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# **ADAM'S INHERITANCE**

**by Alesana & Adam Fleetwood**

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## CHAPTER ONE

Adam opened bleary eyes and peered at the creature in front of him. A red-eyed monster peered back. Its tousled wisps of matted black hair fell in front of its face, obscuring its hideous features. It was pallid, like a fresh corpse, and its breath tasted foul, like rot. In defence, he grabbed his toothbrush and a tube of ultra-white from the cup by the sink.

Turning away from the mirror he drank deeply from the tap, gulping down the cold fluid as readily as he breathed oxygen. He swirled the last mouthful of water around his mouth and then spat it out disdainfully.

"Never, ever again," he thought to himself, taking one last look at his puffy, bloodshot eyes and pale complexion. He flicked his hair out of his eyes and headed for his room. Flopping down on the bed, he remembered the day before.

"Are you sure you'll be all right?" his mother fussed, bustling cups and plates into the dishwasher.

His father grabbed his mum tight around the waist and rested his chin on her shoulder. "Stop fussing Georgina! Adam's going to be fine. He knows how to take care of himself."

Adam smiled to himself at his father's words.

His mother carried on as though Nicholas hadn't said a word. "Mrs. West will be round to check on you every morning between ten and twelve. I've given her full instructions. You know how to cook."

"Only bacon sandwiches," Adam replied, a fond smile playing around his lips.

His mother continued to reel off a list of things Mrs. West would do, though the words flew over Adam's head unheeded as his eyes roved over a double page spread on his favourite band in Rock Sound magazine.

His father tossed some keys onto the table. They came to a jangling rest next to Adam's cereal bowl.

"You can borrow the Land Rover. The tank's full and I cleaned it out yesterday, so there shouldn't be any problems. I will ask you to watch your speed though."

His voice a flat monotone, Adam replied "I don't speed!" then, seeing his father's expression, "Okay, okay. I'll stick to the limit. Not that you can speed in that old crock anyway."

"You'd be surprised!" Nicholas patted Adam on the back lovingly, then sat down and pushed the boy's magazine aside.

Adam peered at his father through his perfectly straight hair.

"What are you planning to do with yourself, Adam?"

"Eh ... dunno, might call Andrew. Hang out."

A shrill screech resonated from the far side of the kitchen where his mother was persistently packing a survival box for the boy. "I don't want you throwing parties and wrecking the place! We have a nice house here and it deserves respect!"

Adam stared fixedly at her. "Andrew, mother, is not a party!"

"Silverson hasn't seen you in a while," his father commented. "You might call him round for a workout."

"I might, I suppose. Depends."

"On what?" his mother retorted.

"Whether I die of boredom or not, following your house rules." A warm smile spread across his face.

"If you do, then do it silently. We have neighbours. Anyway, Nicholas, time to go. Have you got everything you need?"

Adam's father laughed openly. "You don't need to mother me as well as him. Have you got everything?"

With a start, Georgina turned and darted upstairs, muttering to herself about spare socks.

He had watched them sink into the distance in their hatchback, the boot held closed with a thick blue line of rope. Suddenly the house was silent, peaceful.

Games and empty cans littered the floor around the sofa as Adam stared intently at the television screen. It was eleven at night. He started as his phone shivered and beeped on the seat next to him.

He pressed a button. Andrew's voice burst from the speaker. "I saw your parents leaving town man, I'm on my way over now."

Or at least he wished it had happened. Boredom was setting in now and he wished there was someone else in the house just to keep him amused with their mindless chatter. He dialled Andrew's number and after three rings his friend's mother was speaking joyfully into his ear.

"You've gotten through to the Drewer household. Congratulations! There's no-one around to answer the phone but we'll do our best to be on the other end when you answer yours! Bye now!"

Adam disconnected the call without leaving a message. Remembering that they were away until the next day, he thought about re-dialling and leaving a message, but decided against it. In his boredom he opened another beer.

So now he was a white faced, red eyed monster rather than the usual flawed, yet handsome young teenager.

He decided to stay in bed all morning. Anything else would take far too much effort for his battle-scarred body. No-one ever said it was like this when they boasted about drinking at parties, and Adam hadn't even been to a party!

The dog had other ideas, however. Just as Adam was drifting off to sleep again, Gandalf, his massive Irish Wolfhound, burst into the room, his tail beating tribal drum rolls on the doorframe. His pink tongue swept Adam's cheek like a sticky pink flannel and Adam was firmly awake again.

