

## **An Unlikely Pair**

One has a chronic condition which wheezes his breathing. The other has a chronic condition that messes up her ability to regulate blood sugars. Best not get started on age and arthritis.

Tree roots' bare bones curve across the towpath; stones muscle the rain's muddy entrails, slowing everything except the still water.

He is slightly breathless; she takes glucose to fuel enough energy for her next steps.

They pause to look through the whispering reeds, at the baby ducklings, the red-beaked moorhens and their own silvered reflections.

Their different paces, pulses and personal difficulties make an unlikely pairing, yet still they walk and talk, walk and pause together.

Blossom snows the trees and ground. Late-afternoon light tattoos leaves onto their clothes and skin, wrinkled with years of weather and walking.

Behind them in the hedgerow, an oak entwined with ivy – unfurling new green hearts in spring, blessing the autumn with acorns.

A yellow butterfly flickers across. She laughs as she points it out to him; he looks at her instead and smiles.

Both are breathless now with wonder, both re-energised by the dancing leaf-light and the sun's warmth on their faces.

They reach a puddle as wide as the path, with no way to gauge its depth, only a rippled surface of sky and cloud.

He holds out an arm to help her over. Hand in hand, they continue onwards, leaning into each other's knots and gnarls like oak and ivy.