

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

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