

## Memories of Sam

She liked to sit in the bay window, her back straight and hands held together in her lap, appearing to be enjoying the view of their garden. He could see her there never moving seeming to be perfectly happy. He would break off his task, weeding or mowing to make sure she was comfortable whether she wanted a drink, coffee in the morning, tea after lunch. She rarely asked for anything. He usually had to decide for her.

She would look up as he came into the room and smile beautifully and gesturing vaguely to one side of the room say one word, "Sam".

Arthur returned her smile and went to her every time, his heart melting he would take her hand and squeeze it between his. He had tried to think about who Sam could be. He had known Polly since they were children and to his knowledge she had never had another sweetheart. He had resigned himself to never knowing who Sam was.

Polly had lost her memory rapidly after a so called 'mild' stroke. All her faculties had returned, she could still do simple tasks. Her Victoria sponges were still highly prized, literally, she won certificates for them at the village fete. She could shell peas, peel potatoes she could probably do many more small jobs but he didn't like to give her a knife or leave her with the gas cooker, he would never forgive himself if she had an accident. But most of her day was spent sitting on the window seat.

A young woman, he thought she was called Alison, had been sent to the house try some activities which might help improve Polly's memory. Alison had suggested several memory jogging tricks starting by showing her familiar things particularly those from her childhood or early life. She brought a box of bits and pieces, among them old photographs, a peg doll, a washboard although Polly came from a family where someone else did the washing and her own beautiful German doll, now in the hands of a grateful granddaughter had raised hardly a smile when it had been brought to her. Only a photograph of Polly and her sister sitting on a beach seemed to please her. She liked to sit and look at it although she seemed to be irrationally annoyed by it at times, once she had thrown it down so hard that the glass in its frame had cracked. Arthur had the glass removed and replaced with plastic and had put it on a table out of her reach where it stayed unless she asked to hold it.

It was there one afternoon when the only person who actually had conversations with her, Owen their four year old great grandson, came with his mother, their granddaughter, and his baby sister. The baby lay in its portable crib under a tree. Arthur sat nearby enjoying a cup of tea and a brief respite from caring while Owen chatted to Polly, who had insisted that she wanted to stay inside, as usual, when Owen was there.

"If you didn't know she could not talk properly you'd think those two were having a fine old conversation, wouldn't you." Arthur said to his granddaughter.

"Owen insists they do talk, although what about I'm not sure, he has taken the photograph to her, look" answered Chrissy.

A little while later Owen came outside to drink his orange squash. “Gramps” he said. Arthur prepared himself to answer another of Owen’s many questions, “Why did that lady in the picture call you Sam?”

Arthur felt the same clenching in his chest he always felt when Sam was mentioned.

”Did she?” answered Arthur.

“Yes, great granny said” insisted Owen.

Suddenly from the depths of his memory one of the early days he had spent with both sisters, a day at the sea came back to him. They had all sat on the beach, Eastbourne, it must have been, with the sand between their toes and in their picnic. Arthur had taken out his camera which seemed to amuse the girls although he prided himself he took good photographs. It was then that Sylvie had said, “Sam’s taking our photo, Pol. “

“Yes”, Polly had replied, ““Sam, the seaside snapper, from the photo booth up on the prom.”” He remembered that had provoked more gales of laughter.

Was that all ‘Sam’ meant, a silly joke between sisters? Owen would no doubt find out in time.