

# A Time To Remember

Sybil Fuller



Set in the uncertain times of World War Two. This is the romantic story of one family's struggles through: 'A Time To Remember'.

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by

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The picture of the house on the front cover is  
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## Chapter 1

It was a peaceful scene observed from the sitting room window of this old manor house. Snow and frost creating tranquillity and beauty, no doubt a welcome winter scene to grace any Christmas card, and of course the canvas of an artist who loved the countryside.

The scene was a familiar one to the young woman, throughout her childhood and youth she had enjoyed the tranquillity of this old house. Its varied seasons bringing their particular beauty which she shared with her grandparents and the household staff who were not just the domestic staff but her friends also. They were given the same respect and love as shown to her grandparents who in return showed their gratitude by paying them a good wage and adding unexpected perks to brighten their dull, boring lives as domestic servants.

Jane Harris had been orphaned at the age of five. As it was the wish of her parents, her grandparents had been chosen to bring up their daughter, Jane's mother was her grandparent's daughter. Tolerance, understanding and love had helped shape the character, and possibly the future, of their grandchild. Jane had never been a difficult, obstructive child, pleasant and eager to please, she had left the local grammar school with the educational qualifications to go onto university, choosing to follow in the footsteps of her father to study medicine. A year ago she had completed her long years of dedicated study, giving her the right to use the letters 'MD', medical doctor, after her name.

There had been few opportunities for romance during her years of study at Edinburgh, but Jane hid a romantic streak. She longed to meet the man who one day would sweep her off her feet. Her sense of humour had prevailed this somewhat girlish thinking. 'What an ass you are, Jane Harris MD, there is so much waiting for you to do in an ever-changing world, particularly in my own profession.' Jane decided to continue her studies in order to specialise.

As she stood at the drawing-room window reflections of other winter scenes, also viewed from this very same window, flitted through her mind, particularly the Christmases shared with her cousins. Justin was always her favourite, she remembered him as a kind, trouble-free boy of seven. When Jane had lost both her parents there had been sympathy and some tears from Frances her other cousin, but as time and years passed, Jane had realised the sympathy was an act and the tears, crocodile ones, put on for her grandparent's benefit. Frances was a girl born with a streak of resentment and spite in her nature. She was her mother's daughter through and through.

Jane's Uncle Richard, only son of her grandparents, had been completely devastated when her parents were killed. Richard and his sister Susan had shared a very happy childhood together. His marriage to Isabelle had brought him years of unhappiness. A spoilt, pampered, elegant woman with a born arrogance had, unfortunately, been wrongly interpreted as a fun-loving young miss in their youth, which had led to matrimony. Richard had followed in his father's line of work qualifying as a barrister. He loved Jane as he had loved her mother. Often his own daughter embarrassed the whole household with her spiteful, demanding ways. As she reached adulthood she had decided that life was for enjoyment, encouraged in every way by her mother, Isabelle, they had spent hours on the tennis courts, flitting from one summer event to another, winter sports, the opera, or anything that was considered to be the 'in' thing at that particular time.

Justin had inherited his father's quiet, understanding ways, it was therefore understandable that he and Jane became firm and close friends during their growing up years. When Justin was fourteen and his sister, Frances sixteen, they were taken on a month's holiday to Australia, it was to change their lives, and also Jane's. The visit captivated the interest of all the family with the exception of Justin. He was completely devastated when six months later the whole family emigrated to Sydney. He was doing well at his local grammar school, a very promising scholar academically with a healthy interest in sport.

Reluctantly Justin and his school had said their goodbyes.

Jane felt she was losing a brother, at fifteen she had found her cousin of fourteen her equal in their maturity. Parting for both was a painful, embarrassing matter. Never had they kissed, or felt any need to show their love and affection in this way, until the day before their final parting. Justin's parents had sold their home and property one month before their sailing date, the month was spent in residence at the grandparent's home, this had given Jane and Justin a rewarding chance to spend the remaining weeks of his stay, as often as circumstances allowed, in each other's company.

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Letters received from them gave a glowing account of their life in Sydney. Only Justin had different views of his adopted country, and that alone was the result of his homesickness. The country was beautiful in many ways, so entirely different from his beloved Britain where one day he would return.

