



The Light at the end of the Eiderdown

by Daniel Judd

Jeannie tugged at a nightdress sleeve. She couldn't tell which arm. After three days and three very long nights she'd grown accustomed to the scribble monster now sharing her bed. It thrust and jabbed, forcing itself into every inch of the eiderdown and several parts of Jeannie's anatomy and generally caused havoc. Last night was a particularly dark and stormy one.

"Psst Phyll". Nothing, "Phyll!" A grunt. "Phyllis June Wren."

A mop of hair and two smudged eyes emerged from the opposite end of the bed to the one Jeannie was talking to. This was confirmed when a yawn and a stretch placed a smelly foot in her face.

"What now?" the monster roared.

"Listen, have you heard the One about?" Jeannie asked, after extracting the foot from her face.

"The Auntie and the Bishop?" Phyll replied almost human.

"The little One. The baby"

"You really need to settle on a name. I've not heard a thing," said the monster, cattily.

"Precisely," said Jeannie emphatic but worried, all at the same time.

“Well, it is Sunday. Nothing much has changed then; you never know what day it is. She's probably been brainwashing the little One down at the church.”

“I gave up believing when the bombs started dropping. Besides I swore to leave it; I got fed up with the stares and mutters even when the One was just a bump.” Jeannie bolted to the bedroom door, prising it open to find her fears confirmed.

“Yep, she's gone. The witch.”

A long hour passed. An hour which mainly consisted of Phyll trying to calm Jeannie's rage. Variations on the theme of forgiveness and wasn't the peace and quiet quite nice.

You could gut the air with a fish knife when Auntie returned, but the silence was short lived. For the gifts came knocking by the time Auntie had peeled the spuds and put in the pie. Parcels of love for the bundle of joy. Exhausted with the lack of sleep, she let Phyll be hostess, while she cradled the exalted One.

“Have you decided on a name yet?” asked Sylvia Barton, not bothering to scald the twins for getting too free and easy with the One's impossibly tiny hands.

Much to Aunties and Phyll's surprise she answered. It was almost a surprise to her, too. Devilishly, she answered the question knowing it would prompt many more.

“Alice Hope Veal.”