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Opening Extract from...

Bring Down the Moon

Written by Eva Le Bon

Published by Chipmunkpublishing

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Bring Down the Moon

Eva Le Bon

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Author Biography

This sensitively written novel is Eva Le Bon's first piece of fiction writing. From the tapestry of life including her experience as a psychotherapist, she has really loved letting her pen write this novel, with no rush over several years of her life, and has been intrigued by where it has taken her!

From post-war to present day Bring Down The Moon offers a moving account of how our everyday lives touch one another in unforeseen ways to make stories within stories. At times tear jerking and thought provoking Eva's story challenges us to keep on discovering our own pathway through whoever we think we are, whatever the cards of life have dealt us, as we write our own stories by the light of the moon.

'There is an enchanting tenderness about Bring Down the Moon and Eva Le Bon's ability to turn the darkest of moments into light is extraordinary. Keep this book on your bedside table, for it will whisper words of comfort and wisdom long after you have turned the last page.'

A.Bird
Freelance content editor, Munich

I dedicate this book:

To my parents, John and Margaret, and sisters Nanette and Rosanne, for a childhood rich in love and inspiration.

To Lucy and Charlie.
Thank you for your sparkle, for growing up with me, for more than I could ever put into words.

To David, my husband,
for being the heart and soul of my story
and

To Emma and Clare for being such gems.

CHAPTER ONE NEW BEGINNINGS.

December 13th 2005.

‘After all this time, you’re here!'

The baby lay curled up, warm, sticky and weighty, on Lily’s chest.

'You're beautiful,' Lily cooed to him.

'He is, and you’re amazing Lily. I love you so much.’ Lily squeezed Martin's hand. If only he knew how much she loved him; she could not have found a better partner if she'd searched the world. She looked sleepily back at him as she whispered, 'love you too.'

'There now, did you ever hear a pair of lungs like that? Are you going to be as big a fella as your dad? I’ll just take another look at you.’ Lily felt a warm, trickling, burning sensation between her legs as the midwife gently swabbed and soothed her.

‘There you are, clean as a new pin. You’re a great girl, so you are! Now, you be pressing the bell if you need the nurse to come? I'm away home to my bed, if I can get there that is! Well, bye-bye little fella, whatever they’re calling you? '

'David, David Martin' Lily proudly announced.

'David Martin, very grand! Do you like that then, David?’ The midwife smiled, ‘I think he's saying he does. Now see that you give your mum some rest!' With that, the rosy-cheeked midwife was gone and suddenly there were so many questions Lily wanted to ask!

Moments later Lily wakened again. The room seemed extra cold and clinical in the night light and had that lingering smell of antiseptic, but for a smallish rural hospital it provided a more than adequate service.

'I'm so glad Lily that you came into hospital to have him,' said Martin.
'I know, I was just thinking the same. That nurse was fantastic wasn't she?'
'Absolutely! Reckon we got the best. Now then, darling, you must be shattered.' All of a sudden, as Martin stood up ready to go, Lily felt overwhelmed and tears were rolling down her cheeks.
'Darling whatever is it? O, goodness! Is that the time? Sorry, love, I really will have to go. They'll be on pins!'
'I know,'
'I'll probably just ring mum and dad tonight and I'll send a text to your dad and Olga. I'll ring round everyone else in the morning.'
'Good idea! Sorry, Martin, I don't know why the tears. I think it's just 'baby tears' and I'm tired and sore. Now then, off you go, and get some sleep. Have you got that de-icer?'

Two minutes later Martin was gone and Lily reached for the tissues as she heard the door clang shut behind him. She hadn't expected to be quite so weepy: a little boy, how wonderful! How could she ever explain to Martin the mixture of emotions she was feeling; so happy, relieved but also sad.

'Gracious me, are you OK? Whatever's the matter? You'll be waking the neighbourhood!' the nurse said as she came rushing in hearing Lily's sobs and the baby crying.
'I want my mum.'
'Visiting time isn't until 2.00 pm tomorrow. Never mind you wanting your mum, I reckon this little man is saying he wants his too. Perhaps we'll just try a feed?' In the milky twilight, the stinging pull of David's first long suck brought stars to Lily's eyes, and a jarring back to motherly duties.

'Ouch! So that's what you think?' The nurse helped him settle on the nipple, bringing a gradual smile back to Lily's face. How comforting and reassuring the nurse was in those early moments, especially when following the feed she gathered baby from Lily's breast with:

'Now come on little one. Come with me to the nursing station, that's right! We'll look after you, give your mum here, a proper chance to sleep.'
Lily dried her tears and, muttering her thanks, she turned to her diary.

