arvoom. I didn’t even want an arshee anymore.

“Do I make myself perfectly clear?” screamed Grame. “Do anything like that again, and I’ll really hurt you. Really fucking hurt you.”

He let me go and walked back to the gate. I was shaking. I felt so scared on my own in the middle of a field, with somebody who wanted to hurt me. If Robboaw had been there he wouldn’t have hurt me – he would’ve laughed and taken me for an arshee. But Grame just walked away and left me on my own. I walked really slowly after him. I wanted to bite him and scratch him. But I felt so scared I didn’t even want to be near him. My throat started to go a bit funny. He got to the gate and climbed over. I got there and stopped. If I climbed over the gate, he might try and push me off. I was shaking. He waved at me to climb over. But I didn’t want him to hurt me. I didn’t want him to go and leave me on my own. So I climbed over the gate. He walked down the big road and towards Arvoom.

My head started to feel funny and my body shook. I wanted to hurt somebody. I wanted to break something and I don’t know why. I felt worried and really scared. The people who were supposed to be looking after me had let me go out with

Grame. Could it be their fault? They must have known that he likes to hurt people. My throat felt funny. Nobody was there to look after me. I felt on my own.

We walked back down the little road that led to Arvooom. Grame walked in front of me again. My body and my chin hurt. My arm hurt. My chest hurt. Grame had made me feel like that. He'd touched me when I didn't want to be touched. I hate that. I hated Grame. I wanted to hurt Grame. He'd hurt me. He'd touched me. My head felt funny. I felt rage in my head. It felt like I was under water again. Everything looked dark. I couldn't think properly. Grame had hurt me. I felt on my own. Nobody looked after me. I hated Grame.

I felt my belly go funny. My head seemed to go 'pop'. I couldn't see properly. Everything looked dark. I couldn't hear anything. Grame got to the main door of Arvooom. I ran and pushed into him so he fell over. I screamed. I screamed louder than I've ever screamed before. I ran into the telly room and pushed the telly over. Everything looked dark. I hated Grame. He'd touched me. Nobody would help me. I ran into the corridor and pulled a picture off the wall. I screamed and threw it on the floor. I hurt all over my body. I wanted to break things and stop the hurt. I wanted people to see I how sad I felt. I ran upstairs and went into the Watching room. I picked up a metal toy and threw it at the window. I was crying. I hated Grame. The window went smash. Glass went everywhere. I screamed. I wanted somebody to look after me. I could hardly see at all now. My head hurt and felt full. My belly hurt. I ran out and into the room where the lady was writing. I got loads of paper and threw it on the floor. I breathed really fast. I hated Grame. I wanted to feel better. I felt so scared and sad and worried. I felt bad. Nobody was looking after me.

I ran back downstairs and into the toylou. The bath. That would make me feel better. I was screaming and crying. I felt so bad. I turned the water on and the bath

started to fill up. Somebody tried to come into the toylou. I screamed at them – no words; just noise. Nobody wanted to be with me. Nobody cared about me. I knew the bath would make me feel better. The sound of the water seemed nice, although I still screamed and cried. The bath filled with water. I could feel the rage starting to go a bit. I sat down on the floor and watched the bath fill up. As the bath filled the darkness in my head went away. I could see the water going in the bath. I stopped screaming. I wasn't crying as much. I could hear things better.

“Just leave him alone. Let him calm down on his own,” said Robboaw. I could hear Robboaw.

My head felt a lot clearer. I got in the bath. I didn't want to take my clothes off. The warm water went all over me and pushed my clothes into my skin. I felt loads better. The darkness had all gone. My head felt clear. I still hated Grame for what he'd done to me in the field. The bath with the water all around me made me feel safe with no rage. I stopped crying. I laid back and tried to slow down my breathing. I stared at the ceiling. I didn't want to scream anymore. I didn't want to cry anymore. The water all around me made me better. I started to feel like I do when I wake up in the morning. Running around Arvoom and breaking stuff felt like the dreams I have when I sleep. I felt wide awake just lying in the bath. I looked away from the ceiling and saw Robboaw sat next to me. I said 'allaow'. He touched my arm.

“It's OK, Adam. Stay in the bath until you feel better,” said Robboaw.

I felt better with Robboaw being next to me. I wasn't as scared as I had been. The lady walked in and sat on the edge of the bath. She said some stuff to me and didn't seem cross. Robboaw was touching my arm and talking. The lady sat there just talking. I felt a lot better. I still hated Grame for what he'd done to me. My anger came back a bit because I couldn't tell them that he'd hurt me. I bit my hand.

“It’s alright, Adam,” said the lady. “Try and calm down a little bit. I’ve phoned your Mum and Dad. They’re coming to take you home. You can go home and relax.”

After a while I got out of the bath. Robboaw helped me to get dry and undressed. He was making me laugh by then. I hadn’t forgotten what Grame had done to me. But as least Robboaw was there and making me feel good again.

I got into a dressing gown and went up to the Watching room. All the glass had been cleaned up. I felt bad because I’d broken the glass. I hadn’t meant to do that. I just wanted to break something. I wished then that I hadn’t broken the big window. The air was rushing in and making the room feel really fresh. I sat on the box by the window and started to Watch.

First Watch at Arvoom –

Mum walked in and gave me a big hug. Dad stood by the door and spoke to the lady. Mum talked to me and gave me loads of hugs. Robboaw stood near me but looked at the lady and spoke to Dad.

“I’m so sorry,” said Dad. “I’ve never known him do anything like this before. Yes, he’s lively and yes he lets people know if he’s unhappy, but... did anything happen? He wouldn’t have done anything so aggressive unless he’d been provoked.”

I Watched Adinna through the window I’d broken. Mum sat next to me, talking and hugging. I gave her a kiss on the cheek and noticed a Pom-Pom Parlar on the windowsill. I drank it fast fast fast.

“I really don’t know,” said the lady. “He came back from a walk with Graham and just flew off. He seemed perfectly happy before he went.”

There was a piece of cake as well. I gave Mum another kiss on the cheek.

“I think it may be a good idea if Adam spends some time at home so we can assess the situation,” said the lady.

“What? That’s a little premature, don’t you think? It was only one incident,” said Robboaw.

I pulled at my dressing gown and said ‘barve’ to Mum. I wanted to get into my proper clothes.

“It’s obvious that Adam needs time to settle,” said Robboaw. “If we send him off now he’ll never settle. People like Adam need support and stimulation when they start in a place like this. He hasn’t had either yet. We need to develop a proper programme for him. Get him doing things day in day out. We can’t just leave out in the cold because of one incident. We need to give him time.”

Mum looked like she was going to cry. She smiled, but her lip wobbled a little bit. I offered her a piece of my cake. She didn’t want it so I put it in her ear.

“Look,” said the lady. “We can’t talk about it here. Let’s go to my office.”

Dad, Robboaw and the lady walked out of the Watching room. Mum stayed and poked her finger around her ear – I think she was trying to get the cake out.

*

Chapter 5 - Pom-Pom Parlar with Denis

June 1990

It was another really hot day. All the days have been hot for ages. Mum and Robboaw buy me lots of arshees, but I can't walk very far. I get really tired and sweaty and need to sit down.

Arvroom is my place now. I go there every day and do loads of stuff. Robboaw takes me for loads of walks and drives in the big car. Mum is a lot happier. Dad is home more and doesn't go out at night so much. Jake is always out walking in Adinna with the babbobs. He's always muddy. We never see Joss. She doesn't argue with people as much as she used to. That's because we never see her.

We were driving back from Arvroom. Me and Mum were both really hot. I wore my shorts and a T-shirt, but I still felt hot. All the windows were open, but I still put my face in front of the air blower – it made me feel cooler. Mum still looked hot. We always go and see Cath after Arvroom. I like Cath. She always smiles and gives me a hug. She makes Mum smile a lot. I don't like her cake much – it's not as nice as Gran's cake. Her Pom-Pom Parlar taste nice. Apart from her cake, I like her. All the people we know in Adinna are nice and friendly. The lady from the shop is called Edna. She lets me watch her telly sometimes. The lady up the hill, who I hugged in the road on our first day in Adinna, is nice and always gives me sweeties when I see her.

Jake's friends aren't that nice. I call them babbobs because it's a funny word and they make me laugh. They always wear wellyboots and always stink of smelly mud. Joss says they eat their own smelly mud. They don't talk to me or smile at me. I try giving them hugs, but Jake just shouts at me. They go a bit red and look away from me and pretend I'm not there, so I give them more hugs and try to give them sticks so they know I'm friendly. If that doesn't work, I shout at them or run around smacking my arse.

Cath lives in a little house with no upstairs. When I first went there, I didn't know what to do because I couldn't find a good window to Watch from. Now I just go into Cath's bedroom and Watch from there. She doesn't mind. She sits with Mum and talks to her and makes her smile. Dad doesn't make Mum smile anymore. He hasn't made Mum smile for a long time.

We stopped the car at home and walked to Cath's house. It was so hot I didn't even run off like I normally do; I just walked with Mum and held her hand. I ran round to the back door and ran into Cath's kitchen. Cath was washing up. I gave her a big hug then ran past her and straight into the bedroom. I knew she would bring me a Pom-Pom Parlar – she always does. I felt good about that. I felt so hot I just wanted to sit down somewhere cool and drink a Pom-Pom Parlar. After a while Cath brought me a Pom-Pom Parlar and an arshee. I touched her hand and blew her some kisses. She is so nice. I could hear Mum laughing in the other room. I don't know what she was laughing at. Silly things always make my Mum laugh. She doesn't mind if nobody else finds it funny or even if there's nobody in the same room as her. Her funny pictures with the bright colours on the wall used to make her laugh, but she's taken them all away now. There are just pictures of me, Jake and Joss. I drank my Pom-Pom Parlar really fast and ate my arshee.

I like being in Cath's house. It's really quiet and has a good smell. I can just sit at the window and Watch for a little while before going home. It gives me a little time to calm down after Arvoom, because home isn't as good as it used to be and not as much fun anymore. It isn't really fun at Cath's, but at least it feels nicer.

Before Tea Watch – From Cath's room

I sat Watching Adinna while Mum talked to Cath. I'd finished my arshee ages before, and now my Pom-Pom Parlar was finished. I felt a little bored and hot. Cath doesn't like to open the windows. I could hear Mum talking in the other room.

"He's working at last, which is a relief," said Mum.

I thought if I took my shoes off I might cool off a bit. So I did. It didn't really help that much. It did feel nicer. What I needed was a nice cold bath...

"I'm not interested in going to the pub with him, and he's not interested in going to the Church group or the Parish meetings with me," said Mum.

I still felt hot. I tried to open the window but Cath must have locked it. I thought the only way to get any cooler was to take my T-shirt off. So I did...

"No, we've never spoken about it – not since we moved here," said Mum.

If anything, I felt hotter and I couldn't breathe properly. Jake walked past with some of the babbobs. I banged on the window and shouted 'allow'. Jake shook his head and turned the other way. The babbobs looked at me and laughed. I blew them some kisses. Jake shook his head and looked back at me and pulled his clothes at me. I didn't understand that. I was so hot and all the sweat was dripping down me – I had to get cooler somehow. I took my shorts off...

"What about the kids?" said Cath.

"I don't know," said Mum.

I felt a lot cooler now, but I still sweated loads where I wore my arse shorts. Jake had walked over the bridge so I couldn't see him anymore. I really couldn't understand why he'd been pulling at his clothes. It was good to see the babbobs laughing. They never smile normally. I took my arse shorts off.

"At least we can talk. We certainly don't do anything else," said Mum.

Arvroom had been really good that day. We'd just sat outside eating arshees all day and throwing water at each other. Robboaw got the hose pipe and sprayed water all over me. That really made me laugh. I love playing games with water. I filled a big bucket full of water and threw it all over him. He laughed so much somebody had to take him inside. He came back outside later and slipped in the mud and fell straight on his arse. I laughed so much my belly hurt. I decided that I could do with some water now. I walked out into the living room to ask Mum for a glass of water. I don't know why she got so angry. Maybe if she'd taken her clothes off and got cooler she wouldn't have been so angry. Cath laughed and gave me funny looks.

"Big lad, innem?" she kept saying. I don't know why.

Mum took me back into the bedroom and put all my clothes back on. After that she said 'sorry' loads of times to Cath, who kept laughing and patting me on the back. After that we went home. Mum went into the kitchen and started to cook tea. Nobody else was at home. Home has got really strange recently. Ages ago when I used to come home from school, or when I first started at Arvroom, everybody would be there. Jake and Joss would be laughing and Dad would be shouting. Mum would be laughing and I would be Watching. Now when I get home it's always quiet. When Jake gets home, he's really quiet. Joss hardly ever comes home at all, and when she does she never speaks to anybody. Dad hardly ever shouts at anyone

because there's no one to shout at. My family are still here, but I never notice them. It feels like just me and Mum all the time. I love Arvoom and being with Robboaw. Mum will come with me to Arvoom sometimes and we go out with Robboaw. The others never come to Arvoom. We are still a family – we're just not as loud anymore. We're a quiet family. Everybody has their own thing to do. Except me and Mum. We're the only loud people in the family now. Adinna has made everyone quiet except for me and Mum.

There was a bang at the door. That surprised me. Nobody ever uses the front door in Adinna. Everybody goes through the back door. Mum walked from the kitchen to the front door and pulled really hard – it took her ages to open it, and it made a cracking noise. There was lots of talking and high voices and hugging and 'hello's. It sounded like Valerie. I'm not sure if I like Valerie. She talks nicely to me and makes me Pom-Pom Parlar, but I'm not sure if I like her properly.

Valerie stood in the doorway, hugging Mum and talking. That's why I'm not sure if I like her or not – because she talks all the time. She never stops talking. Mum tries to say something and can't because Valerie talks all the time. I stood in the doorway to the living room and watched Valerie talking at Mum. Valerie then saw me and came over to give me a hug. I hugged her back and rubbed my teeth and said 'dinnaow'. I was hungry.

"Oh my god. You've grown so much," said Valerie in a high voice. I never listened to what she said.

Behind Valerie stood a man. I'd never seen him before. He looked funny. His hair looked like Robboaw's, only bigger – there was no hair at all at the sides but the middle stood up straight and tall. He looked like a weird bird. He had a metal earwig going in and out of his nose. He also had something painted on his arm. Dad has

something like that painted on his arm and it never comes off. I've tried to rub it off loads of times. The painting on the man's hand had more colours than Dad's. The man looked strange. He didn't smile or say anything.

Valerie stopped hugging me and went back to talking to Mum. I couldn't stop looking at the man. He just stood behind Mum and Valerie, holding some bags. He looked funny with his weird bird-hair, his painted arm and his nose earwig. He didn't look happy; he didn't look sad either. He just looked at Mum and Valerie. Then he looked at me. That's when he smiled. I stepped back a bit. He was a little scary.

"This is Denis," said Valerie.

"Hi," said the man. He put the bags down and walked up to Mum. He put his hand out and held Mum's hand. Then he pulled it up and down. Valerie moved her eyes around and smiled. Mum smiled a funny smile back at Valerie.

"Adam," said the man, and looked at me without smiling. He stuck his hand out towards me. I noticed a long mark going all the way down his cheek and past his mouth – it looked like the one Dad had on his chest after he got poorly ages ago. It wasn't that I didn't like the man; he made me want to ask him loads of questions. The earwig in his nose bothered me the most. It must bang on his cup when he drinks a Pom-Pom Parlar...

"Adam, this is Denis. He's trying to say hello," said Mum.

Dennaben. I hadn't heard that funny name before. It seemed to fit the man quite well. Dennaben. I decided that he was nice. I don't know why. He didn't smell bad and he looked quite funny. I wondered if he liked games. I poked my tongue at him and ran to my room. I laughed all the way and shouted 'alloaw'.

Before Tea Watch –

I sat up in my room, thinking about our visitors. We hadn't had many visitors recently – maybe because our house is so quiet all the time. I noticed Joss walking over the bridge. She was holding a big white cigar just like Dad's, except his are brown. She stopped, climbed through the broken bit of the wall and stumbled down to the riverbank. She looked really sad. She just stared down at the ground the whole time. She used to wear really bright clothes like Mum, but now she wears black clothes. I don't know what's wrong with her. Maybe she'd be happy to see Valerie. I wasn't sure if she'd like Dennaben. She doesn't like Jake, and she doesn't like Dad that much. I don't think she likes men much at all. I decided that Dennaben would be too quiet for her – she wouldn't like him. I still wasn't sure if I liked him. He looked so funny and his voice was really low. He'd tried talking to me. He'd also tried to touch me. He'd been gentle with Mum and she'd liked that. But who was he? Why was he in our home with Valerie? She used to visit with Gordon. I like Gordon. Gordon is really gentle and he talks to me properly. Valerie and Gordon shout at each other more than Mum and Dad do. Where was Gordon? Did he know that Valerie was here with Dennaben? I felt a little confused.

I saw Jake walking over the bridge. Joss climbed back through the broken bit of the wall, crept up behind him and jumped on him. That scared him and he pushed her away, making her laugh and push him back. I laughed – me and Joss are always making Jake angry. I opened my window, shouted 'allaow' and threw my big book with ladies onto the ground. I don't know why. I like throwing things out my window. If I'm bored I'll throw things out of other people's window too (mostly Jake's). Sometimes things break. Other times they just make a funny noise. Most of the time, my stuff is in the wrong place and I can't find a right place for it all, so some of it has to be outside on the ground. This time I threw my big book with ladies

out to annoy Jake. He hates it when I throw things out of my window and onto the ground. He has to go and get it. I like doing it more when it's raining.

Joss walked in a funny way and held onto Jake around his neck. She was smiling and singing, but she didn't seem happy. Jake pushed at Joss to get her to stop holding him. They got to the front door - Jake picked up the big book with ladies and waved to me - I laughed and banged on my window - and came in. I ran downstairs to say hello. Dennaben was sitting in my chair, talking to Jake and Joss. She smiled loads and her eyes were a funny colour. Jake took his wellyboots off and pretended to be grown up and quiet. He kept looking at Dennaben and tried to frown like Dad. Joss laughed at everything Dennaben said. Mum brought food out and we all sat down at the table. I sat next to Dennaben. I made sure I did. Even though I'd decided I liked him, I still wasn't sure why I liked him. I decided to spend dinnaowtime finding out. He smiled a lot - mostly at Joss. Joss didn't stop smiling and wore her dark glasses. Mum said stuff to Joss who breathed heavily and took her glasses off. I looked at Dennaben. He ate really quickly - nearly as fast as I eat. After a while, he looked back at me, but he still didn't smile.

"What's the matter, Adam?" said Dennaben.

I could feel everyone else around the table looking at me - they always do when a stranger speaks to me. Strangers don't normally know what to say, so my family try and help them. Dennaben didn't just speak to me - he looked at me as well. He looked into my eyes. He spoke to me as if he wanted me to speak back. People don't usually do that. They usually say stuff to me and look at Mum and expect her to speak back for me. Dennaben just looked at me and waited for me to speak back. I felt funny and didn't know what to do. Even Robboaw didn't expect me to speak

back. Dennaben kept looking at me. I looked back at Dennaben. I pulled my clothes and said 'toylou tomorrow'. I wasn't sure what else to do.

Dennaben said something to me and carried on eating.

That felt really odd. Dennaben had spoken to me, I'd spoken back and then he'd said something else. That never normally happens. He'd looked me in the eyes and expected me to talk back to him. I didn't understand what it was that he said, but we'd spoken. He'd treated me normally. I decided I liked him – he could be my friend. I still wasn't sure about the earwig. I tried to take it out for him – it was in the wrong place.

"Adam. Leave Denis alone when he's trying to eat his dinner," said Mum smiling.

Dennaben laughed and put his knife and fork down. I let go of the earwig because I wasn't sure if he might try and hurt me. Instead he grabbed my nose really gently, stared at it for a bit and then smiled. I don't know why but that made me laugh. I don't normally like people touching me. But I didn't mind Dennaben touching me. He was really gentle. And I'd made him laugh. I wanted to make him laugh again, so I put my finger in his ear. Dennaben laughed again and stuck his finger in my ear and tickled my belly. That made me laugh even more.

Everyone else around the table just watched. Mum smiled. Jake and Joss didn't really know how to look. But I felt really good. People never treat me like they treat each other – and Dennaben did. That made me feel really good. I ate my dinner and stared at Dennaben the whole time.

"I think this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship," said Valerie.

After Tea Watch –

After tea, I went to my room for a Watch and a think. But I didn't stay for long. The day felt cooler than earlier and everyone wanted to go out for a walk. I wandered downstairs and sat in my chair, looking at everybody. Jake and Joss were trying to talk to Dennaben. Valerie tried to talk to Mum, but she was too busy watching Joss and Jake. She looked at me and smiled. Dad wasn't home yet. Jake ran and got the dog and we all met at the front door. I wandered off slowly – I felt too hot to walk fast. I expected Dennaben to walk with either Jake or Joss. Mum and Valerie would walk together. But I turned round and Dennaben walked towards me. He got to me and then walked next to me... and talked. I didn't understand his words, so I just carried on walking and looking at his face and his earwig and the line on his skin. Nobody apart from Mum or Robboaw wants to walk with me. It felt nice walking with Dennaben. I still didn't know what he said, but I didn't care. He didn't hold my hand – I didn't want him to. We were becoming proper friends. I don't have many proper friends. Probably Robboaw is my best friend – but he has to be my friend. The little ladies in Adinna are nice but they are old – they aren't really my friends. Dennaben is more like the sort of person I want to be friends with. He treats me the way I want to be treated. He doesn't pretend. Even though I'd only just met him, I felt I could do anything or say anything to him. He'd look after me. I didn't have to annoy him or try to make him laugh. He'd talk to me anyway. If he didn't want to talk to me then that was OK. He treated me right.

I found a stick that looked quite good so I gave it to Dennaben. He looked at the stick and smiled.

“Sorry to sound a little harsh mate, but this stick is crap,” he said. He threw it miles into a field. I laughed – nobody had ever done that before. People normally just say ‘Oh, that's nice’, and they don't really know what to do next. Dennaben smiled and

walked to the ditch by the road and picked up this enormous stick. I smiled and stared at Dennaben's stick. It was better than anything I'd ever found. I decided to play with him. I grabbed the stick off Dennaben and ran as fast as I could up the road. I laughed and shouted 'bad', but the stick kept banging against my legs. I stood on it and nearly fell over. I looked round and Dennaben ran after me. It didn't take him long to catch me. He grabbed me carefully around my neck and started to tickle me. He then took the stick back. We were both laughing loads.

"This, my friend, belongs to me," said Dennaben. "You want a stick as good as this? Then you find it yourself."

I laughed and ran off again. Dennaben didn't chase me this time – he just walked with his stick. I stopped and looked back. Joss, Jake, Mum and Valerie were walking slowly towards Dennaben. Mum smiled and laughed, but Joss and Jake didn't look happy. We all walked to the field with the big tree in the middle. Dennaben walked with me and talked. I didn't understand any of his words, but that didn't matter. I just enjoyed having somebody apart from Mum and Robboaw to talk to.

