

# I Do Not Count The Time

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## Prologue

"I'm afraid"

Her face was turned to mine as I held her in my arms. Her lovely face, and the sea-blue eyes that had looked upon me for almost 50 years, with a tender love and respect I had not known from anyone except her.

I touched her cheek gently "Don't be – there is no need."

"I don't want to leave you. I never want to leave you."

I bent to kiss her forehead. "You won't be leaving me, we are together for eternity."

A look of puzzlement crossed her brow. "Your words – mine, it's silly, but for a moment I felt we had already said them."

I smiled. "I know, for me too. Perhaps we have?"

She shook her head slowly, then, her voice strengthening she said "No, you would never make a promise to me that you couldn't keep."

I paused. Despite the illness, her intelligence and intuition were undimmed. She knew she was dying. She knew I couldn't stop that. I tried to explain.

"We are inextricably bound together. Two parts of a whole that despite being temporarily split, has a destiny that can only mean an eventual re-joining again. We will be with each other again. I will see you and be with you. You will see me, and be with me."

Her brow furrowed again. "How do you know? How can you have such conviction?"

"I have been with you before."

My words sent a slight shiver through her body, and she looked intensely at me "These words again, how can I remember them? How can I remember seeing your face, hearing your voice saying them, when they have never happened before?"

"You do, because they did."

"We have lived another life together? We will do so again?"

I nodded. She looked away from me into the middle-distance then suddenly grasped my hand. "I know. Now I know. I do remember. For the 1<sup>st</sup> time in my life I remember."

I kissed her gently.

She had relaxed, and she smiled at me "When did you know about before?"

"Not straight-away."

"Will I know you when we meet again?"

"Maybe, but maybe not immediately."

She gave my hand a soft squeeze "I love you."

I brushed a lock of the still-red hair that had fallen slightly over her right eye. "I know, and I love you, I always will."

We looked upon each other awhile, and slowly the bright sea-blue eyes dimmed, until a last breath escaped her lips. I kissed her one more time, and laid her down on the bed, covering her gently with the sheet, as the tears rolled down my cheeks.



## Metaspace

Her light coruscated around me and through me, a delicious warm breath that touched every particle of my being in a loving caress in which I bathed, twisting and turning, as to expose the wholeness that was me, to the wholeness that was her. An eternity of pleasure that mounted exponentially, as our mutual energies merged and fluxed, again and again, ever more mixed, ever more potent.

Then came the pause – a halting of time itself as a criticality began to absorb us both, the pleasure increasing as dimension after dimension engulfed us. Finally, the indescribably exquisite release as we were flung apart in time, knowing that despite the eons rapidly separating us, we would ever be as one, our love a singularity so powerful as to bend the rules of time to the inevitable conclusion of our re-union.



## Brenda

I lay dozing, soaking up the delicious combination of the warm summer sun on my body, tempered by a soft breeze off the sea, when a warm wet kiss was planted squarely on my brow. I opened my eyes to see Brenda's face as she leaned above me. I laughed, and she gave me a broad smile, but did not move away. Instead, her expression altered to one of tenderness she hadn't shown me before, then lowering her face to mine, pressed her warm, moist lips on my own. I lay there as if tied to the camp-bed while she kissed me, her tongue making circles around the inner part of my lips, and gently making contact with mine. I gasped, and she moved back a little and looked directly into my eyes. Then once again she kissed me, and this time I wrapped my arms around her, and was aware of a fierceness and urgency within me that was both new and exciting. I made an attempt to copy her kisses, and I felt the strong urge to thrust my tongue deeper and deeper into her mouth. She had dropped to her knees by the camp-bed, and taken my head into both hands, and I could feel her heart beating against my chest.

"Brenda?" came a voice somewhere near my feet — my sister's voice. I felt a last, slight increase in pressure on my lips, and Brenda leaned back, looked up at my sister and laughed: "Had a good time then?" My sister blushed, then smiled: "Mmm, not bad." Brenda stood up, looked down at me and winked, then without another word to me, they both went off to walk on the beach. I lay there shaking. I was aware that my heart was racing, and I felt very hot. I got up slowly, and on wobbly legs that didn't seem to know how to walk anymore, went into the tent and poured myself a large mug of water. I then wobbled my way outside and sat in one of the deck-chairs and slowly sipped the water.