13.12.05 At last, a son, David, he's gorgeous, safe and well all 6lbs 8 ounces of him! We reckon we can see us both in him, as squidgy as he is. Been feeling really weepy, wish mum and Aunty Fleur were here too. They'd love him to bits. Holding him is the best thing in the world.

Lily put her pen down and snuggled under the covers. She closed her eyes and soon was thinking: 'It's Tuesday. Ah, 'Tuesday's child is full of grace.' Lorne and Isles district hospital, what a lovely place for David to have been born!'

5 years later.

The stunning coastline of Budleigh Salterton forms the western most section of the Jurassic coast, with its unique Red Devonian Sandstone rising from the water on either side of the cliffs.
‘Call in again when you're next visiting.’

Another drop into the oil burner, another happy customer and a gentle citrus fragrance of oranges and roses started to fill the shop.
'Very tasteful,’ Polly thought, a subtle way of masking the slightly stale smell of second hand clothes and of introducing something less overbearing than Sandra's squirts of 'fresh linen!’ Polly smiled across at her. There she was, busy helping a customer.

'It really suits you...you might need it taken in a bit. There, I'll just hold it for you. Yes, that would make all the difference.'
‘How much?’
'£22.50, it's not often we have an Ann Balon dress in: it'll look good dressed up or down, with evening shoes or worn casually with boots.’
Five minutes later, the auburn haired lady was gone along with the necklace that Sandra had helped her to choose.

‘What a busy day it’s been! Are you getting off straight away Sandra? Would you like that extra five minutes now as I just remembered you said you wanted a chat and I’m not in again until Wednesday?' Ten minutes later, with the shop sign turned to ‘Closed’, Polly and Sandra were enjoying welcome mugs of sweetened tea. Polly knew just the way Sandra liked it!

'I found this under a heap of clothes inside that old suitcase over there' said Sandra.

‘Wow! I see what you mean. That’s a real one off; do you think we should have it valued?'

'No. Well yes I know what you mean, but no. It's this; this is what I was hoping to speak to you about.’ Sandra opened the ebony box, richly inlaid with mother of pearl. Carefully, she clicked a lever inside the box.
'Goodness, that's the sort of thing you see on the Antiques Road Show! Mind you it's probably not old, old, but still, a box with a secret compartment, you did brilliantly to spot that.’
‘Yes but wait Polly, just look what's inside!'

When Sandra pulled out an old book, a few loose leaves fell out which she straightened and replaced neatly behind the cover. On the top was a drawing, a sketch done in pen and ink showing a lady with two small children standing by a tree. By some miracle Sandra, had found herself flicking through the pages, engrossed.

‘What is it, some sort of manuscript? Have you read it yet?'

‘No, I’ve just flicked through the pages so far. It looks like it's someone's memoirs. Apart from the beginning, it's written almost completely as reflections headed in sections, perhaps ready to be turned into chapters.

“Bring Down The Moon”, nice title, might even belong to someone famous,' Sandra mused.

'Now you really are romancing. Mind you, I wouldn't mind being on that road show, I used to like Michael Aspel! I've got some time over the next few days, so you never know I might just read it. I’m intrigued already. Certainly makes you wonder where it came from, and if it is very personal then what are we going to do with it?’

Once back home, ready for an early night, Polly climbed into bed with a glass of wine and picked up the manuscript. The evenings could seem long these days since Philip's untimely death, so it was going to be good to have something to read: in fact ideally she'd finish it by Wednesday.

Polly looked at the sketch with the picture of the lady and the children; it seemed somehow even more haunting, more troubled in the bedroom twilight. Polly turned the picture over. Clipped onto the back of the drawing was what looked like the writing for the sleeve of a book, maybe it was intended to be published after all.



Synopsis

Following the tragic loss of their two year old son: Christopher, Dr Andrews and Elizabeth reluctantly leave their dales home: 'Springhill', for New Zealand. Five years later they return with two little girls: Maria and Fleur, and find the moon once more over their doorstep.

Straddling the genre of romance and family saga, the novel opens post-war with Annie, the doctor's housekeeper setting the scene for us of those northern times, as she prepares for the family's home coming.

At times tragic, at times touching, Bring down the Moon offers a message of hope. It becomes an account of the heroine: Fleur's story as she moves through the obstacle course of life. It is a story rich with veiled truths, growth and intense feelings. Two sisters marry two brothers.