After Bath Watch –

After walking home, we all did different things. I had a bath and got into my jimjams. Jake, Joss and Dennaben got dressed up in their nice clothes and went out. Mum and Valerie sat in the living room and talked. Dad still wasn't home. I sat in my room and thought about Dennaben and how friendly he was. I don't really understand where he's come from or where he's going, but I hope he stays for a while.

When the time got late and I couldn't stop myself from yawning, I heard the front door go. Lots of voices and heavy footsteps woke me up and made me curious. I wondered downstairs to say hello. Joss and Dennaben were stood in the living room chatting to Mum and Valerie. Jake half-sat in the chair with his eyes shut. He tried to talk, but nobody could understand his words. Joss stared at Dennaben and smiled. Valerie stared at Joss and frowned. They all smelt like Dad when he comes home late at night. Dennaben looked at me and smiled. His eyes were a funny colour and looked half closed. So were Joss'. I blew him a kiss and went to sit next to Mum. I wasn't sure if I liked all this. Everyone behaved a little oddly. Jake was still trying to talk. Mum kept looking at Jake. Valerie stared at Joss.

Jake suddenly got up.

"I'm going to bed," he said, and then he just walked out and up to his bedroom. I went and sat in his warm seat. I wasn't sure if I very much liked my family behaving so oddly, so differently to the way they normally behave. Joss looked really strange. Dennaben didn't look as friendly as earlier, even though he smiled and talked to me. I don't think Valerie liked Joss that much. She just stared at her the whole time. Joss and Dennaben sat down and Mum went into the kitchen to make some food and Pom-Pom Parlar. I sat and looked at the telly.

"Did you two enjoy each other's company, then?" said Valerie. They all spoke quietly and ignored me – even Dennaben. I felt a little sad about being ignored. Why were they ignoring me in my own front room? I thought about leaving but Mum walked back in with food and Pom-Pom Parlar. She smiled at me and gave me mine first, but I felt a bit tired and sad and decided I didn't want it. This was my home and I felt a bit like I shouldn't be there. I liked Dennaben and I love Joss, but they made my home more their home and they ignored me. I left my Pom-Pom Parlar, kissed

my Mum and walked out. At least they couldn't do that if I wasn't there and in my room. I got to the stairs and Jake was sitting there, bent over and covered in sick. As much as I like to annoy Jake, I don't like to see him sad or unwell. I walked back into the living room and grabbed Mum's hand. I dragged her to the stairs and showed her what Jake had done.

"Oh, Jake. Poor boy," said Mum. She looked at Joss as if she really didn't like her. Joss laughed. Then Dad walked in. Everyone went quiet.

"What's up?" said Dad. He moved like he was on a boat again.

"Look what you've done," said Mum.

"What?" said Dad.

"You've got your fifteen year old son into this state," screamed Mum.

Dad didn't like being shouted at, and Mum had really shouted at him. Everybody, even Dennaben, was quiet and looking at the floor. Jake groaned. Dad said something and tried to cuddle Mum.

"Oh shut up," screamed Mum. Dad looked at Mum, shrugged his shoulders and walked into the lounge. I felt really bad. I'd heard them shout before, but I'd never seen Mum that upset and crying. She took Jake into the bathroom and ran a bath for him. I watched. After she'd cleared up all the sick from the floor, Jake came out of the bathroom and went straight to bed. I still felt bad. It didn't feel like home anymore. Everybody had their own thing to do. We didn't do stuff for each other anymore. I went to my room and got straight into bed. I tried to remember how it used to be, when Jake and Joss were happy and Mum and Dad didn't shout at each other so much. I didn't bother with a night Watch – instead I cried a little bit and then I fell asleep.

Morning Watch –

I woke up really late. I knew it was late, because everybody was walking around and talking. I normally get up before everybody else. Everybody seemed to be happy and laughing. That made me feel better after what had happened the night before. I heard Mum and Dad talking outside my room. After a while (they were silent for ages and then spoke in single words) Mum walked in and smiled. She gave me a kiss.

“Good morning, sweetheart,” she said. Her eyes were red and she looked like she’d been crying. I said ‘alloaw’ and touched her face gently. She said some more stuff (I didn’t understand any of her words except for ‘Dennaben’ and ‘car’) before saying ‘goodbye’. She went downstairs and, after a bit more noise by everyone, it went really quiet – I realised nobody was at home. I’d been left on my own. I started to feel really worried – Mum wouldn’t leave me on my own, would she? Who would give me my breakfast and run my bath? I can’t do those things by myself. I need someone to be with me. I stayed in bed for a while and waited to hear a noise. I heard nothing. I started to get scared. Mum had just left me alone in the house. Didn’t she know that I need someone to be with me? Of course she did – she loves me. There must have been someone at home. I decided to get up and see who might be at home. Dad? I hoped so. Jake? I smiled – we would have fun together. Joss – no.

I walked downstairs and heard a noise coming from the telly. I felt so much better. Dad must have stayed so he could look after me. I liked it when it was just me and Dad. Not for too long. I start to miss Mum after a little while. So I walked into the lounge. Dennaben sat on the couch with his feet up the arm, watching telly and eating a bowl of cereal. I was on my own with Dennaben. Why had they done that?

I walked into the lounge and sat down and looked at Dennaben. Dennaben just watched telly and ignored me. I didn't know what to do. I felt my throat go dry and I thought I might cry. He said nothing and just looked at the telly. I wanted to touch him or say something, but I felt scared he might ignore me even more. I remember Grame and all the mean stuff he did to me in the field. What if Dennaben did something like that to me? My belly felt funny and my throat got more dry.

Dennaben suddenly looked at me.

"Sorry, Ad. I was forgetting myself," said Dennaben. He sat up straight and smiled a nice smile. "One heavily sugared tea and a large bowl of Sugar Puffs, wasn't it?"

I felt very happy and blew him a kiss. He'd said something about Sugar Puffs and Pom-Pom Parlar. He got up from the chair, turned the telly off and touched my head. As happy as I felt at him being friendly again, I wasn't sure I liked this. I liked Dennaben and he was probably my friend, but I didn't much like the idea of being on my own with him. I followed him into the kitchen. He made me a Pom-Pom Parlar and filled my bowl with Sugar Puffs. I took my breakfast to my chair by the window and started to eat. Dennaben sat next to me and talked. I started to feel a little better.

"What do you want to do this morning then, Ad?" said Dennaben.

I looked at him and said 'bath' before going back to my Sugar Puffs. I don't like to talk when I'm eating my Sugar Puffs. He laughed a friendly laugh – so he was still being nice. People are sometimes different to me when I'm on my own. Dennaben treated me in exactly the same way. This was starting to get really nice.

After finishing my breakfast, I ran upstairs and went into my room for my Watch. I started to feel a little excited. I'd never been on my own at home with anybody else (apart from Mum or Dad). Dennaben made me laugh and he spoke to me properly.

I decided it was going to be a good day. I sat by the window and Watched Adinna for a while, expecting Dennaben to walk in and talk to me.

I noticed Jake in a field miles away, chasing some moocows with the babbobs. I banged on the window but he couldn't hear me.

"Keep the noise down," said Dennaben.

His voice was coming from Jake's room. Why was he in Jake's room? Nobody was allowed in Jake's room apart from Jake. Dennaben shouldn't have been in there. I sat by my window, wondering what I should do next. I couldn't concentrate on my Watch. Jake had disappeared into another field. I didn't know what to do. Dennaben was in Jake's room; Mum, Dad, Valerie and Joss had gone out; Jake was chasing moocows with the babbobs; and I was just sitting here in my jimjams. I decided to go and see Dennaben. He'd been nice to me downstairs. He'd been my friend the day before at the dinner table and out on the walk. The only time I hadn't been sure about him was last night when he'd made me feel ignored. But Joss and Valerie were doing that as well. And I've known them for ages. Joss is in my family – she should've been a lot nicer. I walked out of my room and across the landing to Jake's room. I stood outside and pressed my ear against the door so I could hear what Dennaben was doing. There were lots of funny noises coming from in there. Lots of 'bing bing bing' and 'dodoop dodoop dodoop'. That worried me a little bit. What was he doing to make those noises? I wondered how he would be with me if I just walked in. He hadn't been angry with me before. But there was no one else at home. If he was going to get angry with me, then he would wait until nobody was at home. But he'd been so friendly downstairs. He'd given me my breakfast and chatted to me at the table. If he was going to be angry or nasty, then he would've

done it downstairs. Grame had been mean to me once when we were alone. I didn't want that to happen again.

But Dennaben was nearly my friend. I opened the door and walked in so I was stood in the doorway. Jake would have been really angry. He hates it when I'm in his room. I laughed. Dennaben heard me and turned around. He was sitting on Jake's bed, watching telly and holding onto something. He looked like he was playing a game. But he was watching telly as well. The thing he was holding had lots of buttons – he pressed the buttons really quickly. I wasn't sure what I should do. Dennaben looked busy. But he spoke to me nicely and patted the bit of bed next to him. Mum always does that when she wants me to sit next to her. Did Dennaben want me to sit next to him? It had been a funny morning already. I was still in my jimjams; Mum wasn't here; I'd got up late; someone else had given me my breakfast. I supposed sitting next to Dennaben and watching him play a game on the telly wasn't that odd after the way the morning had gone already.

“Come on, stinky,” said Dennaben.

I wondered slowly over to the bed and sat next to Dennaben. We didn't say anything. I'd look at the telly and then I'd watch Dennaben. It was nice – the sort of thing Jake did with his friends; just sitting with each other and watching each other doing stuff. It made feel more like them. Dennaben made me feel like that. I felt happy, almost as if for the first time ever I felt like I didn't have to be looked after. I was looking after Dennaben as much as he was looking after me.

Dennaben looked at me and said something I didn't understand. I didn't mind; I didn't feel different. I didn't feel like I needed to do anything silly. If Dennaben wanted to talk to me then he would – he didn't do it because he felt he had to. He liked me because of who I was. I felt really funny in the belly. He was still just

chatting to me. I don't know what he said. It didn't matter. He was just talking to me. That's what mattered. Even Robboaw didn't talk to me like that. So I just sat on the bed next to Dennaben, looking at the telly. It didn't look like a normal telly. It was like loads of cartoon pictures of cars and buildings. Everything moved really fast.

"I feel quite bad about it, to be honest," said Dennaben.

I looked at Dennaben talking, and then looked at the thing with the buttons in his hands. I think that whatever he pressed on the thing made something happen on the telly. I'd seen Jake doing it before. I think it's some kind of game. I don't know why but I put my head on his shoulder. It felt like the right thing to do. Dennaben made me feel good. He made me feel like he really wanted to be with me. He didn't say it and he didn't touch me or hug me all the time. I knew by the way he looked at me and by the way he talked to me. Nobody had ever treated me like that before. I felt comfortable and happy with Dennaben. I could do whatever I liked and not have to do the bad stuff to get him to look at me – like I do with everyone else. That's why I put my head on his shoulder. He was easy to be with. He was my first proper friend.

"I hope I don't have to cook for you as well," said Dennaben. "I can just about put cereal into a bowl and boil a kettle. That's the best I can do..."

He stopped talking after a while and we just sat there. I had my head on his shoulder, and Dennaben played the game on the telly. I didn't want to do anything else. I couldn't even think of anything I would rather have been doing.

"What's going on?" said Jake, standing behind us. He had an angry face.

I didn't like being in there with Jake. I play a game with him sometimes where I come into his room when I'm not supposed to and take some of his stuff. But I wasn't in that sort of mood. I'd done everything I wanted to do. I'd spent time with

Dennaben and enjoyed it. It was time to leave. I walked back out. Jake spoke at me with his angry face. He tried to make me feel bad, I think. But he wasn't going to. I had my friend Dennaben. He would look after me.

I spent the rest of the day at home just Watching. The others all came back later and did whatever it is they do. Dennaben spent time with them. I didn't mind. I knew we were friends. It was a really hot day again and we went for another walk. Dennaben walked with me for a bit, but mostly he walked with Joss. I just walked ahead and looked at Adinna and thought about my new friend. I felt different. I don't know why. I'd always felt like nobody had ever really known me or known how I felt. I hadn't ever minded before but now I worry a bit if I think about it too much.

Dennaben had come along and changed that. He understood exactly what to do. He knew exactly how to treat me. Why didn't everyone else? I hope I stop worrying about all that stuff now.

That night they all went out again, but came back a little earlier than the night before. I sat in the chair and Dennaben came and sat next to me and put his arm around me. He didn't talk to me – he just talked to everyone else. He didn't need to talk to me. I knew that. The others wanted him to speak to them all the time. I just needed him to talk to me when he wanted to. I needed nothing more than that.

I went to Arvooom the next day and enjoyed my best day for ages. Me and Robboaw played games with water again. We all went for a long walk that left me tired. Nothing felt bad about the day. Everybody laughed a lot and enjoyed being with each other, but I thought only about going home and seeing Dennaben. Mum picked me up and we got an arshee from the place where she puts the smelly stuff in the car. We went to Cath's on the way home – I didn't want to but I didn't mind too much. It was always nice at Cath's, and I knew Dennaben would be at home. I

drank my Pom-Pom Parlar and had another arshee. Mum and Cath talked and laughed.

Then we walked home. I went inside and noticed how quiet it was. I'd got used to my home being noisy again. Valerie never stopped talking and everybody else wanted to talk to Dennaben. I enjoyed living in a noisy home again. Jake and Joss smiled a bit more. But when I walked in, the whole place sounded quiet. Maybe they had all gone out, but I walked through the kitchen to the garden and Joss and Jake were there. I searched the garden and the shed for Dennaben. Jake and Joss smiled and followed me around. They spoke to me nicely the whole time. They don't usually do that. It was nice. But I couldn't see Dennaben. I went to the garage to see if he was in with the dog. The dog jumped up and barked at the window – but Dennaben wasn't there. I walked back inside and looked all round the house. He wasn't anywhere. I stayed in my room until dinnaow and hoped that he'd just popped out. He'd be back soon.

Everyone sounded a lot happier at tea. Jake and Joss were laughing and chatting to each other. Even Dad talked more than normal. Mum smiled a lot. But Dennaben didn't eat tea with us. I had my bath and went to my room, expecting him to come back. But he didn't. I decided later that he wasn't coming back. He'd gone home with Valerie. I stayed in my room and got a little sad. Then I got a little angry. I felt as angry because I wanted my friend to take me for a walk, or to come and talk to me, or to treat me the same way everyone else treats each other. I stopped being angry when Mum came in. She gave me a big hug. I pointed at the window and said 'tomorrow'.

"You'll see Denis again soon," said Mum. I don't know why, but when Mum said Dennaben my throat went all funny and I got the feeling in my belly I get when I'm

about to cry. I looked up at Mum and she smiled her good smile – the one that makes me feel good. I felt a big tear fall from my eye and down my face. I wanted my friend, Dennaben – I tried my hardest not to cry.

Mum gave me a big hug and a kiss and tried her best not to cry as well. I felt better, but it wasn't quite enough. Normally when Mum hugs me and kisses me and smiles at me she can make me feel good again, but this time she didn't. Dennaben had made me feel a different feeling to any I'd ever felt before – and then he'd gone. Only my friend could've made me feel better.

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Chapter 6 – Jake is Growing Up

July 1990 –

Jake doesn't like it when I go into his room. I don't know why. All I want to do is sit in there and watch him listen to his music or play on his computer. When he was smaller, he used to let me in his room. He used to let me sit on his bed and read his books. He would talk to me and make me laugh. The bigger he got, the angrier he got when I tried to get in.

(I tore another page from the big, hard book and put it in my mouth.)

He used to take me into his room and show me his footie stuff. He had a whole wall covered in loads of footie pictures. He used to point to different pictures and tell me about them. I used to really like that. It made me feel as if he really liked me. Now he gives me looks even if I even go near his room.

(I put down the book and reached under Jake's bed. Underneath are loads of comics with pictures of ladies on the front. I took one and stared at the picture on the cover.)

He hasn't let me anywhere near his room ever since we came to Adinna. He just shouts at me and tells me he doesn't want me. He lets the babbobs go in there and he lets Mum go in there. He even lets Joss go in there. But she doesn't usually want to go in there. She's too sad to want to go in anyone's room at the moment.

(I ripped a page from the comic, screwed it up, and threw it out of Jake's window.)

When Jake was really little, we used to sleep in the same room. He really liked me back then. If he couldn't sleep very well, he would come over to me and talk to me. I would push him away and pretend I wanted to sleep, but I used to really look forward to bedtime, just so Jake would come and talk me to sleep. In our old home, when Jake was in trouble all the time and the nee-naw man would visit him, Jake would take me to his room and cry. He would talk to me, and then cry, and then he would talk to me again. That made me feel good. I thought that if he was sad, then I was the only person he wanted to be with. But he would then go off and get into trouble again. Adinna has been different. Almost from the first day we were here he shouted at me for going near his room. He stopped talking to me and he stopped crying to me. When we go out, he walks way in front of me. He used to hold my hand and talk to me on walks. He doesn't get into trouble anymore. The nee-naw men never come to see him. They came to see Joss the other day. She cried.

(I ripped another page from the comic and chewed it up until it was small enough to put up my nose. I put it up my nose and laughed.)

He doesn't get angry with anybody now apart from me. In our old home, he would get angry with everybody except for me. He would shout at everybody and try to hit people. But he was always nice to me. In Adinna he shouts at me, but is nice to everyone else. He shouts at me loudest if I go into his room. I don't know why. He just sits there with his music playing. He just stares at the wall or plays on the telly. He's got boring.

I like to get him into trouble. When Dad shouts at him it really makes me laugh. It worries me a little bit as well. I always try to get Jake into trouble. It used to be easy. Even though I really liked him and he was really nice to me, I still laughed loads whenever Dad shouted at him. But Dad doesn't shout at him as much.

Nobody shouts at Jake as much as they used to. Joss shouts at him more – but she shouts at everyone.

(I got bored with the comic so I threw it out of the window. I knocked over loads of stuff on Jake's shelf so I could get one of his Beano books.)

We play a game now. When he first started to shout at me for going in his room, I would get angry and bite him. That just made him cry and Mum would shout at me. I didn't like that. One day I didn't bite him – I just pushed all his stuff off the shelf. That made him really angry, like Dad but not scary. Getting Jake angry made me laugh. I laid on my bed and laughed for ages because Jake had got angry but not scary. I decided that that would make a good game. Rather than trying to get into his room so I could sit with him, I started trying to get into his room so I could push his stuff off the shelf. That's all I do now.

(I looked down at the floor – there was paper everywhere. I picked some up and put it in my mouth and up my nose.)

He locks his room now. A little while ago, just after Dennaben disappeared, he screwed a lock on his door. That made me laugh. I was getting a little bored of just creeping in there and pushing his stuff off the shelf. By putting the lock on the door he made the game a bit more fun. I worked out how to open the locked door after only a day of trying. I started playing a new game after that – going into his room when he wasn't there and moving one thing or pushing over one thing. Sometimes he knows that I've done it; other times he doesn't. Either way it makes me laugh. I always win the game. Jake always loses.

As Jake has got bigger, he's liked me less. When he was little he would bring all his friends home and get me to play with them. He wouldn't bring people home who didn't like me. When we went for walks, he would walk with me and shout at people

who gave me funny looks. Mum would shout at him for that. He doesn't do that anymore. He hates his friends seeing me. A little while ago, before Dennaben came to visit, I was walking in the park with Robboaw. It was a hot day and I was eating an arshee. We walked over a bridge and I saw Jake sitting on a bench with his friends. I looked at him and said 'alloaw'. He looked away and talked to his friends. He didn't even look at me. I hated that. If he'd been smaller he would have run over to me and hugged me. Robboaw didn't say anything to him – he's never met him. I felt really bad after that. I've always liked Jake. Even when he shouted at me, I liked him. I didn't like him after that. We play the game with his room and he shouts at me for no reason. I like that. That's just the way it is. I always thought that even though he shouted at me he still liked me. But after that day in the park I don't like him anymore. I didn't think that was fair. Even Joss wouldn't do a thing like that. I felt like he didn't want anybody to know who I was. It wasn't fair.

(I spat the piece of soggy piece of paper on to the floor and picked up another book – a really shiny book.)

Mum hasn't been at home for a while. I don't know why. It's not nice when Mum's not here. Everything feels different. Everybody acts differently. It's loads quieter than normal. Dad just sits in the chair by the telly all day. Jake is too afraid to come out of his room. Joss sits with Dad, watching the telly and not saying much. The whole place seems sad. Nobody really laughs or smiles. The food doesn't taste very nice. I don't get as many Pom-Pom Parlars as normal. Dad takes me to Arvoom, but doesn't really talk to me on the way. It's really boring. At night we just sit around getting bored. Dad doesn't go out at night, but he doesn't smile or talk either. He just sits there.

Jake does more to our home when Mum's not there. He makes the dinnaows and makes me my Pom-Pom Parlars. He's a little bit nicer to me. But he still doesn't let me go in his room.

"Adam! What the hell are you doing?" shouted Jake.

I looked down at all the paper I'd ripped from Jake's books and laughed.

"You've ruined all my Beano annuals, you little bastard," shouted Jake.

"Jake," shouted Dad. He was still in bed. "Don't swear at your brother."

I ran out of Jake's room laughing. On the way I pushed his stuff off the shelf (he always puts the same stuff near the door). I normally open the door just a little bit so he can't see me, and push it off and then I run. That way he doesn't see me and I don't have to go in his room. He shouts at me and I'm not even in his room. I laugh loads when I do that.

I ran into my room and closed the door, laughing and smacking my arse.

Morning Watch –

I still hadn't had a bath; I hadn't even eaten my breakfast. If Mum had been at home, then everything would've been normal. I don't like it when Mum's not at home. My days are different. Everything happens in the wrong order. I get up before everyone else and wait for someone to come and help me. If Dad helps me, I have to wait for him to get out of bed. It's not as much fun and he doesn't smile as much. Mum always makes me feel better in the morning because she smiles and talks to me. Dad doesn't. He gets grumpy and moans at me. The more he moans, the more worried I get.

I miss my Mum when she's not there. I sometimes wonder if she's ever going to come home. I'm not sure how I'd feel if she was never at home. Nobody would ever

smile at me. Nobody would ever be nice to me. All my dinnaows and all my Pom-Pom Parlars would taste funny. Nobody would hug me or kiss me. Nobody would ever come and visit. It would be horrible. Dad would get me ready every morning. He would be grumpy all the time. When Mum's around, he doesn't get grumpy as much. He moans more but he's not as grumpy.

I wonder how Jake would be if Mum decided never to come home. He does more stuff in the house. Maybe he would become my new Mum. Joss doesn't make the dinnaows or wash the clothes. I don't think Dad knows how to. Maybe Jake would do all the work. I don't think he would smile as much as Mum in the mornings. He might let me go into his room more. I wonder if he would wear Mum's clothes and grow his hair as long as Mum's. He would look funny. Thinking about Jake dressed up like Mum made me laugh.