I suppose I was shocked. What had happened to me was very new, not a little scary, but had left me wanting very strongly for it to be repeated. At the same time my feelings about Brenda had suddenly been transformed beyond anything recognizable as familiar. Brenda was my sister's 'Best Friend', a year older than her, and considerably older than me. I liked Brenda a lot. She was the only one of my sister's friends that didn't simply ignore me, but always made a point of saying a cheery "Hello" to me whenever she visited

our home. She had arrived on Monday to spend a week with us on our annual camping holiday, and her cheerful, happy-go-lucky personality had already brightened up what had been turning into a fairly humdrum and uneventful summer break. My sister had made friends with a group of older lads, camping in the same field, and seemed to spend longer and longer in their tent, and up until now, leaving me on my own most afternoons. My father, who was still working locally, was never seen from breakfast until tea-time, and Mum was at home, unable to join us during the week because of her secretarial work.

I was aware that my heart was still beating rapidly, so I sat until I calmed down, then walked along to the village and bought myself a large ice-cream. By the time I had finished it, I was back at the tent. Neither my sister nor Brenda had returned, and I was already trying to work out what to do when they did return. I knew that what had happened would be sternly disapproved of by my father — I also knew that my sister sometimes took a malicious delight in seeing me in trouble with him, and I wasn't sure how long she had stood watching my embrace of Brenda. At the same time, I was aware that my father would have disapproved even more of my sister's frequent long visits into the lad's tent, so hoped that my knowing this would buy her silence. On the other hand, quite a lot of the time my sister didn't even see me — at least that was the impression, because when it suited her, I was completely ignored. Hopefully, this time would be one such occasion.

I needn't have worried — my sister and Brenda returned to the tent laughing and giggling and my sister didn't even glance at me. Brenda did. Over and over again, or so it seemed. Sometimes with warm smiles, sometimes with that look she had given me earlier. I smiled back and tried to remain calm even though I felt I was visibly shaking with the effect her looks had on me, and I felt strongly that what she had started, she intended to finish. I had no idea what it would be like, but every fibre of my body was yearning to find out.

We all mucked in and prepared tea, in time for Dad's arrival from work, and because the girls chattered amongst themselves I hadn't needed to speak. Dad arrived and we all sat down to tea, and as usual he asked everyone about their days activities. When it came round to my turn, I was more than aware of Brenda's eyes on me and I discovered that I had lost the gift of speech, and was mumbling incoherently, coughing, and sweating

profusely. Dad had looked quizzically at me, then put his hand on my brow, and accused me of lying in the sun too long. He then turned to my sister and upbraided her for allowing me to do so – and she was looking daggers at me.

On the one hand I was greatly relieved that he didn't know the true reason for my confusion, but his attack on my sister threatened imminent exposure by her. I stammered out that it wasn't her fault, that she had told me to seek the shade, and I had ignored her. This re-directed my father's tirade back to me, and I was ordered to take two aspirin and told to rest in an effort to lower my temperature. Brenda had sat through all of this apparently calmly and politely, but she mouthed a kiss at me that I prayed no-one else could see, and that had me wobbling on my feet again as I left the tent to sit outside in the cool early evening breeze.

I lay back on the deck chair listening to the low murmur of voices and occasional laughter from the tent, and I must have dozed off for a while. I was wakened by the touch of a hand on my brow, and was a little disappointed on opening my eyes to see my father bending over me. He looked concerned: "Are you feeling better?"

"I'm OK," I lied.

"You still feel very warm - here, drink this", and he handed me a big glass of orange juice and stood over me until I'd finished the drink. I knew he liked to unwind in the local pub, so I lied again: "Honestly, I'm OK." He shook his head and left me, and a little while later, I heard him telling the girls he was off for a pint. He nodded at me as he left and told me to: "take it easy".

Shortly after, my sister came out of the tent and announced she was going for a walk on the beach. I knew she wasn't, she knew that I knew she wasn't, but we both kept up the game just the same. She even smiled at me. "Brenda's playing solitaire – maybe you fancy a game of cards?" I thanked her and she left.

I waited a while then got up and walked into the tent. Brenda was indeed playing the 'Chinaman', but looked up and gave me a lovely smile as I entered. "How do you feel Joe?"