'How wonderful to have such closeness' Fleur thinks, but is it?

Fleur changes through the years, arriving at that place in time we have all trodden: the unknown. She seeks security from the hills and dales of life. As Fleur journeys, the views are spell binding, the road so rocky, her feet bleed and now in her advancing years, she seeks a simpler life, completing her journey by the shores of East Devon.

Fleur's life takes an unexpected twist when she hears the reflections of a dying priest.

Eerily, we sometimes catch the broken cobwebs of time through an overarching commentary.

Could it be the voice of the moon above, weaving its way in and out of the story?

C1: Home-making. 1954.

'It’s true; we just have ten days to prepare for their return.'

‘Did you hear that? Dr Andrews and his wife Elizabeth are coming home, after all this time.’
‘I can hardly believe it, when did you hear?’
‘Who told you? Are you sure?’

Annie, holding on to her hat, as if keeping the lid on the flurry of questions from Ivy and Janet, carried on:
'Will it be five years? Aye it is that, that’s an awful long time. Will we need to be sure we give them a warm welcome, then?’
Annie’s upward inflection had that charming lilt that belonged to the highlands, and she had Great Aunt Edith to thank for her way of framing things as questions of a kind.

‘Quite a legend,’ Annie recalled to herself, as her mind wafted back to Great Aunt Edith, and her homemade scones.
‘Five years, already,’ she thought. Time had passed ‘awful quick!’ There was a spring in her step as she walked on her way and smiled to herself as she thought about the corner shop and Ivy! It really was as good a place as any for village gossip, but poor Ivy, if there was a wrong end of the stick to get, she'd get it!

Annie loved the dales around her; the undulation of the hills and dry stone walls, the limestone cliffs. She loved the wild ‘Wuthering Heights’ moments of biting turbulence where life seemed on an edge; but most of all she loved the characteristic sound, that haunting bleating sound of sheep which seemed to reach her wherever she was, striking an emotional chord in her in much the way that bagpipes could. This was home to Annie, at least since she was eight years of age.

‘I don’t know,’ mused Annie out loud to herself, as she started to climb the hill ‘forty six years here and still a newcomer!’

Hefty and comely as she was in build, Annie’s sparrow like legs carried her well and her greying sandy hair was usually caught back in a neat bun at the nape of her neck and topped, when outside, by a neutral coloured woolly hat that rarely changed with the weather; she had a handsome face with fading freckles and soft grey twinkling eyes. Annie loved walking, or 'strolling' she called it. She loved the smells, the sounds, the air feeling fresh on her face and was already starting to think of the fire she'd be lighting once back home.

Annie could make anything sparkle: home making was her forte and she knew herself well, all her little foibles! She knew there were times when she needed to be quiet and rest, perhaps drained from her physical graft and having listened endlessly to someone’s story. It wasn’t just ‘Annie the hard worker and good listener,’ because she equally would take her turn; enjoy having a favour done for her, and would chatter away about this and that, glad someone was listening to her too. She was quick to banter, and had a 'bend you up double' sense of humour; but, first and foremost, Annie was a practical person and that helped her enormously to see an order of priorities that kept life simple.

Brier cottage had been home to Annie and Harry since the start of their marriage in 1920. It was at the end of a terrace of three cottages and had open views in every direction. Annie and Harry always liked growing things and, from the start, kept pots of herbs in their yard way for cooking. Perhaps Annie had picked up the idea from her grandmother who had used herbs for concocting old-fashioned medicinal remedies. The croft of land had been tenanted to Annie and Harry unexpectedly and they had taken it in their stride. Within six months of the land becoming theirs, Harry had

fixed boundary walls and fences in place and Clover and Nancy moved in, along with the hens. The livestock varied only a little over the years and usually consisted of at least one milking goat, six hens and Clover, the donkey: the village children loved her and each year someone would enjoy being 'Mary' in the Christmas play so having a special chance to ride her.

Annie was a bit of an Earth Mother to everyone: the one putting on the tea parties in the village hall during ration time and the one behind the food for the summer fete.

'How do you do it, Annie? That's what I'd like to know; how do you make a tin of corn beef stretch to feed an army? Will you show me how to darn nylon stockings?' Eileen with her eight children knew she could ask Annie anything. She loved Annie for she could learn from her and it was so endearing, the way Annie had no problem also sharing with her the odd time when her own Yorkshire puddings had flopped.

