It was nature itself marking the relentless passage of time in the here and now with the gentle, soothing, metronomic *shwash* of waves advancing and receding along the shoreline. Eyes skyward, it was the myriad randomness of stars filling the night sky that marked the passage of a time long ago - photons that had traversed the vastness of the universe for millions of years to provide a light show just as spectacular (and infinitely quieter) than the ephemeral fireworks some hours earlier.

They were supine on the tussocked dune - the now empty bottle of French Champagne and two paper cups between them the only remaining physical evidence of the night’s earlier celebration. They were neither drunk nor sober, but in that zone that was one of pure silliness, deep and meaningful conversation or the silence that goes with inner thought. For the past half hour or so, inner thought had won out, the silliness and deep conversation having petered out.

He was pondering the imponderable – *Why is the universe the way it is and, I wonder what she’s thinking?* He resolved that, even with the passage of time, he would *never* understand the marvellous complexities of the universe, nor, for that matter, what his partner (or anyone else) was thinking. All our thoughts, never spoken nor written, remain our own, which he reasoned was probably just as well. His attention turned to the perceptibly lightening pre-dawn sky as a meteor arced, blazing briefly. A very real cosmic firework?

Her eyes had been closed to the night sky and the meteor, the soothing sounds of the sea having transported her somewhere else, to past memories of a childhood also spent seaside, but with a bucket, spade and a natural inquisitiveness. She didn’t see the night-time stars begin to fade with the slow wash of sunlight until her partner reached across nudging her back to the present. It was the light, just eight minutes old, not millions of years old, that presaged a new day, a new year and the beginning of the end of an interesting decade.

‘Happy New Year … again’ he whispered as he took her hand in his own.

She was thinking the same.