

The Heart Surgeon



One heart saved - Two hearts lost
A compelling short story
J S Morey

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Forward

When robins appear, loved ones are near

It was relatively recently that I heard this for the first time. I was already in my seventies, and my father-in-law had just passed. He was a keen gardener and my wife and I decided to connect the two sentiments - gardener and loved one.

The appearance of a robin is also assurance that a departed loved one is at peace.

Robins are also said to signify a new chapter in life for the living and a symbol of spring.

There is sadness, regret, joy and renewal in the story that follows but if a robin visits you soon after, I will leave you to decide whose spirit it might be...

John Morey - Author

CHAPTER ONE

‘You haven’t changed a bit, you know?’

Ruth reached for his hand as she spoke. They sat quietly, overlooking the bay. It was getting dark.

‘You always did flatter me.’

Frank was staring straight ahead, straining to make out the class of the ship as it sat motionless on the horizon. Was it a tanker, or a cruise liner? At sixty five years old his eyesight was no longer at its best, even though his memory was crystal. He must make a note for Monday: Book appointment with opticians.

Frank kept his gaze firm.

Ruth wasn’t about to let him get away with it.

‘And you’re still just as handsome.’

A smile crept across her lips. ‘That’ll get to him, she thought. He never could resist her charm.

She was right.

He turned, a broad smile breaking into laughter. He was shaking in fact. It was a clear admission that she’d broken through his defences.

‘You never give up, do you?’

‘*You* did,’ she countered. She tightened her grip.

He knew what she was alluding to.

‘You *wanted* me to give up.’ She sensed the regret in his voice.

‘How do you know?’

‘I *always* know.’

Then he was silent for a while, until he added -

‘What if things had been different?’

‘If I hadn’t married Mike, you mean?’

‘You know what I mean. I’m talking about who you *didn’t* marry.’ The edge to his tone surprised her. With a sharp intake of breath she released his hand, stunned into silence. For a moment.

‘But we’re here, aren’t we?’ she replied, finally.

‘Thankfully.’

‘And Mike’s gone,’ she added.

‘At least he didn’t suffer.’

Was Frank’s last remark a simple platitude ‘perfect for the moment’, or had he really cared? She weighed up the options; which was true? Did he mean it, or was he referring to someone else. Himself, perhaps? The way *he’d* suffered?

Not having been with her all these years?

She chose the easier option. The former.

‘Thank you,’ She reached for his hand once more.

Frank warmed to the forgiveness in her gesture.

‘All I ever wanted was for you to be happy.’

‘I know.’

‘Did you?’ His voice was softer this time.

‘Yes. I knew.’

She was talking about all the years apart when they

hadn't even exchanged a word. Not a phone call, a letter, a Christmas card even. Was she saying that, during all those years of silence, she'd still thought about him, continually? Cared about him?

As he had for her?

Unable to speak, it didn't stop him thinking.

CHAPTER TWO

Had it taken the death of her husband, and today's funeral, for her to at last come out with the one thing - *the one thing* - haunting him all these years?

How he despised her at that moment - for a split second, maybe. But it soon passed. He could never think of her in that way. Not for a moment. They were too close, they always had been even when they were physically apart for - what? - forty years now?

The both knew. They knew each other.

Without another word spoken, not for now at least, they rose and, arm-in-arm began to walk slowly along the promenade, past the pier and towards the mouth of the estuary, to the harbour.

To all intents it was a typically English scene at a typically English seaside town. They passed other benches, some of them occupied by singletons and couples similar in age to them; with time to spare and a lifetime of memories of their own on which to reflect. All seemed deep in thought, too.

What was *their* story?

Suddenly an urgent flurry of small, dark shapes over the shoreline caught their attention, first skimming the surface of the water before soaring dramatically ever higher, and in ever-changing geometric shapes. Ruth

and Frank's recognition - and their recollection - of when they last saw a murmuration of starlings caused them to turn to each other, before pausing to watch.

It was on a similar winter's afternoon, as they took to the promenade for almost that one last time, all those years ago, that they had said their goodbyes.

At least for a while - at least as a couple.

Then, it had been half-term break from University for both of them. She was reading English at Warwick; he'd landed a place in medical school in Glasgow. They'd kept in touch constantly in those early days, but they promised each other they'd return home - to their seaside town home - for term breaks, and to spend the following summer together.

And all the summers thereafter.

That was the plan. But promises don't always last.

Things got in the way: pressure to use term breaks for catch-up study for one thing, plus the emotional and geographical separation itself.

