



The Shadow of the One

by the Daniel Judd

The days passed quickly. One seemed so bored here. That's what Jeannie called it, the bump, the One. It rarely seemed to move let alone kick, so it was hard to envisage it ever hatching, being real. Perhaps it was already passing judgement on their predicament and their future. Jeannie and the One versus the rest of the world.

Here she was again, in her postage stamp sized room, feet trying to kick out the wall and make it bigger, updating Phyll on the ups and downs of her new life in Emery Down. It had become a ritual. After church and the peeling of the spuds.

It was 2 months since she had arrived in the village. 3 days of solid sleeping were followed by a week of insomnia; the stillness of the night and the brightness of the stars the polar opposite to the business of the blitz. She strangely missed West Ham, where shafts of light only briefly punctured the blackness.

"Have you heard from anyone about Jay?" she wrote. It wasn't a question she urged for an answer, but he was the One's father. That first week, when she couldn't sleep, she found herself wondering if that's why she'd come here. To keep the possibility open, that he'd 'do the right thing' and they'd end up a proper family. Not that she'd much experience of that, but she did have some sad memories of the years Dad was around.

Jay hadn't even had that. That's what they used to talk about, family, or rather the lack of. He was a dreamer, too. That's how he came to mention Boulbee and his aunt. A glimmer of quicksilver in the dark. 'She'd look after me, find me a job,' he said.

But did Jeannie really need anyone? She'd tried to fit in. The going to church and the endless walks to Lyndhurst to get something forgotten, all part of Auntie's plan to get her accepted.

Maybe it was bravado or maybe a simple case of distrust, but she didn't need anyone. She was sure they didn't buy the story weaved, that her husband was missing in action, anyway.

The simple truth was she was no good at lying. But she'd cope. Maybe that would be the lie she could live, at least for now. Jeannie and the One versus the rest of the world. And Auntie