"I miss you Jane," he had constantly written over the past ten years. Justin would be twenty-four years old this coming spring. Photographs sent to Jane over the years kept her familiar with his growing into full maturity, no doubt indeed, into a handsome young man. Fair hair, blue eyes, tall and slim, a serious young man, yet there could be some humour lurking somewhere, for one snapshot had shown Justin sending her a wink, a wave and a smile as he stepped into a smart looking car where at the wheel sat the most beautiful girl Jane had set eyes upon. She was surprised at her reaction to this snapshot, she felt anger and a spurt of jealousy flow through her body. The letter accompanying the snapshot had only briefly mentioned he was about to set off for a picnic lunch on the beach with friends. Jane answered this letter and thanked him for the wink and wave and hoped he had enjoyed his picnic with his friends. Her courtesy not allowing her to ask who his driving companion was on this outing.

It had been no surprise to Jane that Justin had chosen to study medicine also. They had shared an interest in almost everything during their growing up. Justin had showed special interest in how she felt about treating the sick and had confided to her at the age of ten that, circumstances permitting, he hoped one day to join the medical profession and become a doctor. He was now in his last year at medical school and, according to Isabelle, his mother, Justin was the smartest, brightest medical student born. A totally exaggerated account of course, which brought a smile to her grandmother's face, for did she not have her own slight fantasies where Jane stood in the profession.

"Grandmother we are but human and medical school is a hard, tiring job, but just look at what we are all achieving. We are privileged people, not the smartest or brightest, as Aunt Isabelle has assessed her son to be. No doubt Justin will not let her down, he is renowned as a person who is, by nature, born to do well in whatever he chooses to do in his life."

"Of course you are right Jane, that lad will do very well. We are very privileged grandparents to have two dedicated grandchildren and both in the medical profession."

Jane shrugged off her feelings of slight discontent. She loved her reminiscing thoughts of winter days with Justin. Some of her happiest days were Christmases spent together when Justin came with her aunt, uncle and cousin Frances to share their yuletide with them.

Francis and her mother had almost always ignored Jane, never including her in any conversations or shopping trips to Harrogate, Leeds or York. These were Isabelle's favourite places to spend extravagantly, mainly on herself and Frances. It was the highlight of these special visits for them to give everyone some idea of the total pleasure they had experienced. Sly smirks accompanied caustic, meaning-full, hurtful remarks aimed at upsetting Jane. It was on such an occasion her grandmother had reminded Jane that they too would need to go shopping.

"My dear girl, you must have a new dress for Laura's birthday party and you have just about outgrown your winter coat," she said.

Their day in Leeds had been very enjoyable, returning home with so many lovely new items that her grandma had insisted Jane needed as she was growing up so quickly.

Mother and daughter's cheap attempts to embarrass Jane only ended in embarrassment all round, for Richard more than any of them, for had he not chosen this woman as a wife and mother?

There was deep regret and so much pain in his heart for Jane who had lost both parents, and his parents who had lost a daughter they had loved and cherished, as well as Harry, their son-in-law, who had been like a second son.

The road accident had not been their fault. Jane, as their daughter, had been awarded five thousand pounds compensation, a fortune that had been put into a trust fund. Now, Jane, at the age of twenty-five, was financially very comfortable and independent. Her grandparents home remained her home and was her haven. Her childhood memories were centred in these stone walls and surrounding gardens, with the fields and woods of the Yorkshire countryside she loved and adored.

Justin had so many snapshots of the rambling old house, Jane's box brownie camera had served as a means to keep alive memories of their long, tireless rambles through the woods and countryside during some of the weeks of their long summer holidays. Justin, alone in his bedroom had unashamedly wept on receiving a snapshot of a winter's scene taken from outside the sitting room window of the dear old house where he had spent so many idyllic, happy hours.

The first winter away from Britain the temperature was unbearable as it was Australia's summer. He had not settled well in the new environment forced upon him. Jane's letters and her many snapshots brought a sickening longing to get on the first boat back to Britain.

He found the schoolroom daunting, as he was educationally well ahead in all subjects. His parents had chosen a private education for him and Justin missed the lively banter of his beloved Yorkshire school friends at his old grammar school. Many parents found it a struggle to keep their sons at this level of education, but at no cost would they have denied their son the opportunity of a grammar school education.

