

PARTNERS IN TIME

A HARRY AND JETT ADVENTURE

NICHOLAS HODGSON

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ISBN 978-0-6456131-3-1 (Print Edition)

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fictional characters and historical figures, all events, dialogue, thoughts
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real.

Also - as far as I know, there is no secret tunnel under the British Museum
facilitating time travel. Should future revelations prove me wrong I am
happy to update this disclaimer.

PROLOGUE

Valley of the Kings.

E^{gypt}
October 1922

Hussein paused to take a deep breath and wipe the sweat from his eyes. It was hard work lifting the heavy water jar from the back of the donkey. The jar was almost taller than he was. But the workers at the dig site would be thirsty by now. He needed to hurry. Hussein should have gotten there earlier, but the stubborn donkey wouldn't move fast enough no matter how many times Hussein pushed and whacked it with his stick.

He had been doing this job for three months now,

delivering water from the well far down the valley to the men working in the scorching sun.

The man in charge was an Englishman, Mr Carter. He has been in Egypt so long that his skin was tanned brown. All these men were working hard in the blazing desert sun because Mr Carter was convinced that somewhere beneath these sands, a Pharaoh's tomb remained hidden. Hussein was only a boy, he knew little of these matters, only that Mr Carter paid well, and his family needed the money.

Hussein stepped slowly away from the donkey, taking care not to spill any of the precious water. He carefully used his foot to smooth out a flat surface in the sand so that the jar would sit upright, rather than tipping over.

And that was how he found it.

A firm surface, under his foot. Hussein set the jar down, brushed more of the sand away and stared.

There was a flat stone, buried just under the sand.

Hussein ran off to find one of the workers, watching their faces light up as he described what he had found.

A team of men quickly gathered around, excitedly digging the sand away. The flat surface revealed itself to be a step.

Just below it was another.

Then another.

The water jar was soon forgotten.

The boy, Hussein, had no idea that day of how significant his discovery was.

But Howard Carter, lead archaeologist on this dig, most certainly did.

The tomb.

The fabled tomb of the boy pharaoh.

Now, many months later, Carter was sweating as he worked methodically, slowly uncovering the secrets of the lost tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun.

The temperature inside of the tomb was cooler than the heat of the searing Egyptian desert outside. Nevertheless, Carter was hot as he meticulously worked through his labelling and cataloguing process.

The discovery of the intact tomb of the boy-king continued to make worldwide news. The idea that, in this modern age, there were still literal treasures to be discovered, just buried underground, had gripped the imagination of millions around the world.

But Carter preferred to leave all the newspaper enquiries and magazine interviews to his sponsor, Lord Carnarvon. He would much rather be where he was right now, working on the crowning archaeological find of his career.

With no electric lights yet installed, Carter was

working by candlelight. Each item found in the tomb needed to have its position mapped, then it needed to be tagged, sketched, described, and photographed from several angles. And this was only the antechamber. They hadn't even reached the burial vault yet, where the Pharaoh himself lay.

On that hot, early summer afternoon, Carter was so engaged with his work that he didn't notice the ever-present water-boy at his side. Hussein was not only a hard worker, but Carter considered him a good luck charm. It was his accidental discovery of that first step, buried in the sand, that led to all this.

"Mister Carter, what's that?"

Carter looked up and took the tumbler of water the boy was holding out. But the boy was looking at something else. Something in the tomb had caught his eye.

"Is shiny," said the boy.

"Lots of shiny things in here," said Carter.

"No," said the boy in his broken English, "is too shiny. Not belong."

Carter looked at where the boy was pointing.

The boy was right.

Something shiny was gleaming in the lamplight, from inside the war chariot parked against the opposite wall. The chariot was so well preserved that it looked as if the Pharaoh had stepped out of it only moments earlier.

But the chariot wasn't what the boy was pointing to.

Carter had trained himself, over years of experience, to not be impatient when involved in excavations, especially something of this size. It was far better to be painstakingly slow and get it right than to rush things, or jump ahead, and get it wrong.

