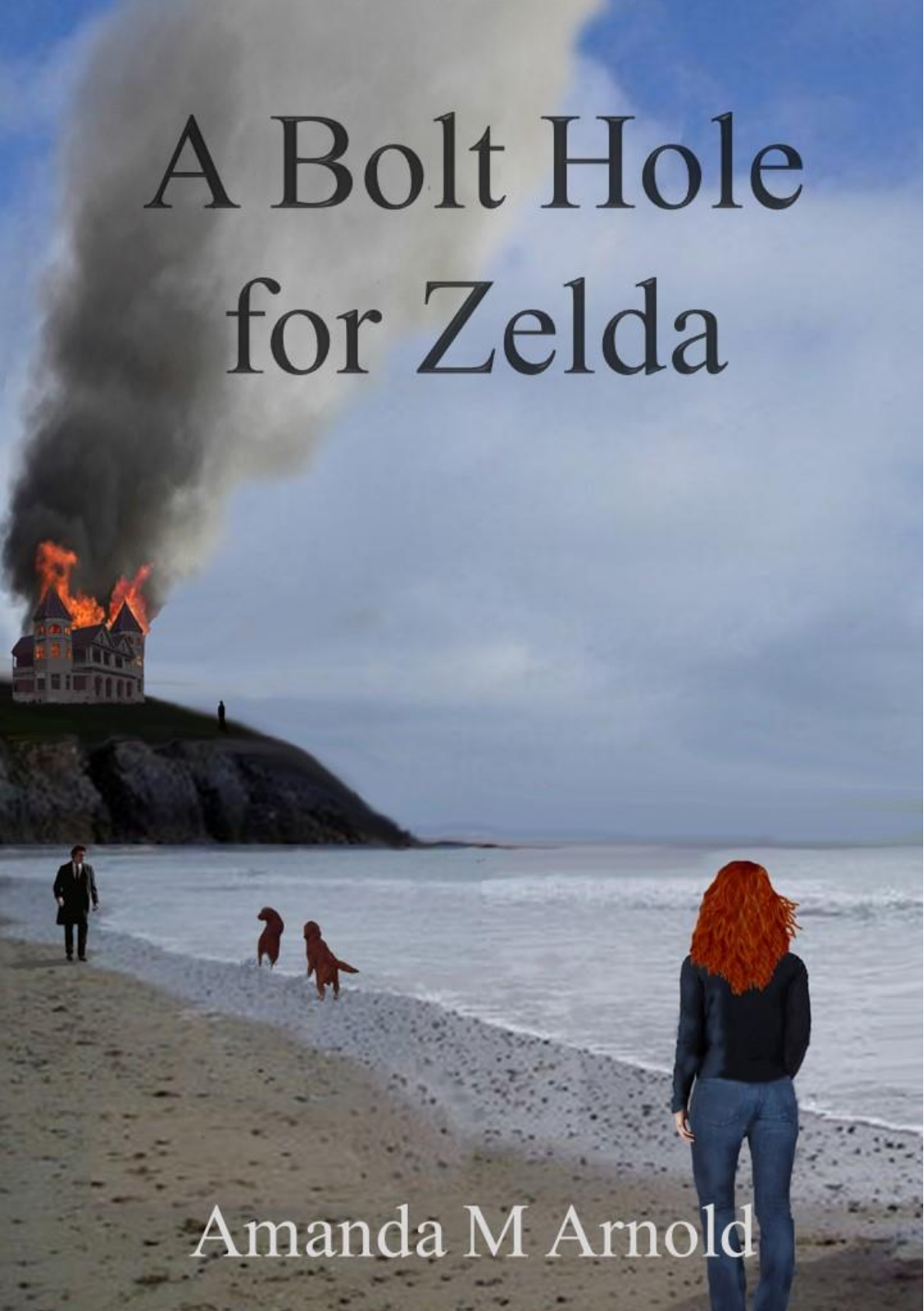
A Bolt Hole for Zelda
Amanda M Arnold

A Bolt Hole for Zelda

By

Amanda M Arnold

A modern saga of Cornwall

After living a life in the Home Counties, Zelda flees a failing relationship to a new life in Cornwall. New friends, a new romance, and discovering the mysteries of her past, means that her life takes many twists and turns before everything is finally explained, and she eventually finds happiness.

Published by and available from
theendlessbookcase.com

e-Edition
Available in multiple e-book formats.