In comparison he was now expected to mix with many of Sydney's snobbish sons of a social society that was, even by British standards, well above their traditional expectancy. Justin's mother and sister had been welcomed into this sort of life, craving for yet another day to join their new friends in endless hours of luxurious, idle entertainment. No such idle existence for Justin or his father, they were expected to toe the line, Richard as the bread provider and Justin's role was to keep in with the best of the wealthiest families in Sydney via his private schooling.

One time when he had received an invitation to spend a long weekend with the only boy there who had become his friend, his mother had made discreet enquiries about the boy's family which had not come up to her expectations, and the mother of the boy received a courteous note of refusal. However, Justin and his friend, Alan Forsyth, had remained firm friends, a friendship that was to be a lasting one, carrying them on to share their love of a woman, to fight a war for tyranny and, in many ways, to witness the end of much of the snobbery Justin's mother and his sister claimed as their privileged right as wealthy citizens.

Justin's mother was to regret her snobbish decision of not encouraging the friendship between these two boys. But we are not expected to know what the future holds in store for each and every one of us, no matter that we do hold our destiny in our own hands, that we reap what we sow, but hope also that fortune will shine upon us. It is a quirk of human nature that we expect the best and not the worse, from life.

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As the two boys grew into young men, whenever possible, they shared many hours together, doing what most young Australian youths enjoyed in those days. Gradually Justin's homesickness would only surface whenever he received Jane's letters and more so, the snapshots she enclosed. It was evident that Jane was charming and clever, and was growing into a woman with a startling, unique beauty. A surge of homesickness would descend upon him and pangs of jealousy ran through his veins as he pictured Jane enjoying hot summer days at the seaside, or winter days at the theatre with some young admirer. But Jane had never given Justin such an account of herself, there were no admirers, she had no intention of encouraging anyone. Her years of study and her love for her grandparents and her home

were all that kept Jane happy. Content, she was happy to let life tick by, a romantic at heart but no flirt. Her job, always a demanding one, kept her busy. All being well she had plans to specialise in surgery. Romance was a fleeting hope that one day would become reality.

## Chapter 2

As destiny so desired, the two young men's lives continued to be linked towards their future, as they joined others as freshmen at their medical college. Justin's studies took him through medical school without much to worry about. He was a good student, reliable and a plodder, but his friend was an excellent medical student with a brilliant future ahead of him. He was the best student the medical school had had for many years and Justin was so proud to be his friend.

It was, however, a difficult matter to keep Alan at medical school, financially his parents had very little resources and could only barely cover essential demands. Justin had no financial problems, his mother showered him with expensive and luxurious gifts which Justin found more of an embarrassment than welcome gifts. His wallet and bank account were always reliable if there was any urgent occasion to make use of them. The only time that there had arose a little friction between these two was brought about by Justin's kindness in offering to pay for a very well earned holiday for both of them. Quietly but adamantly, Alan had refused to enjoy a holiday at his friend's expense. Justin's argument was lost when he unthinkingly pointed out that the money for the holiday would not be at his expense either, provision, and ample of it, was lying around in his bank account, not earned by him either.

As the subject of money and holidays had been broached, Alan had to share his plans with him. There was a job for him on a relative's sheep farm where he would earn himself free board and lodgings, plus a welcome sum of money.

Justin had to face a very angry parent that year, his mother really blew her top when Justin arrived home with the news he was sharing his holiday with his friend Alan, on a sheep farm. Justin felt that he could never forgive his mother for her unkind remarks aimed at his friend's innocent intentions.

"Justin you go nowhere near a sheep farm and that is an order," she screamed, "spending hours in the company of some of the dregs of humanity, filthy in every respect, how dare you even consider this sort of thing?"

"Please mother calm yourself," Justin replied, unruffled. "I, in my capacity as a future medical man, will no doubt be called upon to deal with patients who may socially be called the 'dregs of humanity'. If it doesn't worry me in anyway mother, I really can't understand what all the fuss is about. I also like animals and I may even consider specialising as a veterinary doctor." The latter said just to annoy his mother further.

"Justin you're not serious about that?"

"Of course I am," Justin smiled. "It really isn't the field of work I'm aiming at just yet, but I really will enjoy this holiday. After all, I chose to share it with Alan, not he to share it with me."

"I don't wish to hear anymore Justin, you have spoilt some of our plans, Frances had some days already arranged which she thought you would not dream of missing."