However, the glint of gold inside the chariot piqued his curiosity.

He hadn't noticed gold there before. And he had been working in this room for months.

"It won't hurt to have a look", he told himself, and he stood up from his small, wooden footstool. The light wasn't quite the same once he reached the chariot and the object was no longer glinting. Carter crouched down and peered into the dark recesses of the ancient machine.

"Can you see it?" he said over his shoulder.

"Yes Mister Carter, is still shiny."

Carter reached in.

There was something there, on the floor. Something that didn't belong. The boy was right. Carter held his candle closer to get a better look and almost dropped it in shock.

It was a watch. A pocket watch. Sitting covered in the same ancient dust as the chariot. With a small chain looped around the structure. There was no mistaking it.

Carter stood up and stepped back, astounded. His mind flew in a thousand different directions. How could a pocket watch be in the tomb? Was this a fake? A forgery?

Or had the tomb already been opened much more recently?

Enormous fear and frustration boiled up inside of him, Carter forced himself to slow down his breathing, to take a few long deep breaths. His heart rate slowed.

Nothing else in the tomb appeared to be anything but authentic. The seal on the door had been unbroken since ancient times. The tomb itself looked to have been undisturbed for millennia. He decided that, in this case, he would need to skip the cataloguing and photographing.

He reached in and gently untangled the chain from the structure, before pulling out the whole watch. The timepiece was coated in dust – centuries worth of dust. The attached chain was stained with age, rust patches showing through. It looked to be just as old as the rest of the tomb.

But that was impossible!

At once, Carter knew that this was a problem he was going to need help with. He held the watch tight in his hand.

He turned to Hussein.

“Tell the men...” he hesitated, then spoke again, “tell the men we’ll have to close the site. I’ll be away for a few days.”

“A few days, Mister?”

“Yes,” said Carter, “I need to go to Cairo.”

Carter travelled to Cairo that very night, needing advice. The watch was an anachronism. Something that belonged to a completely different time-period. Its presence in the tomb made no sense.

A day later, he was standing on the plush rug in a suite at the Continental Savoy Hotel in Cairo. It was a hotel suite he knew well. He knew the suite almost as well as he knew the distinguished-looking older gentleman who stepped through the door, followed by his valet.

“Carter!” exclaimed Lord Carnarvon. “No one told me you were coming. What news from our tomb? Riches beyond our wildest dreams?”

Lord Carnarvon was Carter’s financial backer and main sponsor. The two men had a relationship that went back fifteen years.

Carter reached into his pocket. “Sir,” he said, “I’ve found something that might interest you.”

Carnarvon gave him an amused look. “That would be an understatement, Howard. Over the past few weeks, you have given the entire world something to talk about.” Carter smiled, acknowledging Carnarvon’s compliment.

“Well,” said Carnarvon, “what brings you to Cairo then? Until this moment I doubted I could drag you from the tomb, let alone that you would come of your own volition.”

Carter sat down and Carnarvon’s valet handed him a

drink. He looked down at the watch. "I think, Sir, you may need a drink yourself."

Lord Carnarvon sat and listened while Carter explained how and where he had found the watch, including the accumulated dust which suggested it had lain there undisturbed for centuries. To his surprise, Carnarvon's face showed neither disbelief nor astonishment at the story. Instead, he listened, with closed lips, and waited until Carter finished.

Carter himself took a quick, fortifying drink as soon as he finished, and waited for Carnarvon's response. Carnarvon took his time, nodding thoughtfully and running his finger around the top of his glass before speaking. "I think it would be best if you gave me the watch."

Carter wordlessly handed it to him, his eyes never leaving the older man's face.

"My driver will arrange transport for you. I want you to go on vacation for a few weeks; I'll cover the expense. Then, head straight back to the site and continue the dig. I'll make sure the tomb remains undisturbed while you're gone."