In 1945 when the message came over the wireless that the war had ended, Annie, 'the strong one', collapsed. She had been steady as a rock for everyone whilst the war was going on but once it was over the relief of the news sent her legs to jelly. She was so grateful to see loved ones, safe and home but at the same time was sensitive to the huge losses around; those neighbours who were not lucky enough to see their loved ones walk back in through the door. There had been six families in and around Pen-y-dale who had lost their sons to war. 'What a lot the war has to answer for, Annie thought as she neared home.

Thinking about the doctor and his wife's homecoming, had triggered a cascading of memories. She remembered the times when in spite of all the hardships, the villagers could be so amazing! At harvest time, Annie would find half the community on her doorstep ready to help gather in the crops

in exchange for taking some home with them. What a happy arrangement for everyone! It was during that time that a tall, gangly lad with an attractive, off beam smile arrived at Annie's door looking for work.

'Well, blow me down I was just thinking of you. Hello, Frank'
'Mornin,' Annie. Good job I called by after lunch; some o' back fence were down so I've done a make shift job for you until Harry sees to it, but at least it'll save you having Clover and rest o' 'em wanderin'.'
'Ah, Frank! What a thoughtful lad you are! Would you be coming on in for a cup o' tea?'
'No, you're rit, better get back.'
'OK, Frank, then we'll settle up with you tomorrow, and I'll be singing your praises to Harry.'
'See you soon Annie. Go, warm up.'

There was something about Frank's expression, the uncertainty in his voice, the way he looked to you for reassurance: a sincerity that really tugged at Annie's heart.

'They call me Frank Horner, Ma'am' Annie repeated in a quiet semi 'out loud' way as she recalled the first time she had met him with: 'Julie Tinsdale,' Annie muttered, as she remembered. Julie was a polite young girl who was always very kind to her son: Frank, born to her when she was only sixteen, a truth he himself never knew, but how he loved his 'Aunty Julie'. As for Harry and Annie, they never once regretted taking Frank under their wing; they knew the length and breadth of his limitations, but a more willing pair of hands, they could not have hoped to find anywhere.

Once through the white gate, Annie fiddled with the second key in the lock and opened the heavy stable door that lead into the front room.
'There we are,' she sighed pulling off her coat and shoes. She was pleased to be home; still a bit 'out of puff' from the

walk up the hill, her feet felt the relief of the comfy slippers she kept by the fireplace. The fire was just about 'in,' ready for another shovel of coal and a couple of pieces of wood. Annie stood beside it for a while, having a warm, it would soon be crackling away.

Annie sneezed. The front room was a potpourri of smells: accumulations from cooking and baking, from cut flowers, from the fire, the cat and polish. Annie was great with the duster, rubbing on and rubbing off and she had collected some well-loved pieces of furniture over the years. There was granny's welsh dresser and barley sugar legged dining table and Aunt Edith's rocking chair, that still needed a bit of re-upholstering.
'Come on Smokey, off the chair you go, little scamp that you are!'

Annie loved the peace of Brier cottage, the homely atmosphere of the clock ticking whilst Smokey curled up in the corner of the window seat, washing himself. She loved rocking in her chair with time to think things through slowly without any rush; she enjoyed looking out from where she was sitting at the view, she could see as far away as Pendle Hill. How she missed her mother: even with her outspokenness! Annie would smile, hearing her mother saying:

'To think Annie, after all those times I had to get on to you about the state of your room, you could turn into such a good wee housewife! Where did you get those chintzy covers from for the settee? I dare say they cost a bob or too! Did you run short for the windows?'
What a shame! Annie's mother could never see their differences, how Annie might simply have not wanted matching curtains! But for all the irritations even after all this time, when the phone rang Annie half expected and wished it to be her mam.

‘Ah well’ Annie sighed and interrupted the helpless feeling she was starting to have about her mother’s sad life with ‘just one of those things!’ thoughts, as she got up and went to make herself an Earl Grey and settled in Harry’s large easy chair at the side of the fireplace.
‘Thank goodness she had curtains and things to bother about. I think I’d have needed a distraction too if I had been in her shoes.’ She sighed a long ‘aged six’ sigh as she reached out to the photograph of Harry on the table by her side. She picked it up, gave it a perfunctory kiss, and put it back firmly. 'Now where’s that list o’ mine?’

