

A Proper Dog Walk

I let Daren put on Bramble's harness and lead. Dog and boy adore each other; our after-school walks on a Thursday are the highlight of the week. I put on the dark glasses I always wear outside. Daren says I'm the coolest gran he's ever seen.

We walk to the beach. I'm not as steady as I was, but Daren leads me, supporting my arm while holding Bramble's lead in his other hand. I can smell and hear the sea before we round the corner onto the coast path. There is a bench where I like to sit. I ease myself down, take off the glasses and close my eyes. I like to feel the sun on my face.

"Come on Bramble!"

Daren runs off. I don't need to see to know that Bramble is still at my side. "Go Bramble," I say, and so, released, he is off chasing Daren down to the shingle. This is exactly what Bramble needs. A proper walk. I hear them crunch over the stones, and the jangle of Bramble's ball with the little bell inside. There is the soft breathing of the sea as the waves surge in then sigh back rattling the stones behind them. I could fall asleep if it weren't for the occasional screech of gulls.

I press the talk button on my watch: it tells me it is time to return. I call Bramble, and instantly he is back on duty. Back in the harness, my faithful guide.