"I'm sorry Frances," apologised Justin, "but I am not up to being paired off with one of your social debutantes on endless days of swimming, surfing and picnics. Not forgetting your liking for crowded decks of someone's yacht lathered in suntan oil sunbathing. It's just not my idea of spending a long vacation, I want peace and quiet at the end of the sort of days I choose." He continued, "I have exams looming soon after we return and I shall welcome the evenings, I am told we shall be free to do as we wish with the few hours of rest before bedtime. Alan and I plan to use some of those hours for study."

"It seems this friend you have has rather a lot of influence in what you decide to do with your time Justin," his mother sourly retorted.

"You do seem to have decided mother, that I allow others to influence me in many respects, undermining the fact I have a mind of my own. Now may we change this outrageously silly misunderstanding? By the way, I shall be taking Boss off your hands, he will be going with us; he also deserves a holiday."

Whistling, he left his mother's drawing room to collect Boss. The Border collie was on his feet, tail wagging and a gentle excited woof of greeting for the only other member of this family he adored. Justin's father Richard would miss Boss, every evening no matter what the weather, Richard and Boss took a long walk along the tree-lined avenues of Sydney's best social quarters. It was here on these long walks that Richard shared some of his inner, troubled thoughts with his dumb friend.

Boss was Richard and Justin's dog, but mainly Justin's for he was a birthday present. Getting on for four and a half years, he was still very active and alert, he had been Richard's present to his son. Fed up with being put off choosing a pet for Justin for many years, chance had unexpectedly decided that Justin would get a dog for this particular birthday. A barrister friend's collie bitch had given birth to five pups. Richard had been more than interested to hear of the latest additions to the family and decided it was now or never to get a pet for Justin. He had taken his son along to see the pups and to choose the one he liked. Boss soon learned that the women of the family didn't like him, so he kept out of their way as much as circumstances allowed.

It was a jubilant pair who set off one scorching hot sunny morning on the first part of their journey by train that took them through wild scrub-like country, beautiful in its own form. In spite of growing up in Australia, Justin had not seen kangaroos in their own environment. As the train whistled and struggled through the wilderness, Justin was thrilled to see these peculiar creatures, as they leapt well away from the monster that had entered their quiet, docile way of life. He was thrilled also with the many colourful birds, occasionally he caught a glimpse of a long legged bird, no doubt an emu.

On one rare occasion two lone forms were to be seen in the distance. 'Aborigines hunting their next meal maybe?' thought Justin, whose knowledge of the original native was scant and somewhat ignorant.

Travelling through the dusty, hot wilderness never experienced before, a lethargic state hit most of the passengers, and, much to Justin's surprise, he fell asleep. He must have slept for hours, as had Alan. When the train jerked to a screeching halt, it had woken up its entire occupants. Yawning and stiff, Justin and Alan joined other passengers for a taste of civilisation at their overnight stop.

"And very welcome it is," said Justin to Alan. "I have never taken as long a train journey before."

"Stay in this country long enough and you may get hooked on this sort of travel," Alan replied.

"No doubt a unique experience I am pleased not to have missed, Alan, but rather time consuming."

"There is still almost another fifteen hours to travel, going through yet more desolate parts, but much of it has its own form of wild beauty. You will see herds of wild camels, and creatures you have never heard of in the civilised world. A wonderful and fascinating world is the outback Justin; but one has to be prepared for the unexpected, to eat frugally, but most important of all, to have knowledge of the outback. It is rife with hidden dangers; not forgetting one could die of thirst or sunstroke. Even some of the most experienced adventurers have never returned; it is so vast."

"I'm too civilised a person to have an urge to trek these deserts, give me the sort of wildness of a Yorkshire moor any day," Justin said, "but you have no idea of the beauty, the tranquillity, I am referring to Alan. One day I hope we shall share a visit to the Yorkshire moors. I must ask Jane to send me some photographs, which will give you some idea of what they are like. Covered in purple heather with, here and there, a show of golden gorse, it is a heavenly sight. I was only fourteen when I left Yorkshire and I will one day go back there, that's where my roots are." He continued wistfully. "I miss my grandparents and oh, how I miss my cousin Jane. We went everywhere together when we visited my grandparents. Jane is an orphan, brought up from the age of five by our grandparents. She has quite recently got her medical degree, one day she hopes to specialise in the field of surgery."