He'd have to shout at Joss in same way as Mum. He couldn't do that. He's scared of Joss. She only has to look at him and he gets scared. He's scared of Dad as well. The only person he's not scared of is me. Maybe that's why he shouts at me all the time – because he's so scared of everyone else that he has to save up all his anger and get rid of it all on me.

Jake shouted, slammed his door, and went downstairs. I don't think he can be my new Mum. My Mum doesn't slam doors and walked off. She makes everyone laugh when stuff goes wrong. Everyone would've been out of bed anyway. She would have made sure that everybody had got out of bed ages before. I decided that the best thing to do was to hope that Mum did come home. She'd come home before. I didn't want Jake to be my new Mum.

“Jocelyn?” said Dad from his bed.

“No. I'm asleep,” said Joss from her bed.

Everybody talks differently when Mum's not at home. Everyone is quieter. Everybody takes longer in-between speaking. Nobody talks to me. I feel more alone when she's not around. People still do stuff for me, but I don't think that they really want to. I get this funny feeling in my belly as if I'm going to cry. It's not so much that I miss her; it's more the way I feel when she's here. I don't really feel part of the family when she's not here.

- There was a god /an underwater god who controlled the sea.

The music coming from Joss' room was really loud. I could hear Dad shouting at her. That wouldn't have happened if Mum had been home. If Mum had been home, I wouldn't have even been at home. She would've either taken me to Arvoom or taken me for a long walk. It was really sunny outside. Adinna looked so bright – I could see everything for miles.

- Got killed by ten million pounds of sludge from New York and New Jersey.

I hadn't even had my Pom-Pom Parlar. I could wait for breakfast but my Pom-Pom Parlar was really important. I could feel my belly going funny and my throat went all dry. I tear fell from my eye. I wanted my Mum so much. Everyone ignored me. Except Jake. I'd rather be shouted at than ignored. I went into Dad's room and pulled the covers from his bed.

- This monkey's gone to heaven...

“What’s the matter, Dad?” said Joss.

Dad stopped moaning after a while and took me for a walk in Adinna. I felt much better being outside where it was warm and sunny. I tried to hold Dad’s hand but he wouldn’t let me. I didn’t mind too much. I ran ahead and found my gateway for Watching. Joss walked behind Dad with a little white cigar in her mouth. I stood in the gateway and saw Jake playing footie with the babbobs. When I was young, Jake used to let me play footie with him. It was quite boring, actually, but I tried to enjoy it. He doesn’t do it anymore. He never plays with me anymore. I jumped over the gate and ran over to Jake. He saw me running towards him and started to shake his head. I wondered if he might want me to play with him like I did when we were smaller. That would’ve been quite fun. Even if he didn’t want to play with me, it would be fun seeing him get angry.

I laughed and pointed at the footie ball. I wanted to play with them – I really wanted to play a game with Jake and the babbobs. I normally just laugh at the babbobs and try to hug them so that Jake gets annoyed, but I thought that for once it would be nice to play with them. I said ‘tomorrow’, smiled and pointed at the footie ball. I hoped that Jake would understand what I wanted.

"Adam," said Jake, "Just go away."

He waved his hand as if he wanted me to go away. I didn’t like that. He didn’t want me to play with him and the babbobs, so I hugged one of the babbobs. I did it because I knew that Jake would get annoyed. If I couldn’t play with Jake then I wanted to get him annoyed.

The babbobs just smiled and looked at the floor. I laughed. Jake was just standing next to me with the footie ball – he looked really angry. I laughed even more when I saw how angry he was.

I ran back over to Dad laughing and shaking my head, shouting 'alloaw' and slapping my arse. I always have fun when Jake's around. I would have enjoyed it more if Jake had been nice to me and let me play footie with him. Even though I laugh when he gets angry, I wish that sometimes he would just be nice and play with me. Until then, I'll just carry on annoying him.

It was strange being out on a walk without Mum. It was even more strange being on a walk without the dog. The dog hasn't been here for a while – ever since it chased after the man on the motorbike, jumped up at him and pushed him off. I was the only one who laughed. Everybody else was really worried. The day after that, Dad took the dog for a drive in the car and I haven't seen it since. I don't mind too much. I didn't like the dog much at all. Still, it's strange not having the dog around. I'm used to Mum going away. But not the dog. The squeaky, sulky dog.

Boring Watch –

It wasn't long before I was getting bored again. Dad had taken me home and had gone back to sitting in the living room watching the telly. Jake stayed out with the babbobs for ages. Joss just sat in the living room with Dad or went into her room to listen to music.

I don't like going for a Watch just because there's nothing else to do. If I go for a Watch, it's because I either want to or I need to. I had to go for my Watch after the walk because there was simply nothing else to do. I didn't like that. If Mum's away then Dad should do more for me if I'm bored – that's what he's supposed to do. If Mum can do it, then so can he.

Jake finally came home after being with babbobs. I could hear music coming from his room.

- Love's got the world in motion...

I walked to his door and stood outside his room, listening. I smiled as I thought about going in and pushing his stuff off the shelf.

- ... and I can't believe it's true - "... and I can't believe it's true."

Jake was singing. He was singing the same words as the music. His voice sounded all wobbly and loud. I smiled and pushed the door open a tiny bit and looked in. He stood in front of his mirror, holding a hairbrush to his mouth. His eyes were shut and he was shouting the words. He looked really funny. I watched him for a bit, not knowing whether to laugh or not.

- "We're playing for England. ENG – ER – LAND!"

I felt a tap on my shoulder.

"What are you doing, Ad?" whispered Joss.

I smiled at Joss and carried on looking at Jake. Joss leant on my shoulders and looked at Jake. I could feel her arms shaking – I think she was laughing. That was the first time Joss has touched me or laughed with me since before Dennaben had come to visit.

Jake was now dancing round the room with his hairbrush and jumping on the bed. He didn't have any trousers on.

- *"Love's got the world in motion and I can't believe it's true!"*

Jake was really shouting and singing loudly. Joss was laughing loads and, in the end, I couldn't help but laugh. Jake looked over and saw us.

"What are you doing?" said Jake. His face went really red. He jumped off the bed and slammed the hairbrush down on his desk. "Can't you just fuck the fuck off for five minutes?"

I laughed and pushed the stuff off Jake's shelf. Jake stared at all his books lying on the floor and said nothing for ages. Finally, he looked at his hairbrush, then looked over at me and Joss, and said, "Adam, will you please, please just leave me alone?"

"Calm down, Bernie," said Joss. "Keep your knickers on."

Before Tea Watch –

Jake was cooking the dinnaow again. Dad never cooked. Joss did it now and again. I don't know why Jake does the cooking when Mum's not here – the food doesn't taste very nice. I thought about going into Jake's room again, but I'd become a little bored with the game. I was bored with everything. I walked downstairs and went to sit with Dad and Joss, who were watching the telly.

"How long to go now?" said Joss.

"About half an hour," said Dad.

"Nervous?" said Joss.

"Not really," said Dad.

That was even more boring than sitting in my room. I wandered into the kitchen to see Jake. He was taking the plates out of the cupboard. I rubbed my teeth and

pointed at the Pom-Pom Parlar maker. He ignored me, so I just stayed with him for a while and watched him cooking the food. It was really strange seeing Jake do what Mum normally does. It didn't fit him properly. Mum could make the dinnaow, smile and make Pom-Pom Parlars all at the same time. Jake was finding it hard just making the dinnaow. He kept dropping things and burning his fingers. He was trying to talk to me as well.

"This stupid Rayburn," said Jake.

It was nice just standing in the kitchen and listening to Jake talk to me. I blew him some kisses. I didn't understand his words, but I could tell that he was being nice to me.

After a while he stopped talking and just looked at me. I said 'dinnaow' really quietly and rubbed my teeth. I was trying to tell him that I was hungry. I also wanted him to know that I liked it when he talked to me. Even though I laugh when I get him annoyed, I still want to just talk to him sometimes. I want to have fun with him, but I also want to be normal with him. I gave him a hug. He didn't push me away and he didn't say anything – he just hugged me back. It was really nice.

"Squeeze the shit out of me then."

We hugged for a little while until I got bored. I pushed him away and pointed to the plates on the table. I wanted him to finish the dinnaow – I was hungry. He smiled and got on with making the dinnaow and I went back to the living room to see what Dad and Joss were doing. They were still just sitting there watching the telly. I knew that dinnaow wouldn't be long, so I sat down with them.

We all sat in the living room and Jake finally finished cooking dinnaow. He brought in all the plates with the food and put them on our laps. This worried me. He'd been doing this ever since Mum had been away. Why weren't we eating at the table like

normal? I couldn't understand why it was OK to eat our dinnaow in the living room. It didn't feel right. The food didn't taste as nice. Everyone else just ate their dinnaow and stared at the telly. I took my plate back to the table (where it should be) and ate my dinnaow there. It tasted much nicer. It felt strange eating away from everybody else, so I just pretended it was breakfast. That felt better.

After I'd finished, I got everyone's plate and took them all into the kitchen. Nobody else was going to do it. I hate it when there are loads of dirty plates all over the place. They should always be in the kitchen.

Jake and Dad were getting really excited. I could tell by the way Jake's eyes were open really wide and Dad kept asking everybody if they were alright. I sat back down in the living room and looked at the telly. The footie was on. Jake and Dad had been watching the footie for ages. They kept getting really excited and shouted loads when it was on. I don't know why. Joss and Mum stayed away normally, but this time Joss was sitting there as well.

"So who are England playing today?" said Joss.

"West Germany," said Dad. "It's the semi-final. You alright Jake?"

"Yeah," said Jake. "Waddle will score. I'll bet you anything."

I enjoyed watching the footie with Jake and Dad. I felt as if we were doing something together. I don't know why they got excited when they did. They just start shouting and throwing their arms about. It makes me laugh and shake my head. Jake even hugged me the other day.

"They're coming out," said Dad.

"Yeah," said Jake.

"So which colours are we playing in?" said Joss.

"England are in white and West Germany are in green," said Dad.

"Right. Right," said Joss. "And where is it?"

"Italy," said Dad.

"Yeah, I know. Hence Italia 90. Which part of Italy?" said Joss.

"Turin," said Jake.

I laughed. It was really funny. Dad and Jake were really excited about the footie and looked as if they wanted to get angry. Joss didn't really care I don't think. She was talking to them when they didn't want her to. She kept winking at me. When they talked back to her, they didn't stop looking at the telly.

The men on the telly started to play footie. Dad and Jake shouted a bit, then would go quiet, then would groan and throw themselves back in their chair. Joss didn't say much. She just sat watching the footie with a little smile on her face. After a while, Dad and Jake didn't say anything at all. They just watched the telly with worried looks on their faces. They almost looked as if they were angry. Every now and again they'd make a noise and throw their arms in the air and say something like, 'God, that was close', or 'I told you Parker was shit'. I didn't understand it at all, but it felt nice sitting in the living room with everyone.

Mum came in through the front door.

"Hello everyone," said Mum. "Ooh. Is the football on?"

Everyone looked up and said hello, but nobody got up from their chair. She was carrying all her bags and out of breath. I jumped out my chair and ran over to her and gave her a big hug. I'd missed her so much. She was talking and hugging me and kissing me. I kept pulling at her bags and pulling at her face. I wanted her to take her coat off just so she wouldn't go out again. I was so excited that she'd come home.

She walked to the kitchen and made me a Pom-Pom Parlar. It tasted so nice.

“Good to see they’ve kept the house nice and tidy,” she said with a frown.

I took my Pom-Pom Parlars and went with Mum back into the living room. As we walked in Jake walked out – he looked really upset.

“Bloody Paul Parker,” said Dad. “I said so right from the start.”

“Well that’s not very attacking, is it?” said Joss.

I felt a lot better now that Mum was home. Dad and Joss seemed a bit nicer, and I knew that everything would be OK. The whole room seemed strange – even though they were sitting in the same places and doing the same things as when Mum was away, now that she was back, they looked better. It felt as if when Mum wasn't around their faces changed and their voices sounded different. When Mum comes back home they go back to looking normal again, even though they were saying the same stuff.

Dad was sitting in the chair, looking really upset. Even Joss wasn't smiling any more. I suddenly thought that the footie must be really important. I sat down where Jake had been sitting, and Mum sat down next to Joss.

“So what colours are we playing in?” said Mum. Dad shook his head.

We sat watching the footie in silence for a while. Every now and again Mum would make a silly noise, and Dad would give her a look. Then suddenly Dad started shouting and throwing his arms around.

“Jake,” shouted Dad. “Jake. Lineker! Lineker has scored. It’s one all.”

Jake ran down the stairs and looked at the telly. He started to shout as well. Him and Dad were shouting and throwing their arms about. Mum and Joss were staring at the telly with smiles on their faces. I wanted another of Mum’s Pom-Pom Parlars. I hadn’t had one for so long that now I wanted them all the time. But we all sat in the living room and watched the footie for ages. It went on for a long time. Then

everyone started saying the word 'penalties'. I didn't understand that. I wasn't sure if it had something to do with the footie or not.

"This is too much," said Jake. He walked to the front door. "I'm going for a walk."

"What?" said Dad.

"I can't watch it, Dad," said Jake. "Come on Adam."

Dad shook his head and went back to watching the telly. Jake put my shoes on and took me out for a walk. That was quite odd. Everyone was behaving really strangely inside, so it was nice to go out for a bit, but why was it Jake who was taking me out? He'd never taken me out for a walk by himself before. I wondered what he was thinking. Why was Jake behaving so strangely? For so long he'd been shouting at me and getting annoyed at me for different things. Why was that? Walking around all day with the babbobs not really doing very much. What did they all talk about and what did they all do? I realised that I'd never understand Jake again. When we were smaller, we did so much together and he would smile at me, talk to me and play with me. I knew who he was back then. I didn't know who he was any more. He'd changed since he'd got bigger. He was almost like a stranger. For the first time, I realised that my family had changed. I started to worry.

Walking along the road in Adinna with Jake was like walking along with somebody I used to know a long time ago. He talked to me and smiled at me in the same way he used to when he was small. It made me happy, but it made me sad as well. Why had Jake changed so much? Why can't people stay the same? I decided to enjoy that walk more than any walk I'd ever had, because it was probably going to be the last one ever with the Jake that I knew. I thought for ages that the Jake I'd been annoying and getting angry was the Jake that I knew. But it wasn't. The Jake I was walking with was the Jake that I knew. He was chatting to me and smiling. He kept

putting his arm around me and saying nice things. I knew that I'd never see my Jake again. From then on I knew that he would be someone else's Jake – his Jake. He was going to be Jake's Jake.

That made me feel sad. Mum was the same as she'd always been. Dad was the same. Joss was a lot different but she still treated me the same. I realised that Jake was my favourite out of my whole family. I don't know why. I suppose because he'd always been there with me, even though he didn't have to. Even though Joss had been around longer and had always been nice to me, she'd never done a lot of stuff with me. I'd always felt different with Jake. He was the one I'd always felt better about being with. He'd always made me feel good. Mum and Dad had to make me feel good – it was what they were supposed to do.

Watching Jake skipping, smiling and chatting made me realise what was happening. The family that I knew had gone. Things were changing all the time, and everybody was getting different. Dad was quieter and at home less, Joss was louder and sadder and at home less, Mum spent more time with me and needed me more. And Jake – Jake was getting bigger. The Jake I was watching on that walk was the Jake I remembered – happy and smiling and little. The Jake after the walk was going to be sad and talking less and bigger. I missed him. I wanted him back.

“Please God, let us win.” He kept saying. “If you let us win then I promise I'll be nice to everyone and I'll go to church every Sunday. Please let us win. I'll never say another horrible thing to Adam – he can come in my room as much as he wants. He can have my room. I don't care – just let us win.”

Jake stopped walking and skipping. He looked at me with the same eyes he had when he was smaller. He had a little smile as well.

“You're alright, Adam,” he said. “I just wish you weren't such an arsehole to me.”

He looked at me for a bit longer and then went to give me a hug. As I put my arms out for him he suddenly flung his arms in the air and shouted.

“Woohoo! WE’RE GONNA WIN THE WORLD CUP!” And then he started skipping around me. It was very strange – not at all like Jake. I liked it anyway – at least he was happy.

“We’re playing for England,” sang Jake. “ENG – ER – LAND. We’re playing this song.”

He carried on singing and skipping for a bit before stopping, breathing heavily, and giving me another look.

“Come on,” he said grinning. “Otherwise we’ll miss it.”

He stopped talking and gave me a hug. Then we walked back home.

On the way back he kept saying stuff like ‘Waddle’ and ‘Gascoigne’, but I didn’t understand the words. I think he was being nice. I didn’t really want to go home. I wanted to keep walking with the old Jake and watch him being silly so that he would keep making me feel happy. I knew that as soon as we got home the old Jake would go, and the bigger Jake would come back. I enjoyed the last few steps up to the front door of our home. I put my hand out and took little Jake’s hand. He looked at me and smiled and squeezed my hand. Like he used to. Then he opened the door and became bigger Jake. I knew that after that I would never see little Jake again.

After Bath Watch –

Everyone was really sad after my walk with Jake. The footie wasn’t on the telly anymore. Mum kept saying ‘fiddle’ and trying to put her arms around Jake. He was really sad. Dad didn’t say anything – he just got his coat and went straight out. He

didn't even talk to Mum. I went to my room and enjoyed my Watch. I knew that with Mum at home, my Watches were more important.

Mum was doing loads of cleaning around the house. Joss went into her room and listened to her music. Jake just sat in the living room watching the telly. The footie was back on, but he wasn't shouting this time – he looked really sad. Mum would try and talk to him and try to make him feel happy again, but he didn't want to feel happy. I thought it was really funny. I didn't understand why he was so unhappy. On the walk he'd been smiling and laughing. That evening he just sat in the living room looking really sad.

We all stayed up really late and watched telly together. Jake got a little less sad later on, and Joss started talking a bit more. It was so nice being with Mum again. I kept getting big happy feelings in my stomach and I'd give Mum a huge hug. Dad wasn't at home, which made things a little nicer. It felt so different to before, when Mum was away. I felt a lot happier and my food and Pom-Pom Parlars tasted nicer. Dad didn't come home.

Secret Watch –

I stayed up until I was really tired, waiting for Dad to come home. I knew it was later than usual, because Jake and Joss normally stay up for Dad to come home. They had gone to bed ages before Dad was supposed to be home. So the whole house was dead quiet. I could still hear Mum downstairs, so I went down to see if Dad had come in without making any noise. She was crying. I blew her some kisses and went back to bed. I was so tired. I got into bed and tried to stay awake for Dad. Where was he? He was normally home and in bed by now. I tried hard to stay awake, but fell asleep by mistake.

The next morning felt really strange. Mum looked really tired and had been crying again. Jake and Joss looked really worried about something. I didn't see Dad. The bedroom door was open, so I looked inside. He wasn't in bed. I looked around the house, but he wasn't anywhere. Had he come home at all? He must have done.

Mum drove me to Arvoom and cried all the way. I don't know why. I was really worried about her. I'd seen her cry a lot recently, but she normally stopped after a while. I think she'd been crying since the night before. What was making her so sad? Was it because Dad wasn't at home? She kept saying his name and then shouting. I guessed it must have been that.

We got to Arvoom and Robboaw was standing outside.

"Hello, Adam. Hello, Jane," said Robboaw. I snorted at him and ran inside for my morning Pom-Pom Parlar in Arvoom. There was no one in the kitchen, so I went back outside to get Robboaw. He was stroking my Mum's arm and talking. After a while, Mum gave me a hug and drove away. I felt funny. I felt funny all day. I couldn't stop thinking about Mum. I couldn't help thinking that something really bad had happened. The more I thought about it, the more I realised it was Dad's fault that Mum was upset. He hadn't been at home since Mum had come back. He must have stayed at someone else's house. Why didn't he want to stay at our home?

I wasn't very happy for the whole day at Arvoom. I was getting angry about Dad. I hate it when he makes Mum cry. She never makes him cry. It didn't seem fair. I felt like he didn't care about my family. He'd always been a bit grumpy, and he'd always shouted a lot. Sometimes he made me upset and made me feel bad, but he always tried to make things better afterwards. He hasn't done that for a long time – tried to make people feel better. When I was smaller, he would shout at me or shout at Mum, but he would always give me a little hug or have a little chat with me to make

me feel better. That time when Joss upset me and I was sitting in my room, he came in and tickled me. That made me so happy. He never does stuff like that anymore.

By the end of my day at Arvoom, I was starting to hope that he would never come home. With Dad not at home, everyone would be happier; he wouldn't be sat in the chair making everyone feel bad, and nobody would get shouted at. Jake would be happier because he wouldn't be so scared all the time. Mum would be happier because she wouldn't cry so much. Joss would be happier because Mum would be happier. I would be happier because everyone would be happier. So why doesn't Dad just stay away?

Mum was still crying when she picked me up. She chatted to Robboaw for ages while I sat in the car waiting for her. I wondered if Robboaw would be my new Dad. That would be nice. He makes Mum smile loads. Jake and Joss would probably like him more than Dad. He never shouts at anybody, so nobody would be made to cry. But then I realised that he belongs to Arvoom. Dad belongs to my home. Everything has to fit properly and be in the right place. I don't think I'd be very happy if things didn't fit properly. I wanted my Dad to be at home. I wanted my family to fit properly. I wanted that more than anything.

Mum drove us home and we went for a Pom-Pom Parlar at Cath's. We didn't stay very long. I ran into my home and hoped to see my Dad. But he wasn't there. Jake was talking on the phone and Joss was sitting in the chair, with a really angry look on her face.

Jake chatted on the phone for a while but looked more upset than he had done when I'd come in.

"Joss," said Jake. "We don't know what's happened."

Joss screwed up her face and gave Jake a funny look.

“You reckon?” she said.

Mum sat down and cried. She was so sad. I'd never seen her as sad as this before. I was hungry so I rubbed my teeth and said 'dinnaow'. Jake said something to Mum and took me to the kitchen. I was really getting worried. I didn't know if I wanted Dad to be home or not. He made people upset when he was there, and now he was making people upset when he wasn't there.

“I really think he's dead, Adam,” said Jake.

Jake cooked the dinnaow and gave me my bath. We sat in the living room all night with no telly on. Joss was angry. Jake was worried. Mum was sad. I was hungry a lot of the time. I didn't much like Jake's dinnaow and threw most of it away. Afterwards I wished that I hadn't. Mum only made one Pom-Pom Parlar. It wasn't as nice as it normally was. Then Dad came home.

“Pete,” said Mum. “Where the hell have you been? We've all been worried sick.”

“Out,” said Dad. “Is there any dinner?”

“What?” said Jake.

Dad stood in the middle of the living room, moving about like he does when he normally comes home. He looked really strange. He was behaving really oddly. I found it quite scary.

Everyone just looked at Dad.

“You absolute bastard,” said Joss.

Everyone shouted loads, and then Mum got up and grabbed Joss' hand and walked out of the room. Jake said stuff to Dad. Dad pulled his properly scary face and made Jake run out of the living room – he looked like he was about to cry. Dad, alone apart from me, just stared at the door and then sat down in the chair and

looked at the telly, even though it wasn't on. He looked strange. His eyes looked really wide open. I thought he was going to cry.