Annie loved her Earl Grey and she loved her Harry; she could set her watch by him. He said he’d be back by five o’clock and five o’clock it would be. His walk in the hills would take him another two hours she reckoned, which gave her plenty of time to put the casserole into the oven and do her ‘to do’ list for the doctor’s home coming. She felt proud of Harry; he was solidly reliable and it was so wonderful that he was home safe and well from the war; he had seen so many of his regiment killed.

Decorating: Remind Harry and Tom

Laundry: Curtains, towels, linen

Bedrooms Bedding and eiderdowns air

Cot Prepare

Baking Apple pie and scones

In between writing her list, Annie was daydreaming as she emptied the washing tub, set the table, washed and stacked a few dishes in the sink, put the vacuum on over the down-stairs carpets, popped up- stairs to run a comb through her hair and powder her nose; all in time to have that extra stir of the casserole before Harry’s return.

Her first meeting with Harry was by the tombola at the village fete in the summer of 1919. Try as she could, Annie could not recall the first words they had exchanged, but the feelings were as if it all happened yesterday. Annie had often wondered how she would know when the right man came along; in idle moments she had even rehearsed the occasion, what she might say to him, how she might look abashed! In the 'here and now' of that coy moment, it made her feel a little light-headed and she had found herself tongue-tied and overcome. It was two days before her birthday: July 15th and about four weeks after the summer fete when Harry walked Annie home after a chance meeting one afternoon.

'Annie, I was wondering if you would not think it too forward of me…'
'Yes, Harry?' Annie intervened with encouragement.
'Would you care to walk out with me to the brass band parade? They are playing on the village green in the early evening tomorrow?'

Harry was a patient man and had a twinkle in his eye that helped you to see the funny side of something, and Annie absolutely loved the fact that as tall and handsome as he was, he was no rover and quite shy in some ways. She knew there were times when she could irritate Harry like mad with her 'bees in her bonnets' but he usually found a way of settling the buzz and had the knack of helping her down from that occasional 'high horse' too. Fundamentally, Annie felt at home and valued; he appreciated all she did - it was simple. Harry on the other hand had a way of putting his foot into things, but loved to see how he could stir Annie into lots of laughter and he knew she knew that his intention was to always be a solid support to her.

The casserole she had placed in the oven was bubbling away and Annie put an embroidered cloth on the card table that settled by a roaring fire, ready for Harry's return. Annie rarely heard the grumbling Harry did as actual grumbling (a bit

like her mother's 'nagging' perhaps); it just went through a sieve in her head that turned into light amusement. Half an hour later (the timing for the casserole was perfect), Harry was home.

'Hungry dearie?' Annie asked as she placed his hot meal on the table.
'Like starving Russia,' he replied, and in listening mode Annie let Harry enjoy his meal and tell her all about his day. Harry always became engrossed in the re-telling of his own stories, so that when Annie rose to her feet; Harry noticed it as 'abruptly!'
"O, dear, what's wrong? Whatever has happened? I can tell from your face. Are you upset pet? No? Do I need to go and put on a collar and tie, smarten up before you tell me?"
Annie had moved from being irritated to cackling out with her infectious giggle: 'What are you like?'

Annie relayed the story of Dr Andrews and Elizabeth's imminent return to Springhill, including her encounter with Ivy Pickles.
'You mean that nosy parker woman, the one who looks pale and constipated all the time?' Fond as she was of Ivy, Harry's description was perfect.
`That's wonderful news! Go on, pet, tell me more,'

Harry followed Annie into the kitchen,
'OO, you old rogue you,' Annie laughed as she felt Harry's hand tap her on the backside as she bent down to take the apple pie from the oven.
'Rogue! Who me? Now you can't help a husband taking advantage of his good woman's 'apple pie position!'
Annie laughed, 'you, monkey, you.'
'There's only the two of us here,' Harry persisted.
'On with you, old rogue, that you are!' Annie chuckled to the monkey sounds Harry had started to make.

‘Now, go on, what were you saying as I followed you to the kitchen? You let me tell you all about my boring day and held back your important news about the doctor’s return. Now isn’t that my Annie for you, always puts herself last.’
‘Mind, don’t go making any saint of me, Harry Lowther,’ Annie replied smiling,
‘I just needed time to get a word in edge ways!’

Annie continued to tell Harry about the surprise telegram they had had that morning all the way from
New Zealand. It simply stated:

DR GAVIN AND ELIZABETH RETURNING HOME FRIDAY 24th SEPTEMBER WITH OUR TWO LITTLE GIRLS: MARIA AND FLEUR. LOOK FORWARD TO COMING HOME. WILL CALL YOU SOON AS WE ARRIVE IN DOVER.