Carter opened his mouth to protest that he was far from wanting a vacation. Carnarvon stopped him. "I'm prepared to keep funding you for as long as you need to do the excavation properly. Years if necessary. But I think it best you don't mention the watch to anyone."

Carter read something in his tone. “Sir, I really think...”

“Yes, a vacation is a splendid idea. You have been working so hard.” He signalled to his valet, and a protesting Carter found himself escorted from the room.

CHAPTER ONE

London
England
Mid-March, 1941

Harry glanced to his left, then to his right, before ducking between the pillars flanking the front entrance of the grand old museum. There was a bored-looking soldier on duty. Harry needed him to be distracted, just for a few seconds.

He ducked down behind the sandbags piled outside the gate.

And he waited. For just the right moment.

Then he saw a pretty girl walking up the street outside the fence, and Harry smiled to himself. He waited until

she had the soldier's full attention, then sprinted forward, yanked open the doors and slipped inside.

Easy.

No trouble at all.

Harry took a deep breath, exhaled, and grinned.

The British Museum was his favourite place on Earth.

Even now, with the doors closed to the public for over a year, and the most valuable exhibits sealed away in the basement to protect them from the nightly bombing, it was a place of happy memories for Harry.

The museum was a link to the time before.

Harry had spent plenty of Saturdays here, whenever he could convince his father to go. His father didn't take a whole lot of convincing – it was from him that Harry had inherited his love for all things historical. And his passion to learn more.

Back then life was normal and gloriously, naively, simple.

If only Harry had known.

The war started one Autumn Day in 1939. Harry and his dad had been playing cricket in the back garden, when the Prime Minister came on the wireless.

“...I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that, consequently, this country is at war with Germany.”

Harry was ten years old.

Old enough to understand that something significant had happened, but not old enough to realise how much his life would change. At first, the war had seemed like something distant and fun, like a newsreel, one of those cliff-hanger serials at the cinema, or an adventure novel to be read by torchlight under his bed covers. In the evenings, his father would read out loud from the newspaper and his parents would have animated discussions about what it all meant.

“But dear, Hitler will over-extend himself – it’s a known fact. Eventually, his hubris will be his undoing. There’s nothing to worry about.”

Harry wasn’t sure what hubris meant, but he was guessing it was something bad if Hitler had it. He knew both his parents hated Hitler with grand passion.

But life continued as normal. Harry kept going to school. He played war with his friends at playtime. The sun still shone.

Then his father got called up to the army. “I have to go do my bit,” he told Harry’s mother in the kitchen that night, when Harry was supposed to be asleep. “How do I show my face if I don’t?”

“Showing your face is more important than staying alive for your family?”

“Oh darling, you’re worrying unnecessarily. You know Hitler will over-extend himself and then we’ll teach him a lesson.”

“I hope so.”

Harry, listening from upstairs, pulled the blanket up and over his head. He really didn't like it.

A week later Harry's father went away. He had a fake smile on his face the morning he left. He gave Harry a hug and a pat on the head. “I'll see you soon son, I promise.”

Some promise.

The museum visits stopped.

Soon after that, France surrendered. Harry could remember that. It was a seismic shock, ricocheting through the country. Now Britain stood alone.

He could remember his mother sitting in the kitchen, wringing the tea towel, wearing a worried expression while listening to the wireless. And it was always bad news. It seemed like Hitler was unstoppable.

Then the bombs started falling on London.

Harry's mother agonized over whether to send him to the countryside, splitting them up for his own safety, as so many other families had. In the end, she kept him by her side. If Harry had left, she would be alone.

Harry understood.

He saw the king and the queen on the newsreels at the cinema, sometimes with their daughters too. And Harry felt angry.

Why did those girls get to keep their father – when so many other kids' dads were sent away?

One night a German bomb fell on Harry's house. And in a terrible instant his mother was gone. It was such a cruel thing.

Harry had been sleeping at the neighbours. He had stayed until after dark playing board games with their son. It was so late; they offered him a bed to sleep in. It was an offer that would save his life.