And, finally, people. And someone in particular.

Mike.

It happens all the time, of course. To everyone. Doesn't it? Ruth and Mike were on the same course, one that *encouraged* fellow students to interact and to talk about their course work. And so the relationship progressed, as Ruth was afraid it would. From study buddies they became flat-mates.

And from that they became an item.

Ruth broke the news to Frank in a letter the week before they were due to return home.

As soon as the letter reached him in Glasgow, as he recognised the handwriting and postmark on the envelope. It lay in wait for him on the doormat when he returned to his digs after his afternoon lecture.

He knew something was wrong. She *never* wrote.

He was heartbroken.

But he kept the letter, reading and re-reading it over and over for days, perhaps in the hope that, on that next reading he would discover something in her words - anything - to give him some hope that it was all just one almighty sick joke.

Or that he'd imagined the whole thing. A dream.

A really *bad* dream.

He tried calling but she was never there. She'd left the house she shared with three other girl students. They wouldn't give him her new number. Or address. The address she now shared with Mike.

That bastard Mike Whatever-his-name-was.

She was simply, suddenly, irrevocably - gone.

And he may well have been gone, too. Gone into an oblivion where nothing made sense any more. The one truth he had, that he'd held onto, that he was so sure

about - was shattered. Was there anything, anything at all, worth believing in? He found one.

He determined to become a heart surgeon.

Frank's father had passed away when he was still relatively young, of a heart condition. To achieve his ambition would involve a gruelling training period lasting years, with several placements in different locations until he could become a qualified surgeon. Maybe he could make a difference.

He made it his goal. Whatever it might take.

During those years, working purely to qualify, he avoided any other distractions. He avoided relationships of any consequence. He never married, a state to which he never even came close. Sure he had - what would you call them - liaisons. Girls, then women, with whom he shared some part of himself, mainly physical but rarely at any emotional level.

That part of him belonged elsewhere - to someone else. To Ruth? Maybe, or at best confined to the memory of her. But it survived only as a kind of notion, one resting far away, out of sight in some wasteland. And it was slowly dying day by day, year by year, fading ever increasingly, buried in some impenetrable vault he might label 'yesterday'.

Yesterday - but one that existed long, long ago.

CHAPTER THREE

That was until three weeks ago.

It was a letter addressed to him, but in the mailbox at the university at which he was head of department of the medical sciences division. The letter explained that the writer had found him through searches of various medical institutions in his field. She, for it was in a woman's hand, would have phoned but for the absence of a number in his listing. It had been approaching half-term and she'd been told he'd already left early for a short vacation. The secretary wouldn't reveal any personal details.

The woman was, of course, Ruth.

As with the last letter he'd received from her, he recognised her handwriting and, was that a hint of her perfume he recognised as he opened the envelope? The fragrance that had been the last present he'd bought for her? If she still wore it.

It bore the postmark of their home town, where they'd grown up together, gone to school and from which they'd finally parted more than forty years ago.

As he was reading her words, memories flooded back, springing up like green shoots as fresh as if it

were yesterday. No longer faded. They were so strong, those memories so vivid, he found it hard to concentrate on reading. He was filled with one compelling realisation - a belief that had been dormant for decades.

He spoke it out loud.

‘She has never forgotten me.’

But he was so absorbed by the notion of her reaching out to him again after decades of silence, that he hadn’t taken in the reason for her suddenly getting in touch out of the blue. He’d picked up something about a death, a funeral - and Mike - but he was in such a daze that he had to re-read the first few paragraphs again, slowly this time.

Dearest Frank

I do hope this reaches you, and in time.

Mike passed away last week after a short illness. We don’t really know how long he’d been feeling ill with the cancer. We think he’d been ignoring the signs and putting off going to the doctor - until it was too late. They said afterwards nothing could have saved him anyway.

The reason I didn’t notice anything was that we separated last year. We both knew it was coming and had only put it off for so long because of the children. They’re both well settled now. After university they soon found solid careers - and wives and families of

their own - so it was time.

Time for us to follow our own paths again; but separately this time.

I tried to find you before, before this happened - shortly after the parting and before Mike died, but all my letters to you were returned.

You probably want to know why I'm reaching out to you now, and with some urgency. This may sound weird, but I would like you to come to the funeral. I'll have the boys with me - Joe and Francis (yes, I named the eldest after you, well, almost) - but for reasons I can't explain, I need you there.