He looked at me and a tear fell down his face. "Sorry, Adam."

Secret Watch –

It took me ages to get to sleep that night. All I could think about was Dad and the way he'd made everyone feel. I'd never seen everyone in my family so upset. Jake was so upset that he wasn't even scared of Dad when he spoke to him (except at the end when Dad pulled his properly scary face). Even though Mum had been upset because Dad hadn't been home for ages, she walked off with Joss and didn't go back. I heard Mum go downstairs later. She and Dad talked for ages. I didn't hear any of the words. At least they were talking.

I wondered if we were ever going to be the same again.

*

Chapter 7 – Dinnaow with Joss

August 1991 –

- Down, Down, you bring me down

“Joss. Turn your bloody music off and come downstairs for dinner,” shouted Mum.

“What?” shouted Joss.

Joss has been a lot different recently. She’s happier. All of a sudden, she went from being sad all the time to being happy all the time. She’s nicer to Mum, nicer to Dad, nicer to me. She used to shout at Jake and be really horrible. Now she does what she used to do to him – she shouts at him but smiles at the same time and makes him laugh. She’s been chatting to me more and making me smile. I’d forgotten she could do that.

- I hear you knockin’ down my door and I can’t sleep at night

“Joss. Turn it off and come down for your dinner. I’ve got a surprise for you,” shouted Mum.

“What? I can’t hear you,” said Joss. I could hear her voice above the music.

Everyone has been happier recently. Jake threw away his school uniform the other day. He took it into the garden and put it on the bonfire. He doesn’t go out with the babbobs anymore. He smiles a lot more and talks to people more. He doesn’t talk

to me much, and still won't let me go into his room, but at least he doesn't shout at me too much anymore. It's a shame because he's not as funny as he used to be. He doesn't get as annoyed as he used to get. He doesn't spend a lot of time at home now. Mum and Dad have been smiling more recently. I don't know why.

- Your face it has no place.

"Joss," shouted Mum. "I won't say it again. And when you come down can you bring your brother with you?"

"What?" said Joss.

It feels really good that everyone is happy. Which is OK, I suppose – only it also feels as if people are doing more stuff for themselves. Hardly anyone speaks to me anymore. Only Mum and Robboaw. I see a lot more of Robboaw now. He takes me out even if I'm not at Arvooom. That seems quite strange. It's nice as well because I get to go out loads, but I would rather go out more with my family. We haven't been out together for ages. When we went out before, we weren't very happy, so I suppose it's not so bad that we don't go out as much. Perhaps it's because we don't go out together that everyone else seems so happy. I'm not sure if I'm happy. Home is a nicer place to be because everyone seems to like each other more, but it doesn't really feel the same way as it did ages ago. I'm not sure which I prefer.

- I am the resurrection and I am the light/I couldn't ever bring myself to hate you as

I flyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy

“Joss,” shouted Mum. “I’m not... Oh.”

“What?” said Joss.

Joss came into my room and told me it was time for dinnaow. We walked downstairs and...

“Surprise,” said Mum, Dad and Jake. All the lights were turned off and there were lots of candles everywhere. There were some decorations up on the walls and my sheet from my bed with words written on it.

Good luck at university!

I don’t know what it said. The table had loads of food and cold drink on it. Mum, Dad and Jake were dressed really smartly, with silly hats on their heads. It looked really nice, and the food smelled good. I laughed and shook my head. I sat down at the table and waited for my dinnaow. Joss looked at all the decorations and looked at me with a little smile. I think she winked as well – it was hard to tell with all the lights off.

“I... don’t what to say,” she said. “You shouldn’t have made such a big fuss.”

I was getting really hungry now. I didn’t know why all the decorations were up or why everyone looked so smart, but the smell of the food – sangy rolls and pizza – was making me hungry. I wanted Mum to bring the food out. I even thought about eating one of the candles.

After some hugs and kisses everyone finally sat down at the table and Mum brought the food out – we had meat and potitots with loads of veggies – ackee! Everyone smiled and talked and laughed loads. It was just how it used to be. I realised how much I missed it when we all sat down at the table and smiled all the

time. I enjoy going to Arvooom and seeing Robboaw and I enjoy going to Cath's and the old ladies houses in Adinna. But I miss the family smiling and talking.

I hadn't thought about it for ages, but I knew things were changing. Jake and Joss were getting really big now and behaved a lot more like Mum and Dad. Everyone had been at home for the summer holidays, and we'd spent more time doing stuff. Not so much together – we were spending more time apart. A while ago we all went to a little field in Adinna for the day. There was lots of food and drink, and people from Adinna were playing games with balls and sticks. Me and my family all went together and spent the whole time laughing and eating. I hugged lots of people and made them smile. The babbobs were there, but Jake didn't speak to them that much. I hugged them all anyway.

“Do you realise you're the first Olsen ever to go to university? The rest of us were far too intelligent,” said Dad.

“Are you jealous, Dad?” said Joss.

“What of? Spending most of my time around young women and going drinking all the time? What's there to be jealous about?” said Dad.

Sometimes I miss the way it used to be in my family. The day we came to Adinna from our very old home, I felt like we were a family. When Gran came to stay for Chrimbo and made me laugh all the time, we were together then. Even a little while ago when we went to the thing in the field in Adinna, I felt like we were a family. But sitting at that table, I didn't think we were the same as we used to be. I wasn't sad and I didn't feel bad – I just felt different. But I didn't really want things to be different – I wanted things to be the way they were. Why do things have to change? I don't understand.

Jake smiled and talked to Joss. Joss smiled and talked back. Jake smiles loads more now than back when he was friends with the babbobs. I think he's got new friends now. They live near Arvooom, I think. I've never seen them, but they certainly make him smile more than the babbobs. He listens to different music as well. He's started taking Joss' music from her room when she's not here. He's also getting his own new music. It's much better than his old stuff. I do miss it though. Jake's old music means young Jake. I find that I'm missing a lot of stuff. Even though everyone is happy, they feel less like my family than when they were all a bit sadder. It's really strange.

Mum's behaving more strangely than everyone else. I don't know how – she just is.

She's the only one who really talks to me now. When everyone else is around, she smiles and laughs loads. But when we're on our own, she starts crying. When we drive to and from Arvooom, she cries and says loads of stuff I don't understand. I know she's sad about something, but I don't know what. I don't think it's me who's making her sad, because she always hugs and kisses me. Whenever she hugs me now she holds me really tight. It's like she's scared to let go of me. I don't know why. Everyone else is happy.

“Drama,” said Joss.

“I thought you wanted to be a writer or a journalist?” said Dad.

“Yeah, I do,” said Joss. “But I want to do Drama for my degree.”

Dad has been behaving really oddly recently. He's at home a lot more, but he's doing loads of pretend smiling and laughing. He keeps getting loads of letters and is writing lots of stuff at the moment. He's doing the same things he used to do in our very old home just before we came to Adinna. I think that because of what Dad is

doing and from the way my family is behaving at the moment, there is only one thing that can be happening – we are leaving Adinna. Everybody was unhappy for ages and now they are all happy (even though Dad is pretend happy and Mum keeps crying when nobody else is around). Jake threw away his school uniform and isn't friends with the babbobs anymore. Joss isn't sad and shouting all the time anymore. We must be leaving Adinna. I hope not.

“Have you decided which A-levels you're going to take yet?” said Joss.

“English, History and Technology,” said Jake.

I decided that we must be leaving Adinna. I also decided not to worry about it. The food I was eating was too nice, and everyone was really happy and talking loads. I was really enjoying the dinnaow with my family. I didn't want anything to make it bad.

(I put my veggies on Jake's plate when nobody was looking.)

Secret Watch –

I really enjoyed dinnaow that night. Nobody shouted at anyone and Dad didn't go out afterwards. We all just sat around in the living room and chatted. Dad and Jake did all the cleaning, so Mum could sit and talk to Joss. But even though I tried my hardest, I couldn't help but worry about leaving Adinna. Maybe I was wrong, but it was still worrying me. Everyone had changed so much, and everyone was behaving so differently to the way they used to. I didn't really know how to guess at what was going on. I haven't changed. I still do all the same stuff and want the same things as I did when I was small. I think I do, anyway. I couldn't ever imagine not having my Pom-Pom Parlars, or not having my window to Watch from, or not having my family around. I don't know what I'd do if I was different.

The next day I felt a bit better, and decided that perhaps we weren't going to leave Adinna. I felt really happy for some reason. Everybody was talking and smiling loads – like they had done during our dinnaow with Joss. Maybe stuff changing wasn't such a bad thing after all. If it made everyone happy and made our home feel nicer, then it couldn't be a bad thing.

We all got in the car and drove far into Adinna. We went to the place Robboaw and Mum take me when it's sunny. It's a really big place that's outside and really windy. Adinna looks really big and you can see it for miles into the distance. It looks funny as well, because some of Adinna looks as though it's going high into the air and other parts look as though they're going low into the ground.

"Five of Belstone's finest cream teas," said Dad. He was carrying this huge tray with loads of Pom-Pom Parlars and cakes and warm arshee with jammy. I clapped my hands and smiled – I was about to eat loads of sweet, sticky stuff. I shook my head as well.

Jake has lost all of his old hair and grown some new hair. It looks really funny – he keeps pushing it away from his eyes. It looks like a big black hat. I don't know why he did it – he looks silly and it doesn't fit him properly. I keep trying to pull it off him, but it won't come away. Jake just smiles when I try to do it. It must come off; it really must. I had another go.

"Adam," said Jake. "Leave my hair alone."

"He's trying to be Robert Smith from the Cure, Ad," said Joss.

"No I'm not. Shut up Jocelyn," mumbled Jake. He always mumbles when he's a bit shy or a bit worried. He's also started wearing glasses. They don't fit either. Why is Jake starting to do things to himself that don't fit? They make him look funny. He also looks very different. I try to take his glasses off if they bother me too much.

“Adam,” said Mum, “Do leave your brother alone.”

We sat in the cafe for ages drinking our Pom-Pom Parlars and eating our cakes and warm arshee with jammy. Everyone smiled and chatted. I felt like I used to feel when we were all smaller. It felt as if everyone was looking after each other and as if we really wanted to make each other feel less worried and more happy. There weren't any pretend smiles.

Afterwards we went for a long walk in Adinna and smiled more. It was a really hot day but I couldn't really feel it because it was so windy. I don't like it when it's windy. I can't walk properly and my face feels funny.

When we got back home, I felt a bit odd. I think I may have eaten too much of the cake and warm arshee with jammy. My belly felt funny and my face was still feeling all tingly from the wind. My family were still talking to each other and smiling loads.

“You'd better start packing soon,” said Mum.

Mum gave Joss a big hug and looked as though she was going to cry. I didn't really care that much because of my belly feeling a bit funny. I went into the bathroom and was sick into the bath. Ackee! I felt a lot better after doing it. My belly didn't feel funny anymore – although seeing all the cake and warm arshee with jammy in the bath made me feel funny again. I'd just eaten all that. It seemed a bit of a waste. Mum came in and made a big fuss. She cleaned the bath up and gave me a wash and changed my clothes. Then I felt much better.

Something really strange happened then. Joss put my shoes back on and took me out for a walk. She's never done that before. We always went out as a family (apart from the time Jake took me out for a walk because he was sad about the footie) or Mum would take me out. I remembered how I'd felt about Jake taking me out for a walk ages ago – I'd felt sad because I wanted Jake to be how he used to be. But I

don't really think about Joss the same way I think about Jake. Even though she has always liked me and done things with me, Jake has been the one I've liked the most. I don't know why. I think it's because she's a little scarier and I don't really know how to treat her. With Jake, I know that if I go in his room he'll shout at me and make me laugh. He does the same thing every time. Joss will either shout at me and make me unhappy, or she'll be really nice and let me sit in her room with her. She doesn't make me laugh when she gets annoyed. She's not as much fun as Jake, but she can be nicer to me when she wants to be. It's very confusing.

So I felt good about going for a walk with Joss, but I didn't really know how to treat her. I wanted her to be nice to me and make me feel good, but I wasn't sure if she was going to shout at me and make me feel unhappy. The confused feelings were making me a little worried, which was a shame because I wanted to enjoy the walk.

I soon felt better though, and the worry went away. It was a good walk. She didn't really talk that much – only to point at stuff and laugh. I blew her some kisses because I knew she was being nice to me. But she could quite easily be nice one minute and then nasty to me the next, so I blew her plenty of kisses and made sure I walked a bit behind her. I wasn't going to take any chances.

I can still remember the way she was when we first came to Adinna. If I was upset, then she could say something and make me feel good. She used to do that all the time. If Dad upset me or Mum upset me, then I used to go and see Joss and she would say stuff that made me feel good again. She hasn't been like that for ages.

I was starting to feel the same way I'd felt with Jake when he took me for a walk ages ago. I thought at first that I wouldn't because I liked Jake more. Then I realised that it didn't really matter that I liked Jake more. It mattered that Joss made me feel good, but not in the same way as Jake made me feel good. I knew what

was going to happen – I was going to get all sad again because Joss has changed so much, and I wanted her to be the way she used to be. I couldn't understand any of her words, but I knew she was being nice to me. She was being the way she used to be. It was such a nice day as well, and I was feeling much better after being sick.

We got to the field with the big tree in the middle, and I remembered our first day in Adinna when me, Jake and Joss were all laughing and jumping around in the smelly mud. Joss looked so different back then. Jake has his silly hair and his glasses now, but under all that he still looks the same as he did. But Joss looks loads different. She looks a lot like Mum. She's bigger and looks a lot nicer. Her voice was a lot softer back then – I suppose that was because she never shouted. Maybe shouting a lot has made her voice harder.

We climbed over the wooden thing next to the gate and walked to the big tree in the middle. Mum still takes me there now and again, but I hadn't been for ages. I'd forgotten how much I liked it. It seemed quieter than the rest of Adinna, and I could see everything for miles. It wasn't windy at all, and the tree stopped too much sun getting to us as we sat underneath it. I always felt happy under the big tree in the field. It was the first place in Adinna we'd visited as a family. It always makes me remember all the good things about my family. Jake and Joss laughing, Mum and Dad holding hands, the dog getting shouted at and me drinking Pom-Pom Parlar.

It was so quiet. I touched Joss on the face and said 'tomorrow' to let her know that I liked being with her. She smiled at me and looked at Adinna – she wasn't saying anything at all now. She looked like she was going to cry. I held her hand just in case she got sad.

We sat for ages until I started to get thirsty – I wanted a Pom-Pom Parlar. It was nice walking with Joss and seeing her as she used to be when she was smaller, but I didn't want to get too thirsty. At the same time, I wanted to stay with her for as long as possible. I doubted that she would ever do anything like it again. Again, like I had with Jake, I knew that that would be the last time I would ever see the young Joss. I supposed that that was more important than getting home for a Pom-Pom Parlar.

I leant across to Joss and put a stick in her mouth, just to let her know that I liked her, and that whatever was going to change would be OK. She smiled and a tear fell down her face. She leant over and gave me a big hug. She was crying a little and rubbing my back. I liked it. It made me feel as though she really wanted to be with me.

“Come on,” said Joss. “Let's go back. I've got loads to do.”

We walked home and Joss started to talk a bit more, but I couldn't understand what she was saying. Recently I've been feeling worried and bad when I can't understand what people are saying. I don't know why. I feel like people are saying things that I should know about, and it makes me feel bad that I can't understand the words. I've always felt OK about it before, and even now I don't feel really bad. But sometimes I really wish that I could understand what people were saying to me and to each other.

We got home and Mum made me a Pom-Pom Parlar. It tasted really nice after my long walks that day. Joss had gone straight up to her room after the walk. I stayed downstairs so that Mum would give me some food. I was really hungry. All the food I'd eaten in the big place in Adinna had gone down the bath when I'd been sick.

I was missing Joss a bit after she'd been so nice to me on the walk, so after I'd eaten my food, I went upstairs to see what she was doing. I walked into her room. I

didn't understand what she was doing. She was taking her clothes out of her drawers and putting them in bags. I would normally have thought that she was going away for a little while, but there were loads of boxes full of her stuff. It all reminded me of the day we came to Arvoo – I'd been sick, everyone was happy, we'd all driven in the car together. Maybe we were leaving Adinna.

I ran out of Joss' room and into Mum's room to see if she was packing all of her stuff. She wasn't. I went into Jake's room to see if he was packing all of his stuff. He wasn't. I ran downstairs to see if Dad was packing all the other stuff. He wasn't. So why was Joss packing all of her stuff? I didn't understand. If we were leaving Adinna as a family, then why was Joss the only one packing all of her stuff? I couldn't think of anything to explain why Joss was packing her stuff, but nobody else was packing their stuff. I walked back upstairs and went into Joss' room and sat on her bed.

"Hello again," said Joss.

I didn't understand. I screwed my face up and said 'abarb', which means I'm getting worried. She was taking all her music off the shelves and putting it into the boxes. But nobody else was. Maybe Joss was leaving Adinna and nobody else was. Maybe we were all staying in Adinna and Joss was going somewhere else. I couldn't understand that. I thought we were a family and that we would always be together. Why would Joss want to leave Adinna without us? Had we done something bad? Had I done something bad? Was she taking her music with her? Did that mean I was going to have to listen to Jake's music all the time?

"Ah, dear Morrissey," said Joss. "You were Adam's favourite. This is your favourite, Ad – The Smiths. I'll do you a tape of this before I go and then you can listen to it whenever you want."

If Joss was leaving Adinna, then that would mean it would be just me, Jake, Mum and Dad. That didn't sound right. That didn't fit properly. How could we be a family with just me, Jake, Mum and Dad? We aren't a family unless Joss is here. It's OK when she's gone out or it's just me or Mum or just me, Mum and Jake – I know that Dad and Joss, or Joss, Dad and Jake are coming home. But if Joss leaves Adinna and the family, that means she will never come home again. I might never see her again. That's why she was being so nice to me on the walk, and why everybody was smiling at her and making her laugh so much – we were never going to see her again. I didn't like that at all. I got up and started taking Joss' stuff out of the boxes and putting it back where it belonged. I didn't want her to leave without the rest of us.

“Adam,” said Mum. She'd just walked in Joss' room with a Pom-Pom Parlar.

“What are you doing?”

I could feel my throat going funny and my belly feeling odd.

“Adam,” said Mum. She put the Pom-Pom Parlars down and sat me down on the bed. I was feeling really worried. Joss put her arms around me and gave me a hug. I started to cry. I didn't want Joss to go. I didn't want my family to lose Joss. She was one of the most important people in my family. It wouldn't be the same without her. This was the change I'd been feeling. I'd thought that we were just leaving Adinna – together, and I hadn't liked the idea of that. Now I knew that Joss was leaving us all on our own – that was worse. I would much rather have left Adinna, as long as we were all together.

I was crying loads now. Mum was hugging me and crying. Joss was hugging me and Mum, and crying. I couldn't understand. Why? What was going to happen to my family without Joss? If she could leave then anybody could leave. That made

me cry even more. What if everybody else decided to leave – would I be left on my own? Mum and Joss were still hugging me and crying. I felt a little better.

Mum gave me my Pom-Pom Parlar and I felt better. Joss was saying nice things to me, even though I didn't understand the words, and Mum was crying with me.

Maybe it wasn't going to be too bad. I just didn't want things to change. I was happy with my family as it was and I'd been so scared that things were going to change.

And now they were. I'd never thought that any of my family would ever leave Adinna without everyone else. And now it was happening. Joss was leaving the family in Adinna. She was going to be on her own.

I drank my Pom-Pom Parlar and started to cry a little less. Mum stayed with me and Joss while she packed. After a while I got annoyed because Joss was putting things in the wrong place, so I decided to help her. She started laughing again and I decided to smile more. Mum was laughing and kept giving me hugs and kisses.

Joss hugged me a few times until I felt a lot better. I still wasn't properly happy, but I decided that it was only Joss who was leaving. Nobody else would ever leave my family now.

Secret Watch –

After my bath, I sat with Joss all night and stared at her face. I wanted to make sure I knew exactly what she looked like so that I wouldn't forget. She kept saying words that I didn't really understand, but in the end I think she was trying to tell me that she would be coming back to Adinna for Chrimbo. That would be OK. If she was going to come home for Chrimbo, then she would probably come home at other times as well.

I still wasn't happy about her leaving. I was a little sad on my secret Watch. I realised that this would be my last secret Watch with my proper family. After this one, there would be no Joss. I couldn't understand how my Watches would ever be the same without my proper family in the home. They're the reason I Watch a lot of the time. With Joss gone, I wouldn't have a proper family to Watch for.

Special Watch – The Car

Mum got me out of bed really early and made me carry loads of Joss' stuff to the car. I was really tired and didn't really enjoy my breakfast and Pom-Pom Parlar. My family were really quiet. Joss didn't look as happy as she had done the day before. Mum was very quiet. Dad tried to moan a bit, but wasn't very good at it. I think he was a little sad that we were going out. Then I remembered why we were taking all of Joss' stuff to the car – she was leaving my family.

I got a little sad after that, and I was tired anyway. I wasn't at my best by the time we all got in the car and drove off. Joss just stared out of the window and held my hand. I wanted to go back to bed. Mum was trying to talk to people and make them feel better, while Dad looked like he always does when we go for long drives in the car – serious. He didn't talk much – he didn't really need to.

We were in the car for ages. I got a little less tired the further away we got from Adinna. I started to remember that Joss was leaving the family, and that I was sad because the family wouldn't be the same without her. I kept trying to kiss her and talk to her. But she didn't want to do much talking. She just stared out of the window and said stuff to Mum every now and again. I don't think she was being mean – maybe she was a bit sad.

I spent a lot of time looking at the other people in the other cars as we drove. I wondered if they were families like us. I wondered if they left each other, or if they went to live in lots of different places. How would they feel if people in their families decided to leave? I wondered if they would be as sad as me. I started to wonder how many people there actually were and what they all did. Did they shout at each other loads and then suddenly make each other smile? I hoped that I'd see Dennaben in one of the other cars. Or Gran. I miss them sometimes. They make me feel good, even though I haven't seen either of them for a very long time.

After driving for ages and stopping for a Pom-Pom Parlar, we started seeing loads of buildings and loads of roads. I'd never seen a place like it. There were so many buildings and so many cars. After a while all I could see were buildings and cars wherever I looked. We'd been living in Adinna for so long and I'd forgotten about places like this. I'd started to think that we could drive anywhere and Adinna would only be a little while away. This place was everything that Adinna wasn't. There were no trees, no fields – I didn't think that there would be many moocows or old ladies.

After a while we stopped driving and just sat in our car behind loads of other people in cars. Everyone looked really annoyed and hot. The cars were moving really slowly. Dad started shouting a bit and scaring everybody.

"What? Indicators not working," Dad would say, or, "This is the lane for the people who want to go somewhere", or "The lights are green! Why have you stopped at the lights when they're green?"

Joss smiled when Dad said those things. Mum would say something like, "How do you know his indicators aren't broken?" or "Pete! She's an old woman." But that would just make Dad angrier.

(I think she might have been saying it on purpose.)

