

**The  
Fabulous Irish Adventures  
Of  
Aoife and Niamh**

**Where has the Time Gone?**

## Chapter 1 – Antibiotics

Aoife was bored – her sister Niamh was a little bored as well. They were at the cottage in Castlerabbit. Today was Sunday and the outside weather was dark and cloudy and it looked like it was definitely going to rain.

Aoife looked out of the cottage window and in particular she put her hand up to touch the black wooden frame that surrounded window.

She looked at the window frame and then onto the surrounding stones. “This really was an old cottage” thought Aoife, “just look at all those stones that make up these walls. Each one is different.”

Now Aoife had been a little poorly during the previous week with one of her sore ears. She had been to visit the doctor and he had given her some antibiotic medicine.

As it turned out, she didn't take the medicine as she started to feel a little better the day after she'd been to see the doctor and of course her Father had paid for the courtesy.

Not surprisingly, Niamh actually thought there was nothing wrong with her in the first place – and that had caused a bit of trouble between them to say the least.

It was true to say however, that Aoife was much better this week but that made no difference - she didn't want to go out into that dark garden and neither did Niamh.

So Aoife sat looking out of the window and pondering on its old black wooden frame and the crazy patterns of the stones that made up the crazy walls.

Niamh was playing a little game of dominos with herself. “Not much fun” she thought but better than being cold.

The Cottage belonged to Dad and Aoife and Niamh went there to stay with Dad every two weeks. The girls were always happy to go there, as they would be able to play and explore where they wanted. The cottage had been an old farm building that had been completely renovated only last year.

This cottage was a combination of two very interesting halves. The half first was new and clean and white with a new kitchen and a stainless steel oven and normal modern kitchen stuff.

The other was much older with crazy stone walls, high windows with little arches and old stone tiled floors. There was an upstairs part, which was part of the old half but had been painted. This was a bedroom and the roof of the bedroom sloped and followed the shape of the roof.

This was Dad’s bedroom.

At the top of the stairs opposite the bedroom door was a little attic double-door, which led into the eaves of the roof.

Aoife was still looking lazily at the old wooden windows. She looked carefully at the crazy stone walls, her eyes following each of the shapes,

The person – the builder Aoife presumed - who had renovated the cottage had left these stones pretty much as they were – or at least as they had been when the cottage was originally made back in goodness knows when. Each one seemed to have its own special place.

She stood up and started to walk slowly around the room touching each of the stones – mainly to find if any of them were loose.

Just as she had gotten all the way round the room, she put her hand on a stone that moved.

She stopped, tilted her head and then grabbed the stone with two hands and with a little bit of a push and pull managed to work it loose.

Some of the old cement crumbled onto the floor and it came out. Then she was able to lift it out.

Niamh looked up and said “what *are* you doing Aoife, the whole house will come down on our heads...”

Aoife turned her head – still holding the stone with both hands. She looked at Niamh screwed her eyes up – It will be fine Niamh she snapped but secretly she gulped at the thought of the cottage around their ears.

She carefully put down the freed stone and peered into the hole. It was not, as she might have worried, a direct hole to the outside world. The thought of the cottage coming down was one thing but having a large hole in your living room would also be greeted by her father with more than a little concern.

Thankfully, there was another wall of stones beyond a gap. “Wow, this cottage has two walls!” she exclaimed to Niamh, Niamh was still playing and had lost interest.

She gently put her hand in and felt the base of another big stone – like a little ledge. It was very dusty and she brought her now equally dusty hand out and rubbed it on her nice now dusty red skirt.

“Tsk Nothing there” she said with a sigh. She lifted the stone back into position and looked down at the dusty mess on the floor. She sighed again. “I’ll clean that later”.

She wandered back to her chair and sat down to look out of the window again. It was raining now and those heavy grey clouds meant it was going to stay.

Her eyes began to feel heavy and as the rain began to collect in bigger and bigger droplets on the glass, she fell quite easily into a light sleep – her eyes, dreaming gently, moved round in their lids as the rain chattered its gentle words onto the window pane.

## Chapter 2 – The Explorers

A noise disturbed her and she sat up. She rubbed her eyes. Niamh had gone.

“Niamh, Niamh where are you” she yelled.

“I’m in the kitchen Aoife” came back the reply.

Niamh was indeed in the kitchen poking about the cupboards being equally bored. Seeing that Aoife had fallen asleep, she decided not to shout something about the cottage falling down – and had mooched off.

Aoife stood up and followed her into the kitchen. Niamh was standing on a chair holding the bottle of the antibiotics that Aoife had not taken.

Aoife put her hands on her hips – “still think I was not sick then Niamh?” she said in a scornful tone.

Niamh looked her, “yes, no, well whatever. I was just looking at the bottle, I’m bored”.

Aoife paused for thought and then let out a burst of excitement – “I know” she said – giving Niamh a little bit of a fright - “Lets see if we can find something interesting in this cottage. What about the attic. Have you seen that yet?”

Niamh looked up and said – “Attic? No I’ve only seen it when Dad was in there getting some paint.”

“Paint?” said Aoife – “wow... there must something else up there that might be more interesting than that.”

Niamh paused, climbed down from the chair and walked past Aoife – “What’ya waiting for? lets go”

Aoife sighed again and following Niamh, they climbed the small wooden staircase leading to the small landing.

They had to be careful though, the builder who had made this little wooden staircase had forgotten to put any glue on the banisters and if you were not careful bits of it would fall off.

They stood on the landing – looked at each other, and looked at the wooden doors leading to the attic.

Niamh opened the doors and looked in. “I think we are going to need a torch” she said, “its really dark in there”.