His mother, alone in the house, had no one to save her.

He tried not to think of that night.

Whether his mother had heard the tell-tale whistle of the bomb as it fell.

Whether Mum knew it was her last moment.

And whether she thought of him.

The neighbours left soon afterwards. They had relatives in the countryside. They offered to take Harry with them, but he said no, his father would return soon, and Harry wanted to be there when he did.

So, he stayed.

Harry was on his own.

Having nowhere else to go, he lived in the ruins of his house. Spending days searching through the debris of his former life, finding bits and pieces he could use. He even collected the mail for a while, before realising how pointless it was.

Harry didn't know if his father was dead. Maybe he was. Or maybe he wasn't.

But his father wasn't here, with Harry, where he should be and he didn't come home when Harry's mother was killed - not even to the funeral.

Harry hated him for that.

Harry had camped in the ruins of their house for a week - probably closer to two - after burying his mother.

Waiting.

Waiting for his father to come home.

But it wasn't to be.

And he noticed the looks he was getting from the rest of the neighbours. He didn't like it. Harry was too proud to have people knowing his business.

One day he left.

That morning Harry stopped and said goodbye to the ruins of the house, running his hands along the top of the fireplace, the smashed stove top and touching the broken door frame with his height from years past pencilled in.

The house he grew up in. The only home he ever knew.

He had packed a small bag, not knowing what to take, what he would need and what to leave behind. Then he stepped out through the garden gate, pushing it closed behind him as Mum had always reminded him to.

"Goodbye Mum," he whispered and then, forcing the tears back, Harry threw his pack over his shoulder and walked up the street without once looking back.

That first night he slept under a bridge. It was cold and uncomfortable.

He wanted to go home. But he didn't.

The second night he slept in an underground shelter with hundreds of others, because of an air-raid. At least it was warm.

But still lonely, despite the people pressed around him.

The next few weeks turned into months. A blur of trying to survive.

Living on the streets, sleeping in ruined houses, scavenging food where-ever possible, and even doing things he was ashamed of.

Stealing.

He stole food, sometimes clothes and blankets. He tried not to steal from people who couldn't spare what he was taking.

And at night Harry would curl up and cry himself to sleep.

But he got used to it.

Not that he had a lot of choice.

There were agencies who were supposed to assist children like Harry; children orphaned by the war. But Harry knew they would take him away, send him to an orphanage somewhere in the countryside where he knew no one.

He hated that idea.

So, Harry stayed in the city and out of sight as best he

could. The social services tried looking for him, but not too hard. After all, there were so many children just like him.

A year passed.

It was hard to keep track of the days when you weren't going to school. Each day blended into the next: wake up, search for food, find somewhere to sleep, rinse and repeat...

It was a bleak existence. Occasionally Harry would change things up.

That's what today was about; sneaking into the museum, so that just for a moment he could feel normal again. He could almost imagine his dad beside him, telling him an amazing story about some fossil or piece of Ancient Egyptian art they were standing next to.

When he was younger, Harry had thought his father was the smartest man in the world. But now he had doubts. Surely a man that smart wouldn't have left his family to go fight in a hopeless war. Surely, he wouldn't have left his only son all alone in the cold bleak city.

The museums, like lots of things, closed when the bombing started. They had posted soldiers out the front. But, as Harry learned, they weren't there to stop people trying to sneak in. Because who in their right mind would want to go to a museum when bombs fell every night?

Those soldiers were there in case a bomb should hit the museum.

Their job was to put out the fires.

But Harry wasn't worried about that. After all, why would the Germans waste a perfectly good bomb on a museum? How does it help them win the war if they blow a 3,000-year-old mummy to pieces?

He felt safe enough.

The lights were off in the museum, but Harry knew his way around. He wanted to go to his favourite gallery, where they kept the Roman artefacts.