"I think you already know that." I replied ruefully. She started to laugh, and I couldn't stop myself from joining in. Then she said more seriously: "I'm sorry I upset you so – I had no idea." I looked straight into her sea-blue eyes and then caught the beginnings of yet

another wicked smile starting in the corners of her mouth. "Yeah, right." I said. We both laughed again. She stood up and moving towards me reached up and held my head in her hands. She had stopped smiling and now looked intently, but tenderly at me, and said: "I think the world of you Joe, and would never wantonly hurt you. This can stop now and go no further should you wish, and it can be remembered as a bit of harmless fun." I looked back at her, my heart was bursting in my chest and I managed to say "I don't want it to stop now." I reached out and put my arms around her lovely slim body, and pulled her close to me. We didn't kiss, I drank in the scent of her neck and hair and was more than aware of my hardness against her belly.

She whispered: "Are you sure?"

I said "Yes" and released her slightly to kiss her full red lips.

We stood there in each other's arms for a long time – As our kisses became more and more intense, Brenda undid the top buttons of her blouse and took my right hand to place it on her left breast – she wore no bra and her nipples was raised and erect. I caressed her breast and her head fell back a little as she moaned. I supported her back with my left hand and bent slightly to kiss both of her lovely breasts. All my actions were new to me, I simply followed my instincts and the effect upon both of us was electric. Brenda lifted my head up gently with both hands and looking at me with wild eyes, she said softly: "Let's go to your tent, I want you inside me."

We crossed to my tent and attempted to undress whilst kissing and holding each other. Finally we were under the blankets in each other arms. The feeling of having Brenda's whole body against me was almost too much for me, and at this point I was fearful of coming even before I'd entered her. She lay on her back and as I positioned myself between her legs she raised her pelvis and I entered her silky-soft vagina. She gasped and wrapped both her arms around me and pulled me fully into her. I looked down at her lovely misty eyes and concentrated on kissing her long and gently, leaving her to move herself up and down me. She started to shudder and her head went back and suddenly her moaning stopped. There was a pause when she became very still and then she gave out a blood-curdling scream which I attempted to stifle with my mouth. I thrust myself deep and hard into her and we continued until I could hold on no longer and as I came violently and loudly, I buried my face in the blankets to drown out my screams.

For an eternity we lay there locked together. I could not move — never wanted to move, and I kissed her sweet face over and over again. Gradually the misty look in her eyes cleared away, and slowly Brenda's face split into a delicious grin. "Joe — that was absolutely lovely. Where on earth did you learn how to make love like that?"

Although I was still hot from my efforts I felt my face flush: "Brenda, you are the first."

"Wow" she exclaimed, "What a surprise you are!"

I looked down at her and laughed sheepishly: "I must admit, I surprised myself. You are so lovely I was afraid of spoiling it all by coming straight-away." She raised her head and kissed me. "Well, you didn't, but even if you had, it still would have been very lovely and special."

I untangled myself and covering us again with a blanket I lay beside her holding her tight against me. Her hand caressed my face and from time to time she seemed to look at me thoughtfully and quizzically.

After a while I said: "Did my sister ask you what we were doing earlier?"

"No, I suppose she is used to seeing me give you the odd friendly peck, and thought that was all it was."

I lay thinking about this and she said softly: "You know what your sister is doing, don't you?" It was more statement than question.

"I can guess," I said, "But even so, she could cause dreadful trouble for you if she knew what we have done — I don't want you hurt."

She kissed me: "She mustn't find out. Tell me if I'm being unfair, but I want us to make love like this again Joe."

"Brenda, this is the loveliest thing that's ever happened to me, how could that be unfair?" She looked wistfully at me: "I have been very fond of you for a long time, but lately it has become much more than that, and it's been all I could do to keep back what I've felt for you. I know it is wrong, and I should be ashamed, but being close to you and not being able to reach out to touch you has been almost more than I could bear."

"Please don't feel ashamed." I said, "You have always been so kind to me, and I suppose I loved you, but never dared to think about you in this way."

"You supposed you loved me!" she laughed.

I blushed again: "You're teasing me, you know what I'm trying to say." She kissed me softly and whispered: "Yes, I do know — am I forgiven?" Again that cheeky mischievous

grin, and despite my feeling completely out of my depth, I grinned back, then kissed her.

It had grown noticeably darker in the tent. "We must get up in case Sis comes back." I said regretfully, then before she could answer, I gently removed the blanket so that she lay naked before me. I kissed her on the neck, then down and across her breasts to her belly, and loving the feel of the silky smooth skin on the insides of her thighs, moved my lips gently up and down each one. She moaned softly, and I leaned back slightly to stroke the fine silky skin with my hand, whilst watching her face. Her eyes were closed and she rolled her head from side to side slowly. I stopped, and leaned forward to kiss her moist lips. Her eyes opened and I leaned back as she looked at me. I grinned at her: "We have to go."