Aoife remembered she had seen a little silver torch in a drawer in the bedroom dressing table and she went to fetch it. She switched it on and pointed it into the darkness of the attic.

Leaning forward, she stuck her little head in and looked round behind the doors. It was small alright and she realised that they would have to be careful.

The light of the torch revealed a water tank and some bits of wood on the floor. She could also see the big wooden timbers that made up the main part of the

cottage roof and the flat boards that the outside slate tiles rested on.

“Its small in here” she said to Niamh, “we will need to crawl on these big timbers but I can see a way to get along the floor.” Aoife knew that you must always step on the wooden timbers and not the flat floor in an attic.

If you did you were likely to end up in the kitchen rather more quickly than you or more importantly, your Father would like!

She warned “Niamh, we need to be careful when crawling on the attic floor, there are bits of wood and nails.” Niamh rolled her eyes – “OK Aoife, I know a nail when I see it”

“Right well just follow me,” she said.

Aoife then Niamh clambered into the attic. They struggled to get their legs and arms onto the floor – Niamh bumped her head when she put her hand on a nail. “Ouch!” she yelled – sat up and bumped her head. “Ouch!” Aoife was about to say something but she just sighed again and pointed the torch into the darkness.

Once they were both inside, one of the attic doors closed slowly behind them. A shaft of light showed them where the doors were but the torch was the only light ahead of them.

They made their way along the eave of the roof.



Aoife was shining the torch into different parts of the attic, but so far here was nothing of interest. She kept crawling quite slowly and making sure her knees and hands were balancing on the wooden timbers.

Niamh could see even less, she saw the outline of Aoife's bottom – “not interesting in the least” she thought.

They turned a corner in the attic and Aoife could see right along a small dark passage way between a wall and the angle of the roof. She could not see the next corner she shone the torch but it was just blackness at the end.

“Niamh” – she said quietly, “look at that we can crawl right along there and that will take us round the attic”

As Niamh turned the corner, she looked back and could see the already small shaft of light disappearing as the other door closed. There was a draft and then it was completely dark apart from the torchlight.

“Aoife – the doors just closed” she said in a slightly nervous voice.

Aoife turned round and pointed the torch into the Niamh's tummy. “It's the wind” she said, “its going to push the doors closed. Gosh Niamh don't be such a scardy cat”

With that, she turned and continued crawling along the passage way. Niamh gave a small sigh and just followed the bottom with torchlight ahead of it.

By now the rain was beating quite hard on the roof and the girls could barely hear themselves what with the heavy noise of the rain falling on the tiles.

“It is quite scary really” Aoife thought but she was not going to say that to Niamh! Onwards they crawled into the darkness.

A crack of thunder in the distance, Aoife stopped. Then it seemed to come into sight – she could see the other corner.

They reached the corner and turned. It was another passage, almost exactly the same as the one they were on. Well perhaps it seemed a little different. The timbers they were crawling on seemed to be getting more jagged.

“Niamh, look at that” said Aoife and Niamh cranked her head over Aoife’s head and looked round. It was the same passage – almost exactly the same in fact. We must be going round in a circle said Niamh. Aoife could see that now – if she crawled along this passage and with one more turn, then they should be able to see the same attic doors they came in on.

Aoife did notice one thing though. As they crawled along the passage-way – just after that rumble of thunder, it had gotten slightly colder.

“Come on Niamh”, said Aoife, “I’m getting cold and there really is nothing to see in this attic, it’s just too small.”

So they continued to crawl along the passageway and when they turned the next corner they saw the closed doors.

Well at least they thought they were the doors. They were older perhaps and less – well less perfect.

The doors they had opened were a light pine colour. When Aoife shone the torch on these doors, they seemed to be made of dark wood and instead of being a single panel, they were made from individual planks of wood – like floorboards.

By now Aoife was very puzzled. Maybe these were different doors, but they had come full circle and the doors they came in from should have been just here.

She turned to Niamh and pointed to them. Niamh was by now getting impatient.

“Oh for goodness sake Aoife, lets just get out of here. Its cold and I would quite like to get back to my game of dominoes and get something to eat, I’m hungry.”

“OK, OK” said Aoife breathing a deep sigh and with that, she pushed the doors open.

Her eyes squinted into the sunlight and her mouth fell open as she let out a gasp at what she saw. This was

clearly not the same cottage they had just been living in five minutes ago.

### Chapter 3 – A Timely Shock

Aoife sat frozen in the doorway. Niamh who was just about to give her a huge push out of the attic could now see what Aoife was seeing and said “Oh my God”.

The little hallway that used to be at the top of the wooden stairs was now a little hallway at the top of what appeared to be dark stone steps. Everything was different. There was no skylight window. There was no roof - what was in its place was straw – or what looked like straw.

Aoife looked up, turned to Niamh and said – “Look at that, it’s a thatched roof.” Niamh was still just sitting in the doorway unable to even speak. At last she said – “where are we Aoife – where is Dad’s cottage ?”

Aoife turned to her – and seeing a little girl with a mouth open wide and her jaw on the wooden floor, cupped her hand, raised her arm and gently pushed Niamh’s mouth closed.

“No idea” she said, “but this is much more interesting than a tin of old paint don’t you think?”

Niamh moved her head to the side and made a grimace – “yes well very funny Aoife but where the heck are we? “Where are my dominoes....”

Aoife snapped “Oh shut up about these dominoes, if I think I think where we are, they might not have been even invented yet.”

Niamh looked a little surprised at this and started to get herself out of the doorway.

Both girls managed to lift themselves up and came out into the hallway.