"You know you're not supposed to come upstairs," he said fondly to the beast before him. Gandalf slumped to the floor playfully.

Adam dragged himself out of bed and stumbled into the shower where jets of lukewarm water pelted his body. Dripping uncaringly on the bathroom carpet he took another tentative look in the mirror. He was relieved to see that his own face now replaced that of the monster he'd seen in there earlier.

The day stretched ahead, long and empty. He felt listless and cursed his lack of inspiration. He switched on his PC, opened the internet, and swiftly lost himself among his favourite websites.

The doorbell had him almost leaping from his seat in shock. As he headed into the hallway he had to think twice about where he was.

He opened the door to bright sunlight backing a shadowy figure, giving the girl before him a halo of yellow sunbeams. Adjusting his angle, he cleared his throat.

"Hey, can I help?"

Her auburn hair flowed over her shoulders attractively. She clutched a crumpled piece of paper in her left hand. Her features, regular and pleasing, wore a puzzled expression.

"Is this Ravensbeece? I'm looking for someone called Georgina."

Adam replied, as puzzled as she looked. "Yeah, this is the place, but your luck's out. And so is she."

The girl's face crumpled. "Oh no! Do you know when she'll be back?"

"They'll be back in about a week. They're headed for Scotland at the moment, on holiday."

"Oh!" If it were possible, her face fell further. "I don't know what to do now. It's kind of urgent ..."

"It might have been a good idea to phone first," Adam said. He realised how sharp he sounded and continued. "Can I take a name, a number?"

She looked embarrassed. "I didn't like to call. It's not the kind of thing I wanted to talk about on the phone."

"Can you tell me what it's about in case she calls?"

"No ... I'd rather talk to *her*. Anthea said that she's the only one who can help."

"I'm really sorry, but I can't help you. You could try another time."

She stayed still for a moment, as if fighting disbelief, then half turned away. "Thanks anyway. I guess I'll go home."

She set off down the path. Adam, starting to close the door, glanced after her and saw the despairing droop of her shoulders. His heart lurched. Before he realised what he was doing he opened the door again and called out "They're phoning at four this afternoon. Would you like to come back then?"

She turned back. "Could I? You wouldn't mind?"

"No, not at all. Four o'clock."

"Thanks. See you then." She waved, looking far more cheerful, then disappeared behind the hedge.

## CHAPTER TWO

Adam turned back towards the kitchen shutting the front door softly behind him. The quiet morning had cured his head and settled his stomach and now hunger pangs were setting in.

Mrs. West was busying herself in the kitchen wiping down the surfaces with a haggard-looking green cloth. "There you are Adam" she smiled fondly, turning on her heels to greet him "I didn't like to disturb you earlier, absorbed in your studies".

Adam smiled wryly but didn't put her wise.

She continued, "I've taken care of that heap of filthy clothes on your bedroom floor. They're on the washing line but it took two spins in the washing machine to get the dirt out. Your lunch is in the fridge, there's a casserole in the oven for later though you'll need to let it cook for two hours. I've left a note on the side with clear instructions. Unless there's anything else, I'll be off now and see you tomorrow." She removed her apron as she spoke, folding it neatly into a plain beige cotton handbag.

"Thanks a lot Mrs. West. Where's Gan?"

"In the garden, dear. He's a restless mite if I may say so. He needs a good walk." Her voice was firm yet fond, like his mother's had been the day before.

"I'll take him out later on. I could do with some fresh air myself."

"Right then, I'll be off." She shut the door noisily behind her as she eased her large frame outside.

After eating a full lunch complimentary of Mrs. West, Adam and Gan set out across the cliffs. If there were any remnants of this morning's hangover they were blown away by the refreshing sea breeze. His mind turned to his mother's call and he hurried back home with Gan in tow.

Thinking of the call reminded him of the girl, strangely pleasing to the eye, attractive in a way he couldn't explain. She wasn't his type at all but when she smiled it changed her who face and made him feel like he wanted to help. There had been something off about her though, almost bursting into tears on the doorstep like that. What could she possibly need from his mother that was so urgent?

As he hurried back through the front gate he found himself oddly eager to see whether she was waiting at the house. His stomach churned though he'd only eaten an hour ago and he realized that he was nervous.

The place was deserted though. Feeling inexplicably let down he poured a tall glass of chilled coke and settled down by the wide bay windows in the living room. The rolling green hills glistened brightly under the midday sunlight and, aside from the sound of Gan lapping water from his bowl in the kitchen, silence rang through the house.