Harry loved learning about the Romans. He found it fascinating to read about these people from thousands of years ago, who invaded England and stayed for hundreds of years... and then left. It was reassuring, even in the darkest days of the war, to know that one day it would end. One day everything would go back to normal.

Or as normal as it's possible to be, when you have no parents.

Harry went down the stairs, feeling his way along, until he was in the Roman gallery. He pulled a torch from his backpack. It was his father's, and one of the few things he'd pulled intact from the ruins of their house.

He had found some batteries to keep the torch going. Although "found" might not be entirely accurate. It was possible that he had found them in a shop, on the shelf, and "found" in his pocket later. Without paying.

Stealing was wrong. Harry knew that.

But surely God wouldn't mind him having a bit of light. That wasn't too great a sin, was it?

He had a feeling there was even a bible verse about making it light.

Harry wasn't sure. He wasn't even sure there was a God. It seemed to him that, if there was a God, then he must be slacking off and not paying attention, since so many awful things were happening in the world.

Harry froze and flicked off his torch. He had been down here many times and he had never seen anyone else in this section. The museum was usually empty. But Harry could see light coming from a doorway ahead.

Harry crouched down behind a statue of the Roman Emperor Claudius and waited for a minute, to see if someone would emerge from the doorway. But no one did.

Harry's curiosity grew, until he could take it no more. He emerged from his hiding place, and, taking extra special care to keep as quiet as possible, he made his way over to the door and peered through.

It was a passageway leading to a flight of stairs, which went further down.

Harry knew that there was a basement below the museum. Dad told him that the basement below the

museum held all the real treasures, the objects that were far too valuable to leave in the public areas.

Harry had wondered about those treasures, his mind conjuring up all sorts of fanciful notions about what might be down there, but he had never thought he would see for himself.

He hesitated. If someone was down there – and there was a good chance that someone was – they could catch him and throw him out. But... what was the worst that could happen? It wasn't like they could stop him coming back another day. He hadn't exactly asked permission this time.

Harry looked behind him. The gallery was still, the exhibits looking unearthly in the yellow glow of the light from the doorway. Then he steeled himself and stepped through.

Down the corridor.

Onto the stairs.

And down.

Down.

Down.

It surprised Harry how far these stairs went. He soon noticed that the air was colder down here. Then he saw the walls had changed. They were solid concrete now, rather than the timber of the museum interior walls. Every twenty steps there was a bare lightbulb overhead, providing illumination.

Harry pressed on, curious now at what lay at the bottom of the staircase, and not wanting to get caught on the stairs. After one hundred and seventy-four steps (Harry had counted), he emerged into another corridor, this time with walls made of sheer rock.

Maybe he had gone so deep, he was now inside some ancient Roman ruin. How amazing would that be?

The corridor seemed to disappear into darkness, so Harry had to switch his torch back on.

It was cool down here – cold enough that he might have put on his coat if he had one. The coat Harry had pulled from the ruins of his bedroom – the one he had used to stay warm for so many winters – he had traded that away for food, months ago.

Harry shivered, and he pressed on.

It felt odd to be down here so deep under the museum. It hardly felt possible. And another thought occurred to him: the stairs hadn't gone around in a circle like stairs in a tower do. And they hadn't switched back and forth, like stairs in a tall building do.

Was he even underneath the museum at all? Or had he walked so far that he was somewhere else entirely?

These thoughts were occupying Harry's mind when his torch illuminated an old-fashioned wooden door, in the middle of the corridor, blocking the passage, and Harry had to stop.

CHAPTER TWO

Queenstown,
New Zealand
March 2022

Jett swatted away the fly that kept on trying to crawl inside his nostril. Crafty buggers. It was only mid-morning, and he was already sweating – both because of the temperature, and because he had been pushing this lawn mower up and down these streets for hours.

It had been Mum’s bright idea. “Why don’t you go around the neighbourhood and ask people if they want their lawns mowed? You could make some money.”