Opposite stood a door. Not the nice new wood panelled door of the bedroom in Dad's cottage, but a dark wooden panel – the same kind as the attic doors – like floor boards with a large black metal handle on it.

The walls were all stone, the same stone as Dad's cottage however and the staircase was made of stone too. This was more of a smooth dark stone with about ten steps but with no rickety banister.

They could hear some voices but were not sure where they were coming from. This cottage didn't smell quite as nice as the one they had been in.

They reached out for the metal handle on the door in front of them and unlatched it. The door opened and felt heavy, very heavy – they both had to push it as it creaked open offering a lot of resistance.

Given the thatched roof and stone staircase, they certainly had not expected to find a modern bedroom with a computer, duvet cover and a little en-suite toilet. They didn't!

What they did find were four single beds all with big blankets on them. Aoife could not see a pillow though,

more of a smaller blanket rolled up. At the end of the room was a little window – a wooden window frame with a very strange pane of glass in it. The window pane was rather knobbly and uneven and not at all easy to see out of.

There was barely room to move with these beds and when you looked up all you could see was straw forming the roof. It was indeed a strange situation for the girls as the bedroom they were standing in was almost the same size as Dads bedroom.

Niamh backed out of the room – she was starting to look worried. “Aoife, where are we she said? This is totally weird.”

Aoife walked past her and stood at the top of the stone stairs. “Come on Niamh; let’s find out what this is all about.”

They started down the stairs and could see that they were indeed in a stone cottage. However this stone cottage was more like the stony half of Dads cottage and where the other new half should have been, there was another wall with a door.

They went along the corridor into what should have been their own downstairs bedroom. It was the kitchen – or it looked like a kitchen. It had a wooden table and a cooker in the corner. There were some bags on the floor – they were big black cloth bags full of potatoes. The potatoes spilled out onto the floor beside the cooker.

The window that was in their bedroom was still there and in the same position. It looked like the same kind of black wood. The glass was just as uneven as the one upstairs though.

Aoife said “There must be people here, we can find them and ask them.”

She went out of the kitchen and turned to go into the room next door. She was just about to reach for the handle when the door latch clicked and the door creaked open away from them.

Both Aoife and Niamh jumped when they saw the face of a little girl. She was about the same height as Niamh, with long blond curly hair and a slightly dirty face.

The little girl looked up, saw the girls and let out a short scream – she jumped back and shut the door again.

Slowly, she opened it again, Aoife and Niamh just stayed rooted to the spot.

“Who, who are you?” she said in a very shaky voice and strange accent.

Aoife recognised this accent - it was Scottish!

“Hello” she said – “my name is Aoife and this is my sister Niamh.”



“How did you get here, what are you doing in my house?” said the little girl with the slightly dirty face.

“We don’t know” said Aoife, “we were just playing upstairs and we ended up in your attic.”

The little girl stepped forward a small careful step – a friendly step and Aoife felt a little more comfortable.

“My name is Lizzy” she said and smiled.

She stretched out her hand and Aoife took it and shook it gently.

Aoife moved closer to her and whispered. “We have no idea where we are or what we are supposed to be doing. This cottage looks like our Dads Cottage but it’s smaller and it looks a lot older. Can you tell us where we are Lizzy?”

Lizzy looked at them with thoughtful eyes. She looked at their long hair and their lovely clean clothes and those shoes, my goodness me, those shoes. She looked at those long blue pantaloons with sparkly pink belt and that lovely red skirt.

Then Lizzy said – “We be in a village called Castlerabbit. Do you know of it?”

Aoife almost jumped and said, “Yes, yes Castlerabbit, that’s where we live and that’s where our Dads cottage is. We must have found a secret passage or something. Let’s go outside and we can find our way back.”

The little girl looked a little confused but she led them out of the big front door – which was like all the other doors the girls had seen so far. Like floorboards... with a big metal handle.

They went outside into the yard. The sun was shining here – the area looked the same – same hills and sky but everything else seemed different. The house across the way was gone – a small stone cottage was in its place and there was no road – it was a very dirty dirt track.

Aoife and Niamh put their hands up above their eyes and squinted into the sunlight. Niamh whispered, “Look at that, the garden has gone, it’s a huge field now and look, there are sheep and lambs in it.”

Now, Aoife always liked sheep and in that moment she forgot where she was and ran off into the field to have a look at one of the lambs that was sitting on the ground – presumably enjoying the sunshine.

Niamh ran after her. “Aoife, come back” she shouted. Aoife was too busy heading for the lamb.

The mother sheep was looking a bit worried too and started to run towards the lamb. Aoife stopped in her tracks and turned to stare at the horse and cart that was moving slowly on her left.

“Wow” she thought – “I wonder where that came from.”

She forgot about the lamb, which was just as well because the mother sheep was looking a little angry and let out a big bahhhhh.

Niamh ran up beside her and she too was staring at the horse and cart. Lizzy came up beside them and started waving at the driver of the cart. He waved back and cracked a big whip and the horses pulled up to stop. The man jumped off the cart and came over towards them.

“Papa”, Lizzy shouted and ran to meet him. They met and hugged each other. Then they both walked over to where the girls were standing.

He was a tall man with thick black hair – he was thin but he had big muscles on his arms. His face was brown – well tanned and he had a big black moustache.

The man looked down at the girls and in a big booming voice said – “Well how be you young girls, where did you come from – where is your carriage? Be you visiting the manor farm? You have very fine clothes, so you must be visiting the squire yes?”