A knock at the door broke his musings and he found himself hurrying to greet the girl.

Her white clothes were a little more creased than they had been that morning and she was carrying a rucksack. She smiled hesitantly "Hi again. Am I too early? I didn't want to be late..."

"Nah don't worry about it, you're perfect. I mean, just right. You're right on time." He glanced at his watch although he knew they still had ten minutes to fill before the phone was scheduled to ring. "They should call soon, when my mum says four she means *four*."

He gestured towards the living room. "Can I get you a coffee, coke?"

"Coffee would be lovely." She stood in the middle of the room awkwardly clutching the rucksack.

"Sit down, relax. I won't be a minute".

When Adam returned from the kitchen, two cups of milky coffee in hand, he found Juliet sitting on one of the large chairs nervously eyeing Gan who was stretched out across the carpet watching the visitor, his shaggy head rested contently on two massive paws. His bright brown eyes shone intently in his grey bearded face and he greeted Adam's arrival with a lethargic thump of his tail.

"Don't worry about Gan he's friendly."

"I don't think I've ever seen a dog so big. Where did the name come from?"

"It's short for Gandalf. He's named after..."

Juliet cut across him "The Grey Wizard. Who became the White Wizard? I love the Lord of the Rings." She smiled broadly.

Adam smiled back. He could see the girl's unease disappearing. "Well he's managed grey, but only a little bit of white" he pushed fondly at the dog with his foot, showing a white blaze on his deep chest. "Dad gave him to me for my fifteenth birthday. Said he'd always look after me."

She put down her glass and held out her hand. "I'm Juliet by the way. We haven't had a formal introduction yet."

"Where did you come up from?"

"Down actually. Stratford."

"Stratford? I've never been there. Is it a nice place?"

Gan shifted his weight on the carpet noisily.

Juliet shrugged. "Much like any other, I should think. It's prettier around here."

"We moved here from Berkshire when I was eleven. I hated it at first but this place has the habit of growing on you. I'm Adam by the way."

She grinned. "Pleased to meet you, Adam." She squinted up at the clock, sipping noisily from her mug of coffee. "It's five past four. Are you sure your mum won't mind talking to me?"

"Of course she won't. She's always ready to help people, and you looked pretty cut up this morning."

"It never occurred to me that she wouldn't be around. I just got on the train and came down when Anthea gave me the address. I'd been so worried about how to explain myself to a perfect stranger that I just didn't think to phone ahead or anything."

"And you're not now?" Adam leaned in, concerned.

She grimaced "I still feel a bit stupid, but I've spent all day thinking about what to say."

"What did you do with yourself?" he asked, suddenly realising that he'd abandoned her to passing several hours in a small, unknown village.

"Oh... looked around, went to the beach, this and that. I think I saw you on the cliffs with Gan earlier."

He nodded. "That was me! You should have joined us."

"I didn't like to. I'm being enough of a nuisance already just turning up like this." She glanced at the clock again in agitation. He could see her becoming restless once more. "Ten past! Do you think they're going to call?"

"Yeah. They said they would" Adam soothed, though he felt slightly uncomfortable himself. "They're not usually late though."

Time passed, measured by ponderous ticking. Small talk fumbled into silence. To escape the awkwardness Adam offered to make another cup of coffee and Juliet accepted. She followed him into the kitchen and as Adam spooned coffee and sugar into their mugs she began to talk quietly about not taking any more of his time. Adam hid his irritation.

When the phone rang he leapt towards it, knocking one of the mugs off of the surface and sending it spinning to the floor where it shattered noisily. Cursing silently he grabbed the receiver as though he were afraid the caller would cut the connection before he got there.

As he pressed the receiver to his ear he heard a series of crackles before his mother's voice, barely audible, broke through the static. "Darling, sorry we're late. We've had terrible trouble getting through." More crackles followed.

Adam shouted back as if afraid that she couldn't hear him over the hiss of static. "I was beginning to think you weren't going to call."

"I know. A freak storm knocked the signal out. I've never seen anything quite like it. How are you darling?"

"I'm just fine, but..."

"Listen darling, in case the connection goes. I'm not sure how well the mobile will work in some of these mountains so we'll call whenever we can. Don't worry about us though, we'll send postcards. As long as I know you're okay."

"I'm fine mum, but..."