"I am so pleased for you, Justin, it seems Jane is very special to you."

"Oh, she is. I just hope no one snaps her up before I am able to see her again, I really don't fancy sharing her with a husband before we renew our friendship. Remind me to show you some snapshots she sent. I have so many of her as she grew up into the beautiful young woman she is now. Alan, you will love Jane, she is the nicest female I have ever known."

"Well as you know I am not really a ladies man, somehow I don't appeal to women, they go for your

type Justin. You were born with the charisma to sweep the opposite sex right off their feet. It does not worry me in the least Justin, not at this stage of my life anyway, I'm much too ambitious academically," finished Alan.

"Well, all I can say Alan, is that you are totally insensitive to your own charms, you are so aloof and knowledgeable I believe women are scared of you. But Jane is one young lady who will not be deceived, she will make allowances for your self analysis."

Travel-worn, hungry and thirsty they finally covered the last lap of their journey in a very ancient boneshaker that appeared to be some form of vehicle intended to be used for anything that needed four wheels and an engine. It arrived at the station having been brought there by Alan's six-foot cousin. He was as dark as a native, the result of the many hours he had spent outdoors since he was a baby.

Clive McKenzie was a quiet, aloof young man. He looked so like Alan he could have passed for his brother rather than his cousin. His greeting, however, was warm and friendly, obviously very pleased to see them both. But during the two-hour journey to the home farm he was most certainly no chatterbox which suited Justin and Alan well. No doubt if their journey had been less of a torment both would have slept.

On arriving there was a mighty noise, which started up from two old sheep dogs, whose days of hard labour were over and who were now living in contented retirement. They were allowed to greet the new arrivals and then told to quieten it. Tinker and Bell were to become Justin's friends, both had already welcomed Alan as an old friend.

They found Alan's aunt in the vast kitchen, cooking, lovely smells rising from the ovens and pans. The huge stove had two ovens but, in spite of all the cooking going on, the kitchen was remarkably cool, overhead fans had been erected which were most effective. Large trees near to the house screened off the blazing sun and blinds, pulled halfway down, kept the house in perpetual shade but certainly not gloomy.

'A happy house this,' Justin told himself.

Alan's Aunt Dolly (short for Dorothy), slim as a young woman, ruled supreme in her kitchen and anything that was within the four walls of this vast home. She had four domestic helpers, including a second cook who dealt with food cooked for the general farm helpers, and temporary ones needed at shearing time. Everything seemed to be run like clockwork, but that was simply an illusion, as Justin would eventually learn.

Greetings over, they followed Clive down a huge hall and up a magnificent stairway, ornate enough to grace an old mansion.

"Mum thought you wouldn't mind sharing, but if you would prefer separate rooms, don't hesitate to say so." Clive said, as he turned off the wide landing into a huge bedroom.

The twin beds looked very inviting but their stomachs were growling for a decent meal, so they went back down to the kitchen where Dolly dished up their meal on the long wooden table.

"Well boys," she said, "you look ready to drop, please don't hesitate if you want to bathe. Then this evening we shall get together with your Uncle Robert, Alan, he will already have planned what you will be doing whilst you are staying with us, and good luck to you both, it is hard work Justin. Alan knows that, but we do look after your stomach and welfare, in return we only ask of you to pull your weight."

Boss' journey had not been a comfortable one, but he had made friends with Tinker and Bell. His hunger and thirst satisfied, and with Aunt Dolly's permission, he was allowed to share Justin and Alan's bedroom, where he thankfully soon fell asleep in an old comfortable basket which had belonged to a family pet that had died long ago.

Refreshed with their rest and good food, some hours later they joined Aunt Dolly and Uncle Robert who were enjoying a hard-earned 'before dinner' drink in the drawing room. The room was furnished with many antiques. Brocade upholstered chairs and sofas were tastefully arranged in the large drawing room. Expensive wallpaper covered the walls, as did many beautiful oil paintings. One in particular took

Justin's eye, the painting could have been of this very house, but the background and gardens were different. Alan's Uncle Robert was another surprise. A refined, cultured man, in fact, a gentleman with a warm and distinguished manner.