"Oh no – I don't want you to stop!" she exclaimed with a rueful smile.

"We have to." I laughed gently. Another long embrace, and then we dressed and left my tent.

Brenda went to the Loo, and I went into the main tent, and lighting the paraffin stove, boiled some water for a pot of tea. The sky was starting to redden over the back of the dunes and the air was still. Brenda returned and I handed her a mug of tea and a Ginger biscuit, and we both sat outside and quietly watched the sun disappear behind the huge dune. My tea finished, I stood up and offered Brenda my hand: "Would you like a short walk along the beach?"

"Mmm, that would be lovely." We walked, slightly apart, until we were out of sight of the tents, then I took her hand again and headed onto the shore. The tide was in, and we both took off our sandals and walked along the edge of the breaking waves. Brenda didn't say much, but every now and then, her hand gripped mine a little tighter, as if like me, she was having to remind herself that this was really happening.

When we returned to the camp site, my sister was back and the tent was a blaze of light. She looked up at us as we entered carrying our sandals, and grinned: "What's the water like?"

"Bloody cold!" laughed Brenda. "Did you enjoy your walk?"

"Yeah – very much." My sister's voice was oddly flat. I caught a glance between her and Brenda, and then Sis looked pointedly at me. "I'm busted," I said, "I think I'll turn in and leave you girls to your gossip."

Brenda smiled gently: "Goodnight Joe – see you in the morning." Her lips formed a kiss at the end of her sentence, and our eyes met and held for a few brief moments.

My sister nodded: "Night Joe, sleep well."

I left them for my own tent, and after undressing turned into the bed that still bore the scent of Brenda's body. I was asleep in minutes despite hearing the animated voices of Brenda and my sister a few feet away.

I woke slowly from a lovely dream – to find it wasn't a dream at all. Soft auburn hair half-covered my face and chest whilst Brenda's lips nibbled gently on my right nipple, her hand stroking my stomach and groin. I lay still for a few moments not making any sign I had wakened, but the ache I had felt last night had returned in full force and I moved my arms up until I held her tightly against me. She looked up to my face, and her eyes were wild and smoky, her lips full and red from kissing my chest.

She said nothing but buried my lips in a torrent of kisses, and moved over until she was lying full on top, her knees either side of me. Slowly she straightened up and as she did so I felt myself being guided by her right hand into the beautiful soft silkiness of her vagina. Her lovely long hair fell down over her shoulders and part-covered her firm full breasts and she moved sensuously up and down me such that every millimeter of movement sent waves of pleasure through my body. I pushed myself up on one hand and kissed her face neck and breasts, and she moaned softly.

She pushed me back onto the pillow with both hands and kissed me, her tongue darting from side to side in my mouth and around the inside of my lips. I grasped both her firm buttocks in my hands and thrust myself hard and deep inside her, over and over. She was speaking nonsense softly and urgently in my ear, mostly the same phrases repeated over and over again: "Yes", "More", and "I love you Joe". Our movements became more and more violent and her urging more intense: "Faster", "Harder", "Please, please". Then again as last night, she suddenly stopped, momentarily absolutely still and quiet, then her body arched above me and shook in waves of pain and pleasure, whilst I held her head with both hands so that her screams were muffled in the pillow. As her tremors eased, I came, and such was the extent of the exquisite agony, I turned my face against my own hand to suppress my screams.

Together we lay there as the cold dawn light slowly yellowed and brightened. I held her in my arms, as we touched each other softly, kissing a long lingering tender kiss that seemed to last forever. At last, I whispered: "It's time..."

"I know – but I can't go."

"You must", I said, "or we will be caught."

"OK." There was a sadness in her voice that was unexpected, and I lifted my head to look at her. There were tears in her eyes.

"Brenda, what is it? Please tell me."

"Joe, this can't be happening – I'm falling in love with you and it's so terribly wrong."

"Please don't say that Brenda. I love you, and there is nothing wrong."

She looked up at me: "You're not just saying that you love me to make me feel better?"

I kissed the tears away and said: "No, I love you, and we will find a way to make this work." She smiled and kissed me, and I smiled: "But you have to get back to your tent – Sis will wake up, see you are gone, and all hell will break loose."

We both laughed softly, and she put her nightie back on, then with one quick kiss she was gone.