"We'll try to call again tomorrow, but if there's still trouble we may not get through."

"Mum, listen to me." He shouted even louder to interrupt the flow. Juliet was staring with rapt attention. "I've got someone here who needs to talk to you. She's come down from Stratford on Avon to ask for your help."

"What was that darling? I can hardly hear you."

"There's a woman here who needs your help!" he bellowed into the receiver over the whine of static and wind.

For a moment the crackling stopped and there was only silence, as if he had scared away the storm itself. Then his mother's voice came across firmly. "Oh *you* help her darling. I'm sure you'll be able to. Tell her if she needs me she can..." The line exploded into crackling again and then went dead.

"Oh no!" Adam shook the receiver in his hand as though he could shock the line back into life. He faced the waiting girl. "We've been cut off!"

The same heartbreaking look of dismay as she had worn this morning once more twisted her pleasing features. "Was there a problem?"

"Freak storm, she said. No signal." He glanced out of the window at bright blue skies and sunshine. "It was a dreadful line and now we've lost it."

"It was better than nothing." She seemed to shrink back into herself. Her face and shoulders drooped. "What did she say about me?"

"I don't think she really understood what I was saying." He saw the despair in front of him and looked for some sort of consolation he could offer her. "Look, they'll probably call back at some point tomorrow. They'll be able to get through one way or another. There'll be phones. They've got mobiles. Mum's just fussing as usual."

"Did she say what time they'd try to call?"

Adam shook his head.

"Can I come back?" her face was pleading.

"Yeah of course, but it'll mean hanging about for a bit."

"I don't mind waiting at all, I just don't want to keep you from anything." She stood up and hoisted the rucksack onto her slender shoulders. "Is there anywhere about town that I can stay for the night?"

He opened his mouth to suggest 'The Anchor' but found different words escaping his lips. "Look, why don't you stay here for the night? There's heaps of room and if they do call again before tomorrow you won't miss them."

She perked up at this. "Here? Are you sure?"

Suddenly he was very sure. He didn't fancy another lonely dinner at all.

"Yeah of course! Mrs. West has left a casserole for dinner. I'm sure we can stretch it out. We've got a spare room and I'll be glad of the company. It's a bit too quiet without mum and dad."

She relaxed with a wide grin that transformed her face. "Then thanks very much. I'd love to stay, but you must let me help with the cooking."

Adam grinned generously back. "It's a deal."

## CHAPTER THREE

Juliet came downstairs half an hour later with damp hair and wearing jeans.

Adam was in the kitchen. "Why don't we eat at about seven?" he asked from the depths of a cupboard.

"Seven thirty? The note here says that the casserole will take two hours and it's five thirty already." Juliet picked up Mrs. West's instructions.

Adam came up from the cupboard holding a large dog chew. "Let's see what Mrs. West has left." He lifted a heavy brown crock out of the oven and peered inside. "I'm not sure what it is. Beef do you think?"

She looked. "Something like that. Doesn't she say?"

"No, but it's meat and vegetables." He shot her a worried look. "You're not vegetarian are you?"

"Only sometimes," she laughed. "It'll be delicious, don't worry." She replaced the crock in the oven and, consulting Mrs. West's note, turned the dial to 180°.

"So we've got a couple of hours. What shall we do?" Adam asked.

"I don't want to keep you from anything," she responded uncertainly.

"Will you stop that? I had no plans for this evening anyway. Why don't we go down to West Bay?"

"Where is it?"

"Five minutes down the road. Dad left me his Land Rover."

He called the dog then led the way to the vehicle. He spoke as he drove. "West Bay used to be a fishing village. It's still got a working harbour, but these days it's more of a holiday destination with a big caravan site, and shops selling local crafts. It's worth a look."

The tide was high in the harbour. Fishermen were stowing nets and pots on to the wooden decks of fishing boats, preparing to spend the night out at sea. The stale smell of the previous evening's catch mingled with a sharp saltiness from the water itself. A few boats drifted in and out of the harbour, manoeuvring between two wide jetties.

"The beach is that way," he indicated, as he led the way from the harbour to where a stone wall edged a beach. Cliffs swept in swathes of green and gold away to each side. The sea was lapping the shore, sucking noisily at pebbles. Gulls called hauntingly as they wheeled overhead.