The Endless Bookcase Ltd
71 Castle Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire, England,
UK, AL1 5DQ

Copyright © 2016 Amanda M Arnold
All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-908941-70-1

Acknowledgement

A special thanks to Georgina for her invaluable help and support.

About the author

Amanda M Arnold grew up in London and worked in the fashion world. She is married with two grown up sons and has lived in Norfolk and Essex. Now retired, Amanda lives in the countryside and her interests include: art, entertaining, birdwatching and films. She also belongs to a local creative writing group. Amanda has travelled widely and is a keen photographer.

Contents

Acknowledgement i
About the author ii
CHAPTER 1 ESCAPE 1
CHAPTER 2 SETTLING IN 10
CHAPTER 3 PROGRESS 17
CHAPTER 4 JENNY 20
CHAPTER 5 GRACE 25
CHAPTER 6 MAD IRIS 30
CHAPTER 7 TOMMY'S ROOM 33
CHAPTER 8 HARRISON 36
CHAPTER 9 TIDYING UP 40
CHAPTER 10 ST IVES 43
CHAPTER 11 RICK 48
CHAPTER 12 THE BARBEQUE 54
CHAPTER 13 THE DAY AFTER 68
CHAPTER 14 AUTUMN 72
CHAPTER 15 MOVING ON 80
CHAPTER 16 THE TEASHOP 93
CHAPTER 17 EXCITING TIMES 108
CHAPTER 18 CHRISTMAS AND PLANS 121
CHAPTER 19 SURPRISING CHANGES 135

CHAPTER 1
ESCAPE

Zelda was doing a runner. She loaded the car with the things she loved best, her two dogs, Henry and Prince, and her favourite clothes and photos in a large suitcase. The remaining available space was filled with potted plants, cookery books and some framed pictures, plus the dogs' bowls, their beds, and cheese sandwiches for her to eat on the journey.

She locked the front door and had a last look at the magnificent Victorian house she was leaving forever. Then climbing into the car, she drove off not glancing at the flowerbeds that she had tended so carefully for eight long years.

The note on the kitchen table would explain to Donald her reasons for leaving when he returned from New York that evening. It was hard to put into words that what had once been thrilling and exciting was now just sad and boring. Her birthday, two days ago which had passed without even a phone call or card from him, had made up her mind and the visit from the solicitor yesterday had done the rest.

On a long stretch of featureless straight road, it began to rain. The windscreen wipers swished from side to side and Zelda's thoughts returned to the start of her romance with Donald.

It had been a stifling hot evening in New York and as the recently promoted personal assistant, this was the first time she had accompanied him on a business trip.

They had met up with a new client at a Greenwich Village restaurant. After a couple of stiff Martinis, Zelda relaxed and enjoyed the meal and the great atmosphere. Donald was amusing and the conversation drifted from holidays to business, seamlessly. Leaving the restaurant and saying goodbye to the client, Donald hailed a cab to take them back to their hotel near Times Square.

'Did you enjoy that?' he queried. 'New York is my favourite place; it has such a raw energy.'

Zelda smiled at him happily. 'Yes it's my first time here and I can see why people love it.'

Passing a still open bookshop Donald asked the cab driver to stop. 'We will walk from here.' he said.

The driver turned to look over his shoulder. 'OK folks, but be careful.'

Donald helped Zelda out of the cab and passed the driver several dollar bills.

'I need a book to help me wind down after work, even if it has been with pleasant company my mind is still buzzing,' he said by way of explanation.

Zelda could not believe that shops were still open as it was nearly midnight. After Donald had bought a bestselling novel and a magazine for Zelda, they strolled down Fifth Avenue, passing a photo shoot on the steps of a church, where a beautiful girl and a male model, stood posing as a bridal couple. Further on, a string quartet, the

musicians dressed in evening suits, played on the sidewalk collecting money from passers-by.

When they reached their hotel and were going up in the lift Zelda sneaked a furtive look at Donald. As her employer, she had not taken much of a personal interest in him before. Now in the mirrored lift she could see he was handsome in an ultra; smooth way. He obviously worked out and there were no wrinkles in his perfectly tailored suit. His eyes were a grey-blue, depending on the light and his wavy hair a warm brown.

