

End of the Road

By: - Peter S. Jacobs

The wide berms of the lane were covered with masses of flowers. They were in full bloom displaying every colour with a brilliance more beautiful than Sidney had ever seen before. A canopy of blossom trees, spread above him also displaying a full colour spectrum from pale pink to a deep purple. Nature's beauty lay before his eyes.

Sidney wasn't sure how he had got to this garden of splendour. He peered ahead to see if he could see where the lane lead to. He could discern a huge building at the end of the drive. Finding it effortless walking on the even-surfaced ground, he started moving towards it. He felt there was no hurry. He could just meander and enjoy the beauty and tranquillity around him. As he drew closer to the building, he realised that it was the structure of a mansion built with stone and covered with climbing roses. There seemed to be no end to the building. He could see that the pathway led to an entrance with a huge elegant arch. As he approached people appeared from the entrance. They were walking towards him, showing a welcome with enthusiastic waving. As the distance reduced, Sidney recognised the group. They were his relatives and friends seen for many years. His mother led the line, with her arms outstretched to embrace him.

She hugged him with great affection. "It is so wonderful to see you. I have been expecting you. I have watched out for you regularly".

Sidney looked at the others all massing around him smiling and waiting patiently to welcome him. His father extending his hand to give him a heartfelt hand shake. He hadn't seen his Dad for many decades. "Hello Dad, are we still at odds"?

"No son. I'm sorry I lost my patience with you. But you were trying."

"I'm sorry too, Dad. We wasted a lot of time".

There were so many faces that he recognised. Some were from photographs of past generations. Sidney turned to see his grandmother. "Nana, it is lovely to see you again". His train of thought immediately focused on a memorable winter's day. "Do you remember the day I called in to see you when we had a heavy fall of snow? Well. I always wanted to thank you for the glass of delicious sweet hot milk you made for me. It was the tastiest drink of milk I have ever tasted."

"You were always welcome; I enjoyed making drinks for you".

Sidney felt as though he had returned home. He saw Mabel. "Is your Fred here?" He asked cautiously.

"Of course he is".

"Is he his usual difficult self?"

“You mean critical and argumentative?”

“Well, yes”.

“Sidney, there is no aggression here, nor grievances or greed. We all share our time in harmony. It is lovely”.

Doris, Sidney’s aunt came into focus. “Well, my word, you have made it. I knew you would get here one day. Geoff and I have been watching out for you for a long time”.

Sidney smiled with delight. “It is magic seeing you after all this time”.

Doris was nearly laughing with joy, and embraced him as all aunts do. “I must show you the way to your new home”. She took him by the arm to lead him to the regal entrance.

Sidney hesitated. “No I’d rather stay here”.

“Don’t be silly, you must come and see your new home, it is a grandiose place, and you’ll see all your friends”.

At that moment Sidney felt a shuddering. “Is that an earthquake”, he asked in a worried tone of voice.

His aunt looked at him unconcerned. “No, but many newcomers feel that, sometimes several times. Occasionally they leave shortly afterwards, but always eventually return. It is nothing to worry about.

There was another shudder that shook Sidney’s’ body.

Doris continued to urge Sidney towards the mansion. “Come on, you will be delighted with the place when you see its full grandeur”.

“No.” Sidney become resolute, “I will stay here until my wife catches up with me”.

“You can’t do that, she may take ages. And when she does arrive, she will know where to find you. We will see her when she comes along the road. We see everyone who arrives. You are shivering; I’ll put my shawl around you”.

“I will wait here until she arrives.” asserted Sidney.

Doris started to cover Sidney’s shoulders with bright coloured woven material.

Sidney felt the manoeuvring around the back of his neck. His head was being pulled forward gently. He looked at her smiling face wondering why she seemed so sure that he should be going to this new home. As he looked at her, her face started to show changes. He blinked several times and each time she became a much younger woman in a nurse’s uniform. The colourful flora disappeared to reveal trolleys and cabinets.

“Ah, good you are awake.” the nurse spoke, as she repositioned pillows for Sidney’s comfort. “We were a little concerned for a while. The operation was successful, but the anaesthetic

caused you a little problem. We had to resuscitate you twice. But all is fine now. You were mumbling that you wanted to see your wife. Well, she is waiting in your room. As soon as you leave recovery, she will be able to join you”.

Sidney was relieved. He spoke in a soft tone. “Thank you. I have a lot to tell her”.