Adam looked out across the bay to Lyme Regis then turned and leaned against the wall, watching the procession of people passing back and forth. His eyes drifted across the crowds. A strange looking man was walking slowly along the pavement. The man's height first caught Adam's attention. Well over six feet, he stood head and shoulders above the crowd even though he was hunched over. He was painfully thin. His face looked like a skull with paper stretched over it, and his skin looked ill, almost grey. He was walking along, head down, taking no notice of anything.

Suddenly he looked up, penetrating eyes locking with Adam's. The world stopped. All sounds stopped. To Adam it seemed as though nothing else existed but the man's eyes, and a freezing, penetrating cold that spread from the pit of his stomach through his body, lacing its way through his veins like venom. He felt sick. He wanted to run, anywhere; he didn't care as long as it got him away from the towering figure. He tried to pull his eyes away, but had no power over his senses. Then the man looked away, the world returned, and the cold started to lose its hold.

Shaken, Adam watched the retreating back. He forced some words out. "Hey, did you see that strange guy?" His voice fell away as he saw Juliet, staring past him into the crowds, mouth opening and closing silently, a stricken expression on her face. Drained of all colour, she was visibly trembling.

"What's wrong?"

She didn't reply, just stared fixedly. He followed the direction of her gaze, but all he could see were tourists, walking slowly or standing to admire the view. The strange man was out of sight now.

Adam repeated, "What's wrong? You look like you've seen a ghost."

She blinked, shook her head, and turned towards him. "What?"

"I said you look like you've seen a ghost."

"No!" Shaking. "I'm fine. I thought I recognized someone, that's all."

"Who?" asked Adam, looking along at the mass of people.

"He's gone now."

"Did you see that strange guy? The tall skinny one with grey skin?"

A strange expression crossed her face, but she just shook her head again. "I was miles away."

He shrugged, still feeling an inner chill. He needed something to warm him up. "Let's go and get some coffee."

She shivered. "Do you mind if we don't? I'd quite like to get back to the house. I'm not feeling too good."

He shrugged again, suddenly irritated. "Suit yourself."

They walked back to the Land Rover in silence. The journey home was strained. Adam made several attempts at conversation, but Juliet turned away not wanting to talk. Even the stomach rumbling fragrance that welcomed them indoors made little impression on her sudden mood.

As the silence lengthened, Adam searched desperately for something to change the subject. "What do you think of the house?" he blurted out.

She looked at him blankly.

He carried on, wincing inwardly at his own words. "Mum puts crystals and things all over the place and claims that they attract the right energies."

Interest flickered across Juliet's features. "Anthea, the woman who told me to come and see your mother, heals with crystals."

Adam eyed her warily. "Are you into all that stuff then?"

"Not really. Someone else sent me to Anthea. I do love the look of them, though." She wandered through to where large windows looked out over a lush, green garden. "Who designed this?"

"Dad did most of it. He loves plants and animals, and working on the garden. He taught me about it too, although I'm not into the digging and planting. Do you want to come out and look at it all?"

She stiffened again, shaking her head and retreating back into herself. "Tomorrow maybe."

"I'd better get on with the dinner." Adam was glad to have something to do, busying himself while listening for Juliet to say anything that would make him feel more at-ease.

The casserole was delicious, but Juliet just pushed food around her plate. She refused bread, and left the talking to Adam. Even when he produced a tub of rich, toffee ice cream she barely responded, hardly touching the small spoonful he put in a bowl for her.

After dinner she huddled in a chair, shooting fearful glances towards the darkened garden until Adam drew the curtains with a sigh. "Something's really got into you, hasn't it?"

She shook her head, and then said she was ready for bed. She lifted herself from her chair heavily as if a great weight had settled on her.

Adam watched her go. "You sure you're okay?" he asked after her.

She turned in the hallway. "You've been lovely today Adam. Thank you so much for letting me stay here." And with that she turned and disappeared upstairs.

He retired to the porch and leaned against the veranda. Thick clouds drifted like grey smoke across the sky. The sooner his parents called the

sooner he could get shot of Juliet and get on with his own life. The person he'd thought might be fun and charming company had turned out to be a bore that he didn't need. He made his way back inside the house taking care to shut the door quietly behind him, cursing the girl upstairs.

He poured himself a steaming mug of coffee and sat down on the living room sofa. Lost in thought, he lay back against the soft cushions and soon found himself drifting off. As he felt his eyelids weighing themselves down with sleep he thought of Juliet and how shaken she had seemed earlier that day. What in the world could scare someone that much?