‘Dover. Friday. Two little daughters! Well I never, that’s amazing! What are they called again? How old are they? Does either of them look like little Christopher?’
‘Harry,’ Annie interjected, ‘what are you like? I only know as much as you do, we will just have to be patient'.
'Come on...look at you now, mop them up'. Annie relaxed a little, as she felt Harry's strong warm arms around her.
‘It is wonderful news, Harry.’

‘You loved that little boy,’ Annie found Harry’s large handkerchief, soft and comforting, she kept twining it round her fingers like a worry rag. What a long time it had been!

Five years had passed since the doctor and Elizabeth had left the sleepy village of Pen-y-dale, following the tragic death of their little boy Christopher who had died at the age of two from leukaemia. He was a beautiful child with dark eyes and silky dark hair just like his father’s. He was bright and sunny, and could be very funny at times. Annie had often

babysat for Dr Gavin and Elizabeth on their special occasions. Christopher's tragic illness came as such a blow to the couple and the whole village.

'Do you remember when Christopher was born, Harry?'
'Remember? I do, you put the card in the window.'
'That's right. The card used to mean 'home visit', and none of the doctors liked seeing it there, because it meant 'more work': an interruption to an already busy morning; they'd have to stop the car, come inside to collect the details. What a surprise that day! Remember how the doctor came running in?'
'I do, and he was fairly bristling, expecting an emergency, and instead.'….
'Baby Christopher had been born, safe and sound!' Harry finished off for Annie completing that shared memory, and he watched on tenderly as she walked over to the welsh dresser to take out the photograph album. She knew exactly where it was kept.

`Now Annie, mind you don't go upsetting yourself.'
'Ah! Look at him, all that hair, at the christening. I reckon he looks about two on this one.'
'Got some chocolate on his face on this one,' said Harry doing his best to lighten things up a little.

'Two years, two weeks this one says on the back of it.' Annie turned over another page of the album.

'Ah, see here how gaunt Elizabeth looks and that's two months before they lost the wee soul. So sad.'

Thursday, 9 September 1948, that was one of the saddest days.

It seemed beyond contemplation to think that this perfect family could have their own major tragedy in full view of everyone. Dr Gavin was, after all someone who everyone looked up to and who people expected to go to for their

own treatment and Elizabeth, a vicar's daughter should be consoling others rather than receiving condolences herself.

'I just thought it was so sad to see them go all that way away to New Zealand,' said Annie.
'I know, it just gave them a chance for a breather. Village life can be so…'
'Claustrophobic!'
'That's the one. Now come on Annie, it was a long time ago and we've to welcome those two little girls. So put that book away.'
Harry's tone of voice still had that warm ring of his father's Geordie accent: 'tell you what pet, there's a bit of clearing behind that rhubarb. How about us having a little piece there for our Christopher? We could put some rosemary there for remembrance and forget-me-nots, alongside the buttercups and daisies.
'O, Harry, how do you do it? I can just imagine those wee girls skipping and playing there. They never need know the significance of it, at least not until they're old enough to understand,' she sighed.

'Just going upstairs a moment to freshen up.'
'That's my girl', Harry replied. He knew Annie was such a brick for so many people and it saddened him to picture her behind the bathroom door on her own crying, yet he reckoned sometimes, when he saw tears well up in her, she sometimes needed him to step aside and let her have that private space.

Annie had had the heartache of several miscarriages before having Billy and Susan and knew how difficult it could be talking to people. Annie finished combing her hair; she had cried enough; she had things to do and, ever practical, tuned in to what Harry would say; 'That's life for you!' and with that thought she smiled, stood up taller and walked downstairs.

Soon Annie was recalling to herself five years ago, but in practical ways. The replacement young doctor and family hadn't taken to the country practice but had soon been replaced by a much more suitable locum. Doctor McFarlane came with a reluctance to become attached and embedded but had a sincerity of spirit as well as a good sense of humour that warmed the people of Pen-y-dale to him. He had no intentions of making sweeping changes and suited the dear practice house, Springhill, with its stone steps leading down to the surgeries. He was often seen, time and weather permitting, striding out with trousers tucked into his boots and aided with a much loved walking stick and with a familiarity of purpose, as if he had walked the paths before.

No one knew the old doctor well or what became of him after he left. Perhaps he wanted it to be like that! He was content and that made all the difference. He loved nothing more than to look out on a clear day from the morning room window and see across as far out as Pen-y-ghent.