Mum - you'll remember how she always took a shine to you - is ninety next birthday, and still asks after you. She could never understand why we didn't... well, you know the rest.

The service is at St. Thomas' on the 25th of this month - two weeks on Thursday as I write. Please call as soon as you get this - the number's at the top. I won't have much time to actually see you before then because of all the arrangements and, for the boys' sake at least, perhaps we should be discreet. But we must find time to spend together afterwards.

It's been so long.

Since Mike and I split life has been so empty. There was never anyone else - not for me. But Mike and I were just destroying each other. He always accused me of never being there for him 100%, that I was holding back. Not fully committed. All that stuff.

Do you think he could have been right?

You knew me better than anyone. Do you think that's still the case? Is that remotely possible? We were barely adults. I remember thinking I always knew what you were about to say, and why that was. I figured it out a while back, and why Mike and I never shared that connection.

Before you come out with something important, you give yourself away by the expression on your face. I've never met anyone since who does that - not in the way you do, anyway. And if anyone said something the least bit controversial, or different, I only had to look at you to know what you thought about it, to see if I would agree with you.

You didn't have to say anything. I'd just know.

Frank looked up from the page, reflecting on what she'd just written. He'd never realised. No-one else had ever pointed that out to him. It brought a smile to his face.

He turned the page to resume reading.

Sorry. I'm rambling on a bit, aren't I? I always did, I suppose, and you were so quiet. Usually. But I've got so much stored up - a lifetime of it, in fact - which is one reason I want us to spend some time together after the funeral. Once things have died down.

There are other things I want to say as well, but not now.

They'll have to wait. Meanwhile, I'll leave you guessing why, but, knowing you (probably more than most other people, unless you've changed), I'll lay odds you'll figure that out.

Love always, Ruth x

P.S. Don't forget to call as soon as you get this!

CHAPTER FOUR

He called.

‘Ruth. Is that you?’

There was no answer. Not immediately. But there was someone there. He could here faint breathing, before the person at the other end cleared their throat. It *was* Ruth.

She could hardly get the words out. Not at first.

‘Frank?’

‘Yes. I’m so sorry about Mike.’

He felt clumsy. False - especially coming out with it straight away, as if he felt he must.

‘Thanks. But I’m over that part.’

She sounded cold. Emotionless. Had she changed?

‘You say the funeral’s next week. Thursday?’

‘Can you make it?’

‘I’ll try.’

He knew he could. He had nothing else planned. The next term wouldn’t have started. He just didn’t want to sound so easy to persuade.

‘You must.’ There was urgency in her voice.

‘Yes. Of course I’ll come.’

Why didn’t he say so straight away? she thought.

‘It’ll give you a chance to see the boys.’

Why would he want that? Then he realised it was

something she'd just thrown in. To fill the space. After all, the past they'd shared was decades ago. They could hardly pick up from where they'd left off.

Then he came up with a bridge in the conversation that he knew would get them over the initial awkwardness.

'How's your mother? She'll soon be ninety?'

It was perfect.

'Yes. Her memory's starting to go a little bit. Day to day things. But she does remember you.'

'So you said.'

'Above everyone else in my life.'

'There've been many, then?'

As soon as she'd said that he knew it was cruel.

She didn't reply.

Back to square one. A little awkward again.

'I thought I'd stay in 'The Globe,' he said.

'Make sure you stay for a few days.' She sounded insistent.

'What do you want to talk about?'

'Can we wait 'till you're down here?'

He agreed. He knew it would be something needing more than a phone call. It was time to sign off.

'I'll let you know when I'm arriving,' he added. 'We can talk further then - after the funeral.'

They said their goodbyes and hung up. He was still

not quite certain why she needed him there. After all, he'd never met her husband socially when he was alive, knowing very little about him apart from scant detail Ruth had shared with him all those years ago when they'd broken up.

She'd left details of the funeral arrangement for him with the receptionist at The Globe.

She called him at breakfast time at the hotel the next day - the day before the actual service - just to explain how she would introduce him to her boys as 'an old friend', but hoping her own mother wouldn't have a lucid moment and reveal too much about their past.

The service, a solemn affair as was expected, was brief, with tributes from Ruth's eldest, Francis, and Mike's brother. Ruth remained in the background as much as she could and well away from Frank, even at the wake that followed - at Ruth's mother's house.

Her mother's carer, an old family friend, and Ruth, had taken charge of most of the arrangements.