Eventually we started driving again and ended up stopping at a place where there were lots of little buildings all over the place. Dad got out of the car and held his back and lit a cigar. Ackee. Joss got out of the car and lit a little white cigar.

We all went into this big building with lots of stairs and took all of Joss' stuff in with us. We climbed loads of stairs until we finally came to a hallway with lots of doors. We went up to the last door and went in – it was smaller than my room. There was a bed and a table and a sink... and nothing else. I couldn't believe it. I guessed that this was Joss' new home. She came in after me and sat on the bed and looked around.

“Seven hundred quid a term for this,” muttered Dad.

“I packed you four changes of bedding,” said Mum. Then she started to cry. Joss gave her a pat in the shoulder and said –

“Come on Mum. Let's get all the gear in then I'll buy you some lunch. We'll find a pub, Dad.”

Everyone else went out so I went up to the window to test Joss' view.

Special Watch – Joss' new home

All I could see were buildings. There were lots of cars and lots of people carrying stuff around down by the door where we'd come in. But further away, I couldn't see any trees or any fields. All I could see were buildings. I didn't like it that much. I couldn't understand why Joss would rather live there than in Adinna. It didn't fit her very well.

“Hi,” said a voice behind me. I turned round and saw two new people stood in the doorway. “I’m Duncan, and this is Kelly. We just thought we’d introduce ourselves – we live on the same floor as you.”

I blew them some kisses and looked at them. They looked back. I thought that they were saying hello, so I said ‘alloaw’ really loudly. They said nothing, so I shook my head and grabbed my bollocks.

“Erm,” said the man. He looked at me in a funny way.

I laughed and blew them some more kisses.

“Yes,” said the man. He looked at the lady next to him. She had a very sweet smell. She made my willy feel a bit funny. “Lovely view, isn’t it?”

I pulled at my clothes and said ‘bath’. The man looked at me in a funny way and the lady smiled. My willy moved all on its own.

“What’s your name?” said the lady. She had a nice voice. I liked the way she looked as well – she should’ve been in my big book with ladies.

I rubbed my teeth. The man tried not to laugh. I didn’t like that so I poked my tongue at him. The lady laughed. She had a nice laugh.

“Hi,” said Joss. She had just walked up behind the two people with a box full of her stuff. “I’m Joss. I see you’ve already met my brother Adam. He got into Oxford. Maths genius and total bastard.”

Joss put the box down on the bed next to me and started talking to the two people so I carried on with my special Watch and hard willy. There wasn’t a lot to Watch – just cars and people and buildings. I had a look in the box next to me and saw that it had Joss’ music in it. I got a little sad because I remembered that I would probably never hear Joss’ music again. Even though she played it too loud sometimes, it fitted my family quite well. I wasn’t sure how my family was going to be now that

Joss was leaving. I picked up one of the music things and held it in my hands. I wished that Joss would change her mind and decide to come back to Adinna. But I looked up at her and saw that the two new people were making her laugh. She always laughs differently with other people. It's a much nicer laugh.

I put the music thing back in the box and poked my tongue at the man again. I didn't like him. I realised that Joss wouldn't be coming back home. She was already home. The people in the doorway were making her happier than the people in Adinna. I was sad because she was leaving my family, but I was happy because I knew that Joss was going to be happy. She'd been sad for so long because she was in Adinna and my family weren't making her smile. I hoped I'd see her again.

After we'd got all the stuff out of the car, Joss took us all to a smoky place to eat some food. It was our last dinnaow together as a proper family. Joss didn't live in Adinna anymore. I made sure I had loads to eat. Joss chatted to Mum and laughed a lot. Dad didn't say much. He looked quite sad. I started to think that he didn't want Joss to leave the family. I'd never really seen Dad be properly sad before. It made him look a lot less scary – he looked the way he should look all the time.

After we finished we walked outside into the sun and the warm.

“Do you want to come back for cup of tea before you go?” said Joss.

“No. Time's cracking on,” said Dad. “We really must be getting back.”

Mum started to cry. She walked over to Joss and gave her a big hug. I looked at them both hugging and suddenly realised that this was it. Even though I'd decided that it was OK that Joss was going, I watched them both hugging and felt really cold. Everything I had been worried about was suddenly happening all at once. I felt my belly go funny.

“Jocelyn Olsen,” said Mum. “My little girl.”

Mum and Joss hugged and kissed and cried. I looked at them and felt my throat go all funny. I also felt so cold and... almost angry. I felt as if Joss was doing it on purpose just to make us all feel bad. I don't know why. I wanted to scream at her.

"It's good that we're alright now," said Joss. She said other things, but I couldn't hear her words. I could feel myself starting to get worried and also a little angry. I couldn't decide whether I wanted to cry or scream.

Mum wiped a tear from Joss' eye and looked at me. Dad stared at the ground. I looked at Dad and started to feel even angrier – he was sad as well. She was making us all sad. I put my hand into his hand so that he would look at me and squeezed it really tight.

"Alright, Ad," he said. His voice sounded a bit wobbly. "Say goodbye to your sister."

I walked up to Joss and was about to hug her when suddenly I couldn't stop myself from being angry anymore. So I screamed really loud. She tried to hug me but I didn't want that. I wanted her to come back to Adinna and be part of my family again. I screamed really loud again and grabbed her arm really hard.

"Adam," she said. "Stop it. Let go. You're hurting me."

I started to pull her away from where we were and towards where I thought the car was, but Dad jumped in front of us and pulled my hand really hard off of Joss' arm.

Dad shouted.

I started crying really loud and looked at Dad. He'd hurt me. I was trying to get Joss to come back home, and he'd hurt me. For the first time ever, I felt so angry at Dad that I bit my lip really hard and tried to grab his head. But he was too quick. He grabbed my face before I could get to him and pushed me really hard so that I turned round. I screamed again as he held my arms down by my side and hugged me

really hard – not a nice hug like Mum gives me but a hug that hurt me and didn't let me do anything.

“Adam,” said Dad in my ear, over and over again. It felt like he was shivering. Dad stayed hugging me from behind for ages while I cried and sobbed. I was feeling so bad. I didn't want Joss to go and I didn't want Dad to hurt me anymore. I think I knew Dad wasn't being horrible or stopping me from taking Joss home to be mean, but he wasn't making me feel happy either.

After a while I started to get less angry and I stopped crying so much. Dad let me go and I ran over to Mum so that she would give me a proper hug. I stayed hugging Mum while Joss was trying to get me to say goodbye. But I wasn't going to let her. If she was going to go then I just wanted her to do it. I wasn't going to say goodbye unless she was coming home.

Secret Watch –

It was a really long journey in the car. As we got closer to Adinna, I felt worse about getting angry at Joss. By the time I got home I felt sad because I hadn't said goodbye properly. I also felt bad about wanting to hurt Dad. I don't know why I had wanted to do that. It was really strange – this feeling in my head had just suddenly told me to hurt him. But he wasn't angry with me. He was really nice to me for the rest of the day.

I was so tired by the time I got home that I just had a short bath and went straight to bed. I stayed up for a little while Watching Adinna. I was trying to think how Joss must've been feeling now that she had a new home. My home felt completely different. It almost felt empty without her.

I could still smell her. Her dirty plates were still in the kitchen. I went into her room by mistake, thinking she might be in there, and got really sad when I saw all her stuff had gone. Mum hadn't made her bed. The room seemed so big without her in it. My home seemed really quiet without her music filling it up and her shouting making me feel bad. I wished that I was feeling bad because Joss was shouting at someone. I hated feeling bad because she wasn't in my home anymore.

I felt scared, but I don't know why. I kept wondering what was happening to my family. If Joss can leave, then maybe other people can leave too. Maybe Jake would be the next to go. Or Dad. I don't think Mum will ever leave me. I couldn't imagine ever being without Mum.

I laid in bed and started to remember how my family used to be. Joss used to be so small. She would run around and ask for hugs and kisses all the time. Dad used to pick her up and sit her on his knee. Mum used to sit her in the kitchen and show her what she was cooking. Joss and Jake used to play together all the time. They used to get me to play with them. I was so happy when they were smaller. I never knew that bad things could happen. I never knew that people shouted at each other, or that people tried to hurt each other. I felt so safe back then.

Now I know that people do shout at each other and that they do hurt each other – people have even tried to hurt me. I remembered a man who used to go to Arvoom. Grame, his name was. He chased me around a field when I thought he was playing with me, and then he tried to hurt me. Nothing like that ever happened when I was smaller.

I realised that things change, and that I have changed. I used to think that I would never change. That time Grame tried to hurt me made me realise that people could

hurt me if they wanted to. He never tried it again – he stopped going to Arvooom a little while after I started going. But other people I don't know might try to hurt me.

Any of the others in my family could leave at any time, and I wouldn't know it. Who would tell me – and if they did tell me, how would I understand their words? That made me worry. If someone else from my family did decide to leave, then I wouldn't know it until they'd actually left because I can't understand their words. I realise now how important words are. It never used to bother me because I didn't know how important words were. But I do now.

Normally, just before I go to sleep, I hear Joss put her music on really quietly. I used to really like it. It used to help me go to sleep. That's one of the many little things that I will miss about Joss. I never realised that I liked that, and all the other little things Joss did. I always felt good when I heard her music late at night. I knew that she was at home with the rest of my family, safely tucked up in bed. Now I don't know where she is, or how she is. If she was shouting at someone then I wouldn't know. If she was playing her music, then I wouldn't know. I don't know anything about Joss anymore. I'm not sure I know anything about my family anymore.

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Chapter 8 – Watching from an Open Door

March 1992 –

Secret Watch (cancelled) –

Fuck. I've heard people say that word when they're angry. Fucking. That's how I felt about spending the night at Arvooom. Arvooom is for the daytime, and then Mum picks me up and takes me home. A while ago she didn't come to pick me up, and I ended up spending the night at Arvooom. Fuck. Fucking. It was horrible. I was in my jimjams and drinking a Pom-Pom Parlar by my Watching window. I didn't understand what was going on and started thinking 'fuck'. It's a good word. I see why people say it when they're angry. I want to say it all the time now. Fuck.

I threw my cup out of the window. I'd finished my Pom-Pom Parlar.

That first night at Arvooom, a man who I'd never seen before stayed awake all night. I know because I kept going down to see him. It was really weird – I felt like he was watching me all night. That's why I started screaming and throwing things out of the window. I hoped he might get scared and go away or go to sleep. But he didn't – he just spent more time following me into the kitchen and into the bathroom. After that night, Mum made me go back for more nights! Fuck. I felt worse with each night I spent there, because I knew that people didn't understand what I wanted. My home is where I sleep – not Arvooom. I go to Arvooom in the daytime and Robboaw takes me out for walks and drives and Pom-Pom Parlars – even arshees when it's sunny.

Home is where I go to sleep and eat my breakfast and dinnaows and have my baths. Everyone knows that. So why did Mum make me stay at Arvoom at night?

I saw one of the people go outside and pick my cup up. It wasn't broken. They've started giving cups that don't break. They make the Pop-Pom Parlars taste funny. And not nice funny.

After a while I stopped going to Arvoom as much. I went a few times, but not nearly as much as I should've gone. I don't know why. The people who do stuff with me at Arvoom aren't as nice as they used to be. I only like to be with Robboaw now. I don't like the rest of them – I'm scared in case they hurt me. Also I don't want to end up liking them because they might end up leaving me like Joss did (she never comes home). If they try to do stuff with me, then I scream at them and throw things out of the window. They leave me alone then. It doesn't make me happy when I scream at the new people. I just don't want them to like me in case I end up liking them.

But I've started going back to Arvoom all the time again. Now when I stay at night, there are two people who stay awake all night. People don't understand. How can I sleep if there are people who don't go to bed? But I've stopped getting angry and screaming at them all the time. I play games with them now. I've started throwing one thing out of the window and watching them go outside to pick it up. Another thing I do now is moving furniture. It makes me feel better. The people who stay awake don't like it so that makes me laugh, plus if things don't fit properly then I can move the furniture around until things fit better. I do it at home as well.

People make me want to say fuck all the time now. I'm always worried. My stomach always seems to feel funny, and my head makes me want to get angry. My Mum makes me angry all the time. I still love her and I know that she probably loves

me more than anyone else, but when I see her I just want to say fuck at her. Even when she speaks to me, the sound of her voice makes me want to say fuck. I don't know why. I get angry because I can't say fuck and I get even more angry because I can't understand the words that Mum tells me. So I bite her. I hardly used to only bite her at all – only when I was really angry. Now I just want to bite her whenever I can. She just stands there and says 'sorry', which makes me angrier. It seems like she doesn't try to let me understand her words. I've known her for so long, and she's always said more stuff to me than other people – why doesn't she try and make me understand? She spends all of her time looking after me; she could at least try and make me understand her words.

I got bored in my Arvooom room and decided to go down to the kitchen and find some food. I was hungry.

I don't think people like me that much anymore. Because I do more bad stuff and get angry more, people have to shout at me and stop me from doing stuff. People talk to me differently and don't do as much good stuff with me. The new people at Arvooom never try to and talk to me. Robboaw and the lady are the only people who do stuff with me now. That makes me feels good because Robboaw is the only person I like to do stuff with and the lady always smiles and makes me feel good. I do feel bad as well because I want to do good stuff all the time – and Robboaw has to do other things with other people. That makes me angry. Why can't he just do stuff with me? I get a different feeling when I see Robboaw with other people. I don't know what it is, but it feels horrible. I see Robboaw with other people, and I start thinking that he doesn't really like me at all and that he likes the other people and would rather be with them. It makes me a little sad, but not sad so I want to cry or want to be hugged. I get sad so I want to break things or hurt people. So I

scream and scare people. That way Robboaw has to leave the other people and be with me. I feel better then.

I know Robboaw will never leave me.

The bigger I get, the less I understand people. When I was smaller, people did more for me and said a lot less words. Now it seems that nobody wants to do stuff with me, but they spend a lot more time talking and saying things that I don't understand. Mum doesn't do a lot for me anymore. She doesn't smile as much as she used to. She walks around looking really serious all the time – especially when she's near me. She takes me out for walks and drives and still cooks my dinnaows, but the smiles are more pretend and the words are harder to understand. That makes my dinnaows taste bad. That makes everything feel cold.

“Adam,” said one of the people who stay awake at night. “It's half past two in the morning. It is not time for food yet. Why don't you go back to bed? Come on – I'll come with you and tuck you in.”

I looked at the man. I didn't like him because he wouldn't go to sleep, and because he wasn't Robboaw. I screamed at him and pushed a load of cans off the shelf and onto the kitchen floor. I didn't do it to annoy the man, like I do to Jake. I did it because I wanted to do something bad. I screamed again and pinched the man on the arm and ran up to the room I was supposed to be asleep in. I felt bad about doing that. I turned my light off and sat by the window. I was really tired and wanted to go to sleep, but not at Arvooom. I wanted to be at home and be with my family.

When I finally went to sleep I had a funny dream. It was the same dream I'd been having for a long time. I dreamt I was sitting in my room at home Watching Adinna, but it didn't look like my room, and Adinna didn't look like Adinna. Joss would come in and say something. I could understand what she was saying. Then I would try to

say something. But only my noise came out. Then Joss would laugh, and all my family would come into my room and laugh at me. Then Robboaw and the lady would come in and laugh. Then Valerie and Dennaben would come in and laugh at me. Then Cath and the lady from the shop would come in and laugh at me. Then the babbobs would come in and laugh at me. Then Grame would come in, and everybody would smile at him and say nice stuff to him. Then they would all look at me and point at me, and start laughing at me again. They all had horrible laughs that made me feel really bad. Then they would take all my stuff and throw it out of the window, and push all my furniture around my room so that everything fitted badly. After that, they would all disappear and I would be left on my own with my room empty apart from my bed, which was in the wrong place. I would try and push it back into the right place, but it wouldn't move. I knew that if I could move the bed back to the right place, then I would feel better. But it wouldn't move. I pushed as hard as I could but it stayed in the same place. I could hear my family and my friends laughing from a long way away. I'd start screaming because I couldn't move my bed, and the laughing would start to get closer. I start crying and the bed would start moving but in the wrong direction. I pushed one way, but the bed would move the other way, and the laughing got really loud. I knew that if I could move the bed into the right place then the laughing would stop, and all the people I love would start being nice to me again. But it wouldn't. Then I'd wake up.

I woke up feeling really bad because of the dream. I'd felt bad going to sleep. I felt bad during the day because nobody was doing the right things, or saying stuff that I understood. I couldn't remember how it felt to be in a good mood. I just felt confused and angry all the fuck time.

I got up and went downstairs. The man who had stayed awake all night made me a Pom-Pom Parlar in the cup that didn't break, and gave me my breakfast. I sat at the table in Arvroom feeling really sad. I was still thinking about the dream. I didn't know what it meant. Did things in a dream actually happen? Was I going to go home and see Joss and talk to her before being laughed at by all the people I knew? That made me feel a little scared. I screamed at the man who was giving me my breakfast. It didn't taste right.

When Robboaw came in, I felt a little better. He was smiling and chatting to me while he gave me a bath and got me dressed. That was one of the strangest things about spending nights at Arvroom – Robboaw giving me a bath and dressing me. The only person who had ever done that before was my Mum. Sometimes Dad. Robboaw was good at it and made me laugh a little, but it still didn't fit properly. Then Mum came to take me home.

"How was he last night?" said Mum. I was a lot happier now. Mum was there and Robboaw had cheered me up a little. My Pom-Pom Parlar tasted better, even though it was in a cup that wouldn't break.

"A lot better apparently," said Robboaw. "He only got up once and went into the kitchen to disturb some unfortunate baked beans. But apart from that he was fine – asleep by three."

"That's not so bad then," said Mum. I'd found the big book with ladies.

"Is today the day, then?" said Robboaw.

"Yes. I haven't told Adam yet," said Mum. "I'll wait until we're in the car."

Mum got my coat and took me to the car. We were going home. I sat in the car and watched while Mum looked serious again. I didn't like her when she was serious. It didn't fit her properly.

Nobody had seen me, but I'd taken Arvoom's big book with ladies. I started to read it while Mum talked. I couldn't understand her words. I got angry again and started tearing pages from the book and throwing them out of the fuck car window.

"Daddy moved out yesterday," said Mum. "He's got another job in Plymouth, and has decided to move there."

I heard Mum say 'Daddy'. She'd been saying that a lot recently. Dad had been in a funny mood for a long time. I didn't see him that much, and he didn't talk to me as much as he used to. Mum and Dad never argued at all now. There was no shouting at all at home now. People were really quiet. I hardly saw Jake at all – he hardly ever came home at night anymore. Mum and Dad either talked quietly to each other, or didn't talk at all. It was really strange.

Home has changed so much since Joss moved away without us. I don't feel like we have a home anymore. Nothing fits properly. I used to Watch out of the window for my family, but that wasn't enough to keep Joss at home. I don't know where I'm supposed to be, or what I'm supposed to do anymore. I spend a lot of time making my room look different. I either throw my stuff out of the window or I change the furniture around. It makes me feel better – it makes me feel like I've got something I'm supposed to do.

When we got home, I went up to my room and took all my clothes off. I didn't like the clothes that Robboaw had put on me. They didn't feel very comfortable. My home didn't feel very comfortable. Sometimes I wander around, seeing if people are hiding in different places. I even go up to the garage to see if the squeaky dog has come home. I hope that I will find them and then things will go back to the way they used to be. But I never find anybody.

My day at home was really strange. Mum was really quiet and serious. I put some other clothes on and moved my room around until things fitted better. I threw some of my stuff out of the window. I had so much stuff now that there was too much to make everything fit properly, so I had throw some of it outside. Mum would get angry and bring it all back to my room. Then I'd just throw it all back out again.

Mum spent the day going through her really big box with all the photies and paper with words on. As I've got bigger the box has got more full. When Mum is sad, she opens the box and looks at the photies and bits of paper. That day she dragged the box downstairs and took everything out. Maybe she was trying to make everything fit properly.

Even though it was a really boring day, it was quite nice seeing all the stuff from the big box lying everywhere. There was stuff that made me think of how my family used to be. Some of the photies were of all of us – me, Mum, Dad, Jake and Joss – all smiling and holding one another. It made me remember loads of stuff about the things we used to do and how happy we used to be – before all the shouting started. Back then everything seemed to fit OK – I'd need to change things now and again, but most of the time it was OK. Mum was taking out the photies and looking at them or taking out the pieces of paper and reading them. Sometimes she would cry, and other times she would laugh.

By the time it was dark, I was feeling quite good. Even though my family had changed and our home felt so different, at least I could remember how it used to be. I found the teddy my Mum gave me when I was really small. It made me feel really good. Holding the teddy made me feel the same way I used to feel when I was small. It was strange – I'd never done that before. Usually I'd felt happy enough to

enjoy everything I already had. But now I needed something from when I was small to make me feel happy.

I took the teddy and put it on my bed – that’s where Mum used to put it when I was small. I stayed in my room and looked at the teddy for ages, remembering all the things we used to do. I remembered how Jake used to be nice to me and let me play with him. I remembered how Joss used to say nice things to me and make me feel happy. I remembered the time Dad made me feel better by tickling me. I thought about how things were now, with Mum being there all the time, but everybody else being somewhere else.

I heard the door go slam and thought that Dad must be home. I went downstairs and saw Jake chatting to Mum.

“He’s gone, then?” said Jake. His voice is all deep and grown up.

My home suddenly felt totally different. With Jake at home and chatting in his deep voice, the quiet and boredom of the day just went away and noise came back to fill it up again. I shook my head and got a little excited. I’d been thinking so much about how my home used to be that I’d forgotten that it could still be good. I ran upstairs and threw the teddy out of the window. I really liked the teddy, but I didn’t want it to make me forget that I still had my family now even though it wasn’t as good as it used to be.

Secret Watch –

I wasn’t feeling as angry as I had been. Finding the teddy and remembering how happy we used to be reminded me that I still loved my family. I knew that they weren’t trying to hurt me or make me feel bad. I just want everything to feel the way it used to feel. I just want us all to be happy and together. But I can’t stop getting

angry, and I don't know fuck why. I don't like spending my nights away from my home – it doesn't feel right. I don't want my Mum to be serious all the time. I want Jake to be home more and to fill up all the quiet. I want Dad to be at home more and to talk to people the way he should talk to people.

Lots of Watches later –

Dad hasn't come home. I went to sleep that night feeling better than I had done, but still wasn't sure why Dad hadn't come home. But I was OK about it – he hadn't come home at night before, and things had been OK. But Dad didn't come home at all for ages. I went to Arvooom everyday and things were a little better. I wasn't thinking about fuck as much as I had done. The new people at Arvooom didn't seem as bad as they had done. Robboaw was making me feel really good. Jake was at home a lot more and talking to Mum a lot. That seemed to be making her happy. But where was Dad? I hadn't seen him since the last time I'd spent the night at Arvooom.

Even though I was feeling better about things, I was still confused about Dad and why he hadn't come home for ages. He had been acting strangely for a long time – maybe that was why he wasn't at home. But where had he gone? When was he going to come home?