Aoife and Niamh were somewhat at a loss to answer as they were now starting to realise that although they seemed to be in the same place, everything had changed. This was not their Dad’s cottage but someone else’s cottage and Lizzy was living there instead, with her dad.

Aoife just stammered and said – “We don’t know, we were playing in our cottage and we went into the attic and and and... “ she stopped. What would she tell him? None of this made any sense at all.

Aoife said “Hello my name is Aoife and this is my sister Niamh.” Niamh quietly said “hello” and asked the man if she could have a drink of Fanta.

The man looked a little puzzled and said, well we have some beer – you can have that if you like. Niamh looked totally indignant and shocked– “Beer she said ? I am not allowed to drink beer... “

Aoife said – “do you know where we are? What is the place? It looks very similar to our Dad’s cottage but it’s all different – where are we?”

“You are in Castlerabbit” said the man “and this is my farmhouse. I am a farmer. Have you been here before then?”

Aoife was simply lost for words. “I don’t know, maybe” she said.

Aoife had a puzzling thought at the back of her mind. She couldn’t quite let herself believe it – the horse and cart, the old style clothes – no roads – she recognised this from her school history books. How people travelled and lived before cars and buses and trains and video games.

What year is this she said with a little trepidation?

The man smiled and then laughed – “That is a strange question young lady – Do you not know of our year? It be six years past eighteen hundred.

Aoife paused and looked up into the sky – she worked out this strange way of saying a year and then her eyes began to open wide.

“Eighteen o’ six?” she whispered to the man.

“Yes young lady that be the year and today be the fourteenth day of the month of May and it do be Wednesday.”

Aoife’s puzzling thought began to make its way quite quickly to the very front of her mind and then to very quickly become the only thought in her mind. She turned to Niamh.

Now, Niamh was a little younger than Aoife and had not quite grasped the year thing just yet. “Its 1806” said Aoife. “1806?” Said Niamh. “Does that mean its 6 o’clock?” (She had grasped the time thing)

“No, not exactly” whispered Aoife, “its 1806 – the year - and about 200 years ago.”

“200 years ago where” said Niamh.

Aoife paused and said patiently – “Niamh, we seem to be in Castlerabbit about 200 years ago. We seem to have gone back in time. I think there was something

strange about that attic – we went in one door and came out the same door but 200 years earlier – it’s the only explanation, weird as it may sound.”

Niamh turned her head and started looking at the lamb and the mother sheep. She was a little cross. “I Don’t know what you mean Aoife!” she said.

Aoife grabbed her arm. In a slightly less patient voice she began... “Look Niamh, We have gone back in time; before we were both born; before Dad was born and probably before his dad and his dad’s dad.”

“This is what things used to be like Niamh.”

Niamh rolled her eyes and just bent down and stroked the lamb’s head. Mother sheep seemed to be a little wary but the lamb didn’t run away.

Aoife let her arm go and snapped back “Oh never mind, you will get it.”

Aoife turned to the man and said – “Mr, we are lost – we don’t know how we got here.”

She was not too sure whether she should say any more because the man might get a bit cross or just not believe them.

“Gosh, she said, this is a lovely farm.”

“Lost did you say?” said the man.

“Where do you live and how did you get here young girls? “

“We live in Kilkenny” said Aoife confidently – that bit was true. “We got lost while we were out playing” that bit was not so true – not quite.

“You be from Kilkenny,” said the man sounding astonished – “that be a good six miles from here. How did ye possibly get up here girls?”

Niamh was listening to this conversation not quite sure if she understood. She looked up from the sheep towards the man and said – “why by car of course Mr.”

Aoife quickly pretended to cough loudly. “Actually” she said, “we came up by horse and car...t” finishing the word a little better.

“We were visiting our Aunt eh Aunt eh Molly when we em accidentally fell off the cart.”

The man looked a little puzzled and then looked a little disbelieving – Aoife could see him raising one of his big bushy eyebrows.

“Maybe you could help us get home said Aoife – maybe we could have a ride in your cart with the horse?”

The man looked at her – “Why did you want to know the year he asked, what year did you think it was? Have you been away to England?”

Without thinking Aoife said “Well I flew to Scotland with my Dad last month.”

The man was about to open his mouth in surprise at this fantastic claim that she could fly, but he stopped, gave a big smile and said, “Hello my name is Jeremiah and this is my daughter Lizzy.” Our families came across to Ireland from Scotland about 20 years ago. We wanted to farm in Ireland – we are both Scottish though. Come into our house he said and we can have some beer and some scones. Lizzy, go and call your mother and tell her we have guests.”

Lizzy ran off towards the house.

Aoife and Niamh followed her. Jeremiah followed them he was a little concerned for them.



## Chapter 4 – Beer and Scones

They all headed back into the house. The sheep and the lamb didn't follow though. As Aoife was walking towards the house she could see without any doubt, that this was the same as Dad's cottage – smaller and with a straw – a thatch roof - as she corrected herself - but basically, it was the same thing.

Her head was spinning. How did this happen, how did she manage to go into a dusty attic and end up being a place that was two hundred years before she was even born? She began to think of all sorts of questions she could ask – it certainly would be a great story for school and for the teacher.

Then she began to think – “Hang on, I wonder how are we going to get back? I wonder if it's going to work in reverse. If we go into the attic and crawl round the opposite way.”

Aoife decided that she would have to make sure they could get back. But firstly they would have some beer and scones – after all there dinner was not going to be ready for another two hundred years!

Hold on though – “beer and scones?” She remembered from school that people – adults and children - used to drink beer because the water was so very dirty and unhealthy and beer was altogether safer. “Interesting” she thought, “I get to drink beer and I'm only eight!”

