SAMANTHA

Samantha had moved into a luxurious old age home called The Manor House. She was eighty-six and childless, a remarkably pretty woman who looked much younger than her years. The Manor House was situated in the pretty village of Come Again in England. It was a sixteenth century building set in a huge park. The gardens were magnificent with flowered walkways, fountains and statues set in enclosed areas with rustic gazebos or comfortable seating. Although The Manor House was a listed building so that the outside could not be altered, the interior had been altered extensively. The residents' apartments were on the first floor and a lift had been installed and ensuite bathrooms added to the residents' elegant rooms. The Great Hall and Salons on the ground floor remained as they had been when it was built, full of beautiful antiques and huge paintings. However, the Great Hall was now the residents' dining room and small antique tables seating four, filled the room and were set with silver cutlery, embossed napkins and crystal wine glasses. Samantha had signed in as a widow with no dependants. This was not true. She had woken one morning to find Patrick was nowhere in the house or garden. She was distraught and called the local police. "We will put him on the missing persons list, Ma'am, there are no reports of casualties at present."

If residents wanted to go to the nearest town to do some shopping or meet old friends, a limousine service was

provided. If residents were bored, there was a well-stocked library and a reading room. The beautiful grounds were a delight and there were plenty of country walks for the energetic types. Pianists, instrumentalists, ballet and Scottish dancers came in the evenings to entertain the residents and there were balls and speakers on many subjects. Samantha made use of all these facilities. She was popular, very pretty and had many admirers. On her first Valentine's Day, the butler brought her a large stack of cards.

In the park there was a chapel, built of stone at the same time as the Manor House had been built. Samantha and Patrick were fervent Christians. Patrick was a farmer with extensive fields of sheep and cattle, of which the cows were bred for their milk and cheese, and heifers for the meat market.

Every day Samantha went to the chapel to pray. Kneeling with her hands clasped in prayer, she said, "Dear Father God, please help me to find out what happened to Patrick. Is he alive or dead? I am so very unhappy, although I pretend to be a happy widow. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, your dearly loved Son, Amen."

She missed Patrick enormously and spent hours going over what could have happened. One day, coming out of The Fancy Cakes where she had enjoyed a delicious cheesecake and coffee, she met an old man with a long beard, unkempt long grey hair and dirty clothes. “Please help me, Ma’am,” he said. “I am very hungry.” She started back and stared at him in amazement. It was Patrick! His voice was undeniable! “Is your name Patrick James,” she asked?” “No. Ma’am, he replied, I am Joe Smith.” “Come with me,” Samantha said, “I will help you.” She led him to the Health Spa where she often went. “Hello Mary,” she said to the young assistant, “I need your help, but you must please not tell anyone about this. I am not a widow and have found my husband. He appears to be suffering from amnesia. He is the filthy old man sitting in the lobby. Please see he has a haircut, is shaved and has the full spa treatment. I am going to buy him some clothes. I will also book him into the Coach Inn and visit him every day.” And this is what happened for two weeks until Patrick suddenly disappeared. Samantha was devastated. Where was he?

Patrick had suddenly regained his memory. He went to the hotel’s desk and asked who had paid for him to stay at the Inn. “We don’t know,” replied the man at the desk, “except that she is a pretty woman of about eighty-five who came to visit you every day.” Patrick was shocked and began to search for her. He went to their old home on the farm and

found it had been sold and there was no forwarding address. He went to the cathedral, knelt and prayed, “Father, please help me to find Samantha, in Jesus Christ’s name, Amen.”

After that, he went to his bank and asked for new credit cards, only to be told he must prove he was who he claimed to be. “How old are you?” he was asked. “What is your ID number? Who are you married to? Who is your doctor? What is your house address? And, at last, “Thank you very much! How many cards do you want Sir?” Next, he bought a new small Mercedes, and began his search, calling old friends and asking them if they had heard from Samantha. No one had. “Where on earth has she gone?” he asked himself in desperation and went back to the cathedral to pray. There was another person kneeling in prayer. “Dear God, please help me to find Patrick,” Samantha prayed. And both their prayers were answered!