It was a small gathering. Apart from family and friends of Mike, there were a few people from the town, some of whom Frank recognised. And there was one woman in particular who Frank was sure he remembered - Grace - who, as Frank recalled, had always seemed to take a shine to him. Back then.

She'd spotted him at the reception afterwards and continued to stare at him from across the room until he

felt compelled to put her out of her misery.

He walked over to her. She spoke first.

‘Frank, isn’t it?’

‘Grace?’

‘You haven’t forgotten me, then.’

The occasion and the need to lighten events, or the fact that she was on her third glass of Rioja, had made her a little flirtatious. She pulled him to one side.

‘I buried mine last year,’ she added. ‘Cancer.’

‘I’m sorry.’

‘No need to be. I’m over it now. A girl’s got to move on, right?’ She took a step towards him.

He took a step back.

She noticed his evasive gesture.

‘You haven’t changed.’

‘Oh?’ He gave her a puzzled look.

‘You always were stand-offish.’ She looked him up and down, a disdainfully showing her disapproval.

‘I prefer to call it loyalty.’

His last remark left her in no doubt what he meant. He and Ruth had been seeing each other ‘officially’ for at least a year when Grace had made a play for him at some party. Ruth had never let him forget it even though, in a way, it had cemented the notion - in both of them - that they were serious about each other.

It all came back to him now.

It was a time for celebration for most in their school

year, with exam results released and their immediate futures known - education-wise, that is. The place where the party was held - a private house of one of the teachers - was packed with people. Ruth and Frank had become separated when, half way through the evening another guy from their school year pulled Ruth onto the dance floor. Frank let her go. But the move was spotted by someone else from their year - Grace - who pounced on Frank right away. There was little he could do since, after the amount he'd already had to drink that night, his resistance was low.

From all accounts afterwards, he and Grace had really connected, on and off the dance floor. The next he remembered was being in a room away from the main party, slumped in an armchair. Ruth was sprawled on the sofa opposite. There was no sign of Grace. Ruth appeared to be in a foul mood.

'I'm surprised you have a face left.'

Frank had merely looked at her, dazed. 'What?'

'That snog-fest. Was it entirely necessary? In front of all our friends? *So* embarrassing!' She'd risen to leave.

He reached out and caught her arm.

'Not sure what you mean,' he confessed.

'From where I'm standing, you're not sure about anything. Least of all 'us'.'

'But you're still sitting. Not standing.'

His humour was certainly lost on her this time.

‘I really don’t know why I bother with you.’

His reply was instinctive.

‘Because I love you?’ he replied.

She remained seated, but bolt upright. Stunned. It was the first time he’d said anything remotely romantic to her.

Actually come out with it.

She was silent for a while longer, then, ‘Do you really mean that? Are you sure?’

He moved over to her on the sofa.

‘Of course I’m sure. I really mean it. I’ve always meant it. It’s always been you.’

‘Always?’

‘And always will be,’ he added.

She rose, closed and locked the door, before returning to be beside him again. ‘Then show me.’

She pulled him closer...

CHAPTER FIVE

They'd been sharing that moment - but two versions - once more as they continued to the end of the promenade.

After the sombre proceedings of the funeral their mood wasn't exactly light. Let's say moderated. Balanced. So there was no edge in either of their tones as they compared their separate recollection of the scene.

Ruth had been able to slip away from the funeral unnoticed after a respectable attendance. She was part of the family, because of the boys, but her separation from Mike was known by all, so any over-expression of sentimentality would have been seen as somewhat false.

Mostly, she was sorry for the boys.

Frank had left for his hotel earlier, which is where Ruth had found him - by arrangement - and, as far as he was concerned, owing him an explanation as to why it was so necessary for him to attend both proceedings. Mike had been a rival, after all. even though there'd not been any unpleasantness between them when he was alive. In fact, there'd not been any contact at all, not at a social level.

They decided to drop in for coffee at The Beachcomber on their way back to Frank's hotel.

'Still take it black?'

‘Yes. Filter if they have it, please.’

She returned from the counter with a cafetière for him and Earl Grey tea for herself.

Through the descending dimness he could now make out lights on the ship he’d seen on the horizon. It was definitely a cruise liner.

‘Must be a storm coming,’ he said, recalling that the bay was a popular shelter for ocean-going vessels.

They’d taken a seat by the window, but away from the door, away from a possible draft as customers came in and out. And away from the nearest occupied table.

For privacy.

‘You meant it, then?’

She was referring to the words they’d exchanged all those years ago, at the graduation party, and during their scene over Grace.

