

My foot inches closer to the floor as my car devours the miles of the A30. Ahead of me, just coming into view I can see them. One hundred and forty beech trees grouped together in a little copse at the top of a hill. 'Welcome home,' they say. Will I be welcome though? Have I become an emmet in my absence? When I left, approaching them from the opposite direction, I noticed a single tree further down the hill. It looked as though the others had all turned their backs on it because it had left their group to explore new pastures. I was excited for it then. It was off to new adventures. Now I just felt sorry for it.

I thought my life was beginning when I left Cornwall, but five years later, here I am, driving down the same old road, returning to the county of my birth. It's an old story, told for ever more in romantic comedies: girl meets boy, girl and boy fall in love, girl follows boy back to the big city, girl and boy marry. Boy dies. Yeah, maybe that last bit isn't quite as funny. I could have stayed there, I suppose, I had a job, friends, a life. None of it meant anything though. Not without him. And so I decided to move back home. Not to my parents' house – I couldn't do that again. But back to Cornwall at least. Somewhere I can heal.

I risk another glance at the trees and I feel something settle over me. A sense of calm I haven't felt since Tim died. There's something so reassuringly solid about them. They've been there all my life, welcoming us home whenever we went on holiday. Someone would always say, 'Almost home now,' whenever we saw them. We weren't of course – there was still almost an hour of driving left, but we were on the final stretch at least.

The trees are famous in their own right now. Nobody truly knows why they were planted there, but they've been welcoming people to Cornwall for over a hundred years. They've been immortalised in paintings and prints and sold by the thousand all across the county under different titles. Trees are said to have great healing qualities and to some extent it's true – I've walked miles through woodlands in the last few months. These ones are different though. They're more than just trees. For me they're simply, home.