Now home is feeling odder than ever. It's just me and Mum, with nobody coming home at nighttime. I've found the teddy again and started taking it with me everywhere I go. I've started thinking more and more about the days when we were all smaller. I've started thinking fuck more and feeling angry about everything more. As Dad hasn't been home for such a long time, then I'm starting to think that he isn't coming home at all. That makes me feel so fuck angry and so fuck sad. I've

realised that the new people at Arvoom aren't nice at all. It feels like they've made my Dad go away – and that's made my family worse than ever. Fuck.

I spent another night at Arvoom and felt angry the whole time. I had my teddy with me the whole time, which made me feel a little better. I didn't go downstairs and scream at anybody, but I still fuck hated them for staying awake all night and not letting me go home. But what's good about going home? Mum just looks all serious all the time, and sits in her chair with her head in her hands all the time. Jake just walks around pretending that he's Dad. I'm biting Mum loads at the moment. I only have to look at her and I want to fuck bite her. I ignore Jake. I don't like him at all anymore. I don't even feel like Robboaw is my friend anymore. He's letting me stay at Arvoom at night and then he gives me a bath in the morning when Mum should be doing it. What's going on? All I want to do is bite people and say fuck all the time.

And then Dad came home. Mum picked me up from Arvoom and I bit her because she wasn't there when she was supposed to be. We got home, and Dad was there sitting in the chair. My head suddenly felt so much better, and I felt so much less angry. I laughed when I saw him and ran up to my room. He wasn't leaving at all. He'd just gone on holiday or something. I didn't even want to change my room around. It looked fine. Everything fitted better than it had done for ages. Dad was at home.

After Arvoom Watch – Dad's home

I sat in my window with a huge smile Watching Adinna. Every now and again, I'd clap and laugh and shake my head. Dad was home. I ran downstairs to get a Pom-Pom Parlar – Dad was sitting in the chair in the living room chatting and smiling with Mum. That made me feel even happier. Not only was Dad at home, but he was

smiling and making Mum smile as well. I knew that everything would be OK after that. I would never want to say fuck again. I would never need to move things around, because everything would fit properly. I knew that my family would feel better than ever.

“Are you going to stay and eat lunch with us?” said Mum.

“Yep,” said Dad. “But then I must go.”

I followed Dad around, giving him hugs. I slapped him on the part of his head where he hasn't any hair – it's a lot bigger than it used to be. I'm not sure why, but he kept taking stuff out of drawers and off of shelves and putting it all into boxes and bags. I didn't care, though – he was at home, and that's all that mattered. For a joke I would wait until he was out of the room and take the stuff out of the boxes and put it all back where it was supposed to go. That would make me laugh and I'd run away shouting 'alloaw' and slapping my arse.

Later on Dad took all the boxes down to the living room and sat down with us for dinnaow. It was really nice. We hadn't eaten dinnaow together for ages. Mum and Dad chatted and smiled – they were being very nice to each other. I spent the whole time looking at Dad and smiling. I'd hold his face really gently and say 'allaow'. He would look at me and smile. I didn't understand his words. I would normally have got really angry because of that – that's the way I'd been feeling. But because it was Dad, and because he'd come home and was staying forever, I didn't care.

Everything was going to be OK.

After lunch I went up to my room, and thought about all the boxes in the living room. Why had Dad put all his stuff into boxes? I looked out of the window and saw that he was putting the boxes in the car. It was a different car to the one Mum drove me to Arvoom in. Had Dad got himself a new car? And why was he putting all his

stuff into it? It seemed really odd – this was his home and we already had a car. Why would Dad want to get a new car and then put all his stuff into it? I started to feel really funny in my belly. I was getting worried again – I felt it. I knew what the answer was but I was too scared to think it. I was feeling so happy – happier than I had done for so long. I didn't want that feeling to go away. I picked up my teddy and hugged it.

Dad was going. Dad was leaving. My family was losing another person. Even though Dad had always been grumpy and had always made people feel bad, he was still an important person in my family. And now he was going. He was leaving us all. It was going to be just me, Mum and Jake. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. All the bad feelings and anger and worry I'd been feeling before were coming back. My belly was feeling horrible. My head felt like it was going to burst.

I ran downstairs and sat in the chair in the living room, watching my Dad take all his stuff out of my home and put into his new car. I sat there getting angrier and angrier. Why was he doing this? Didn't he know that this was going to make my family worse than ever? Had I done something to make him want to leave us all behind? I tried thinking that it didn't matter – I was spending nights at Arvoom, and I would be alright with that soon. As long as I spent time at Arvoom being happy and not letting the new people get me angry, then I knew that things would be OK. At home I still had my room and my window to Watch from. Mum had always made me feel good before – I would just have to try harder to feel good again. I'd have to stop thinking fuck and stop myself from getting worried. I'd have to stop myself from being angry with Mum all the time. She was the one who loved me the most out of everyone, I think. She had made me go to Arvoom at night. That was her fault. She'd shouted

loads at Joss, and then Joss had moved away. Mum and Dad had been shouting at each other for ages, and now Dad was moving away.

Was it Mum? Was she sending everyone away? She had always been there for me and made me feel good. Why wasn't she making me feel good anymore? Why were people moving away? Was it because of her? It was. It must have been. It was all her fault. That's why I was always angry with her now – because she was supposed to make me feel good but she wasn't. She was making everything feel bad. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

I jumped out of my chair and bit my Mum's hand. I screamed at her and bit her again. Dad ran in and pulled me off her. I screamed at him and tried to bite him but he pushed me fuck on the floor. I laid on the fuck floor, screaming and crying. I didn't want him to go. Mum had made him go. Mum had made Joss go. I got up and pushed all the boxes over and screamed more. I tried to run after Mum again, but Dad got in the way. Mum was crying. Dad looked really worried. Fuck. I screamed and cried.

“Adam,” said Dad. “Stop it now. For fuck's sake just stop. For once in your miserable...” He was really shouting. That just made me feel worse. I sat on the floor and screamed until my fuck throat hurt. I was feeling so bad. I didn't want to be here anymore. It wasn't my family anymore. Fuck. I screamed and wanted to shout fuck. But I couldn't. I couldn't say words and I couldn't understand words. That's what Joss always says in my dream – ‘You're so fucking stupid’. I can understand those words. I don't know why. I was stupid and didn't understand anything. How could I make my Dad stay if I couldn't say words or understand anything? Fuck. I hated myself and hated everyone for leaving and making me feel bad. Fuck. Fuck.

Dad tried to talk to me, but I couldn't understand him. I jumped up and pinched him really hard and screamed and ran up to my room. I fuck screamed some more and started picking things up and throwing them at the window. The window broke and I screamed and cried more. I got all my stuff and started throwing it out my window.

"Adam," shouted Mum. She was crying loads and Dad was stood behind her.

"What are you doing? Please. Please don't do this. Oh, Jesus."

I screamed and fuck cried and threw everything I had out of my window. I didn't have a family anymore. None of my stuff fitted properly anymore. Fuck. I pushed my bed and screamed and cried. Mum and Dad were stood outside. I didn't want anything in my room anymore. Nothing fitted anyway. Fuck.

"Jane," said Dad.

I pushed the bed really hard until my arms and hands hurt. I pushed it out of the door until it was at the top of the stairs. Then I gave it one last big push and watched it fall all the way down to the bottom. I looked at my Mum and my Dad and screamed at them again. I felt so fuck angry. I hated them, and I hated me. They made me feel bad. They made me feel so angry that I had to scream and cry and hurt myself and get everything out of my room.

I walked back into my room to see if there was anything left. I saw my drawers with all my clothes in standing by the window. I picked that up and walked to the top of the stairs and threw that down to where my bed was. It made a really big bang as it hit the wall, leaving a huge hole and loads of dust on the stairs. I stopped screaming and went back in my room to see if there was anything else left in there. The teddy was left where my bed should have been. I walked over to it and picked it up. I then sat down on the floor, hugging my teddy and started to cry. I didn't want to be angry anymore. I didn't want to say fuck anymore. I was just feeling really sad. All I

wanted was to have my family at home with me, and to enjoy going to Arvooom. I didn't have any of that. All my family were leaving me. Arvooom had loads of new people who I didn't like. I didn't understand anything and I couldn't say any words. My teddy was the only thing that made me feel good, because it came from back when I was small and everything was good. All I wanted was to be alone in my empty room with my teddy.

After a while, Dad came in and sat with me. I didn't scream at him. I just sat there with my teddy. He was being really nice to me. After throwing all my stuff out of my room and screaming at him and pinching him and biting Mum, I thought he was going to be angry. But he wasn't. It didn't make me feel better. I still couldn't understand his words and I was sure it didn't mean that he was going to stay.

"Things have changed. Things have to change."

I sat there hugging my teddy and listened to my Dad talking. I wasn't going to feel any better. I knew that. I wasn't going to scream anymore, and I wasn't going to break my stuff anymore, but I wasn't going to let myself feel better. Whenever I've done that before, something worse has happened to make me feel bad again. Maybe if I carried on feeling bad, then things would start to get better.

"We want you to be happy. But you won't be happy if I stay here..."

Mum walked in and gave me a Pom-Pom Parlar. She sat down next to me and put her arm around me. But again, I didn't feel any better about her doing it. Maybe I'd stopped feeling so angry, but I couldn't get rid of the sad feeling. I couldn't get rid of the bad feelings that were in my stomach and in my head. I knew that Dad would get up in a minute and leave me. Nothing was going to stop that. I used to think that everybody in my family wanted to do everything for me and make me feel good all

the time. It wasn't like that anymore. All they wanted to do was leave me. Fuck them.

After a while, I got up and helped Mum and Dad carry all my stuff back into my room. I didn't care. I knew I'd get angry again and throw it all out. I may not have been as angry as I had been, but I was still feeling really sad. I knew it wouldn't be long before all the anger came back. The feelings in my belly and in my head weren't going to go away.

Dad finished putting all his stuff in his new car. He waited until Jake came home before going. He gave me a hug, which made me feel bad again. I ran up to my room and got my teddy. I hugged my teddy and watched my Dad drive away. It was the saddest thing I'd ever seen. My family was definitely gone. It was just me and Mum from now on. I was scared about what was going to happen. I loved her and I didn't want to hurt her, but when I got angry who else was I going to hurt? Jake may have been living in my home, but that didn't really matter. Dad was gone. Joss was gone. Even the squeaky dog we used to have ages ago had become part of the family. Where was the dog now? The same place Dad and Joss were – far away from me. Jake was still there, but he never talked to me or did anything for me any more – he may as well just leave as well.

I was so tired. Mum put me in my jimjams and made me a Pom-Pom Parlar. It tasted worse than any Pom-Pom Parlar I had ever drunk before.

I felt so tired. My whole body felt tired. I just went to bed.

Secret Watch (cancelled) –

Why have secret Watch? I have no family to Watch for, and I have no Dad to wait for. I just got straight into my bed and closed my eyes. I hoped that I wouldn't have

the dream again, although I didn't really care. I felt bad enough already – I couldn't see how that was going to make me feel even worse.

A few days later, I was sitting at my Watching window at Arvooom. I hated it there. I hated being at home. I just felt fuck angry all the time. I hated everybody who did stuff for me. My Mum had made my family go away and was making me spend more nights at Arvooom. Robboaw made me spend all my time with the new people. He knew I wanted to spend time with him and not them, but he still made me spend time with them. I would bite them and scream at them, but they still looked after me instead of Robboaw. Nobody understood what I needed or what I wanted. Fuck them.

My Mum and Robboaw were at Arvooom, talking to the lady with the nice smile. I was Watching out of the window while they were sat in the other room. I heard my name said loads, and I even heard them say Dad a few times – they were probably thinking of new ways to make me feel bad.

What used to be Adam's secret Watch –

I haven't seen Dad for ages. I don't know how to feel about that. I think Jake may have gone as well now. All of his stuff has gone from his room. I don't really care. My family finished a long time ago, and Jake being at home doesn't make a lot of difference. Sometimes I want to laugh, so I go to his room and pretend to push all his stuff off the shelf. But he's not there. Then I'll go to Joss' room so that she'll say nice things to me. But she's not there. I'll go downstairs to see if Dad is sat in his armchair being grumpy. But he's not there. Then I'll bite Mum.

I'm still angry and worried all the time, but I don't how to feel about people any more. I just sit in my room or move some furniture. I move my furniture all the time

now. It never fits properly, no matter what I do to it. I get really fuck angry with it sometimes and push it down the stairs again. I have to do it because it won't fit properly. Nothing fits.

I don't know what I feel about anything anymore. I almost don't feel anything at all. I just Watch and move and throw and scream. I don't know why I do most of what I do. I'm not even sure what I want any more. Arvoom is fuck and my home is fuck. My Mum is scared of me. Robboaw treats me differently. I never see my Dad, and I don't really care about Jake and Joss anymore. All I want to do is laugh. I can't remember the last time I laughed.

It's just me and Mum now. When we first came to Adinna all that time ago, it was me, Mum, Dad, Jake and Joss. Then we got the dog. Now it's just me and Mum. Everything is horrible. Except my teddy. I hug it all the time. It's the only thing that makes me feel good.

Instead of my secret Watch, I just lie in bed with my teddy. Sometimes I get fuck angry and bite my hand. Other times I just get really sad and cry. I hate lying there, knowing that when I wake up the next morning, I'm going to be feeling bad again. I want to wake up and feel good again. I want to feel as good as I used to feel.

Adinna doesn't look good anymore. The old ladies who we visit sometimes aren't as nice as they used to be. Nothing is. I want something to happen. Maybe my Gran can come and visit me. I'm scared of that. What if I get angry and hurt her? I would never want to hurt my Gran. But then I used to think that about Mum.

I feel so bad. I wish I could be somewhere else, or I could go back to the time when things felt good. That's why I hug my teddy – because it makes me remember how good things used to be.

Chapter 9 – The Cold Wind Blows

June 1992 –

I was sitting in the car and not even thinking. I don't think about stuff anymore. I remember and worry and feel rage. Nothing else.

Ages ago, after feeling so bad for so long, I started to get good feelings again. I started wanting to feel happy again, and I would laugh the way I used to laugh. Then it all stopped again. I woke up one morning, and all the good feelings had gone and I felt bad again. That's when I got really angry at Mum and tried to hurt her before Jake had to hurt me.

Today, earlier, was very strange. The bad feelings went away after breakfast, and I was worried but not angry or sad. It felt like happiness but different – like I was borrowing a happy feeling and it wasn't really mine. It certainly wasn't the same happy as I used to feel. Mum wouldn't talk to me after breakfast, and I could feel my head wanting to get angry, but it wouldn't. I didn't like that. I felt like something else was in my head stopping me from having my proper feelings. I didn't laugh or smile but my mouth felt funny – it kept moving all by itself. I didn't want to hurt Mum the way I had been hurting her, but I reckon I could've, really easily. I was confused.

My room looked really strange, but I didn't need to throw everything down the stairs or out of the window. Normally I would've changed everything, but I couldn't make myself today. And there was that something in my head that wasn't letting me feel what I really wanted to feel. So I tried hard to find out what it was – what that

something in my head was. Then I don't remember anything. It was nearly dark and my head was fuzzy. Then I woke up. Then I was in the car. How did I get to the car?

Everything seemed so quiet and dark. That was all I knew as I sat in the car. Mum was chatting as she was driving. I used to think the more she talked the faster the car would go. But this morning I didn't think about anything. My head felt full up. I could feel it banging and hurting and spinning. But it wasn't thinking. I used to think about why I felt bad. I used to think about how Jake had got bigger and changed, and how Joss had been there all the time before not being there at all. I used to think about Dad and how he used to be there all the time before just being there sometimes. But this morning, I didn't think about anything like that. I didn't even remember their faces. I didn't care.

I sat in the car staring out of the window, with Adinna rushing away so fast I could hardly see all the black clouds in the sky. Mum was talking next to me but, like always, I didn't understand her words. My eyes were hurting and felt really heavy. I was trying really hard to remember what I was supposed to do. Was I supposed to try and talk back to Mum? Was I supposed to wait for the car to stop and then go for a walk? Was I supposed to like the music Mum had put on the car for me? I couldn't remember. All my feelings were being stopped in my head. I wanted to feel sad or angry. But I couldn't. I didn't care that at one time I'd been happy and that all my family were at home. I didn't care that Mum was the only one I had left and that she was doing everything for me. So there was one feeling not being stopped. I didn't care.

"Mummy hasn't got a lot of money, Adam," said Mum. "So we'll just drive for a little longer, and then go to Cathy's for some lunch."

I didn't listen to her words. All I could hear was a quiet banging noise at the back of my head.

And then those thoughts started again – the thoughts that happen without me even wanting them. They just come into my head and invade me and go around and around really fast. I can't stop them. Stuff like – why is everyone always talking to each other and not to me? Why can't I understand the words people say? Is there something wrong with me? Why have all the people I love left me? Why am I doing all these bad things? Because I have to. People have to understand me. People know that if I hurt them, then I'm not happy. And I'm not happy. I don't think I'll ever be happy again.

"For God's sake. It's started raining again," said Mum. "Shall I put the radio on?"

Mum stopped the music I was listening to and made the radio come on. Why did she do that? Why is she always changing things? I fuck screamed. She was trying to make me happy and I couldn't be happy. I couldn't be anything – something was in my head and stopping my feelings. And anyway, if I was going to be happy, then everything would have to be good. And everything was so fuck bad. If she was going to make me happy, then she would have to make everything good and take this thing out of my head that stopped the feelings.

But a feeling was there again. Out of nowhere, it went bang in my head. A big one. A bad one. A worried one. I felt so bad. So fuck fuck bad. It was there again. Oh fuck. Oh fucking fuck.

"Alright, darling? Poor baby," said Mum. "We'll go home. Oh God. Please."

What was she saying? Why wasn't she making me understand her words? I was so angry. My eyes felt so heavy. My head was so full of fuck bad. I had feelings,

but they were strange. Not mine. Pushed away but being pushed back in. I grabbed my Mum's hand and bit it really hard,

"Adam," Mum shouted. "Please don't. Not in the car. You'll kill us."

She was shouting at me. I was the one feeling bad. I let go of her hand and started punching my seat as hard as I could. I was screaming so much my throat hurt. I was trying to get the fuck bad out of my head. But it wasn't going anywhere. It stayed in my head no matter how loud I screamed or how hard I punched my seat.

Mum stopped the car at the side of the road.

"Adam," said Mum. She was crying a little. Her face was red and twisted. I hated it. Her fucking face. "Please." She was trying to stroke my hair. But the fuck bad thoughts and the fuck bad feelings wouldn't stop. Everyone must hate me. I'm a bad person. I'm stupid. Everything I do is stupid. Her face. I just sit in my room looking out of a window, or I run around making stupid noises while everyone else talks to each other. Why? What have I done that is so bad?

I decided that I wanted an arshee, so I started rubbing my teeth. I wasn't really hungry and I didn't really want to eat one because it would be nice – I just wanted one so that I could hurt my teeth and my mouth. I would bite it and chew really fast so that it was so fuck cold and so fuck painful.

"No, Adam," said Mum. "No."

NO! NO! NO! There was that fuck fuck fucking word again. I hate that word. It means I can't do something that I want to do. And she said it. She wouldn't let me have an arshee. Her face. Her silly voice. If she wanted to get herself an arshee, then she would just go and get one. I'm not allowed. I'm forbidden from getting my own arshee. That made me so fuck angry. I hated her. I fuck hated her and

everyone else who could do whatever they wanted. I grabbed her head and pulled it to my mouth. Fuck her.

“Adam,” screamed Mum. “Adam!”

I bit her as hard as I fuck fucking could right on her face. I felt my teeth go into her face and my mouth got full of funny tasting stuff. Blood. My Mum’s blood was in my mouth. I stayed biting her face for ages – the blood went into my mouth and down my throat. It was horrible. I felt so bad. Mum was screaming at me and hitting my head with her hand. But I just bit harder. Blood. Fuck blood all in my mouth.

“Adam,” screamed Mum. “Adam. Let me go. Let me go!”

After a while I let go and screamed again. Then I looked at Mum. Her face was covered in her own blood. The seats were covered in her blood. I looked at my hands and they were covered in blood. Mum was holding her face and crying loads. She looked at me and cried more loudly. What had I done? I didn’t like that. However bad I felt about myself and my fuck bad head, I didn’t like seeing my Mum in loads of pain with all her blood everywhere – and I’d done that.

I stopped screaming. My head felt a bit clearer. She was holding her face where I had bitten her. She was in so much pain. All her tears were running into the blood on her face and making it go a funny colour. My head was getting clearer and clearer. All that blood coming from my Mum’s face – all those tears coming from my Mum’s eyes. All that crying. All that pain. I’d done that. Because I’d been feeling bad, my Mum had got hurt. Why? Why had I done that to her? I loved my Mum. Even though it was probably her fault that I was feeling so bad, she didn’t deserve to be in so much pain. But who else was I going to hurt?

I stared at Mum for a bit longer as my head cleared more and more and the feelings started to get through better. I hadn’t meant to do it. I hadn’t meant to hurt

her so much and make so much blood come out of her face. It's just that she was there, and I'd felt so angry and fuck bad. Normally I bite her hand or I push my face against hers, but this time I did both at the same time. It just happened.

I was so horrible. How could I have done that to her?

I reached across and touched her on the arm to say sorry. I didn't think it would do much good. I just wanted her to know that I hadn't meant to hurt her so much.

"Don't," said Mum. "After everything I've done for you. Why?" She stopped. She sobbed. "We're going home."

She stopped crying and got that serious look on her face. We drove home without saying anything. Mum sniffed and wiped some blood off her face – but there was so much of it, she just made more come out. I started to feel less bad and worried and worse about what I'd done to Mum. That wasn't me. I didn't do that sort of thing. I got angry and I screamed and I got bad feelings and bit people or broke things, but to make blood come out and to make my Mum cry so much, that wasn't what I did. That wasn't what I wanted to do. I just wanted to be happy and to make other people want to make me happy. What had made me do that to my Mum?

We got home and Mum just walked in without waiting for me. I felt all alone. Before I'd done all the bad stuff I knew that Mum would always be with me, or Robboaw would always be with me. But I hadn't been to Arvoom for ages so I don't think that Robboaw is with me anymore. Mum doesn't even wait for me to get out of the car. So that was it. I was on my own. The last person who had cared for me was now walking away from me. And it was my fault. It had all happened because I was different to everyone else. I didn't care anymore about not understanding people or my head feeling bad or everything in my home having to fit properly – I just

wanted my Mum to be with me again. Even though it had only just happened, I wanted it to stop straight away.

“What happened?” said Jake. I didn’t know he was going to be at home. He still comes home sometimes – more than anyone else. He’s a lot less nice to me than he used to be. He doesn’t talk to me at all.

Jake and Mum just stood there just chatting. Mum was still crying and bleeding. I wanted to make things better. I wanted to give Mum a hug and let her know that I hadn’t meant it and that it had been a mistake. I wanted everyone to know that I was sorry – and to feel better and to be a little bit happy. I didn’t want to hurt Mum. That wasn’t me. I tried to give Mum a hug but Jake shouted at me.