Dolly was just as much a surprise to Justin also, for seated on one of her brocade sofas, and tastefully dressed, she certainly looked what she was; the lady of this huge mansion house. Here was class, in spite of the workload each busy day brought them. Justin felt as though he had known this family for years and not hours. As he sat enjoying the contentment of this happy environment, his eyes strayed to a beautiful painting of a young woman hung over the large ornate fireplace. Dolly saw his interest.

"That's a painting of our daughter, Rowena. She is away living in Paris where she is studying art, she has a wonderful gift. This wallpaper on our drawing-room walls is an example of some of her work. We see very little of her but we shall be visiting her this year. We're planning to join her in time to do some Christmas shopping and spend the whole of Christmas with her friends and fiance, Pierre, they are engaged but have no immediate plans to marry. Clive will take over the farm whilst we are away."

The next day Clive introduced Justin to some light work.

"Just to get the feel of things," he explained.

The day over, tired and ravenous they sat round the kitchen table alongside many other long-term hands silently eating Dolly's delicious, substantial meal. At the end of a hard day's work it was one of the luxuries Justin looked forward to.

The light work had hardened him up to sharing some of the many heavy tasks on the farm. He got on well with the other men and showed he was quick and willing to learn. Perhaps because Justin had arrived with Alan he was accepted as one of them within a short space of time.

One evening after dinner, which was always served promptly at seven thirty in the dining room. Dolly asked if Justin had any interest in music.

"Indeed I have," he replied. "I simply love old composers, but I am not that highbrow that I don't enjoy some of the old music hall ditties and songs."

"But do you play any instruments or even sing?" Dolly prompted.

"Yes I do, I was taught to play the piano but I have not had any singing lessons. I doubt if anyone would care to listen to me for more than a minute or two."

"Well Justin, as you play the piano do you mind if I ask you to play something for us?"

Justin stood and went over to the piano, as elegant as any item of furniture anywhere in this astonishing home, this rosewood instrument had been a gift from Robert to Dolly.

"You will find it needs no tuning, I keep it sound as I do the tuning myself."

"Gracious Dolly, how do you find the time?" asked Justin.

"Somehow Justin there is always time for the things we love and I do love this piano, and yes, I do play it very often, so does Clive who, one evening, will give us a piano recital."

Justin felt small and inadequate as he began to play the works of Brahms. His teacher had taught him well and Justin was an apt scholar, if not up to concert standard. He was pleasing to listen to, his audience, taking great interest in what he played, deservedly for his good performance; he bowed his thanks to their applause.

"Now Alan will give us a good old rendering of the variety concert halls," said Dolly. Soon the drawing room mood had changed as Alan belted out London's famous old popular variety songs, followed by some ragtime that was all the rage in America and catching on everywhere.

Justin had never enjoyed an evening as much. Tired out, he was ever thankful he had come to this lovely place. He thanked Dolly and Robert for their kind and generous hospitality.

"We have to make do with what natural talent is available Justin, I shall organise a concert, on a small scale of course, nothing up market. All the hands and their wives and families are always invited. Many also are talented in their own way, they are delighted to join in and share in the arrangements, breaks the monotony of our isolated existence, something to look forward to."

Clive's piano recital left Justin feeling very musically inadequate, he was the best Justin had ever

heard. "Chopin couldn't have played that any better," he told him as Clive bowed his thanks to his small audience.

"Thank you Clive, that was really a wonderful performance." Dolly concluded.

Justin was rather puzzled that this well-educated, talented young man was content to stay here in the outback being a sheep-hand. Clive worked as hard and long as any of them, even though his father owned this well-run, thriving sheep farm.

It was all such a puzzle, this huge mansion, the painting on the drawing-room wall of a house identical to this one, but its background most certainly not Australian. Having looked closer and longer at the painting, Justin had found it had the name of a well-known artist, and he had rightly associated the background scenery as Scottish. Somewhere in Scotland there was an identical mansion he was sure. There had been no mention of any family connection with that country. The name McKenzie had its origins way back in Scotland. Justin had also noted that Robert McKenzie had still some signs of having had red hair, there surely could be some Scottish blood in this family. It was all very strange, for no matter how long connections have been severed, it is a natural instinct to keep some memories and pass them down to ones forebears.

One evening, a week later, Justin was enjoying Alan's ragtime being belted out from the piano. The day had been glorious and Justin had been thankful work had eased off towards the end of the day. Alan stopped playing to take some refreshment.