‘It’s always been you,’ he confirmed.

They were married a year later.

It was a respectable time for Ruth, even though her separation from Mike had taken place well before he was even known to be ill, let alone passed away.

The boys were fine with it all, and happy for their mother, attending the small gathering for the wedding complete with their families. Once they’d heard the story, the history - somewhat abridged - of Ruth and Frank’s previous time together, it made even more

sense.

At the reading of the will, she found that Mike had left her well provided for, alongside the boys, who shared most of the residual estate. Frank had never married so, on his retirement soon after being reunited with Ruth, they used his not inconsiderable capital saved from a career as a successful heart surgeon, to buy the place of their dreams. Their final resting place.

On the outskirts of their home town.

It wasn't so much large or even ostentatious, but it had sea views from the kind of neighbourhood quiet enough for them to enjoy what was left of their lives together in comfort.

They even connected with old friends - those remaining with whom they'd gone to school - and, in turn, made new ones.

Their time together was the most precious aspect of it all, interspersed by visits from the boys.

Frank was declared 'honorary granddad', which pleased him but also Ruth, a gesture by the boys that he was now fully accepted. As the Americans say, 'grandfathered in'.

Frank had never married, nor did he have children.

That in itself became a subject of scrutiny by Ruth, eager to hear about all his past liaisons, whilst disappointed when there were so few, and spaced so far

apart. She imagined his spent long periods of loneliness, leaving her with a feeling of guilt, despite Frank assuring her he'd been 'OK'.

That rather simplistic dismissal left her even more concerned, but his excuse - his reasoning - was that his work had not only filled, but also fulfilled, all his needs, wants and ambitions in life.

She knew he was lying.

'It' always been you,' he'd said, 'since all those years ago.'

She knew he wasn't lying.

She knew that was still, and always had been, the way he really felt. About her; and about his life. She knew it was the case because she'd found herself in a similar position some years after her marriage to Mike. The first few were all about the boys. They soaked up all the 'love' she could possibly provide, overshadowing her feelings for Mike. His tenure as an English teacher at the local grammar school seemed to be so absorbing, absorbing his time *so much*, that they'd cruised through the years until the boys left for university before realising they shared very little,

Very little *spiritually*.

They call the condition after children have 'flown' as being 'empty nesters'. It was indeed the case, but the emptiness went beyond the two spare bedrooms that each boy no longer needed - apart from flying visits,

now with a wife family in each case.

She felt empty.

Released from full-time motherhood, she returned to education but, this time, as a school administrator. A different school from the one where Mike was Head of English. It filled her time.

But not her heart.

She and Mike hung on until they were a few years coming up to retirement, in their sixties, before going their separate ways. Mike stayed where he was; Ruth returned to her home town. It was where the boys were in any case. The boys, and her memories of hers and Frank's time together, would have to be enough.

For Frank, the seaside town where he was born and had grown up was a natural choice for him, too, once they were back together. A place to spend his final days. He'd called several places 'home' of sorts, over the last forty years, but none really 'called him' now. Not in the way his birthplace did; the first, and the only, place where he'd fallen in love. How could he forget?

How could he live anywhere else?

Every street, every turn, told a tale. A story of Ruth and himself. The warmth of each memory was ever-present - at least until the coldness of the days covering their separation long ago, crept in - unbidden.

But now even that wound had healed, and would re-

main so.

Ruth had her rejuvenated circle of friends, her book club group, her yoga classes, and their garden. Plus, of course, her boys - now close at hand. Frank busied himself, when he and Ruth weren't engaged in some joint social event, in his study.

Although retired, he still felt the need to be involved, in some part, with his former profession. One room of the house, the study, was devoted to that - dozens and dozens of case files he'd retained for one final purpose.

To pass on his expertise to others.

Without any particular timetable or structure, his days would be taken up in part, and when other demands didn't intervene, in contributing articles to medical journals. His reputation was international, as was the audience for his knowledge. He was now writing and contributing using the internet and in digital format, but a lot of his early work still existed as paper-based reports, records, charts and diagrams - hence his need for his own office.

CHAPTER SIX

It was in his study that Ruth found herself some five years after they'd reunited and then married.

Alone again.

Ironically, Frank's death was by fatal heart attack during one of their favourite walks overlooking the bay, not far from the house, and help.

But all efforts to save him would have been too late.

That was a month ago now. It was just after lunch and her eldest, Francis, had just left, having visited with her two grandchildren. She decided there was still time to return to the main task in hand. The task was going through Frank's effects.