She flushed as he turned suddenly and caught her stare. Luckily, they had reached their floor and Donald stood back to allow her to leave the lift first

Outside the door of Zelda's room Donald watched her put the key card in the lock but it didn't open. 'Here let me,' he said and the door swung open at his first try. 'Girls and mechanical things,' he said, his laugh was warm and sexy. It was the first personal moment they had ever had.

'Darling does it have to end here?' Donald's voice was soft as he took a step into the room to hold the door open for her.

Zelda felt her pulse race as she weighed up the situation. 'Perhaps you won't need your book after all,' she said quietly following him inside and closing the door.

There was hooting from the car behind and Zelda realised she had driven slower and slower as she relived that first night.

'Sorry. 'She said out loud and waved hoping the driver behind could see her through the back window. 'Must concentrate,' she murmured knowing no one could hear her.

Only stopping to let the dogs out a couple of times she arrived in the Cornish village and eventually found Marryat House about a few hundred yards beyond the row of fishermen's cottages.

It was pitch black but by the light of her torch, she made out the name on the garden gate, which swung open with a grating squeak when she lifted the latch. Flashing her torch round she saw the outline of the house and a garage on the left hand side with a shingle drive leading up to it. No gate, just a gap in the front wall. Parking the car, she let the dogs out, more for a feeling of protection and support, then followed the beam of the torch over what might have been a lawn, but was now just knee high grass. There was a porch with different coloured panes of glass to the sides and door.

In her pocket were the two keys that the solicitor had given her along with the deeds to the house. The keys were attached to a buff coloured label with Marryat House written on it in rather smudged ink. The first one fitted and after a short tussle with the lock, the door opened. Zelda's feet crunched on a pile of mail as she walked hesitantly into the porch. A huge cobweb wrapped itself around her face, she shuddered and stifled a scream.

'That's it boys,' she said to the dogs, 'we'll wait until the morning.'

Back at the car she took out the two dog bowls and filled them from the remaining bottle of water, leaving just

enough for her to drink. Then with the dogs on the back seat, she sat in the driver's seat and finished the sandwiches, snuggled down under her coat, and fell fast asleep.

She awoke to see a face peering in the car window and the dogs growling.

'Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you, are you OK?' said a blonde girl about her own age. 'I was passing and thought you might have been taken ill. I am Jenny the local Doctors' practice nurse so it could have been an early call.'

Zelda struggled upright and opened the car door.

'Thanks for asking but I'm fine. We arrived too late to go into the house last night so I thought I'd wait for daylight.'

Jenny smiled. 'I don't blame you the house has been empty since poor Tommy……' her voice trailed away not wanting to go into details. 'Well as there are no problems I better go or I'll be late for work.'

Zelda was wide-awake now and realised Jenny could fill in the background to many of her questions.

'When I have settled in will you come round for a cup of coffee and a chat?'

'I'd like that. I live in the last of the cottages down the hill so it's no distance to walk,' and with a cheery wave, Jenny strode away.

The second key opened the front door and Zelda edged slowly into the hall. There was a staircase to her right with a couple of bends in it before it reached the upstairs. She opened the first door on the left hand side of the hall, which revealed a dining room with a large oval table and six

chairs, a sideboard and a cabinet containing glasses and decanters. The next door opened into a light and airy sitting room with French doors leading to the garden. The three-piece suite had seen better days and the loose covers were of a 1930's swirly design. However, the large television was right up to the minute. There was a film of dust over everything, but it was not as bad as she had anticipated. Ahead was the kitchen, but before tackling that Zelda was curious to explore the bedrooms.

Telling the dogs to stay, she climbed the stairs. There were three good sized bedrooms, a large bathroom and separate toilet. Between the bathroom and a bedroom, there was another door that she took to be a storage cupboard. No time to investigate now, the kitchen was her priority.

Downstairs the dogs were sitting staring at the kitchen, no doubt hoping it contained food. 'OK boys,' Zelda laughed, 'let's sort you out.'

With that, she went to the car and came back with their two beds, which fitted nicely in the space before the stairs along with their bowls and tins of food.

The dogs fed, she realised that without a hot drink she could not tackle what lay ahead. The solicitor had said that all the services had been left on so it was time to find out if that was the case.

Having run the taps for a while, Zelda rinsed out and filled the kettle, then put it on the cooker. The burner lit first time and soon the water was boiling away. Rooting round the pantry, she found a jar of instant coffee. Luckily, she could drink coffee without milk, so she found a mug with a

red and black design round the base and put a good teaspoon of coffee in it, then stirred in the boiling water. Soon she was ready to begin the big clean up.