## CHAPTER FOUR

**W**ith a start, Adam jolted awake. Crashing thunder rang in his ears. Cacophonous rain smashed against the windows.

His untouched coffee spilt generously all over him as he sat up briskly. Something was wrong. Was this smashing storm the same one that had cut the phone connection earlier?

Lightning flashed every few seconds, throwing the room into stark relief. Suddenly, silhouetted in the flashing light, a shadow bloomed on the wall in front of him. An inhuman and crooked shape was rising up.

Adam span in his chair. Through the bay windows he thought he saw a small dark figure dart across the garden. He leaped to his feet, the now empty cup crashing to the floor. At least this one didn't break!

Heading to the window, he peered out on the rain soaked garden, keeping as low as possible. If there was someone out there he didn't want him or her to see him. But the garden was empty, just the same sight he'd been looking at for six years of his life.

His mind shot back to the hunched, skeletal figure he had seen at the harbour. What was going on? A million questions battled for space in his head and, looking up in the direction of the guest bedroom, he wondered whether the person there could offer any answers.

He stood at the window for a while, his heart pounding, before turning away and heading for bed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Deep barking shattered the night, jerking Adam awake. He struggled upright, disorientated in the pitch black, fumbling for the light switch. His clock showed it was just before three o'clock.

Leaping out of bed and grabbing his dressing gown he hurried downstairs. Gandalf was padding back and forth across the hall, hackles up. His claws clicked on the wooden floor as he worried at the door, deep, ringing, single barks punctuating the air.

"What's going on Gan?"

The dog continued to assault the door with one long foreleg.

"Is someone in the garden?" Adam peered through the glass, but could see nothing. Silently he slid back the lock and eased the door open.

It was totally black outside, clouds blocking out any possible moonlight. He shivered, squinting into the darkness. He could see nothing. He was on the point of closing the door again when Gandalf slipped past him and shot into the shadows.

"Gan?" Feeling horribly vulnerable he followed the dog into the garden. Bushes near the gate rustled and Adam inched forward, eyes straining. Why hadn't he thought to bring a torch?

There was a snap and a rustling to his right. Without thinking Adam shot out his arm. His fingers closed round something warm and slightly damp, like slimy leather. The thing tugged and pulled. Instinctively Adam gripped harder. Loose skin moved over what felt like twig thick bone.

As his stomach hit the floor in disgust, Adam leapt back in shock, letting go of whatever it was. His hand felt cold and damp. At that moment he heard a low growl from behind the house, followed by a shrill screech and running feet. He swung towards the sound, then back as the thing in the bush rushed past him.

Swinging towards the gate, he could see the dark shape of a man. For a moment they peered towards each other. An icy chill slid down Adam's back and he shivered violently. Then the man turned calmly and walked out through the gate. A sneaky form slipped out from the bushes and followed him.

Adam started forward, racing to the gate and peering after them. It was so dark! Was it just shadow, or was that the man, surrounded by smaller figures, striding away down the road? He wiped at his face as he realised that a tear of terror was slithering down his cheek.

A wet nose touched his hand and he shivered again. "Let's go back in, Gan."

He closed the door, secured the deadlock and pulled the security chain firmly into place. Gandalf padded alongside him as he returned to the kitchen. He needed to think about what he'd seen. Children? And the man?

He didn't want to put the light on. Using just the light from the refrigerator, he poured himself a glass of milk then made his way back to his bedroom, still in the dark. Gandalf followed closely behind.

Adam nursed his milk thoughtfully. He had an uncomfortable feeling that he'd missed something important.

Gandalf rested his large head on Adam's knee and he fondled the dog's ears. "What was it, Gan? Who was out there? Burglars?"

The obvious explanation was that some chancer had heard his parents were away and assumed the house would be empty. The dog's barking must have given them the fright of their lives!

That must be it! But the niggle remained. Then suddenly he realised - the cold! It was the same cold he'd felt earlier, a deep icyness threatening to overwhelm him. The man at the gate! Had he been the same man he'd seen on the promenade at West Bay?

He wasn't sure. It had been dark, the encounter brief. He was probably imagining the similarities.

And what about Juliet? Why hadn't she come down? Surely she couldn't have slept through all that barking?

Draining the glass he climbed out of bed and peeped into her room. She appeared to be sleeping soundly, undisturbed by the drama.

Suddenly Adam was overcome with weariness. He fell back into bed, unwilling to think further. He heard the soft sounds of Gandalf's paws pacing the carpet and soon he was asleep.

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