I lay quietly, half-expecting to hear raised voices, but all was quiet. I tried to doze, but couldn't, so dressed and left the tent. It was about six, and the sun had made its way just over the dune, there was no wind and already I could feel the slight warmth on my face – it looked like being another lovely day. The main tent, where Dad slept, was still fastened up, and as this also had all the food and drink in it, I grabbed an empty water carrier and walked slowly over to the toilet block. I drank long and slowly from the cold water font and after filling the carrier, walked slowly back to the tents.

The main tent's door flap was pinned back and I heard the sound of a paraffin stove – He was awake and up. I poked my head around the tent door and said: "Good Morning."

"Joe – what are you doing up? Has someone died?"

My pulse slowly sank back to normal, and for once his brittle humour and sarcasm were as music to my ears.

He laughed at his own joke, and seeing the carrier in my hand, he reached out and took it: "Good, saves me the trouble." Then I was aware of him looking quite intently at me. "Are you feeling OK this morning?"

"Yes – I had an early night as the girls were talking, so I'm feeling much better this morning." He nodded his head in approval, but he warned: "Look, it's going to be another hot day – for God's sake, stay out of the sun."

"I will – I promise."

"Yeah, and your promises are like pie-crust – make sure you do."

Despite his heavy-handed humour, he meant business. My skin was very fair and my uncanny ability to acquire heat-stroke given the slightest over-exposure was a cross both my parents had borne since I was very young.

He made tea and two big platefuls of bacon and beans, and we sat and enjoyed breakfast together, an event which happened all-too-rarely because of his early start for work.

"How are you getting on with Brenda being here?"

It was all I could do to stop sputtering beans from my mouth, but his question appeared to be completely innocent. I finished my mouthful, and not waiting for my reply he continued: "With your Sis having her friend here, are you going to feel left out?" I looked at him, trying to detect even the faintest trace of guile, given the apparent unintentional irony of his questions, but I could detect none. "I'll be fine, there are still the kids in the village."

He seemed satisfied and I asked him about his work at the power station. He loved discussing that, always had some good stories and so the time passed quickly until he left for work.

I washed up the breakfast mess, then re-boiled the kettle and took it over to the wash rooms to have a wash myself. I was aware of Brenda's lovely musky smell on my body, so despite wishing to revel in it had to consider its removal before its detection by the keen nose of my sister.

I entered the wash rooms and realised I wasn't alone. A young man stood with his back to me at the basins, sluicing water over his head from a jug. I busied myself. First of all shaving off my face what was really not much more than down, then I washed my hair. Finally I reached for my towel, and became aware that I was being watched.

He saw me glance at him and smiled: "You're Joe – aren't you?"

I smiled back: "Yes, but I don't know your name."

"Your sister not tell you?" he looked quizzically.

"She tells me as little as possible."

He laughed: "Well, I'm Tony, nice to meet you Joe. You know we are going out together?"

"Yeah – I'd noticed"

"What do you think?"

"It's OK by me – keeps her off my back."

He smiled: "I like your honesty - even though Judy doesn't talk to you, she talks about you all of the time."

"Eh?" I couldn't help myself.

He laughed again: "She's a bit concerned you've got the hots for that gorgeous red-head friend of hers, who she says is much too old for you."

"Oh, Brenda?"

"That's her" he paused: "Well, have you?"

"I like her a lot, but we're just good friends." I lied.

He nodded slowly, but made no sign that he either believed me or not. "Well, if you have, good luck - she's lovely."

"I thought you liked my sister?" I said curious.

"I do – she's lovely too." He laughed again, and we walked back together over towards the tent.

Despite the circumstances, I liked him, and felt strangely better. I trusted my instincts and believed he would make a good friend – or a formidable enemy – and I knew which I preferred to have.

I stopped at my tent, and he went on to his with a wave and a "See you later." I dressed and headed back to the main tent. My sister was up, had re-lit the stove and was boiling water for tea: "Morning, you're up early. You OK?"

She sounded a little grumpy.

"Yeah, I'm great – Is anything wrong?"

"It's nothing much."

She was holding back, but I knew better than push her. Only when and if my sister was desperate for help, would she ever ask, especially from me.

"What are you doing today?" She said lightly.

"Nothing planned." I looked expectantly at her.

"Do you mind doing the shopping in Ashington with Brenda this morning? I don't feel too good."

"No problem."

"Thanks." This was a surprise — my sister hardly ever thanked me.

She poured us both a cup of tea, and started frying some bacon.

"I saw Tony in the wash rooms." I said conversationally.

"Oh — you know his name?"

I laughed: "He told me."

"What did you talk about?" She looked a little worried.