When they entered the house, Lizzy was standing just behind a lady. This lady was dressed in a blue shawl a long brown skirt and a dark blouse that was buttoned up to her neck. Around her neck was a lacy collar and she wore a little blue bonnet tied round under her chin with a blue ribbon. She was very pretty.

“Hello” she said warmly, “my name be Eliza. I hear you two young girls be lost! Well come ye into our house and do have some beer and a scone and we shall talk about how we can get you back home to your own home in Kilkenny, for your mother will be looking for you I will wager”

Aoife and Niamh smiled and said “Thank you very much” and sat down on big wooden chairs at the large kitchen table.

The table was large with an uneven surface - it was much scratched and had obviously seen many scones, beer and big dinner plates.

Aoife was starting to think a little more clearly now. She had no idea of how this whole thing had happened and that she was better not to try and tell these nice people anything else that would make them get into any more trouble.

She didn't fancy having them calling the Gardi or something silly like that. All right so they lived in Kilkenny but their house there was not actually built yet, the roads were not actually made yet and it might be a bit of a problem telling anyone where they came from.

Aoife knew though that Lizzy might understand. That would be a great help.

So they had their beer and more delicious scones and apart from the scones being about as big as pies and the beer being as strong as well very strong beer – it really was a scrumptious snack. Neither Aoife nor Niamh liked the beer but they just pretended to sip and enjoy it.

The fireplace was in the same place as it had been in Dads cottage and on it stood a large pot. There was a chain hanging down on which hung a large kettle.

Then Jeremiah said – “I must just go to the milking shed, I hear one of the cows in distress. She must be in need of milking. We shall talk of your journey home when I come back.”

Aoife smiled and said “Thank you sir” – she was getting used to this way of speaking and how nice and well mannered it was.

Niamh, on the hand was looking increasingly more confused and just sat with a big frown on her face.

“Eliza can you fetch me the milking bucket” and with that they both stood up and went out of the door.

Aoife had her chance and turned to Lizzy and whispered – “I want to talk to you – its very important but can you keep a secret.”

Lizzy smiled excitedly and nodded.

Niamh didn't react – she kept frowning but was quite happy to sit and have another pie-sized scone. She was not keen on the beer though and just pretended to keep drinking it and when Aoife and Lizzy stood up and went outside, she poured her beer into an empty mug.

“Double Yuck” she said to herself – “I want some Fanta.”

Aoife told Lizzy their fantastic story. She told them of the attic crawl and the cottage being exactly the same but different. Not surprisingly to Aoife, Lizzy understood immediately– well she seemed to understand.

After all, the girls had appeared in her house, wore very strange clothes and talked with a very weird accent.

Why should they not have come from the future?

As you might expect, Lizzy became excited at the thought of this. Aoife didn't want to tell the little girl too much just in case she wanted to come back with them – that is if they could get back – as her mum and dad would miss her if she didn't and had to wait 200 years to see them again.

Aoife then said that she wanted to try to go back home. If they could return to their own place and time, then there was a good chance they could come back again.

“Maybe we could be friends she said and we could visit any time.”

Lizzy said, “Yes Aoife I shall try and help you. I can tell my Papa that you want to see the bedroom upstairs – when you don’t come down I can tell him that you went home – your uncle collected you – something like that.”

“That’s so great” said Aoife, “I think we should do it now” – she was getting anxious and she turned to go back into the kitchen, to get Niamh away from her scone pie and go upstairs.

Lizzy stopped her. “I do have an idea,” she said. “Why do not I hide something in this cottage. It could be something that you can get when you get back to your own time. If you do know which parts of the cottage are still here then maybe you could look and find what I have left?”

Aoife stopped and thought - “What a great idea” she said.

“I can send you a message” said Lizzy.

Aoife then said that “she would have to write on something that would last for 200 years.”

“It’s going to have to be on a bit of wood or stone she said – something that can’t fade or break up. Paper will be too easy to rot away.”

They looked around the yard and found a flat piece of slate.

“I can write a message onto that Aoife” said Lizzy.

“Now we need to find somewhere to hide it and I know the perfect place” said Aoife and went into the room that had the loose stone in the wall. It didn’t take her long to find it. She pulled and pushed and it came away, exactly as it would 200 years from now.

“Look she said, we can put it in there – that is quite a big hole behind this stone and it will easily hold that slate copy!”

Then she turned to Lizzy – “We must go back now. Its time for us to get back, our Dad will be missing us.”

Lizzy looked a little sad – she didn’t have any friends on the farm – but she remembered that Aoife might be able to come back and that made her happy again. They ran into the kitchen to get Niamh.

“Come on Niamh,” said Aoife quickly, “we are going to try and get home.” Niamh still had a face full of pie-scone. By this time she had eaten four of them and was feeling a bit full. She spluttered – “OK,OK Aoife I am coming” and they all made their way up the stone staircase.

Aoife opened the old wooden doors – exactly the same way she had opened the new ones 200 years in the future. She looked into the little girl’s tearful eyes and said “We will come back and see you Lizzy, I promise” and gave her a hug. Niamh hugged her too and then they both said goodbye.

She grabbed Niamh and said – “come on, we have to go.” Aoife bent down onto her hands and knees and climbed into the attic. It was very dusty indeed and she could see some daylight through the eaves and the edge of thatched roof. She moved to the right – where she had come from - and Niamh followed suit. Soon they were both out of sight from the doors.

As they shuffled along, following the path they had been on – it got very dark again and then there was a rumble of thunder. They lost sight of the end of the passage – and then they heard the noise of a radio or television and slowly the light became to get brighter as they turned the last corner.