In a tall cupboard in the kitchen Zelda discovered a fully working Hoover, and under the sink a selection of sprays and polishes. Tommy was no slouch at keeping things clean, or did he have a cleaning lady? So many questions but as yet no answers. Shooing the dogs into the garden and flinging open all the windows she set to work. It was late afternoon before all the rooms had been cleaned to her satisfaction, the bedding in the front bedroom had been washed, tumble-dried, and the bed remade. Tonight she would sleep in a bed in her own house, but first there was a pressing need to get supplies before the shops closed.

The dogs bounded on to the back seats of the car and sat with their noses out of the half opened windows, one each side. Zelda drove past the cottages on the right hand side and the curving bay on the left, and they soon arrived in the village. By the Anchor pub, there were several shops, so Zelda stopped the car and parked by the double fronted general store. Leaving the dogs in the car, she picked up a wire basket from a pile by the front door and went in. The store was well stocked and soon she had all the basics she needed, plus cans of dog food.

'Have you dog biscuits?' Zelda asked the young man at the till, 'I need a large bag, I have two big, hungry dogs to feed.'

The young man smiled and nodded then disappeared into the back of the shop and returned with a large sack of dog biscuits. 'Will this do?' He enquired.

'Thank you that is just the job.' Zelda said paying him.

Then while trying to carry all the bags she dropped the dog biscuits and her purse. A man in dark blue overalls who had been looking in the frozen food cabinet stepped forward and picked them up.

'Here let me help you to your car,' he said. 'I saw your two dogs in it when I came in, lovely Red Setters aren't they?'

Zelda nodded. 'Yes they are my best buddies. Thank you that would be such a help.'

At the car, he loaded all the shopping into the boot. 'I haven't seen you round here before, where are you staying?' he said.

'I've just moved into Marryat House.' Zelda replied.

'What Tommy Tree's old place? I used to go there when his car was on the blink. My name is Joe, I run the local petrol station and car maintenance centre. Is the car still there?'

Zelda looked surprised. 'I really don't know. There has been so much to do today I have not even looked in the garage yet, but I shall go back now and check. What sort of car was it?'

Joe closed the boot of the car. 'An original orange MGB. Tommy really loved that car, perhaps not the best car for round these parts in the winter, but in the summer with the roof open it was perfect.'

Zelda would have liked to ask more about Tommy, the few details she had were sketchy, but that would have to wait for now.

'Thanks for your help Joe, I expect I shall see you again soon,' and with a friendly wave she started the engine and drove off.

The double wooden doors of the garage were locked. Zelda stared at them trying to think where the key might be. Then she remembered seeing a bunch of keys hanging on a nail by the kitchen door. Entering the house, she ran to the kitchen and there they were, some rusty, some shiny, but which one? With the dogs watching Zelda first tried the shiny ones, thinking that they must be the most used. The fourth one turned in the lock, the door swung open and there it was, a beautiful orange MGB. Zelda caught her breath. 'Wow' she breathed, 'thank you Tommy, I will look after it.'

For several minutes she stood transfixed, then jolting back to reality, she locked the garage doors and calling the dogs, unloaded the shopping and went inside. Looking down at their puzzled faces Zelda laughed and said. 'That's it boys, we're home.'

CHAPTER 2
SETTLING IN

Next morning dawned bright and clear. Zelda opened her eyes and wondered for a short moment where she was, then as the light streamed through the half closed curtains, she remembered the events of the last few days. Great! she thought, time to explore and then I will tackle the garden.

Pulling on her jeans and a thick jumper, she went downstairs to be greeted by Henry and Prince, tails wagging and both standing by the front door making it plain that a walk was what they wanted. Outside, Zelda crossed the road and stood looking over the cliff-top at the bay below. A great curve of pale yellow sand, and the sparkling blue sea, stretching out to the horizon met her gaze. There was a rough path down to the beach with a wooden handrail and steps for the last few feet. The dogs ran ahead and were soon on the sand, chasing each other, their ears streaming behind them in the breeze. Zelda followed, breathing in the lovely salty air. I'm going to like this place, she thought. Further up the beach was a man with a camera, taking photos. The dogs bounded up to him.