"You, me, him, Brenda - I like him - he's fun, and I can see why you like him."

She relaxed only a little and started to say: "Look, if Dad..."

I cut in: "He won't find out — not from me anyway."

She nodded then smiled: "You like Brenda a lot, don't you?"

She was looking directly at me, it must have been obvious to her so I didn't lie: "Yes, I do."

I was dreading the next question, but she surprised me: "Well it's good to see at least one of my friends gets your approval."

I breathed again: "She's the nicest friend you've got."

She laughed and looking up said: "And here she is - 'Morning sleepy-head!'"

Brenda stood in the tent doorway and smiled at both of us; "Sorry, I had a lovely dream and didn't want to wake up."

I laughed — a little nervously, and looked up at her, silky hair tumbling down each side of her neck and on to her breasts, and I couldn't help myself from still being amazed at how beautiful she was, that I spoke without caution: "Good Morning Brenda, you look lovely."

Brenda smiled very sweetly at me: "Thank you Joe."

My sister turned pointedly to look at me, then slowly turned to Brenda, and said: "He's smitten."

I felt myself blushing. We would have to be careful. My sister had the scent, and might run with it if we weren't. They both laughed lightly but Brenda's eyes met mine — and held them in a very private and gentle embrace, that made me feel as though I was melting into them.

I tried to busy myself with airing the bedding as the girls had breakfast, and then seeing them in happy conversation, I called out I was going for a short walk on the beach and left them to it.

I walked down to the beach, then taking off my sandals, walked fast alongside the breaking waves and thought of her. Despite our early morning love-making, seeing her so radiant had my heart pounding again. All I wanted to do was to hold her, kiss her, smell her lovely body, and make love with her forever. I walked a mile or so in the light surf, then turning, walked back more slowly, aware that I needed to calm down.

When I was back near the camp-site I headed over the dune, dried my feet on the grass, and put my sandals back on. I strolled past the lad's tents and saw Tony sitting with a large mug in his hand.

He beckoned: "Joe! come and have some coccy."

"What?" I replied, heading over.

"Coccy - Coffee and Cocoa. Haven't you tried it?"

I laughed as I reached him: "No, and I'm not sure I want to."

He poured some steaming dark brown liquid into a tin mug, slopped some milk into it and handed the mug to me: "Here, get stuck in."

I lifted the mug and sipped - it was strangely familiar - a bit like taking a sip of coffee after eating a chocolate.

"Well, what do you think?" He smiled encouragingly.

"Hmm, not bad at all." I murmured, lifting the mug for a longer sip.

"Hah!" He exclaimed, "Another convert!"

I laughed, and sat down on a spare canvas stool. From where I sat, I could see Brenda and my Sis still washing up and talking together. I must have been staring at Brenda for a while when Tony said softly: "You really like her a lot, don't you?"

I turned and faced him: "Yes."

His eyes met mine, a slow insightful look growing on his face, and I realised the game was up - he knew.

"Wow!" he said, "You lucky dog! Good for you!"

Instantly I was worried, and he must have seen my brow furrow. "Look" he said, "Your secret's safe with me. The only thing I'll say is be careful you don't get caught."

"Thanks" I mumbled, and took another long sip of the coccy.

"What are you doing today?" he asked.

"Brenda and I are going into town, shopping. Sis is staying here."

He nodded. I guessed it was no surprise to him, but said nothing – it suited me too.

"And you? I added.

He smiled: "Hang with Judy I reckon."

"Sis seemed a little upset this morning." I said, trying to sound casual.

He looked at me and smiled sadly. "It looks like I'll be going home earlier than I thought.

I told Judy that last night."

"Ah – that explains it." I said, thinking of her mood last night.

I sipped some more of the coccy – it was strangely addictive. The rest of Tony's friends were making their way back to us, so I thanked him for the drink and drifted over to our tents. I hadn't asked him why he was leaving – it wasn't my business, but oddly I was curious, as there was something about his manner – that momentary lapse of his good-humour, that vaguely concerned me.

Brenda smiled at me, her eyes flashing and said: "The bus leaves in 10 minutes Joe."

I smiled back: "I'm ready, just let me get my backpack."

I dived into my tent and grabbed the bag, and we left for the village. For a respectable distance we walked slightly apart, but as we passed the main bend in the road, Brenda stopped suddenly, and putting her arms around my neck kissed me passionately. I wrapped my arms around her, and we stood for a long while in a tight and loving embrace, until we saw the bus making its way down the hill, and I broke away from her laughing: "C'mon, or we'll never get there." She laughed and we both sprinted along the road to the village square, just as the bus was turning around. We boarded and Brenda made her way to the rear of the bus. I followed her and laughed at the wicked grin on her face once she'd sat down. She took my hand: "That's better, I've ached for you since breakfast time."