His 'stuff' as she was usually known to call it.

The books - the ones none of the boys might want, for whatever reason - could be collected by the local charity shop; The British Heart Foundation. That excluded the academic text books. She would ask his university if they wanted those.

It was still surprisingly painful, going through his things. His clothes, the golf clubs he never used, what photographs he might have saved from his childhood and family before they met - they were relatively easy to deal with.

But what about his files? The case files he'd retained going back some thirty years or so, collecting dust - literally - in his cabinets? She decided she needed advice. The university told her to destroy them. They would normally have taken them off her hands and dealt with them but, with cuts in the budget and all that, they didn't have the capacity - or the will - to help her.

She was left to shred them. File by file.

It was tiresome, but she had to do it. As with all records of this nature, there were strict confidentiality rules. As legal 'owner' of his personal effects, it fell to her to adhere to data protection guidelines. It was her responsibility. She set about it with mindless abandon, a pot of coffee continually percolating, a playlist of Eric Bibb on the CD player, one she and Frank always reached for when there was a need for soothing, background music.

As she lifted one folder after another from its alphabetically perfect location - they were filed in completion year and patient's name order - she was operating on automatic.

Until one file - one *name* - stopped her in her tracks.

Michael J Porter.

Mike!

Fingers trembling, clumsily handling and opening the file in question, she read the name on the record sheet

again. It was as she thought. It was *his name*. And the address checked out, too.

And the timing of the operation?

Round about the time of their first-born - Francis - give or take. Due to pre-natal complications and high blood pressure, the maternity hospital had admitted her early, days before her first baby was due. It was a difficult birth, after which they insisted she stay in extra days to get back to full strength.

Mike's heart operation coincided with the birth.

His had been an emergency admission the day after Ruth's, locally, from which he'd been transferred to another specialist hospital up the country for surgery. He was absent before and during the birth. Ruth's mother had kept the worst of the reality of Mike's reasons for going into hospital away from Ruth, so as not to burden her with more stress.

After the birth, and after Mike's operation - both of which were within hours of each other - Ruth's mother could reveal the truth with added reassurance that all had been successful.

A similar message, regarding Ruth and the baby, was delivered to Mike. He was a proud father to a fine son.

Ruth was fine, Mike was also fine. Ruth never learnt the name of the head surgeon, nor did Mike seek to tell her. Why should he? Mike didn't know who Frank really was apart from being his designated surgeon, let alone

what Ruth and Frank had meant to each other. He'd never seen a photograph of Frank, nor met him. Ruth had rarely mentioned much about Frank in those early days, and had certainly not bothered to refer to Frank by his full name. Frank was just a student when he and Ruth split up. He was a million miles away from being a heart surgeon.

And what might Mike's identity mean to Frank? Did he know Mike was husband to Ruth? Would it have made any difference if he had known? As far as anyone knew, Michael Porter was just another patient to Frank, but one transferred to him due to the seriousness of Mike's condition.

Likewise, years afterwards, the surgeon's name - Frank Davis - continued to hold no significance to Mike, other than he was the one who'd saved his life.

Ruth dropped the file, shaking, then picked it up again to re-read the first page, just in case she'd imagined the whole thing.

Names, location, time-frame, type of operation all checked out. They hadn't changed.

She was even documented.

Next of Kin - Ruth Porter.

Tears cascaded down her cheeks as she returned the records to their folder, placing it carefully on his desk.

‘Oh, Frank,’ she whispered, but to an empty room.

‘What did you do?’

‘You gave him another thirty years of *his* life - yet you robbed us of thirty years *of our happiness!*’

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Further reading of works by J S Morey

[Read My Shorts](#): from which The Coal-Miner's Son is taken, together with a collection of stories in prose and verse.

[Three Easy Pieces](#): two romances, one haunting tale

[Unresolved?](#): Death on honeymoon in St Ives.

[The Sign of the Rose](#): Book 1 of the historical romantic, Romani saga - a journey from Ireland to England, late 1800's

[The Black Rose of Blaby](#): Book 2, a Leicestershire village - historical facts blur with mystical events

[Rose: The Missing Years](#) and [Finding Rose](#): two novels; one story; told from two perspectives - Books 3 & 4

[Those Italian Girls](#): a murder/mystery/romance set in the Tuscan wine-growing town of Volterra

[Wild Hearts Roam Free](#): modern-day 1960's pioneers seek a new life, and find themselves, in the grasslands of Wyoming

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