**Serendipity**

‘The faculty of making fortunate discoveries by accident.’

I had checked the tides and the weather too and knew that the strand that joins Asparagus Island to the cliffs at Kynance Cove would emerge just before sunset. I arrived with a few hours to spare and checked out a series of viewpoints that I would use later when the warmth of the sun’s light and its direction were just right. With that done I still had a couple of hours before I got into position for the photographs that I would take and so I headed off along the coast path as it plummets and rises like some monstrous sea serpent emerging from the blue green ocean, its sinuous, rollercoaster body sculpted from the subtle greens, blues and pinks of the dry serpentine rock, in vivid contrast to the glittering colours that it takes on when drenched by the sea. The monster’s body, not scaly, but covered, instead in wild grasses and heathers, like the sea creatures of Medieval legend that took on the form of an island and would wait until enough unfortunate sailors had landed on them before plunging to the depths carrying their human prey with them to be drowned and then devoured.

I am in a waking day dream, I am not consciously looking but I am also somehow aware. When I am in this mood I will notice the smallest and most beautiful of things, the perfect rose amongst a whole garden of them, the stranded jellyfish like a piece of amethyst cast up onto a shingle shore or the one piece of driftwood on a storm ravaged beach that has been sculpted by its ongoing battle with the sea into a figurehead worthy of a Viking Long ship.

The art of being in this mood is to be found in the not trying too hard. If I let my mind wander then something will reveal itself, simply trust that it will happen and that part of me that is aware will awaken the rest of me when it has found that one thing that is just right.

The path descends to a stream and I cross the bridge and follow the stream to the cove where the fresh water within it is finally embraced by the sea. In its final act the water tumbles down a waterfall and then flows through a steep, sided valley before arriving at the wave smoothed rocks of the shoreline. The waterfall is beautiful, its water clear and sparkling and the rocks which it falls down are bejewelled in moss. I stop to take its photograph, my tripod precariously balanced within the rushing water itself. I frame the photographs so that the bottom of the image is the water just before it tumbles downwards and the top is the foam created as the water enters the plunge pool below. Fighting my anxiety about losing another camera to a river I go from composition which feels like an art and is instinctive to the technicalities needed in order to make the photograph work, polariser or not, where to focus, what is the key light reading, check the camera’s readings against the reading of my light meter, if there are differences between the two which should I trust, what shutter speed will best reflect the motion of the water, does that work with using minimum aperture for maximum depth of field, is the tripod secure, exposure may be difficult so is it best to try a range of different ones? Now to some what I have just described might sound dull or even a constraint on being creative but for me both parts are essential. It unites the rational Tim with playful Tim and both are equally necessary if the final image has a chance of being able to express what the whole Tim wants to express.

I pack the camera equipment back into its rucksack and then follow the path that follows the stream but at a height above it. The path may have been an old miner’s track and it reaches a dead end in a series of granite buildings that cling precipitously to a cliff which stands above the cove below. It’s time to daydream again and I rapidly slip back into that place that I described earlier. And while descending the path I see ‘it’. Something in the valley below that looks like as if it doesn’t belong, something that looks like burnished metal, something that looks as if it made of the clouds in the sky rather than flowing water. I do not know what it is but it is near the foot of the waterfall that I have just photographed. The valley is steep sided and covered in loose rocks. There is no path here to the stream but I know that I should be able to pick my way down to it for I am strong and agile. I scramble down carefully avoiding treading on the ferns and heathers that have made this difficult place their home and then I am there. My burnished metal is a pool just below the waterfall that has been filled with foam, but foam that flows in a series of sinuous and entwined forms. The low sunlight has reflected off the water but also revealed its textured surface and cast shadows of the nearby rocks across it. It is an extraordinary sight and I try a number of angles, lenses and viewpoints to do it justice but the best view is simply to shoot from directly above from where I hope it will be impossible to tell if this photograph is one of water or one of the heavens. One particular shadow cast has the form of an animal and I frame the picture so that it contains only the foaming water and the shadow as if my picture is of the silhouette of a great beast against a sky full of cirrus clouds.

Serendipity, if I hadn’t decided to drive to Kynance that day, if I hadn’t been early leaving no time to explore, if I hadn’t taken the path that followed the stream and which ended in a dead end and if photographing the waterfall itself had been enough and I had packed up then and returned to what I had planned to shoot? Then I would never have seen the pool that looked as if it was made of burnished metal and you would never get to see what I saw too.

I returned to the cliffs above Kynance Cove and took a series of photographs of the tombolo that emerged at there at sunset. They are good, I think you’d like them actually but none of them are as good as those of the burnished pool revealed to me by serendipity.