'Prince, Henry, come here,' Zelda called, eventually catching up with them.

The man laughed. 'Great names. Who are you Queen Anne?' He was tall and sun tanned with dark hair and twinkling blue eyes.

'Sorry about my dogs, it's our first walk here and they're a bit excited. No, I'm Zelda and those were their

names when I bought them from the kennels. Their father was called King, hence the royal connection.'

The man nodded, 'Ah that explains it. I'm taking photo shots and doing link shots for a TV programme about Cornwall. This is a great place, which I have discovered has a history of smuggling.'

Zelda shook her head. 'I really don't know much about the area yet, we only arrived yesterday.'

The man bent down and patted the dogs then smiled up at Zelda, 'That's fine, have a good walk. By the way, my name is Harrison. Perhaps I will bump into you again, I hope so.'

Zelda looked at his retreating back as he strode off. I hope so too, she thought.

Crossing the road on the way back, Zelda glanced over at the house, something struck her as odd. What was it? Then she realised, there was a room built over the garage. Puzzled, when she was back inside she ran up the stairs and tried to think how to get into it, then noticed the door she had thought was a cupboard. It opened revealing a long, narrow room in a very untidy state. There were unfinished canvases lined up against the walls, a big colourful abstract painting on an easel and paint splashes all over the bare wooden floor. Tommy had obviously dabbled at painting. Was it a hobby or did he sell them? Two guitars hung on the wall above a workbench on which were all manner of art materials, pots of paint, brushes stuck in jam jars, pencils and a collection of sketches of sea birds. They were very good. Also underneath were various magazines.

Zelda glanced round the room and realised there was a shower room at the rear and a small kitchenette with a window that overlooked the back garden. A previous owner must have added this on as a granny flat. The kitchenette contained a fridge, washing machine, a microwave and an electric kettle, what a find. Zelda wandered over to the pile of magazines, drawn by an unexplained feeling that there was something important in them. The top one was a year old and opened at the page that showed photos of people in the business world at a fund raising event. A circle had been drawn in biro round a smiling couple. It was of her and Donald. The blurb under the photo read, "Mr Donald Ferguson and his fiancée, Zelda arriving at a Mayfair charity launch, sponsored by the D F Hedge Fund."

'Eureka,' Zelda said aloud, 'now I know how Tommy found me.'

Downstairs, she opened the backdoor and followed by the dogs stepped into the garden. At first, she was appalled by the sad state of neglect that met her gaze. Paths were overgrown by trailing climbers that had nowhere to climb, dead flowers obliterated what could have been raised beds, towards the far end was a large pond choked with weeds and dead lilies, fruit trees bent with unpicked, rotting fruit. Standing there with the warm sun on her face Zelda suddenly felt a surge of happiness. I'll make this lovely again, she thought, I'll sit on that old oak bench with a cup of coffee and view a perfect scene. Then she sighed, thinking of the work she had to do before that could happen.

'Rome wasn't built in a day and I have lots of time,' she muttered, half to herself and half to the dogs who had come back after scampering excitedly round their new territory.

Running along the entire back of the house was a crazy paving patio. Tobacco plants grew up between the cracks but that was OK, it was in keeping with the rustic feel of the garden. Zelda went to the car and unloaded the potted plants she had brought with her, they were a bit droopy but she found a watering can in the garden shed and filled it from the water butt that stood outside the back door. They'd soon perk up she thought. Next, she had a good look in the shed. A large sit on lawn mower nearly filled it. 'What fun' Zelda said aloud.

When she had lived with Donald, they had the same type of mower, which only the gardener used but now she would sit on this one and cut the grass herself. However, there were still more things to look at, on the other side of the house to the garage was a large conservatory.

Zelda found the door unlocked, opened it and went inside. There were several broken panes of glass but otherwise it was in a good state. It would be lovely in the winter as it caught the morning sun. Next, she unloaded the rest of her possessions from the car. Having already cleaned the inside of the wardrobe and chest of drawers, she unpacked her clothes and the contents of the suitcase.

When she came to the two silver framed photos, one of her mother and the other of her Grandmother, Zelda put them on the top of the dressing table, then sat on the end of

the bed and stared at them, what would they think now if they were still around? They had both had their share of tragedy as well as good times, but had always kept their sense of humour and resourcefulness, come what may.