“Adam,” said Jake. “Leave her alone and go to your room – now.”

I ran up to my room. Now I wanted to be on my own. I needed to think about what I’d done, and how I was going to make things better.

I went to my window and looked at Adinna. It used to look so good. Adinna used to make me feel so happy. I used to sit at my window and listen to my family as they talked to each other and shouted at each other. I’d be happy then. I could hear all the noise and see all of Adinna and know that I felt good and that bad things would never happen to me. But there was no family anymore. Even Mum was gone. I’d made her go away. Jake wasn’t nice to me anymore. There were no noises in my home anymore. All that was left was Adinna – and even that didn’t look nice.

“You bastard,” said Jake. I looked round from my window and saw Jake standing in my doorway. He looked really angry and he was being horrible – his face was twisted and his teeth were poking out. I felt so bad about what I’d done to Mum and about all the horrible things I’d been doing, and Jake was standing there trying to make me feel worse. Why was he doing that? I got up and went to bite Jake, but he

was quick and strong. He grabbed my arms so hard that they hurt. He then pushed me round and tripped me up so I fell onto my bed. I landed with my face in the pillow.

“Do you want to hurt me as well?” shouted Jake. After more shouting, he walked out of my room and slammed my door. I felt even more stupid just lying on my bed. Jake had made me feel worse than I had done before. If there was one thing I could do, then it was make people know when I felt sad or angry – but Jake had taken that from me. I wished that there was a way that it would all stop, and I didn’t have to be me anymore. I just wanted the whole thing to stop so that I could go to bed and stay asleep.

I stayed in my room for ages, getting angrier and angrier. I screamed a few times. I would scream so fuck loudly that my ears would start to hurt. I started to think about what had gone wrong, and what I had done to make things go so bad. I remembered how ages ago Dad used to come into my room and talk to me. He’d just sit there and say stuff like ‘sorry’, and ‘I wish I could make things better for you’. I never really understood what he was doing or what he was saying, but at least he was there with me. At least he was trying to be nice to me. That made me feel so happy – and I didn’t even really know it back then. My Dad had made me feel happy, and I didn’t even know it. Maybe that’s why things were so bad and everyone (including Mum) had left me – because I didn’t show them that I was happy. Maybe they thought that I didn’t know that they loved me, or that I didn’t show them that I loved them. They’d got so fed up with me that they decided to leave me.

Sitting on my bed after Jake had been horrible to me was probably the worst I have ever felt. I felt stupid. I felt alone. I felt angry. I felt bad. My head was hurting. My eyes felt heavy. I was so hungry I was shaking. I was scared. I was scared

because I had hurt the person I love most in the world because I had stopped feeling stuff. I was scared because I didn't know who was going to be looking after me after what I'd done. Everything was so horrible.

Then I saw Dad turn up in his car. I nearly felt happy – I got that weird feeling in my stomach when something good happens. But then I thought that he was going to be angry with me as well, after what I'd done to Mum. Maybe he'd come to tell me off. Normally I would have run downstairs to say hello to him. This time I just stayed where I was and got scared in case he was angry with me and wanted to hurt me. I hoped that maybe he would come and talk to me like he used to. But I knew that he wouldn't.

I just sat in my room for ages and ages, thinking about how I was feeling. Dad didn't come up and see me; he just sat downstairs chatting with Jake. I really wanted to go downstairs and say hello to Dad. Normally I could do it and know that Dad would be nice to me, but I knew that he wouldn't be nice to me this time. I knew that after the things I had done, he would be as angry with me as Jake had been. I hated that.

After a while, I fell asleep. I started to have the dream again where everyone is being horrible to me. Before it got too bad, I woke up and Mum walked in with a drink.

"Hello darling," she said. There was a big plaster and little black things on her face where I had bitten her. "Daddy and Jake have gone out for a little while."

I felt like crying when I saw all that stuff on her face. I'd made that happen. Me. I'd bitten her and made all that blood come out. I decided then that I was never going to do another bad thing to my Mum.

"He said that if that happened, then we would have to start giving you this."

Mum was talking to me, but I didn't understand her words. But I didn't let myself get angry. I didn't want to hurt her again. I felt really sad and I wanted Mum to know how bad I was feeling, but I wasn't going to hurt her again. I touched the plasters on her face and said 'noolah'. I always say that when I'm sorry. Mum showed me a little bottle.

"It's supposed to taste quite nice."

Mum took the top off the little bottle and poured some stuff onto a spoon. Sometimes, when I ache, she gives me medsin. This looked like medsin. It tastes nice and makes me feel better. I thought maybe she loved me again – she was trying to make me feel better by giving me medsin to take the ache away. She put the spoon in my mouth so that I would drink the medsin. It tasted funny – not like the normal medsin. I didn't really want it. I don't know why. Probably because it tasted funny. I felt like pushing her away and making her stop, but after what I'd done to her before I wanted her to like me again. So I drank it. It tasted really nasty but she smiled so I felt better.

"There's a good boy," said Mum. "You'll feel much better now."

When Mum said those last words, her voice went a bit funny and she started to cry again.

I went and sat at the window and thought about Mum. Maybe she'd forgiven me. She'd been so nice and had given me the medsin on a spoon (even though it had tasted nasty). I decided that however bad I felt, I wasn't going to hurt my Mum ever again. Even though I still felt so sad about everything, I knew that I could be happy again. If I could start being nice to people again, then perhaps they would start being good to me again. Then I knew I would feel happier. Maybe it would take a long time, but if I started straight away then it would happen more quickly. I wasn't

going to be horrible to Mum ever again. Then Jake would be nice to me. And then Dad would be nice to me. Maybe Joss would come home.

My head started to feel a little funny again, like it was full of noise. It felt like my head was spinning around. I was hurting as well – hurting because of the noise. But then it stopped and I felt really thirsty. It scared me a little at first, but I wasn't too upset. I was still thinking about what I'd done to Mum. Maybe I deserved a full head. So I went downstairs to ask Mum for a drink. I felt better than I had done earlier, because I knew that I'd been bad and that I'd felt sad, but I also knew that I could start to do things to make stuff better. I would never hurt Mum again the way I'd hurt her earlier.

I found it difficult to walk down the stairs because my head was feeling full of noise again. At first it would spin a little and make my legs feel all weak, so I found it hard to walk. Something awful happened then – I got to the bottom of the stairs and a big rush of wind blew right through my head. It made me nearly fall over. The wind in my head had nearly pushed me over. I'd never felt that before. I thought that if I sat down in the chair, then the spinning and the rushing wind would stop. For a while it did and I started to feel a little better. But then it started again. Only worse. It was making me really scared. It felt horrible – the worst thing ever. I forgot about all the bad things that had been going on. I couldn't think about anything else apart from the rushing wind and the spinning.

I sat in the chair for ages, trying to make myself feel better, but I just felt worse. The wind in my head was getting faster and faster and my head was making the room spin more and more. It was horrible. I tried to stop it but there was nothing I could do. I was getting thirstier and thirstier.

"Adam?" said Mum. She smiled. "I didn't hear you come down."

I looked at her and the room went all funny. It was as if when I turned my head the room moved slower than my eyes wanted it to. All the colours seemed to move into each other and go all blurry. I tried to say 'allaow' but the words wouldn't come out. And then my neck started to feel strange – it suddenly went really stiff and made my head stick up in the air. That was horrible. That made me even more scared. I couldn't turn my head or look at anything that I wanted to look at. Something else was in my head – a bit like earlier, but worse this time. It was making my neck stiff and filling my head with lots of noise. I was so scared.

Mum came and sat next to me. I tried to look at her, but my bad neck wouldn't let me. I heard her say words, but she sounded like she was a long way away. But that was stupid. I could see her sitting right next to me.

I was getting more and more scared. The wind in my head was rushing so loudly and the spinning was so fast. The room moved too slowly if I tried to look around and all the colours were getting blurry, and my neck was feeling really stiff. It was so scary. And then my mouth started to go all stiff. I couldn't move my mouth. What was happening to me? Why were all these horrible things happening to me? I couldn't think. I couldn't move my head or mouth. Everything was looking so strange. It was so horrible.

"What's the matter, darling?" said Mum. I tried to look at Mum but it was so hard and painful. I tried to say something but my mouth was too dry – I was so thirsty. I wanted to go and lay on my bed, but I was too scared to move. But I couldn't just sit there with my head hurting like that and with my mouth feeling so dry. So I got up and walked to the kitchen – but my head wouldn't move down. Because my neck was all stiff, I couldn't move my head and see where I was going. So I walked into

the kitchen with my head stuck in the air, and with all the wind rushing through my head.

And then it happened. There was this sudden huge rush from the bottom of my head that made everything go blank for a second... and it was like I was in my horrible dream. The rushing wind in my head stopped, but the laughing started. The spinning in my head stopped and the whole room stopped, like it was a photograph. A thumping sound started in my chest. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. Really slow at first. Everything in the room seemed still and really far away. I could hear Mum saying stuff, but it was like she was saying it from another room. I could see everything really clearly – it all stopped being still but it was all moving too slowly and going all blurry. But the scary thing was the laughing. Right at the back of my head, I could hear this faint laughing. It was horrible. It made me feel as if I couldn't control anything. I felt like everybody hated me and they wanted me to go away. I was so scared.

"Adam," said Mum from another room. "What's the matter? Ha ha ha!"

I walked into the kitchen to get some water. I filled a glass up, but didn't hear the water running.

"Adam's having a glass of water," said a horrible voice. I tipped the water on the floor and tried to scream. The laughing was getting louder. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. The thumping in my chest was getting faster. I wanted to do something to stop it all from happening. It was horrible. Ha ha ha. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. So I threw the glass on the floor. I heard it smash. The noise went on for ages. Much longer than it should've done. I screamed because the noise wouldn't stop. It went on and on and on.

I turned round and saw Mum stood in the doorway. I think she might have been crying. But I couldn't tell. She had her hands over her face. I hoped that she wasn't scared. I didn't want to hurt her. It wasn't her fault. I realised how much I loved her.

"She doesn't love you, Adam." That voice again. It was horrible – the most horrible voice I'd ever heard. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. My chest was thumping really fast. The laughing was getting louder. I wanted to do something. My neck was still stiff and making me stare up into the air. I felt so weird. I felt like I'd never felt before. Where was that voice coming from, and why was it saying such horrible things? The whole thing was really scaring me. I didn't know what I was going to do to make myself feel better.

"Nobody loves you Adam," said the voice – really loud. Words like normal words, but I understood. I screamed again and ran out of the kitchen. Ha ha ha. The laughing was getting louder. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. My chest was thumping faster. I ran to the stairs and tried to get up to my room, but my legs wouldn't work properly. They kept going all weak so I'd fall over. I stood up, and my whole body shook and went stiff. I screamed and pulled pictures from the wall. I didn't really know why I was doing it. I just did it. My head was so full. My chest was thumping so fast. My body didn't work and the room looked like a faraway photograph.

"You are fuck," said the voice. I screamed and fell backwards down the stairs. Mum was behind and caught me so I didn't hurt myself. I was so scared. The laughing was getting louder. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. The thumping in my chest was getting faster. I was getting more scared – I never realised I could be so frightened. Nothing was right. My head was so fuck. I was lying on top of my Mum.

"Why don't you have a bath, Adam?" I screamed again. Why was that voice talking to me like that? Mum was trying to hold me down, but I elbowed her in the

head and got up from the floor and ran to the bathroom. All the colours were blurry, less like a photograph, and the laughing was getting louder. I ran to the bathroom to run a bath. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. Ha ha ha. I tried to turn the taps on so I could have a bath, but I couldn't see the taps. My neck was so stiff and painful. The laughing was getting louder. My worry crushed my head, and I picked up the big plant next to the sink and threw it into the bath. Smash. There was mud and soil everywhere. I cut myself on a bit of the pot. Again, the noise of the smash went on for ages and got louder and louder. It was so weird and so horrible. Mum was standing behind me in the doorway. I think she was crying. It was so hard to tell because everything was so weird.

I walked back out of the bathroom. Boo-boom. Ha ha. I got to the stairs and walked up to my room. Then another huge rush of wind went right through my head, and I forgot how I got to my room. Without remembering how I'd got from the top of the stairs to my room, I was standing there with all the spinning and all the noise in my head. I screamed. The laughing got so loud it made my ears hurt. Everything was blurry. Nothing had a proper colour. Mum was standing behind me, crying and saying stuff. I couldn't hear her. I couldn't see her properly. My room was moving around.

"Why don't you make everything fit properly, Adam?" said the voice. I screamed and picked up my bed. I dragged it out of my room to the top of the stairs and pushed it down. Bang. The corner of the bed hit the wall and made a massive hole. The noise went on for ages. It sounded horrible different to the way it should've sounded. Crassshhh! Loads of big bits of dust and brick lay on the stairs and the floor. I went back to my room and screamed again. I got my drawers with my clothes in and threw that through my window. Smash! went the glass. Crash! went

the drawers. For a moment there was total silence – then the sound of the drawers hitting the ground outside my window hit me, and it all started again.

I felt so tired. I sat down on the floor. Ha ha ha. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. The thumping in my chest was so fast now that I felt sick. The laughing wouldn't go away. I looked up at my light. It was so bright. It made my eyes sting. It was so painful. I jumped up and pulled it from the ceiling and smashed it on the floor. Everything went dark.

“Push Mum down the stairs. She hates you. Push her down the stairs.”

I screamed. I wasn't going to hurt Mum. I was not going to hurt Mum. Boo-boom. Ha ha ha. I ran past Mum and out of my room. I pulled all the pictures from the wall and ran into my Mum's room. I felt so sad. My whole body was hurting. My neck was still stiff. My mouth still wouldn't move. My chest was thumping so fast. I saw my Mum's huge wardrobe. I walked over to it and pushed it on the floor. It felt so light. I knew that really it was heavy, but it felt so light. The wardrobe hit the floor and smashed everywhere. It made no sound. The laughing and rushing wind in my head was all I heard.

I started to shake. The laughing was so loud. The thumping was so fast. All the colours were so blurry. The dream was horrible. Everything was so bad. I saw my Mum's big metal bed.

“The ladies in the big book. Mum. Throw her on the bed. Touch your willy.”

I screamed again. No. I wouldn't hurt her. I wouldn't hurt her.

“Then break the bed. Break the bed. Break the bed.”

I screamed really loud for ages. Break the bed. And picked the bed up. Break the bed. It felt really heavy. Break the bed. But I got all strong – I felt pain in my arms but it didn't stop me – and managed to tip it right over and onto the wardrobe.

Baannggg! The sound was the loudest ever. The whole room shook and the sound pushed me onto my arse and I fell onto my front and...

... It all stopped. The dream ended. My whole body went totally weak, and I fell on the floor. The laughing stopped. The colours went back to normal. My neck felt proper. My mouth went proper. But my heart was still going boo-boom. And I was so tired.

I just laid on the floor of my Mum's room, breathing really fast. I could see Mum crying next to me. She was stroking my hair and saying stuff. But I couldn't hear her properly. She sounded like she was in another room. Boo-boom. Boo-boom. I couldn't move. I was so weak. My Mum's room was such a mess. Her wardrobe was just lying on the floor, all smashed up. Her big metal bed was lying on top of the wardrobe. Everything was totally silent. Mum's mouth was moving and tears were coming from her eyes and blood was coming from her face. But I couldn't hear anything. I couldn't move. I was so scared.

I stayed lying on my Mum's floor for ages with my head feeling weird and my chest thumping slowly but loudly. Mum was knelt over me crying and stroking my hair. I was trying to remember what had happened – it seemed like I hadn't done those things. It felt like I'd had a proper a dream and that I'd just woken up. But I knew it hadn't been a dream. I could still see the mess. I could see Mum crying with blood coming from her face...

... And then Jake was standing in the doorway. I could see him just standing there staring at me. And then Dad came up behind him and pushed him into the room. When he got pushed, he stopped just staring and started talking and waving his arms. I couldn't hear him properly. When he spoke, it sounded as if my head under the water in the bath.

I was still breathing really hard. My chest was thumping slower and slower. My head was still in the bath. Dad went off for a little while, and then came back. Jake tried moving the bed back to the way it should've been. But he couldn't do it – it was too heavy. I started to think about silly things. I remembered the dog and how I used to play around with it. I remembered when I first went to Arvoom and found my Watching window. I remembered the time I hit my Gran over the head with a metal thing. I remembered how I sat in the smelly mud and laughed so hard my belly hurt. I hadn't laughed like that for ages. I decided that I was definitely never going to laugh again. I didn't think anything good was ever going to happen again. That was it. What would happen to me, I wondered? I'd ruined everything. Mum was never going to love me. Dad would never come and visit me again. Jake would never be nice to me again. Joss would never come home. I wished that we could all go back to when I was sitting in the smelly mud laughing so much my belly hurt, or sat on the log with Jake and having our picture taken. I shut my eyes and wished and wished and wished. Just make it so that all this time hadn't passed, and that we'd always just been playing in the field, sitting on the old tree, playing with the dog, drinking Pom-Pom Parlar and laughing and laughing. But when I opened my eyes I saw Dad and Jake pulling at the bed that I'd broken. I could never go back.

Jake and Dad were chatting and looking worried. Occasionally Dad would put his hand on Jake's shoulder and say something and smile. My head was still in the bath water so I couldn't hear the words. Then I shut my eyes and everything went black. I couldn't see anything, but the sound had come back. Everything was black, but I could hear what people were saying. I still couldn't understand the words, but at least I could hear again.

"I can't believe he did this to the bed," said Jake. "Jesus. I can't even lift it an inch."

"What time did that doctor say he was coming?" said Mum.

"He said about twenty minutes," said Dad.

"I'm so sorry, Pete," said Mum. "You must be starving. What are we going to do about tea? Me and Adam didn't even have any lunch. I've got some cold chicken in the fridge and..."

"Jane," said Dad.

"There's fresh bread and... If I'd never agreed to give him those drugs..."

"Jane," said Dad. "Don't worry. It'll all be fine. I promise. We'll see what the doctor says. I'll take care of it all."

There was silence for a bit.

"Thanks," said Mum.

I didn't hear anything for a while. I think I might have fallen asleep. But then all of a sudden, I heard another voice in the room. I opened my eyes and could see everything. I listened and could hear everything. My chest wasn't thumping any more. But my head was thumping fast. It hurt so much. It was really hurting me. Oh, I'd never hurt so much, ever. Why was my head hurting so badly? I looked at the new man in the room. He was wearing glasses and had really dirty hair. He smelled bad too. He was chatting to Mum. I didn't like him. He made me want to get angry again.

"What do you think caused all this?" said Mum.

The man mumbled. I didn't hear his words. He kept looking at the door.

"Yes," said Mum.

The man kept on mumbling.

"About an hour and a half ago. Why?" said Mum.

"Yes." said the man. I heard that clearly, but then he just mumbled again. He stood in the doorway and kept looking at his watch.

"What?" shouted Jake and Dad together.

Mumble mumble mumble. I didn't like him. He didn't like us, either. He looked tired. He needed a bath. Jake shouted at him loads. In the end Dad had to hold onto him.

"Jake," said Dad, and pulled Jake from the room. Mum and the doctor were left alone with me.

"So what happens now?" said Mum.

Ambulance mumble observation mumble mumble unit.

"I see," said Mum.

My ears went pop. Sound flooded into my head and everything was clear again.

"Yes," said the man. "But for your safety, I think it'll be best if he spends a couple of nights in a secure unit."

"Oh right," said Mum. "A couple of nights?"

Nobody said anything for a moment. I suddenly thought of Gran and then Dennaben. I think I may have smiled a little bit. Then I thought of the dog and my little smile went away again. My breathing was still fast.

"I see," said Mum. "Would you leave now? Please."

The man picked up his bag and left the room. After a while I felt a little stronger, so I got up and walked to my room and got into bed. I was still really tired. Every now and again, the colours of the room would go all blurry again like they had done during the dream. But it wasn't as bad. My head was still thumping a bit, but it was getting a little better. I still felt very strange though. I just wanted to go to sleep.

I laid in bed for ages, feeling really strange. I was really tired and breathing quite quickly, but I was too scared to go to sleep – I didn't want the dream to come back. I'd never felt so strange before. I kept thinking about how we were all at home together – me, Mum, Dad and Jake. We hadn't all been at home together for ages. I didn't enjoy it, though. I was feeling too weird. It was almost as if I was waiting for the next bad thing to happen. I was more scared than I had ever been in my life. I eventually fell asleep.

I didn't have any more dreams. I just slept. And then I was awake. I was walking outside. Mum and Dad were walking with me and these two men dressed in white were walking in front. I felt so scared. Why wasn't I at home in bed? Why was I leaving my home? The two men in front were walking towards a big white car with a blue thing on top. Were we going for a drive? I didn't want to go for a drive. My head was hurting so much and I was so tired. I'd never been so tired – my arms and legs didn't work properly. Mum and Dad had to hold me up, otherwise I'd have fallen over. Why couldn't they have just left me alone? I'd been feeling a little better just lying in bed and sleeping. And now they were taking me away. Was that it? Was that the end of me being at home?

I got really scared and tried to get away from Mum and Dad, but I felt so weak and so tired that I just fell over. That hurt. I hit the ground really hard and hurt my knee. My head was hurting so much. They were taking me away from my home. I didn't want to go anywhere. Didn't they understand that I knew that I'd done bad things, and that I wasn't going to do them again? No. I forgot – nobody understands what I want or what I say. Because I'd been bad a few times, everybody thought that I was always going to be bad – that's why they were taking me away.

I screamed as Mum and Dad tried to pick me up. The two men in front ran back to help Mum and Dad.

"Its fine," said Dad, waving at the two men. "Leave us alone."

I was so scared. I was so angry. I'd been picked up off the floor and the two men had opened the big doors on the big white car with the blue thing on top... Nee-naw men. They were nee-naw men and this was a nee-naw. They were taking me away for being bad. No. No. This was all wrong. I'd made up my mind not to be bad anymore, but they didn't understand. Mum and Dad helped me up to the big doors and tried to make me get inside. But I didn't want to get inside. I wanted to go to my own bed, not into the nee-nor. I screamed and tried to pull away.

"Adam," said Mum. "Come on, baby. It's only going to be for a couple of nights." She looked at Dad. "This is wrong. Wrong."

Dad nodded and looked away. I think he had tears in his eyes.

I screamed more and more. I didn't want to leave my home and my family. What if I never saw any of them again? What if I was taken to a new place where all the people were horrible? What if they didn't give me food and drinks? I screamed and pulled. Mum and Dad cried and pushed.

In the end I was too tired and too weak to stop myself being put in the nee-naw. I got in and sat down on this bed that was inside. I sat there trying not to cry. There were loads of green boxes and bottles and tubes and stuff inside. That scared me even more. What was all that weird stuff for? My head was hurting more and more. I'd never felt pain like it.