"Now then boys, I think I shall take a short break outdoors, Justin would you care to come along? You haven't been shown our gardens yet, they're worthy of a visit." Dolly ventured the invitation, for the gardens were her pride and joy. With the help of her four gardeners she had planned and cultivated two acres of virgin soil into gardens fit to grace any royal palace.

There was an abundance of everything, vegetables of every sort, delicious fruits of many kinds and a treasure of an herb garden, plus flowers and tropical shrubs grown in a riot of colour. What fascinated Justin most of all was a fairly large lake with a bronze fountain, water cascaded over its sides into the lake, its rhythmic sound cooling and restful.

"I am rather puzzled, Dolly, how do you manage to keep a lake with a fountain playing in this constant heat?"

"No problem there, Justin, we have our own water supply and most of that in the lake is more or less recycled, mainly through the fountain. I just had to have that lake and fountain, you see Justin, it's somehow part of our heritage."

Justin was equally puzzled about the words cut in stone over the heavy oak front door, they were in a language foreign to him, but good manners stopped him from asking, less it was thought to be none of his business.

Alan's relations had been a pleasant surprise to Justin. Talented, hard working, each one of them showed a refined, cultured side to their nature. He was sorry when the day arrived and all three of them had to leave this kind family.

Boss whimpered his farewell, he was loathed to go back to the sort of lonesome existence he had to put up with, the only pleasure a slow, short walk down an avenue, sometimes returning before having had the pleasure of seeing another friendly dog. There was little pleasure to return to so he decided to lie at Justin's feet, close his eyes and dream back into the many happy days gone forever.

Justin and Alan were also just as unhappy to leave, it had been hard, manual work, but its compensations were happy memories. They were both still tall and slim but most certainly they had developed a little more muscle in certain places.

"Perhaps one day Justin, we shall return," said Alan. "Uncle Robert was very pleased with you, he's paid us well also."

"I am most grateful," answered Justin. "He says we have both earned every penny as it was gruelling, hard work for two pampered university medical students, but we are healthy young men Alan, comparing us with some of the older men who did more than their share."

“It is their livelihood,” replied Alan. “Possibly until old age calls upon them to call it a day. They all seemed able to stand up to the hard essential work asked of them.” “Same applies to your uncle, he really pulls his weight Alan, and Clive would work until he dropped I am sure.”

“Well, it is different with Clive, he isn’t always a very happy person to be with, life has treated him badly. Two years ago, he lost his fiancée in a fire, at that time he was studying languages at university, they included Japanese and Chinese. He also had a gift for absorbing medieval languages.

Last year he was in India and whilst there he got a bug of some unknown origin and he almost died. But now he has given himself a year to recuperate and decided the best place was to be at home. Hard work seems to have done what a long spell in a nursing home may not have achieved. Perhaps that is something we should take note of, as we are to be future doctors Justin. We tend to pay more heed to curing the cause, but pay little attention to mental stress that may arise from other problems that could stop progress in getting the patient back to physical and mental health. Clive is almost ready to go back to university, he is a talented artist also but that is something he uses when he wishes to relax.”

“I feel very privileged to have been given the opportunity to have met and shared, even for a short time, your relatives Alan. I know Boss here would have been happy to stay with his friends, he will miss them.”

“Tinker and Bell will miss Boss too.”

“He hasn’t much to look forward to now that we are going home. My mother and sister care very little what Boss needs. Animals in their social world have to give them some form of pleasure. Horses are tolerated because one can belong to a riding club where it is fashionable to strut around in jodhpurs. Or, on other occasions, it is the social thing to go to the races where snobbery is rife. I am sorry to admit my mother and sister are two of the most selfish snobs I know. Frances is beautiful, she could earn her living as a top model she has flair and good taste in all she chooses to wear. She has deportment, good carriage and class is written into almost everything she does, but she is lacking in compassion and understanding, she is indeed a very spoilt young woman.

Poor Boss is going home to face all that again. Dad does his best to make life somewhat worth living for him though. How he will face such an unsociable existence after his wonderful holiday with Tinker and Bell and all the fuss the farm hands showered on him, plus the kindness and affection from your own family also. I shall always be so grateful for Boss’ sake. I am so glad I brought him along with us.”

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