Her mother's short life had established her as a star of screen and stage, while her Grandmother had blazed the trail of the super models. By comparison, her job as a PA, lacked the excitement of the fashion and film world; however, it had led to her working for Donald and becoming his fiancée. Their life together had been fun at the beginning. Zelda had enjoyed the lavish entertaining at their home, or playing hostess on a yacht rented for the Cannes film festival, also the numerous holidays they had in exotic places. On reflection, Zelda realised that lifestyle had not been real, in the sense that making Marryat House a proper home would be, because that would all be down to her.

By now, it was past midday and the sun was high in the sky, what a great time to try out the MG Zelda thought, going for the fun option. The car has been stationary for a while so may not start she thought, excusing herself from the prospect of a stint in the garden, that would have to wait. Finding the keys on the kitchen worktop and leaving the dogs in the garden, Zelda opened the garage doors and sat in the driver's seat. To her delight the engine fired into life at the first try, obviously Joe had done a good maintenance job. After backing out, she drove along the coast road delighting in the husky roar of the engine. When she came to the Anchor pub, she turned in and parked. It was quite busy inside with several men leaning on the bar, and three

couples sitting, eating at tables. Zelda studied the blackboard with its chalky written menu, offering local caught fish and various other options. 'Can I have the baked potato with tuna and salad?' She said to the girl behind the bar.

The girl nodded 'Anything to drink?' She asked looking at Zelda curiously.

'Just a tonic, lemon and ice please, I'm driving so that will be all thanks.' Zelda paid and took her drink over to a table by the window.

A tall man with his dark, thick hair tied back in a ponytail was staring at her and finally came over to her table. 'Excuse me for bothering you, but I saw you arrive, isn't that Tommy's MGB you were driving?'

What a small bubble this place is Zelda thought, everyone knows everyone's business, and if they don't, they ask. However, she smiled up at him and said, 'yes that is right, did you know Tommy?'

He held out his hand and shook hers. 'I am Cador, I used to help him with his garden. Tommy had no idea about gardens, so as I run a market garden and landscaping business with my brother, I was up there quite a lot.'

He gave Zelda a flashing smile showing a row of gleaming white teeth, and she noticed that as he smiled his dark brown eyes glinted like coal in the beam of a flashlight. 'Wonderful,' Zelda replied, 'perhaps you could do the same for me? I'm afraid the garden is all overgrown and needs a lot of attention. When could you start?'

Cador pulled out a mobile phone and scanned it intently. 'I could start tomorrow. I have a couple of days clear before we start another project.'

The girl from behind the bar came up with Zelda's order.

Cador gave another one of his smiles. 'I'll leave you to enjoy your meal then, until tomorrow.' With that, he turned on his heel and went back to his place at the bar.

The girl stared after him with obvious warmth, then bent down and whispered in Zelda's ear, 'Watch out for him, he's dynamite, all the girls are after him.'

Zelda laughed. 'Not this girl, I just want someone to do my garden.'

The food was excellent, and when she had finished, Zelda got up from the table, and smiling at several faces turned toward her, she left the Anchor and drove back along the coast road.

CHAPTER 3
PROGRESS

As Zelda was driving past the cottages, she spotted Jenny, pliers in hand, cutting dead roses and putting them in an overflowing wicker flower trug. Pulling up, she called out. 'Hi Jenny, how about coming for coffee tomorrow morning?'

Jenny straightened up and pushing her long blonde hair back from her face, she smiled in recognition. 'Zelda, yes I have a free day, so that would be lovely, ten thirty OK?'

'Fine, see you tomorrow, bye.' Zelda waved and drove back to Marryat House thinking perhaps soon, I will learn more about Tommy and how we are connected.

Back at the house the dogs were pleased to see her, and once she let them in they ran to the front door obviously wanting a walk. It was a lovely warm afternoon so it was a good time to explore some more. The tide was out, and now she could see that there were large rocks to the left hand side of the beach. Clambering over them and rounding the corner Zelda saw there was a small cove that could only be reached at low tide. Sea birds wheeled overhead, their shrill calls filled the air and stopped when they landed on their nests, dotted along the cliff. It was a lovely hidden cove. Was this the old smugglers haunt that Harrison had referred to the other morning?

The dogs bounded happily about at the water's edge, Zelda kicked off her shoes and paddled into the sea, it was a bit cold to start with but she stood and wiggled her toes, sinking slowly into the sand and after a while, the water felt