They had been right – it seemed like they were back in their own time - and they were both very pleased to see the daylight coming through the holes and the modern panel doors.

They climbed out of the attic back into their own time and place. Aoife turned to Niamh and Niamh turned to Aoife – they looked at each other and said at the same time – “Loose Stone” and they ran downstairs to find it.

The stone was still there, although Aoife thought it was in a slightly different position.

She wiggled it and pulled it out. She turned on the light and peered into the hole.

There was indeed a piece of slate. It was very dusty and had cobwebs all over it. She put her hand in and

pulled it out. She blew some of the dust away – right into Niamh’s face as it happens.

Niamh began to take a deep breath, screw up her eyes and sneezed back onto the slate. The remaining dust was blown off with a few cobwebs to boot and those ended up on Aoife’s hair – “Argghh” she squealed as she tried to brush the cobwebs and doubtless a few dead spiders off her hair.

Niamh just gave her a “serves you right glare”. They both looked at what was written on the slate.

“Aoife and Niamh – very sick have sore throat – Lizzy”.

Aoife felt a cold chill travel up her spine and looked back into the hole. She saw another piece of slate and she pulled that out too. This time she brushed the dust off a little more carefully – she didn’t want a slap from Niamh...

Both girls read what was written and then looked at each other, both had a horrified look on their faces. “Aoife – Lizzy very sick – she will die – you help us – Jeremiah”

Niamh said – “how did Jeremiah know about the hole in the wall – that’s from him isn’t it?”

“Lizzy must have told him – they need our help – she needs our help” said Aoife, her voice a little shaky.



Aoife put the slate messages back into the wall and sat on the couch to think. “We must help her she said but how?”

“She must have had an ear infection” said Niamh “Just like you Aoife.”

Aoife looked up and said – “Brilliant Niamh - of course that’s it – we can get her some antibiotics – that might help her. That will definitely help her”

Aoife was good at remembering history at school and one of the things she remembered was that before antibiotics were discovered, people, children and adults, would die from a sore tooth or an ear infection – especially children. Well Aoife was not going to let her little new, well very old actually, friend die.

## Chapter 5 - The Time Changes Everything

With all the excitement of coming back to cottage and finding out about their friend, the girls had not noticed that things were different, very different indeed.

They had gone downstairs and into the lounge of the cottage. They sat on the couch – tired from the adventure of going back in time – tired of coming back and in a tizzy over Lizzy and the news about their friend.

Aoife looked around the room and something was strange again – Was this the cottage they had left? It looked different. The couch she was sitting on was not the same couch – in fact it was a brown couch and not the red couch that had been there. This was a different cottage.

Aoife began to realise that they were not in the same place after all. They stood up. Niamh had also seen that things were different. “What’s going on, what’s happened to us, have we not returned to our own time?” She said in a worried voice.

Aoife knew what the date and time should have been. She began to look around for something that would tell them what date it was. She saw a magazine lying on a table. She picked it up. “May 2006, Volume 42.”

Yes this was 2006 and it was the right month.

“Something must have happened when we were gone” she said – “but surely not a new couch and television and different paint job.”

They heard the front door opening. Niamh was just about to run to meet her Dad, when Aoife grabbed her arm.

“Hold on Niamh” she said, “I have a very bad feeling about this.”

Niamh stopped and could see the Aoife had a very concerned look on her face. The door closed and they heard the footsteps in the hall bringing whoever it was closer to them.

The door opened and a large and very fierce looking ( a little startled too! ) stood before them.

She jumped back and snapped, “What are you two little rats doing here. Who are you? What are you doing in my house.”

Niamh said nothing at all, she was just too scared.

Aoife tried to think of something. “Errr well we were just passing and we saw the front door open and we thought maybe – we came in and we thought that you were being burgled and...”

The woman interrupted her. “What? That door was locked from the outside. How did you two get in here?”

Aoife was out of excuses and decided that since the woman was a little bit on the chubby side, she could make a good escape.

“Niamh – RUN” she shouted and both girls ran towards the fat lady separating to either side of her, accidentally pushing her backwards and making her fall back on her feet, hitting the floor with an enormous thud.

She squealed and roared, “I’ll get you two monsters and when I do, I will give you a good thrashing....”

But there would be no chance of that. Aoife and Niamh had bolted for the door and were almost at the front gate of the cottage. They jumped over the fence, crossed the road and ran off into the fields towards Kilkenny.

After a minute of running as fast as they had ever run in their lives, Niamh looked back towards to cottage. She could not see the fat woman chasing them. Niamh, shouted, panting – “Hold on Aoife, I don’t think that fat woman is going to chase us.

Aoife stopped and turned round – panting as hard as Niamh, she said – “yeah you’re right.” She looked over towards a small wooden style leading into another field.

“Let’s go over there” she said, “We can sit on that style and figure out what the heck we are going to do next. “

The girls sat on the wooden style and got their breaths back. “What are we going to do” said Niamh, almost in tears. She still didn’t quite understand what had

happened to them and to be honest this was a lot for a little girl to take in.

Aoife said nothing; she just looked back towards the cottage. She was deep in thought.

She began to pull her ear lobe – it was still a little bit sore after her ear infection. Just then, she froze and sat bolt upright. “That’s it Niamh,” I think I understand what’s happened here.

Niamh was only too glad to hear of this and would be more than too pleased to find out how she could get back to her Barbie dolls and dominoes.

“We must have altered time” said Aoife – Niamh listened carefully – she said nothing. “We have gone back in time and in some way, have given Lizzy my sore ear. I should have taken that Antibiotic, and then I might never have affected her.”

