

THE BEDROOM

Stuart Kear

She was feeling no pain now a little woozy perhaps but very tired, it was the morphine and she was grateful for it.

She was, by her own request, propped up high with pillows, she could have anything she wanted now. Her time was short, she knew it as did everyone else. The Doctor and the District Nurse were professionally calm and efficient, kind, caring without fuss. She appreciated that, but it was different for family. They were trying to control their emotions, not quite knowing what to do or say. 'How are you today' is somewhat superfluous when today might be the last day, as it will be very soon.

She had asked to be propped up because it was a sunny spring day and in the afternoon the Sun travelled around the house and beamed like a Golden Searchlight into the bedroom at the back of the terraced house. The Sunlight cast the shadow of the window frame onto the carpet and lapped up and onto the bottom of the bed illuminating the pinks and greens of the little flowers decorating the white candlewick bedspread. The whole of the room lit up, the light catching the picture frames, wardrobe and the chest of drawers handles glittered, she had always loved it.

She also loved it for the memories it engendered of the afternoons many, many years before when she and Harry would make love on the bed bathed in the sunlight. It had been warm and wonderful, wistfully bringing him back closer to her now when she needed him most.

Through the window she could see the mountain on the other side of the valley. The daffodils she and Harry had planted would be standing proudly now pronouncing through their custard yellow trumpets that spring had arrived, encouraging everyone to enjoy the passing of the grey barren days of winter and the change to a season of colour and new beginnings.

This was life endlessly moving on she thought, soon to leave her behind as it would ultimately for everyone.

This room symbolised life for her too, it was where her two children had been born and where she too had been born as a woman after her wedding to Harry and where she had learned about living and loving, where innocence turned to maturity.

It had been hard at times, but she had been happy, she felt fulfilled. Her passing would mean the completion of her circle of life. She had loved and been loved in return and she was content with that.

After the funeral Diane the daughter and elder of the two children took on the onerous task of clearing the bedroom of her Mother's things.

She did this quite dispassionately for although she had loved her mother she had come to despise this room. Indeed, she now hated the whole house for its smallness and the fact that it was part of a terrace. She hated being cheek by jowl with others constantly popping in knowing your whole life.

The house also represented her Mother's life of hard uncompromising toil. She had been from the generation of few labour saving devices, of coal fires, strikes and wars, when the woman's place was shackled to the home. The eagle eyes of neighbours kept her worrying about the whiteness of her window nets and the sheets upon her washing line every Monday. The observance of the expected way of doing things properly.

Diane knew it had held the family in good stead, but it was not her way. She was not prepared for her life to be scrutinised, her clothes, relationships, opinions, her whole being, by other people. She was no-one else's business.

Glimpsing life over the rim of the valley's mountains Diane had liked what she had seen. Preferring the open fields of country life and now lived on an isolated farm away from all this living in a bee-hive. She wanted freedom of thought of movement and mobility. Time and life had moved on and she wanted more from it.

She would leave this bedroom and its symbolism never to return.

Derek the son, stood in his mother's bedroom, he and some friends had come to empty the rooms of the furniture ready to sell the house, his sister had insisted.

He stood and experienced the intensity of his mother's presence. He had spent many nights in his mother's bed as a child when his father worked the late shift. Her warmth and closeness had formed an unbreakable bond between them and he had been devastated with her passing. The bedroom resonated with her neatness and sense of order, something he had inherited from her.

He loved this house with its myriad happy memories so much so that he lived in one just like it. He liked valley living with its sense of community, camaraderie and caring with family and friends close to hand. It was how he had been happily brought up. His morals, his work ethic, his beliefs all had been bred into him or taught here at his parent's knees. It was an integral part of him. It was his inner core, who he was.

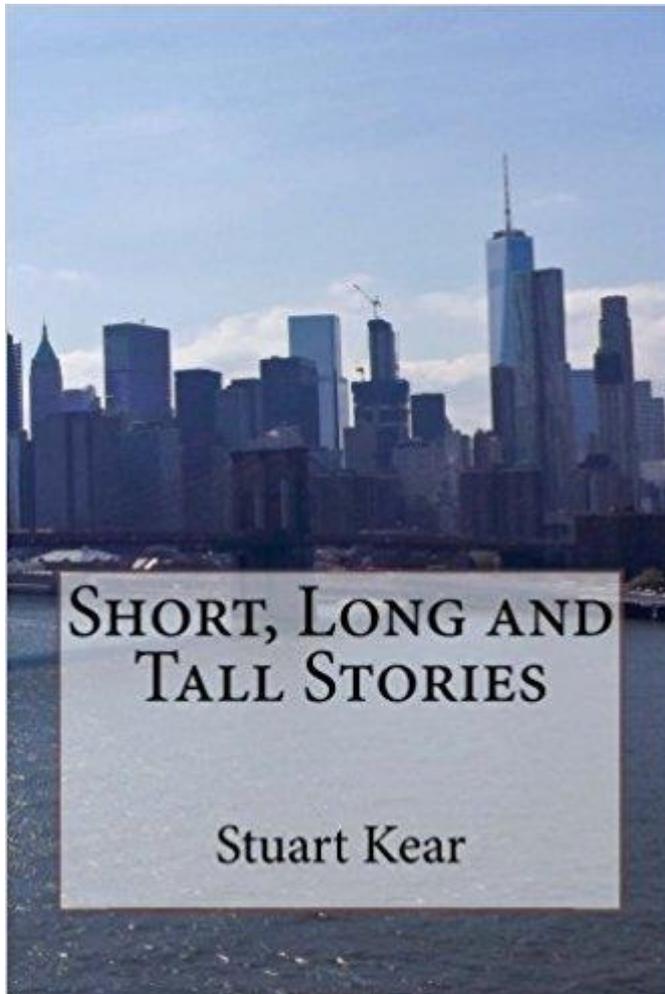
He did not understand his sister's eagerness to move on, to cut the ties that bind. On to what, some lonely outpost in the middle of the country constantly travelling, yet it seemed to him she was going nowhere. While his roots grew seemingly deeper with every passing year.

They were brother and sister born of the same parents, of the same blood, but they were completely different people. He recognised it but could not come to terms with it.

He looked around and thought that if he were to pass on as contentedly as his mother in a bedroom such as this one then that would be fine with him.

Books by Stuart Kear:

Short, Long and Tall Stories



Do you love Welsh Valleys life and humour? This is the book for you.

Never experienced Welsh Valleys life and humour? This book is a terrific introduction. Stuart Kear's stories are sometimes quirky, often whimsical and always with a twist you won't see coming; some will also bring a lump to your throat and a tear to your eye. Together they make for a really engaging read.

If you know and love the Welsh Valleys, these stories will take you right back there (Hiraeth

alert!) If you don't know the Welsh Valleys, they are a great insight into the many levels of Valley culture and you will want to visit!

I cannot recommend this little gem of a book highly enough. Go on, treat yourself!