It wasn’t a half-bad idea. Jett liked the idea of money, and since turning eleven, the twenty-dollars pocket money

he got for doing jobs around the house just wasn't enough. Everything he wanted to buy was so expensive.

Hats.

Video games.

Shoes.

More hats.

Mum had looked aghast when Jett asked for money instead of a present for his last birthday. "Cold hard cash" was the phrase he used.

"Don't you want me to get you something that you can open on your birthday?" she said.

"No," Jett said, "cash will do."

He was already thinking about what he could spend it on. But that was three months ago, and his birthday cash was long gone. He'd spent it on a pair of white Nike trainers which Mum thought were stupid ("what boy in their right mind gets white shoes?") and a black and a red raiders hat.

Mum also thought buying two hats was stupid. After all, he only had one head.

She just didn't understand being eleven.

Jett wasn't against the idea of earning money. What he had to be convinced about however was the need to get up at the crack of dawn – well, eight a.m. – in the first week of the school holidays to do it.

"Mum... I'll do it later."

"C'mon Jett, the early bird gets the worm."

Jett glared at her, willing his mother to close the door to his bedroom so he could go back to sleep. She didn't.

"What are you talking about Mum? What bird and what worm?"

"It's a saying."

"It's stupid."

Like in most aspects of Jett's life, Mum got her way. Which is why, two hours later, Jett was pushing his lawn mower up the road, wiping the sweat from his eyes, and deciding which house to hit up next.

So far, he had found four houses where no one was home, two houses where someone was home (as evidenced by the cars in the driveway) but they refused to answer the door, three houses where they were home but weren't interested, and one house where the door had been answered a two-year-old wearing a nappy that was so full of wee that it was falling halfway down his bum. At the last house, the old lady who answered the door wanted Jett to come and meet her parakeet. Jett politely declined, as the house smelled of old people and kidnapping.

So, no customers.

Up the end of the street, there was an older house set back from the road. It must have been one of those places built before the new estates went up. But it had two things going for it: the house itself looked neat and tidy (so someone lived there), and the grass outside needed a mow.

As Jett got closer, he saw a car in the driveway and a

man getting out. "Excuse me!" called Jett, running with the lawn mower which made an enormous clatter on the road. "Excuse me, are you looking for someone to mow your lawn?"

The man turned and glanced at Jett. His suit and tie were dishevelled, and he had perspiration around his collar. "Sorry, kid, not my house."

"Oh," said Jett, "okay. Sorry to waste your time."

The man nodded and went to get in the car. Then he stopped. "Say, kid, do you live around here?"

Jett was uneasy about answering. His mother had drummed it into him that you didn't talk to strangers. But then, Jett had started the conversation, and it wasn't like he needed to give a precise answer.

"Yeah, a few streets over."

"So, what – you're offering to mow people's lawns?"

Jett nodded.

"For money, I'm guessing."

It was on the tip of his tongue to say something like, "well I'm not mowing them for free." But then he decided not to. Not everyone got his sarcasm. Sometimes no one got his sarcasm, which was usually when he ended up outside the principal's office.

"Yeah" he replied. Then he smiled in what he hoped was a friendly 'please hire me' way.

"How much?"

Jett looked at the man. The suit looked kind of expensive. And it was a big lawn.

“Twenty bucks?” he said.

The man nodded. He pulled out his wallet and got out a twenty. Jett noticed there were a tonne of other notes in there. He could have asked for a lot more. Crap.

The man held the twenty out. “Now it’s gotta be a decent job.”

Jett nodded vigorously.

“No half measures. You cut it nice and neat and don’t be leaving clippings on the ground.”

“Course not mister,” said Jett. “I know how to cut a lawn.”

The man nodded, then gave Jett the twenty. “That’s a down payment. If I come back and you’ve done a good job, I’ll give you another twenty.”

Forty bucks! Jett grinned. He took the man’s hand and shook it. “It’s a deal mister, I’ll cut the lawn so good you’ll think it’s made for royalty.”