“But how does that affect us?” said Niamh puzzled.

“Well don’t you see” said Aoife, “Lizzy got an ear infection from me and they didn’t have Antibiotics in those days and I think she either got very sick or died from it. Now that changed everything in the future.”

“I don’t understand” said Niamh, “what do you mean?”

“Well I think it’s like this” said Aoife. “If she died young because I gave her a nasty bacteria, then maybe she would have had children and then didn’t. Then I guess

those children that were supposed to have been born were never born and so that makes everything different.

“How?” said Niamh – “I just don’t understand.”

“Let’s say that one of those children was Dads grandfather, right?”

“OK... got that” said Niamh

“Well, then if he was never born then Dads’ father could never be born and then he could not be born and we could not be born either, right?”

She paused and thought. “Right Aoife, but we are here we have been born.”

Aoife was keen to get her point across - “Yeah yeah yeah, I know but it could mean that Lizzy did something else – something else that didn’t affect us but did affect where the cottage was and who owned it.”

Niamh, at last, began to see too. “Oh my God” she said slowly and in her very melodramatic style. “What are we going to do then?”

“We have to try and go back and make sure Lizzy is ok and that she doesn’t get an ear infection. If only I could get some antibiotics for her.” said Aoife.

This was going to be a problem for sure.

“How can we do that?” said Niamh. “We are stuck in a field, no Dad, no idea where he is, how on earth can we possibly get that. It will take ages to walk back to Kilkenny and I’m hungry.”

She reached into her jacket pocket hoping to find a bit chewing gum or sweets. This time she sat upright. “Oh my God” she said again. She pulled out the bottle of antibiotics. “I must have put it in my pocket – you know when you came into the kitchen?”

Aoife looked at her and let out a scream – “Wonderful! Niamh you are one clever girl, I take it all back!”

Aoife could see a way out of this now. She explained the plan to Niamh.

They would go back to the cottage and try to get in somehow – they could go back into the attic, go round again, hear the thunder and come out in Lizzy’s time. They would find Lizzy and tell her to take the antibiotics when she got a sore ear and then come straight back and never go in there again.

That would, she hoped, get them back and Niamh could have some supper.

Firstly, they had to work out a plan to get back into the cottage. That fat lady was not going to be so kind as to open her door and just let them walk upstairs and disappear into her attic. “Oh yeah” Aoife thought, “that would be an interesting conversation – Hello there, I am

sorry we pushed you to the ground and hurt your fat butt but could we just come in for a second. I think not.”

They decided that the best way would be to entice the woman out of the house and then somehow to get in. They only needed a few seconds to get in and then they would be gone anyway. That fat woman was not going to be able to catch them once they were in the attic.

They started back over the fields, back towards the cottage. They kept low and walked slowly. The cottage came into view and they stopped and squatted down.

Then they crawled up to the fence on the side of the road. They could see the cottage and right into the kitchen window. The fat lady was walking from room to room. There didn't appear to be anybody else in the house.

Aoife looked around and then she spotted the clothes dryer in the yard. On it hung a large number of clothes – large being both number and size! Aoife thought hard and then she came up with a plan. “OK Niamh, here's what we will do” and she smiled a wicked smile.

“We creep down there, take all those clothes off the line and then put them in a trail from the front door round the cottage. We hide round the corner and then we sneak up and ring the bell, then make a run for it. She will come out, see the clothes and then go off round the other corner to pick them up. We run into the house and into the attic. Got it?”



“Got it” said Niamh.

Quietly they pulled the clothes from the dryer and then crept around the yard laying them on the ground, leading a sort of Hansel and Gretel trail of big pants and bras. Niamh went and hid round the corner of the cottage.

Aoife went up to the front door. She rang the bell 3 times and for as long as she could. She waited until she heard footsteps and then she ran round the corner beside Niamh.

The door opened and the fat lady came out.

She looked left and right and tried to see where the person ringing the bell was. “Hello” she shouted, “who’s there?”

Then she looked down.

The fat lady let an even louder roar this time. “Who did this – I’ll get you”

Aoife and Niamh dared not put there heads round the corner, but they had to. They heard the woman shuffling and they reckoned she was picking up the clothes - she was.

Aoife very carefully looked round – she was gone – “lets go” she said to Niamh pulling her arm.

Both girls ran into the house and up the staircase. They got to the top of the stairs – the attic doors were in front of them – “at last this whole nightmare was about to be over” Aoife thought.

The doors were in front of them but there was a chain round the handles.

“Oh no” said Aoife with desperation in her voice, “she’s locked it. She must have realised we came out of the attic last time and just locked it.”

Niamh looked down the staircase and said “What a bit....”

Aoife interrupted – “No time for that Niamh, we have to get this thing open – we won’t get past her this time and there is no way out.”

Aoife darted past Niamh into the bedroom. She was looking for something to get that chain off. Being only an 8-year-old and probably not finding a pair of chain cutters in someone’s bedroom, she realised she was up against it.

Niamh was standing looking at the chain in disbelief. Then she heard the door slam shut and big stomping footsteps.

“Aoife,” she shouted “that fat woman is back.”

Aoife looked up – “Oh great Niamh, now she knows we are here.”

A third roar and this time and it my goodness was it a blood curdling roar.

“Is that you two up there, I am going to kill you both.”

The piercing squeal left Aoife and Niamh in no doubt they were going to be in trouble.

Aoife was frantically looking for something. She went into the en-suite bathroom and she saw a toilet brush. She looked at it, “worth a go” she said and grabbed it. She ran out and past Niamh.