"Me too, for you." I replied.

As the bus made its way up the hill, I pointed out a large partially tiled roof just visible in amongst the trees on the left of the road. "That's the old Hall – it's semi-derelict, and mostly used now by a farmer to keep his hay and straw in. We could visit it on the way back if you like." I looked around at her face. She turned to me and grinned: "You are very naughty, and what a lovely idea!"

We dawdled around Ashington hand in hand, laughing and talking. I felt I had never

been happier. I had Brenda all to myself, and I breathed her in deeply. She was all I had thought she would be, bright and intuitive one minute, laughing with me the next, and then moments that caressed my heart, when she squeezed my hand, and looked tenderly into my eyes. I also couldn't help feeling secretly very proud, as her beauty turned many heads in the High Street.

The two hours passed quickly, and with loaded bags, we boarded the return bus, again sitting at the back, away from curious eyes. Brenda held my hand, and leaning toward me nibbled my right ear. The sensation sent shivers down my back to the base of my spine, and I sat transfixed as she kissed my ear and neck.

The bus turned off the main road and trundled down the lane towards the coast.

She whispered softly in my ear "I love you Joe, I don't want this to end."

I said "Do you still want to visit the Hall?"

"Yes please" she whispered, and gently turning my face with her hand, she kissed me long and deep.

A few minutes later, as the bus carried on down the short hill, we walked across the road and climbed over the gate leading to the Hall. I stashed the bags out of sight amongst some stinging nettles, and we walked hand-in-hand up to the derelict Hall. Leading Brenda by the hand, I took her up some rickety stairs, and into the area the local farmer had stored his hay. I took Brenda's other hand and we stood facing each other, both hands holding and simply looked long into each other's eyes, no words spoken.

Finally, she moved forward, and her lips were on mine. She let go of my hands, and held my face as she kissed me. I wrapped my arms around her, and we embraced and kissed until Brenda broke away and led me by the hand onto the loose hay. She lay down, still holding my hand, and pulled me gently on top of her. I put my lips to hers and we kissed, her tongue moving round the inside of my lips until I felt they were on fire.

We lay passionately kissing, and Brenda started moaning softly, her groin thrusting up at me. With no word spoken we stopped while I got rid of my trousers and boxers, and she deftly removed her knickers in one fluid movement. I moved back over her, and as her legs opened she guided me inside her silky loveliness, then her velvet-smooth thighs locked

against my sides as she wrapped her legs around me.

She looked up at me as we moved together, and the look in her eyes melted me. I watched her face as she moved nearer and nearer into ecstasy, trying to take my cues from her. Then her eyes closed as her moaning gave way to short screams as she shook her head from side to side. Her hands gripped my buttocks and urged me on, and I sank myself deep and hard into her, deeper and harder, until her head arched back, her voice silent for a few seconds, then a final contraction of her whole body and a scream so loud, I smothered it partly with my own mouth as I kissed her. I felt her right hand middle finger press deeply into my anus and I followed her climax with my own, burying my face in her shoulder to drown my screams.

We lay still as our pounding hearts slowly returned to normal, and she held my head with both hands as she kissed me on the lips, cheeks, and both eyes with tenderness I never knew existed. Finally, arms shaking with supporting myself, I lay beside her, covering her with my right leg, and my left arm under her neck. I stroked her temples and curled the beautiful deep red hair in between my fingers. We lay silent as we caressed each other, and the strength of the emotion I felt had tears pouring down my cheeks. She smiled a gentle, sweet smile and kissed the tears away.

Finally she spoke: "My week is nearly over."

I knew what she meant. I was trying very hard not to think how bad I would feel when she left at the weekend, so as to be back at work on the following Monday. I still had 3 weeks to go until the end of the school holidays, and it had been assumed that I would be camping until school resumed.

I looked at her. The tears were in her eyes now, and her lips were trembling. It was my turn to kiss her tears away. She looked at me with frightened eyes that seemed to plead with me. I said: "Brenda I love you. I don't want to stay here without you. I'd rather spend the rest of my holiday at home where we could see each other. Would you like that?"

Her arms tightened around me and she breathed fiercely as we embraced: "Yes Joe. Please, yes. I love you."