The man laughed. “Just do a good job kid and keep your word. That’s the only thing you’ve got that’s worth anything.”

Jett nodded, not quite understanding. “You’re not staying, mister?”

The man shook his head. “Nah,” he said, “I’m on my lunch break. I just came by to check on the place. We’re

looking to sell it. It belonged to my Nan. She died last month.”

“Oh, I’m sorry to hear that mister.”

“Thanks, son.”

The man nodded towards the house.

“The back door is open – the lock’s busted. If you need a drink or need to use the toilet, you can go inside. Just don’t make a mess of things.”

“Thanks, mister.”

The man nodded; he looked a little lost in thought. Then he looked at Jett again. “Say, kid, what’s your name? I forgot to ask.”

“Jett,” replied Jett. “Jett Black.”

The man chuckled. Because Jett, with his messy blonde hair, did not suit his name.

“Nice to meet you, Jett Black, I’m Simon. And I’ll be back in a couple of hours to see what kind of brilliant job you’ve done.”

Jett nodded again. “Thanks a lot, mister.”

Two and a half hours later, Jett had done the best job he could. It had been a big lawn.

In some sections the grass was up to his knees, so Jett had to mow those parts twice, once with the lawn mower raised up as high as it could go, so the blades didn’t get choked with grass, then again with the blades nice and close. Plus, there were rocks hidden amongst some of the

thicker patches!

But Jett had finished, and he could be proud of his handy work. What had been a wild lawn just a couple of hours ago was now tame, and, if not as neat as the lawns at Buckingham Palace, was much more presentable.

Jett hoped Simon would like it. He could really use that extra twenty.

But for now, Jett was bathed in sweat and grime, and utterly exhausted. His shirt lay discarded over the mailbox where he had thrown it. Rivers of sweat ran down his shoulders and arms. His throat was parched and his water bottle was long since empty.

Jett looked at the back door of the house. He hadn't intended on going inside, despite what the man said. It seemed rude to go into someone's house when they weren't home, even if it was empty.

And there was that other thing.

Simon said that his nan had died. Did she die in the house?

Jett shivered. He wasn't sure how dead old lady ghosts feel about sweaty, smelly boys.

But he sure could use a drink and maybe he could splash some water on his face. Jett looked around and then decided to risk it. He pushed open the door a little and, despite himself, called out. "Hello? Is anyone home?"

The moment Jett heard his own voice echoing back

from the empty rooms, he felt stupid. Who was he expecting to answer? The ghost?

Jett took a step into the house. And then another. He saw the kitchen, just down the hallway. The tap looked so inviting.

Then Jett looked down at his feet. He was wearing an oversized pair of gumboots his mother had insisted he wear. It was to “protect his legs”, she’d told him. Although, to be brutally honest, they had proven quite effective. The rotating blade had flung more than one rock in Jett’s direction. The boots had likely prevented a couple of nasty bruises.

Jett pulled off the boots and left them sitting by the back door. Now his legs had this line of grass and grime, from his knees upwards. But below his knees, where the boots had been, his legs were sweaty and pale, down to his thick socks. The contrast looked quite comical...

Jett headed into the kitchen and turned on the tap. He didn’t bother looking for a glass to pour the water into. He didn’t want to make any unnecessary dirty dishes. Instead, he turned on the tap and stuck his head under, letting the cool water flow straight into his mouth. It was bliss.

Then he farted.

Now, Jett didn’t intend to fart. He wasn’t one of those

kids who could fart on command, or who enjoyed doing it when other people were around, for maximum impact. But with his head under the tap like that his body had to make room for all that water.

Hence the gas, which had been contentedly sitting in Jett's lower intestine after the second helping of meatballs last night, had to exit Jett's body, quickly. And it did so, in an explosive, loud way – so loud that Jett startled himself.

He felt embarrassed, until he remembered he was the only one here, which meant no one had heard it. Jett relaxed.

And he farted again. This time he found it funny, right until he heard a voice.

“Excuse me, did you just fart?”