Niamh looked at her and said “what on earth are you going to do with that Aoife – shove it up her ar... “

Aoife interrupted again – “Niamh, we really have to talk about your language... No I am going to try and break the wooden handles – you have got to help me or we’ve had it.”

Aoife jammed the toilet brush into the space between the chain and the handles. The handles were small and Aoife hoped they would break. The woman was on the bottom staircase and they could see by her bright red face that she was hopping mad and out for blood. Both girls pulled as hard as they could – “come on Niamh,” screamed Aoife “pull it, pull”.

The fat lady was on the 4<sup>th</sup> step and for a woman of her size was bounding up those stairs with a real purpose – a purpose of giving those girls a good hiding.

“One last pull” shouted Aoife and with all their weight they pulled. There was a loud crack and both girls, two handles a large metal chain and a toilet brush all crashed back into the bedroom.

The girls picked themselves up and ran towards the attic – which was now open.

They didn’t even see the fat lady as she reached the last step. Niamh was first to the opening and she clambered in.

Aoife followed but the fat lady was right on top of them. She managed to grab Aoife’s leg as she stumbled forward. “Got you, you little rat.”

She might have been fat but she had a very tight grip on Aoife’s right leg and Aoife felt herself being pulled back. Aoife still had a hold of her toilet brush and she turned round and gave the fat lady’s hand a good whack.

“Owe” fat lady yelled.

Aoife decided this was it – so with mighty wield of the toilet brush and with a vision of Joan of Arc she whacked the fat lady’s hand again.

“Owe, Owe you little bit.”

“Got ya” shouted Aoife and the fat lady let her go.

By this time Niamh was out of sight round the corner. Aoife dropped the toilet brush and just crawled as fast as a beetle with its butt on fire round the corner. Round the corner into the dark passage and hopefully back to her friend.

When they rounded the last corner Aoife had caught up with Niamh – “Is she going to follow us said Niamh?”

“Not likely unless she has some dynamite handy to make a hole big enough for her fat butt” replied Aoife.

They crawled along the darkness and the distant thunder rumbled again.

They came full circle and found the attic doors again – the big floorboard attic doors. This time they prepared themselves.

Lizzy would know who they were but they didn’t want to spend any more time in the past – so it was a case of making sure Lizzy knew what to do and took her medicine when the time came.

They heard some voices and they knew it was Lizzy. Aoife decided to go because Niamh would get distracted and go off to play with some wooden dolls somewhere.

She climbed out of the attic and made her way down the staircase. She saw Lizzy.

“Lizzy” she whispered. Lizzy was delighted to see her.

“Aoife” she squealed with happiness “you came back!” – but at once she could see from Aoife that something was not quite right. She stopped – “what’s wrong” she said.

Aoife explained to her as quickly as she could.

“When we came to this time – the last time – we brought something that will make you ill and you will be very ill. We need to make sure that does not happen otherwise we won’t ever see our Dad again.”

“If you get a sore ear or throat in the next week, you must take some of this liquid in this bottle.”

She held up the bottle. “About a thimble-full” she said.

“You must take it 3 times each day until it’s finished and then you must put it into the hole in the wall once it’s finished. That way no one will ever find it.

“Then do you have to leave?” said Lizzy.

“Yes” said Aoife, “we must and we can’t come back – ever. You will always be my friend but for me to be here means I could change everything. I, we must leave now. Please take that medicine – it will make everything right and you will be fine. OK?”

“Yes” said Lizzy. She knew that this would be the last time she saw Aoife.

Aoife smiled and said – “take care Lizzy – look after yourself, for all of us.”

“You take care too” said Lizzy and she moved to give Aoife a hug.

Aoife pulled back – “No Lizzy” she said, “we can’t touch it might make it worse. Goodbye Lizzy” and she smiled. But she was crying and Lizzy was crying too with tears running down her cheeks.

Aoife remembered everything that had happened. “I have to make this right again” she said quietly to herself and with that she waved goodbye to Lizzy and ran off up the stairs to meet Niamh in the attic.

For the last time, they crawled into the darkness and heard the rumble of thunder.

## Chapter 7 – Back Home?

When they came back through the attic, the wooden handles on the doors were back on where they should have been. There was no metal chain and no mess.

Aoife looked at Niamh as they peered out of the opening. “Let’s hope it’s fixed” said Aoife hopefully and climbed out again. “This has to be the last time” she said to herself.

They ran downstairs and checked the couch and the paint and the fireplace – everything looked as it had been – everything looked normal. Aoife went over to the loose stone and pulled it out. She was very surprised. There were lots and lots of pieces of slate in there.

She pulled out the one closest to her. It read – Thank you Aoife and Niamh – 1856. Aoife held it in her hand and tried to work out the date. “That means Lizzy would be about 70 then” she thought.

“We did it! We did it Niamh” she shouted and they hugged each other with a huge sigh of relief.

“Dad!” she shouted. Dad shouted back – “Yes Aoife?”

“Where are you?” said Aoife.

“I’m in the kitchen,” he replied.

Both girls ran through and looked at their father.



He was sitting at the kitchen table just reading a newspaper as if nothing had happened. He looked up and just stared at them. Are you girls ok, you look kind of weird.

“Is it you Dad” said Aoife?

“Is it me? Yes it’s me – are you alright? Is your ear hurting you again?”

Aoife looked at Niamh and they let out a big laugh...

“Dad we are just fine” and they ran to give him a hug. He stood up to make them both a mug of hot chocolate. He looked at his watch. It had stopped.

What time is it Aoife?

Both girls looked at each other, rolled their eyes and let out a scream.....

Arghhhhh.....