She kissed me long and hard, before lying back on the hay. I found a clean handkerchief in my trouser pocket and gently wiped her face. She smiled at me a little shyly and said

gently: "You are the loveliest boy I have ever known, and I feel loved and safe in a way I never have before."

I blushed. She saw it and laughed softly, then kissed me.

A tremor passed through my body, and suddenly my skin was covered in goose-pimples. She felt the shiver. "Are you cold?"

Again the tremor, and I shook my head. "I must be."

I couldn't tell her what I felt. I only half-believed it myself. She looked concernedly at me and then wrapping her arms around me, held me very tight. The moment passed, and with it the silly feeling of *deja-vu*.

We dressed, and left the hay-loft, making our way hand-in-hand to the gate. I retrieved our bags from the nettle-bed, and we set off down into the village on our way back to the camp-site. As we rounded the bend in the road from the village to the tents, I heard the screaming for the first time. I took in the near-distant scene like a snapshot, and shouting "Brenda! Run!" I dropped the bag I was carrying, and ran towards the tents as fast as I could. I heard Brenda's footfalls behind me on the road, rapidly catching me up. As I passed our main tent, I picked up a mallet, almost without stopping, then ran on towards the figures beside Tony's tent.

He heard me as I approached him from behind, but because he held my struggling, screaming sister, he had only partly turned when I hit him as hard as I could on the back of his neck with the mallet. His whole body crumpled, his grip on my sister fell away, and she stepped aside quickly as he fell, unconscious, to the ground. Brenda had ran past me and tried to grab the arm of the other man who held a bleeding Tony with one hand, whilst attempting to stab him with a knife in the other. The man spun round, catching Brenda off balance, and he lashed out with the knife. I screamed "Brenda!" as she fell to the ground, and he turned to me, knife held pointing before him.

I caught Tony's eye and his brief nod, and moved to one side. The man eyed me warily, looking at once into my eyes, then back to the mallet, then back to my eyes. Tony hit him low in the back, and he yelled in pain. I saw my moment and hit him hard at the top of the arm that held the knife. He yelped again and dropped the knife. Tony kicked sideways hard behind his left knee, and I hit him full in the face with the mallet as he staggered forward. A gurgled scream left his lips, both hands went to his face, and he

fell forward onto the grass. Tony pounced on him, and was joined by my Sis who sat hard on his back.

I passed Tony the mallet, and turned to Brenda. She lay partly on her side, and her dress was covered in blood across her left breast. She was conscious, just, and breathed my name as I cradled her head: "Joe, I'm sorry."

I screamed for help and Tony hit his captive hard on the neck with the mallet. The man stopped struggling, and Tony jumped up and ran off to the village to phone for an ambulance.

My Sis joined me, to hold Brenda's hand as I held her. Brenda said softly: "I'm going. I can't stop myself."

My sister wept uncontrollably, but Brenda looked only at me and said "I know Joe. This time I remember. This time I'm not afraid."

With what little strength she had left, she squeezed my hand, and a weak smile played upon her lips. "Perhaps next time, we can be together a little longer?"

Tears streamed from my eyes, but I looked at her through the haze "We will, I feel it."

She looked up at me "I knew. Instinctively I knew. The day I first saw you, our destiny touched me. But I couldn't understand the message. Then last night..."

She faltered, and I said "You knew before I did."

She nodded weakly "When we made love early this morning, I was certain. I remembered your words to me. It all made perfect sense."

Parts of reality washed over me. Her blood had saturated my leg, and it felt warm and sticky. Her breathing was becoming laboured, and I gently wiped away a trickle of blood from her mouth as she coughed.

She gripped my hand for the last time "I love you – don't stay lonely, and take care of Judy"

Then she was gone.

I held her in my arms, my sister weeping beside me, until the paramedic prised me gently away from her. Then I held my sister and rocked her like a baby until her sobbing ceased. I looked up at Tony and nodded, and he took her into his arms. I walked away slowly,

oblivious to the crowd of onlookers, police, and paramedics still fussing over the two thugs on the ground.

As I walked toward the beach I heard footfalls behind me. A young police-woman was following me. She stopped as I turned, and smiled shyly at me: "Go ahead, I'm just here to make sure you are safe."

I nodded and continued on down the beach, and just before the water's edge sat to gaze at the endless rhythm of the waves. I became aware I was weeping, silently at first, then in great gasping sobs. A warm arm surrounded me as she sat down beside me, her other hand cradling my face into her soft shoulder.