

# RUINS

*To most people standing stones are simply a relic from the past, another old ruin which would eventually crumble into the earth losing their original identity.*

*To a select few, however, they are much more than that. With touch and wonderment, the chosen ones can feel their history unfold, knowing the stones are a precious portal into a world of times gone by.*

Recently single and ready for the next stage of her life Katy was ready to embrace all opportunities in this new world which was inviting her in. After the shackles of an unhappy relationship had been released, they'd unlocked a new mindset, carpe diem was her new byword.

She'd found herself checking into a quirky Airbnb in a beautiful, but fairly remote, Cotswold stone cottage. This was a first in many ways for her. Never before had she travelled by herself, let alone spent a week with no plans. All previous trips she'd made had been meticulously planned and researched and this felt like a refreshing new adventure. She would take the next 7 days as they came and wait for the experiences to unfold.

After a long day's drive there was still plenty of daylight remaining, so after unpacking and completing her exploration of her temporary home, she'd found a bottle of wine in the fridge and a welcoming note from the owners.

**"Please make yourself at home and we truly hope that you find our cottage as magical as we do"**

"Well, that's a great start" she said to no-one in particular and selected a glass and carried it together with the wine into the beautiful cottage garden.

A gorgeous bench nestled in the corner which drew her in, the soft floral cushion was inviting her to sit. The bench was surrounded by a pungent honeysuckle and she felt immediately at ease as if entering another world. Bird song was the only sound to be heard and she homed in to the nature around her. Any traffic noise or hustle and bustle from the outside world had unexpectedly evaporated. On reaching to turn off her mobile phone she noticed that there was no signal and the whole screen was blank, flat battery she assumed. She was not unduly concerned as this week was dedicated to finding herself some 'me time' and any outside contact wasn't a priority for her.

The wine had been chilled to perfection and she savoured every mouthful, sipping slowly as it's relaxing effects began to take hold. Relishing the solitude of the moment her eyes were suddenly drawn to an archway of roses and her curiosity having got the better of her, she decided to explore around the garden. To her surprise and wonderment, the garden opened

out beyond the archway and a path meandered into the distance. Gosh, this place really does keep on giving she whispered to herself.

There appeared to be the remains of a circular stone raised bed which had been creatively planted with an array of herbs. She made a mental note to clip some mint to make herself some herbal tea tomorrow. As she approached the aged planter, she traced her hand along the top of the mottled stones, now covered in lichen, and was surprised to feel a burst of what she could only describe as electricity. It wasn't an unpleasant feeling or even painful but the sensation of touch seemed to vibrate along her fingers. Wow, she said to herself, that wine is stronger than I thought!

The daylight was beginning to fail and she decided that any further exploring could wait until the morning. Dodging the midges which had begun to emerge, she made her way back through the rose arch and into the cottage to prepare her supper.

With supper completed and kitchen tidied, Katy felt the need of any early night and she barely recalled climbing the stairs and falling asleep in the cosy attic bedroom.

The following morning sunlight penetrated the flimsy curtains on the window and she reached out for her watch to check the time. She was sure she'd left it on the bedside table but it was nowhere to be seen this morning. Never mind she thought to herself, it will turn up somewhere and what difference does it make, I'm awake now, the birds are singing, the sun is shining and this was the start of a whole new day.

As she wandered into the kitchen to make her morning cuppa she experienced an odd sensation of the feeling of being watched. Katy looked over her shoulder, quickly checked that she'd remembered to lock the door after finishing off her wine the previous evening and she was happy that all was secure, but she really couldn't shake off the feeling of another's presence.

Tea on the patio would be the perfect spot to blow away the morning cobwebs she thought. As she tried to unlock the garden door, the key seemed to be jammed and it took a great deal of twisting and pushing before it finally released the catch. The door appeared to be the original cottage door and the key looked ancient, perhaps the lock needed to be oiled maybe?

The morning was already beginning to feel quite mysterious.

She seated herself on her cosy corner bench and breathed in the fresh country air, relishing the beauty of the nature that surrounded her. She closed her eyes for a moment trying to capture the scene before her and lodge it safely in her memory. She was startled by the clip clop of horses' hooves on the lane and her mind instantly took her back to school days and the plays she'd loved to participate in. On one occasion she'd been given the back stage job of sound production and she'd improvised the horse's hooves sound with two coconut halves clapped together. Happy days and lovely memories and she was determined to turn her new life around and experience many more.

The garden and morning air seemed to smell differently and she took her tea and wandered through the rose arch to explore some more. She was drawn to the circular stone planter she'd noticed last night and was amazed to see that it was now beautifully planted with an array of colourful summer bedding plants. Oh my goodness, she thought to herself, what is going on here? Surely this was full of herbs last night? A robin gently landed on the stones and unusually looked up and seemed to beckon her to follow.

Having decided just to lose herself to the mystery of this magical place, she followed her little friend as he flitted from side to side and visited the furthest corners of the garden. Here was her guide and she inwardly smiled. She recalled her granny's old saying that "Robins appear when loved ones are near" Well that could account for her feeling of not being alone and she accepted this thought.

A few tummy rumbles suggested to Katy that it was time for breakfast and she meandered her way passing the stone circular planter, through the archway to the cottage back door. The old timbered door was still ajar but strangely the stubborn key had been replaced by something much newer and shinier.

Something was just not right. It felt that her world was spinning and she couldn't quite catch up with some time shifts. What was she experiencing here?

Katy was determined to find some answers and after searching through the welcome literature had found a folder entitled "Useful information" and also a Visitor's book. These would make good reading after breakfast she thought.

Breakfast complete and on re-entering the garden Katy was shocked to see that her corner garden bench had been replaced by a simple stone structure. What WAS going on here? Nothing out here in this garden seemed to stay the same and it was as if the old wooden door was a portal into a different era. Trying to calm her nerves she took her seat on the stone seat and began to read through the visitor's book.

Page after page of complimentary comments from recent visitors met her eye, all expressing their delight and recommendations after a wonderful stay. Nothing appeared to give her any clue to explain her strange experiences and she was on the point of closing the book when one entry jumped out.

**"I had some very unique experiences staying in Henge House, difficult to explain in words but the garden is full of surprises and mysteries. All I can really say is just allow yourself to experience all of its history and keep your mind open, but most of all just enjoy the adventure"**

Well, thought Katy to herself, that really does explain things a little. Ever since she had arrived, she had felt the intrigue of this homely place. She hadn't felt intimidated or threatened in the slightest, but her curious spirit longed to know more.

Thumbing through the “Useful information” booklet the pieces began to fall into place. A really detailed history of the house and garden revealed that numerous dwellings had been constructed over the centuries on this very site. The garden walls and structures had been built using ancient stones gathered from around the surrounding countryside and the current owners believed the foundations to be from prehistoric times.

Katy then recalled the owner’s note welcoming her to this “**magical place**”. The owners must know how special this place is too and Katy couldn’t wait to see what happened next. I wanted to escape and be at one with nature she thought and oh boy my wish is coming true. The remainder of her stay was going to be the very tonic she’d yearned for and she looked forward to surrendering herself to its mysteries.

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***Do you believe; and where do you fall?***