

## Discovery Hill

I was trying to remember when I arrived in Discovery Hill; it was quite a while ago but I can't really put a figure to it. Years ago certainly.

Yes. Years. It's a nice place to be.

Yes I'd definitely say it's nice.

I think I saw it from a train quite a long time before I actually came here. I have a memory of some modern single-storey buildings in yellowy brick and a road that looked like it should lead to a level crossing but didn't - just to some empty trackside land. There was a sign saying "Discovery Hill" in white lettering on a dark blue ground. I thought it looked a nice place but I can't recall why. Just an impression. It's not actually *on* a hill either. Quite the contrary - you get a sense of the wider city around you but there's never really very much to see, there's no vistas. There's no views.

It's on the edges of zones 5 and 6. There's a railway going through but there's no station. People don't seem to visit that often. Or at all.

The signal here is really bad. I can hear people on my phone but they don't seem to be able to hear me at all; sometimes they seem to be having conversation with other people and I can hear *their* voices as well. It's like when you used to get crossed lines in the old days.

What was I doing in the days when they had crossed lines? I can't recall; trying to 'phone someone presumably. I'm sure I used to know a lot more people then. I used to speak to more people.

When Stella rings I can hear her be she can't hear me - it's like she's just thinking aloud and I get to hear all of it. The world she lives in sounds very different to mine, full of frightening things, floods and fires and epidemics and angry people. The trains still come by. I sometimes stand by the railway where the sign is. I can hear her best standing there but she still can't hear me. She'll say "Dad, I wish you were still here I wish you could hear me..." I'm sure she'll come and visit me here when she can. Then we can go and find Hazel. She'd been here but she's not here now. She went somewhere else. If Stella was here with me I'm sure we could find her.

I have this odd idea she turned into a bird. A swift. Silly of me to think such a thing.

There's a Co-op on the High street - such as it is. Just a few shops but enough for everything. There's a little bakery and a café, a locksmith, though I've never seen anyone go in there. It's not as if there's anyone to lock out. There's a charity shop where I have occasionally bought things - well I bought this jacket there I think and I must have got other things there. I can't think there's anywhere else to have got them, though things seem to last a long time. Maybe I don't do things that wear them out any more.

The other day I found a young man walking down the road that goes to the railway line. He looked thin and undernourished. he was very pale - grubby looking. Not the sort of person you see around here at all - not that I'm passing judgement or anything. I went up to him and said "Are you alright? Are you looking for something?" and I saw as I got nearer he was carrying a knife in his hand some kind of kitchen knife. Quite long though. He wasn't brandishing it threateningly, just holding it at arm's length as if he was trying to work out what it was or where it came from. I asked him again "are you lost?" and he turned towards me and I saw he was crying so maybe he *was* lost in some way; certainly he was in distress. Then he turned away as if he hadn't heard me and started walking

quite quickly towards the track where the crossing should be. Past the sign where the road turns to gravel then onto the tracks and across to the other side. I wondered whether I should stop him, because its not safe and we mustn't cross there, but he got to the other side. There was no train.

It looks much the same over the other side of the track - modern single-storey buildings in yellowy brick and a road that looked like the kind of road that would lead away from a level crossing . I wondered whether I should go after him and make sure he was alright; the thought crossed my mind. "cross the tracks, see if he's alright". I remember it distinctly but I didn't cross - its not safe and we shouldn't cross there. I suppose I was distracted by something because when I looked again he'd gone so I walked back and I went to the café.

The young woman who works there is very pleasant. Very polite. She always seems to be smiling, though not smiling *at* anyone directly if you know what I mean; sometimes she doesn't even seem to see me, but she still smiles.