

**...from 'Fertility Rites'**

Amanda and Graham met at a teachers' conference in Scarborough. Amanda wore cheesecloth, jeans and leather clogs while Graham sported corduroy trousers and a checked brushed cotton shirt. They both voted for strike action over pay levels, a fact they only discovered in the bar on the second evening when locally brewed beers loosened inhibitions and lent a party atmosphere to the proceedings.

"I long to travel" said Amanda wistfully as she accepted a third pint from Graham who had been introduced to her by a fellow domestic science colleague.

"Me too" agreed Graham. "I mean, don't get me wrong, there's a lot of satisfaction to be had from teaching P.E. but there's a whole world out there." They both gazed mistily into the distance as the rain lashed against the windows of the Spa building and the noise level rose beyond deafening.

Later, huddled more intimately over a small table sticky with beer, they discovered that they were teaching within twenty miles of each other, that they shared a birth sign and that they both had a passion for all things green, both politically and horticulturally. When they recalled that evening in later years they agreed it was fate bringing them together.

"It was meant to be" Amanda would say and Graham would nod solemnly.

Amanda and Graham didn't have sex until their second meeting in Huddersfield; there was a certain decorum to such things in the seventies. After several phone calls they arranged to meet at a cinema Graham knew where they watched *The Godfather*, so overcome by lust for each other that they were later unable to recall any of the plot, only the thrilling vibrato of Nino Rota's famous waltz theme. Afterwards they caught a bus back to Graham's flat, a soulless place located above a hardware shop on the outskirts of the town, where they tore each other's clothes off and made frantic love on the lino flooring of the sitting room, then on the kitchen table before finally making it to the bedroom. Later they lay in each other's arms and listened to the hiss of traffic on the A61, the glare of the headlights filtering softly through the brown linen curtains.

There was never any doubt that Amanda and Graham were made for each other.

Gwenda Major