Dad jumped into the nee-naw and sat next to me on the bed. Mum was sitting on the other side. The two men in white were sat in foldy chairs by the doors. I was so angry. I was so tired. I felt so weak. My head hurt so, so much. Everything was so

bad. Everyone hated me. They wanted me to go away for being bad. Even my Mum. Even my Mummy wanted me to go away. I could feel the rage starting at the bottom of my head. I felt my body get full of strength. My head hurt more and more, as the rage got bigger and bigger. Mum and Dad were making me go somewhere I didn't want to go. I was never going to see them again. I was never going to see my home again. I was never going to see Arvoom again. I was never going to see Robboaw, Cath or the little old lady again. I was never going to see Joss and Jake again. I was never going to see Adinna again...

The rage rushed right through my head and down through my body, and everything seemed far away. I got up and grabbed the fuck big bottle on the wall and threw it on the fuck floor. Glass and water flew up and went everywhere. I screamed so much I hurt my fuck ears. Mum and Dad got up and tried to hold me. I pushed them both away. I felt so fuck strong. Everything looked so dark. The sound seemed so far away. I walked to the fuck bed and tipped it upside down. I wasn't going. I didn't want to go. I screamed again. The rage...

The two fuck fuck nee-naw men who were making me leave my home got up and grabbed me. I fuck screamed at them. Why were they grabbing me? Who said that they could grab me? I threw my hand at them and caught one of them in the face. I grabbed the other man's fuck hand and bit it as hard as I could. Mum put her hand on my shoulder... But I couldn't hurt her – even though she was making me leave my home as well, I couldn't hurt her again... I pulled away from Mum and started grabbing at anything I could pick up from the walls or the floor. I'd throw stuff and smash stuff, while Dad and the two men tried to grab me. Mum was sitting in the corner crying. I wished that I could just go up to her and give her a hug like I used to. But the rage was too much.

As I was looking at Mum, one of the men grabbed me from behind and tripped me up onto the floor. Then he and the other man got on top of me and held me hard on the floor. I couldn't move. I was just stuck on the floor without moving. The rage in my fuck head was getting fuck worse. I couldn't do anything. Even with all the strength the rage had given me, I couldn't move. The two men were just holding me on the floor as hard as they could. It hurt so much. I screamed and I screamed and I screamed louder than I ever had done before.

Dad was now sitting in the corner with Mum. I looked over at them both crying – they looked like they were in the telly, or on the other side of the field. Dad was hugging Mum, who had blood coming from her face again. I screamed at them. They had done this. They were the ones who had made me sad. They were the ones who had made me want to do bad things. And then they made me get out of my bed and into the car with the two nee-naw men. Why did they hate me so much? I hated them. I hated them for what they were doing. Fuck! Fuck! I just wanted it all to stop! I wanted to go back home and go to sleep. I wanted to lie in my bed and listen to the noises my family used to make. I wanted to see my Gran. I wanted to see Robboaw. I wanted to go to the field with the big tree and eat sandwiches and drink Pom-Pom Parlars and have my picture taken with Jake on the log – like we did ages and ages and ages ago. I tasted Pom-Pom Parlar in my mouth. Then arshee. It tasted like it used to taste, when we were a family. When we were happy. When I was happy. But look at me – screaming on the floor with the two nee-naw men holding me down with all their strength. Mum and Dad sitting in the corner crying and hugging. I used to be happy. What had happened?

After screaming for ages, the nee-naw stopped. The rage stopped, and I wondered where we were. The two men got up and left me on the floor. I didn't

want to get up. I felt too weak without the rage. I just wanted to know where we had come to. Mum and Dad got out of the nee-naw, so I sat up and looked round. From where I was sitting, I could see out of the doors – we'd stopped at this big, red building with huge glass doors. I didn't like the look of it at all. I didn't want to go in there. I could feel the rage starting again. The two men who'd been holding me down were talking to two other men dressed in white. They were sweaty and looked upset.

“Come on, darling,” cried Mum. Her face was white, and she was shaking. She was crying so much. “Let's go. We have to go inside.”

I held Mum's hand and stepped out of the nee-naw. The air was so cold I wrapped my arms around myself. I shivered. We walked a few steps, but my belly started to feel funny – I was getting frightened again. I didn't want to go into that place. I knew I'd never come out again. What were they going to do to me in there? They might hurt me again. What if I was there for ages and ages and they just hurt me all the time? I would never see my family again. I would never see my home again. The two men in white walked back towards me. I screamed and fell to the ground...

... And the rage came back. I wasn't going into that place. They tried talking to me and touching me. But I didn't want to be touched again. I was still hurting all over my body. I got up and ran back to the nee-naw. The two men ran after me and grabbed me by the arms. I screamed and tried to bite their heads. But they were too quick and got out of the way. Fuck! They dragged me from the nee-naw, and towards the horrible place with the red walls. I screamed again. It was so cold. I could hear Mum crying. I just wanted to give her a big hug and get her to take me home. But I was being dragged into the horrible place. I screamed until my throat hurt more than ever.

The two other men in white held open the doors to the horrible place, and I was dragged inside. It smelt so bad – like sick and smelly mud and piss. It was still cold, even inside. I screamed and I screamed and I screamed as they dragged me through the horrible place. All the people looked really ugly. It smelt so bad. Loads of people were talking and shouting and running and opening doors for me. I screamed and tried to bite them and I tried to pull away. But their strength was better than my rage. I couldn't do anything.

They dragged me into a room. The two other men went inside as well. When we got inside, I managed to push away the men who were holding me. I screamed again and grabbed at anything I could and threw and smashed. Screaming, smashing, throwing. Screaming, shouting, biting. The two men grabbed me again and tripped me up onto the floor... and then I felt a pain in my arse, like the dog biting me. Was the dog here? Was this where they'd brought him? The silly, squeaky...

Everything went really quiet. After the pain in my arse, the rage rushed away and left me lying on the floor, breathing really heavy but slowly. I was hurting so much. I looked up and saw Mum and Dad standing in the doorway. They were both crying and hugging each other. All the men in white left me alone and sat down on the floor. One of them started to clear up the mess that I'd made.

I didn't feel like screaming anymore. I didn't want to be in that horrible place that smelt of sick, smelly mud and piss where all the people were really ugly and where the dog now lived. I looked for the dog. He wasn't there. I wanted to be in my home, in my bed, with my family in Adinna where it was warm. But I couldn't. I'd done all that I could to get away. But I'd lost. The horrible people had beaten me. I

knew that all I could do now was stay lying on the floor, getting more and more tired, waiting for the next bad thing to happen to me.

As I got more and more tired, I could feel a cold wind blowing over me. I'd never been so cold. Mum and Dad hugged and cried. The men in white went out of the room and left me alone – the way I should be and the way I should always be. My eyes were getting more and more heavy. The cold wind was getting colder and colder. Mum and Dad were just looking at me and crying. I was so scared. I didn't know what was going to happen to me. Would I ever see my family again? Would I ever be able to stop myself from being this sad?

I started to think about something good. With all the bad and sad in my head and body, a good thought came to me. I remembered the day when we were first living in Adinna. Dad went out early and came back with the dog. We all went for a walk and laughed and talked. We did a lot of laughing back then. And then at night Mum put *Hi-Di-Hi* on the telly for me. I was so happy. Everyone came and sat with me as I bounced and laughed. I got so happy I couldn't laugh any more, so I started to cry. And that made everyone else cry. We were just a family laughing and crying together. We loved each other so much.

Now I'm lying on a floor in a horrible, smelly, ugly place. My eyes are getting heavier and heavier and my head is almost empty. No more rage – no more worry. Just nothing and cold. Mum and Dad are crying and hugging each other. This is me now, hoping that when I fall asleep I won't wake up again. I'm so scared. So many bad things have happened to me. I've done so many bad things to the people I love. What will happen to me? Will we ever sit under the big tree in the field again? Will Mum ever want to hug and kiss me again? Will Dad ever want to tickle me and

make me happy again? Will Jake ever shout at me for going in his room again? Will I ever see Joss again?

My eyes shut a little and everything goes black. Then I open them again and there's Mum and Dad. I shut them again. Black. I open them. Mum and Dad. Black. Mum and Dad. Black. Mum and Dad. Black...

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Chapter 10 – Driving Along...

February 1995 –

It's a long, long time after, and I know I'm home. I've been on holiday before, so I know how it feels when I eventually go home. Holidays normally mean walks, arshees and Dad going off at night. But for ages and ages it's been feeling bad, then feeling good and then lots of new people. I never meet new people on holiday. And I've been on loads of long walks with all the new people.

This time I'm not going home. I'm home already. I'm pretty certain of that.

The day I finally accepted it once and for all was a funny day. I woke up to this horrible smell and all sticky bits on my face and pillow. I think I'd been sick during my sleep. Jennyfury came in and gave me a big smile and made me feel a lot better. I like Jennyfury. She has a really nice smile and always says good stuff that makes me feel happy. She's one of the new people who looks after me. She gave me my bath and my breakfast that morning.

My new home is called Armarnar. It's loads different to my old home. Instead of me, Mum, Dad, Jake and Joss, there are lots of different people. Some of them look after me and some of them live here. The people who live here are like me – they need to be looked after. That morning I had breakfast with Dezek and Jwanna. Dezek never makes any noise (I like him) and eats all his food really fast – faster than me. Jwanna always makes loads of noise (sometimes I like her) and needs someone to put the food in her mouth for her. It was a really nice breakfast.

Jennyfury helped me put my Sugar Puffs in the bowl and let me make my own Pom-Pom Parlar. Pom-Pom Parlars are never as nice when I make them, but they always taste a little better. I don't know why.

Armarnar is loads bigger than my old home. There are rooms everywhere for me to go and Watch from. Sometimes I get told off for going in other people's rooms and Watching – people never seem to get their room to fit properly, and then I get told off for trying to make it better. So I suppose it's not too different to my old home. But all the people at Armarnar like me. They always do loads of stuff with me, and they never shout at me. Sometimes I get bored and all the angry feelings come back and I start screaming and breaking stuff, but it doesn't last very long. It doesn't happen much now. When I first came to Armarnar, I kept getting my rage, but the people who look after me always made me feel loads better. I never felt like I was being bad. Now when I get angry (I never get my rage), the people who look after me make me feel better before I start screaming and breaking stuff. They see the worry on my face and take me to another part of the house where it's quiet. They talk to me and read to me and make me feel better. They're so clever and kind.

After 'Jennyfury bath' Watch –

When I Watch at Armarnar, I always think about the bad times. I find it really hard to remember what actually happened, but I still remember the feelings. The thing I remember the most is lying on the floor in the horrible, smelly place and seeing my Mum and Dad hugging and crying. They were sad because I was sad. I know that now. If they were sad because I was sad, then I know that they must love me. I was so scared – scared of what I was doing and scared that they would never love me again. It was a horrible time.

I don't remember anything about the horrible, smelly place after that. I know that I was there for a long time. After I went back to my old home with Mum and Jake, I never thought, I never felt and I never did anything. Sometimes the rage would come back and I'd hurt Mum, and I'd never know why. I just wanted to cry all the time. Then I wasn't at home anymore. I spent loads of days and nights at Arvoom being really angry all the time. I didn't see Mum for ages.

After ages of spending days and nights at Arvoom, I started to think properly again and have proper feelings. Mum started seeing me again and taking me out for Pom-Pom Parlars – never for very long. I used to hate it when she left me. I used to cry and scream and break all the stuff in my room. I thought she was going to leave me forever. I still worry that she might never come back to see me again, but I don't get angry anymore – I just get sad. I haven't seen Dad since the night in the horrible, smelly place. Joss has been to see me a few times. Jake comes quite a lot, but not enough. I miss them all.

Even the dog.

I don't wish we were still a family (like I used to). I'm happy now. I like my new home with all the new people. I still see loads of Mum. She comes all the time now and takes me for a Pom-Pom Parlar. Jake comes with her sometimes. But I do wish we could spend time together like we used to. I still hope that one day we can all walk to the field with the big tree in the middle and drink Pom-Pom Parlars and eat loads of sandwiches. Then I'd jump in loads of smelly mud and make everyone laugh and have my picture taken with Jake. But it doesn't have to happen – I'm happy with what there is.

Driving along Watch –

After breakfast at Armarnar, I always go for a long drive in the car. That's my favourite part of the day. We're all really happy because we know that we're going to be having fun, and that nice people are going to be doing lots of different stuff with us. I always sit next to Dezek (who never says anything) and Jwanna (who laughs and makes lots of noise) always sits in the front with Bumblee. I like Bumblee. He makes me think of Robboaw. He's always laughing, and he always says loads of nice stuff to me. I got really scared on my first night at Armarnar and took all my clothes off and threw them in the bath. Then I turned all the taps on and watched all the water fill the bath and run on to the floor. It made loads of mess. All the water went through the floor and broke the ceiling downstairs. I don't know why. Bumblee came up to my room and I thought that he was going to shout at me and make me feel bad. But he didn't. He chatted to me and smiled at me. He said stuff I understood like 'It's OK', and 'You're cool'. All he wanted was for me to be happy. I understood that. He's never made me feel bad the whole time I've been at Armarnar. He's my favourite.

After lots of laughing and chatting in the car, we always get to Arvoomee. It's just like Arvooom, but it's bigger and there's loads more to do. Sometimes Bumblee stays and does stuff with me, other times he goes off again. I don't mind either way, because Rosie is always at Arvoomee. I like Rosie. She should be in the big book with ladies. She spends all her time with me when I'm at Arvoomee, and she always makes me loads of nice tasting Pom-Pom Parlars. She always smiles and makes me feel good. She shouts at me sometimes when I do naughty stuff, but she's not a scary shouter like Dad used to be. I laugh at her. Then she laughs with me. She's makes so much fun for me.

When we got to Arvoomee that day, I ran in and sat by my Watching window. I decided that I felt happier than I had done since I was in my family in Adinna. I had my friends Bumblee, Jennyfury and Rosie who made me feel good. I had my other friends Dezek, Jwanna and Porky (he didn't live at Armarnar – he just went to Arvoomee.) They were always really nice to me and always made me feel good.

“Good morning, Adam. Happy birthday,” said Rosie. She moved her hands in a weird way. I think she's making shapes to go with her words, but I don't know what it means. She does it the same way every morning. It always makes me laugh. I grabbed my Pom-Pom Parlar and laughed again. Then I blew her a kiss and said 'allow'.

“Do you want to do pottery today?” said Rosie.

Pottery. I love pottery. I get to make loads of mess with all the sticky mud. I drank my Pom-Pom Parlar and grabbed my coat again – we always go for a long walk before pottery. I wanted the walk to start and finish so that I could go to the pottery room and make all my mess.

After the walk and after the pottery and after the mess, I drove back to Armarnar with Bumblee. I'd had a really good day so I was really happy. I don't why but Bumblee was looking really sad and talking funny. I didn't care though because I'd had such a good day. I'd made loads of mess for Ginghy (the man who does the pottery) to clean up.

“Your Mum, brother and sister have come to take you out for tea, Adam,” said Bumblee. Then he looked sad again.

I think he was talking about Mum. I don't know why. She came to see me all the time, so perhaps she was going to be at Armarnar when I got back, I thought. And she was. With Jake and Joss. I jumped out of the car and ran up to Mum and gave

her a big hug. Then I hugged Jake and then I hugged Joss. I was so happy to see them all together.

“Hello, darling,” said Mum. “Happy birthday. We’ve brought you loads of presents.”

“Happy birthday, Adam,” said Jake.

“Happy birthday,” said Joss.

They had loads of prezzies with them, and they all looked tired and had red eyes. They looked a little sad as well, which was strange. But they had prezzies. I thought that was a bit weird, but I didn’t mind. All that mess to make. I would’ve been happier if Dad had been there – my family all together. But I was still happy because it was a nice day, and Mum, Jake and Joss had all come to visit me. I just wished that they weren’t all looking so sad. Mum had been crying, and Jake kept looking at the floor. Joss kept looking at me with tears in her eyes. I didn’t care that much though. I ran around the garden of Armarnar laughing and slapping my arse.

I started to get a little worried because Mum kept talking to Bumblee when I wanted to go out with my family. She looked really upset, and Bumblee was starting to look unhappy. Why was Mum making Bumblee look unhappy? Jake and Joss stood with me and chatted to me a little, but I wanted to go out. I kept sniffing hard and grabbing Jake’s hand and saying ‘tomorrow’. I’d rub my teeth as well so that he knew that I was hungry. I tried grabbing my bollocks as well. But that didn’t work.

As I was about to get really angry, Mum stopped talking and we all got in Mum’s car. I hoped we might go back to the field with the tree and the smelly mud, but instead we drove to the place we always go for dinnaow. Mum tried to chat to me, but she was really sad and had to stop herself from crying. Jake and Joss just looked out of the window. Why were they so upset? I didn’t care that much. I was

with my family; we were going to the place we always go to for dinnaow, and I was happy with all the mess I'd been making.

Maybe Gran would be at the place we have dinnaow. I've been thinking of ways to make her happy and really wanted to her see so I could do some of those things to her. I thought of her little voice saying 'Ooh' and laughed. I hadn't seen her for such a long time. I wonder why.

We sat in the place and were given our food by this nice lady who always chats to Mum and me. But everyone was still really sad. I didn't understand why. I ate my food anyway.

"When are we going to tell him?" said Jake.

"Let's wait until he's back at home," said Mum.

My family have all changed so much. Mum's hair is nearly all grey now. It looks really funny. I want to take it off her sometimes and put her old hair back on, but she looks a little nicer with the new hair. I don't know why. She's still got a little mark on her face from when I bit her. I always feel really bad when I see that. It reminds me of how I used to be. At least I know I'll never do anything like that again.

Jake looks all grown up. He's not little Jake anymore. He hasn't been little Jake for a long time. His glasses look OK now, and fit him properly. He hasn't got the silly black hat anymore. He talks differently to the way he used to talk. He behaves differently to the way he used to behave. He looks a lot like Dad. He behaves a lot like Dad. Without the shouting.

I think Joss has changed the most. That's probably because I don't see her as much as the others. She has really short hair now, and looks really nice. She's a lot quieter than she used to be. She looks really smart all the time as well. When she

talks to me now, she sounds like she did ages and ages ago and makes me feel happy. She makes me feel better again when she talks to me.

Special Watch with the family –

After eating our dinnaows, we drove back to Armarnar. I was getting really excited. All those prezzies. All that ripped paper. All that mess. My family were going to be with me and making me feel happy. Why had they brought me prezzies? Would Dad visit me today? Or Gran? I was very excited.

When we got back to Armarnar, I ran up to my room and Watched out of my window while Mum chatted to Bumblee again. It was a really bright day, and all the people who live at Armarnar were sat in the garden. Far away I could just about see Adinna. Sometimes I Watch really hard and hope to see my old home. I remember all the happy times I had with my family. I remember the Chrimbo when Gran visited and slipped on the ice and sat in the chair saying 'Ooh' all the time. I remember my friend Dennaben, and how he used to talk to me properly. I remember going for the walks with Jake and Joss, and realising how much bigger they were. I remember going for Pom-Pom Parlars at Cath's and sitting in her bedroom, taking all my clothes off. I remember Robboaw and how happy he used to make me feel. But most of all, I always remember how Dad came into my room one day when I was sad and tickled me until I was happy. I don't know why I remember this thing the most. I suppose because it made me feel the happiest out of everything. Dad made me feel like I was better than him. No one had ever done that before, and no one has ever done it since. Even now, when I'm sad or getting worried, I want my Dad to come in and tickle me.

But when I think of the happy times, I also remember the bad times. I always get a little sad when I think of the bad times.

“Alright, Ad,” said Jake. “I’ve got a bag full of presents here.”

I remember the horrible dream where everyone is laughing at me and being nasty to me. I remember Grame and the time he chased me around the field and then tried to hurt me. I remember the time Dad didn’t come home all night and Mum cried for ages. I remember the time Joss packed all her stuff and left my home and my family. I remember the time I bit Mum on the face and made her hit me. Then my head was bad and sad for ages. I’ll never forget that.

“Aren’t you going to come and open your presents, Adam?” said Mum. She and Joss had walked in while I was thinking.

I sniffed hard and decided that the bad times had happened and that there was no point in getting sad about it. I could remember the happy times and feel good about that – that was all fine. The sad times were bad and just made me want to get angry. I wasn’t going to do that anymore. People just get hurt when I’m angry. People I love. Why bother?

I sat on the bed with all the prezzies laid out on the bed. My Mum was holding some cards. I looked at the prezzies and then looked at Mum. She was crying loads. Tears were pouring down her face. Jake was looking at Mum and crying. I’d never seen him cry before. I felt a little lump in my throat and my belly went funny. I looked at Joss and saw that she was crying as well. Why were my family crying? I don’t know why but I started crying as well. I touched my Mum’s face and said ‘noolah’. Maybe it was my fault.

“Adam,” said Mum. “I’ve... I’m...”

I stopped crying and picked up a prezziie and ripped the paper off. I didn't enjoy it as much as I normally do when I rip the paper off prezziies. My family were too sad for me to enjoy something like that. I put it down and listened to Mum's words.

"Your Dad ..."

"Mum," said Jake. "I don't think it matters. Well, it does matter. I didn't mean that. Sorry. I just. Just... Just let him open the presents."

Jake, Joss and Mum all looked at me, with tears pouring down their faces. They were so sad. I don't know why. I was crying as well. I tried to pick my prezziies up and rip the paper off, but I didn't want to. I wasn't going to enjoy myself until my family were happy.

"Dad bought you a card," said Mum.

Mum wiped her tears away and tried to stop herself from crying. She took a deep breath. I touched her on the bit of the face where I'd bitten her and said 'bath'.

"Look, Adam. It's a picture of a scone with clotted cream and jam on the front. And a cup of tea. Just like the ones at Belstone. He loved taking us all there," said Mum. She showed me a card. She opened it. "I'll read it out for you."

Mum was crying. Jake and Joss were crying. This was supposed to be a happy day. I'd felt so good all day and was so happy when I saw my family. Why was everyone crying now? Where was Dad? Why had everyone else come to visit me and not Dad? I wasn't angry that Dad wasn't there. I just missed him. I always miss him.

"Dear Adam,

Happy birthday to my number one son. I love you.

Dad.

P.S. Here's a tenner. Get yourself a Pom-Pom Parlar."

Mum put the card down and looked at the piece of paper that had been in the card. Then everyone started to cry again. Well, I'd had enough of the crying. I decided, even though it was nice having my family all around me, I didn't want them there. Just for a little while. I wanted to be on my own for a bit. Just so I could sit at my window, Watch for a short time, see if Dad or Gran or the dog or anyone else from my family decided to come and see me. I knew that they probably wouldn't, but I wanted to be on my own for a bit. Just so I could Watch from my window. I like Watching. It makes me feel calm. Less sad. Less worried.

I pull them all gently to the door and walk over to my window. I sit down and look out over Adinna – home. That's better. Now I'm happy. Now I'm on my own – my family close by, but not making me sad. Except for Jake and Mum – they are standing in the doorway, staring at me. Jake has a funny look on his face.

"What's a Pom-Pom Parlar?" says Jake.

"I don't know," says Mum. She looks at me with this funny smile – big tears are in her eyes. Then she says something I'll never forget. Something beautiful. Although I don't understand the words, of course. "Goodnight, sweetheart. See you tomorrow."

Now, I feel better.