



The 2nd book in the Short Stories From Scotland series was released on March 27th and is available on Amazon. Published by Scottish Historical Fiction Publishing, the stories cover a wide range of historical settings and time periods, so there's something for everyone. Available from Amazon. It's a great read and all royalties go to MacMillan Cancer Support.

Glenavon

T N Kerr

The solicitor, a man called Morgan, straightened the paper on the desk, and then picked it up between well-manicured fingertips. He cleared his throat and began to read from my grandfather's will, "I, Sachairi MacDiarmaid, being in good health and of sound mind, leave my home and land to my Granddaughter, Elspeth MacDiarmaid, with the condition that she make it her home and live there for the rest of her days. In the event that she is unwilling or unable to comply with these terms the house and property should be sold on the open market and the proceeds donated to the Caber Foundation for the Furtherance of Highland Games.

For my namesake and grandson, Zachary MacDiarmaid, I bequeath my collection of antique bottles some of which were left to me by my 'Da. They've been in the family for generations. I don't just mean the bottles displayed in the parlour but also the ones hidden beneath the stair. Some of them should be worth a bit by now. Finally, I leave my dog, Islay, to Hamish, my neighbour of over forty years, who's always wanted a good herd dog."

The lawyer continued on with a lot of blather until finally he sat the paper back on the desk blotter and looked at my sister and me. "Do you have any questions for me?" he asked.

My sister shook her head, no; as did I.

Outside the office Elspeth and I hailed a cab to take us to Dey's house. My sister began touring the outside.

Walking around and noting the landscaping, the paint, the deferred maintenance; taking an inventory in her head. I went straight inside and made for the staircase. I never knew that there were bottles hidden there. I saw nothing but a couple boxes of books and Dey's Wellies, with his Mac draped over the top of them. I moved the boxes and discovered a panel in the wall. I called my sister.

I had to call Elspeth several times because she was back behind the shed. I got her inside and showed her the panel.

"Ever see this before?" I asked her.

"Never", she said, "did you open it?"

"Not yet."

We found that drawer, in the kitchen the one used to hold 'all things' and in it we found a screwdriver which we used to prise off the panel from the wall beneath the stair. We found two wooden boxes of equal size. I lifted the first one out and sat it behind me. The second seemed a bit heavier, but I removed it from the cubby as well then dragged them both out to the lounge. In the light we could see that the boxes were handmade of a tight grained white wood, now honeyed with age. The top of the heavy box was nailed down but the lighter box was not. I lifted the lid and saw that the inside was divided into 24 separate sections. Eleven of them were empty. Twelve of them contained bottles one of them had a piece of heavy paper rolled up inside.

First I lifted one of the bottles. It was pale green in colour and adorned with a hand lettered label. The label sported three golden stars for decoration and read:

Glenavon Special Liqueur Whisky

Bottled by the Distillery

It was smaller than a normal whisky bottle. I reckoned that it held less than half a litre. I handed it to my sister and pulled out the rolled paper, which turned out to be a note the script was fading and hand lettered in an old style. I read it aloud to my sister.

Greetings Mr MacDiarmaid

You've found the family legacy. Forty-eight bottles of the finest whisky ever made and bottled in Ballindalloch. The idea is this – Two of these bottles belong to you; to do with as you see fit. The remaining bottles are to be passed to the next male MacDiarmaid bearing the name of Zechariah. Make note of the dates and circumstance you use yer botuls.

Inventory

1863 Zechariah MacDiarmaid – One bottle drank and shared with friends on the occasion of me wedding

1876 Zechariah MacDiarmaid – One bottle drank and shared with friends at the wake of me wife

1890 Xackary MacDiarmaid – Drank with me bràthair two botuls one night

1920 Sagairi MacDiarmaid – Shared with Elspeth Buchan

1920 Sagairi MacDiarmaid – Shared with Elspeth MacDiarmaid on our wedding night

1934 Zechariah MacDiarmaid – Drank one and sold one to Glendenning for £2

1945 Sagaire MacDiarmaid – End of the war. Opened two bottles at the pub and drank to absent friends

1959 Sachairi MacDiarmaid Drank one. Sold one at auction £500

1981 Sachairí MacDiarmaid - Drank one alone. Sold one at auction
£15,00

“1981”, I mused, “That had to be Dey. Wonder what a bottle’s worth now?”

Elsbeth sat mute and shook her head. Finally she spoke. “I need to Google this stuff...” She crawled out from beneath the stair and wandered into the house.

That night we toasted Dey with the bottle we opened. The whisky was golden in colour. The taste was smooth, rich, earthy and wonderful.

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