

Cheptour Ane – Tittie

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Chapter One – Titty

“Stopping the car on a high point of the road she saw the length of it, lying before her, unchanged, the islands standing out like jet carvings against the mirror of the water.”

“All the summer long is the swallow a most instructive pattern of unwearied industry and affection; for from morning to night, while there is a family to be supported, she spends the whole day in skimming close to the ground, and exerting the most sudden turns and evolutions. Avenues, and long walks under hedges, and pasture fields, and mown meadows where the cattle graze are her delight, especially if there are trees interspersed; because in such spots insects most abound.” Gilbert White – The Natural History of Selbourne, 1774.



Cheptour Ane – Tittie

Tittie wes awauk. Shae liggit stil an bruikit the feill o friedome. The licht o the mornin wes hers. The caller air cumin ben the windae belangit hir. The saft souns o the dous in the gairden in the samen wey wes in hir aucht. The lest tyme Tittie myndit sicna expairience wes frae hir quyne-heid, whan shae awaukent on the ertest day o hir holiedays an luikit forrit ti the delyte o haein the lang simmer afoir hir, wi hir faimlie an freins, saulin on the loch, slepin unner cannas an cuikin at ane aipen lowe. Bot thon wes lang syne.

Nou shae wes in a fremm laun an wes eildit bi the pingils o lyfe. The sensautioun o be-in lowssit frae preisioun, onshakkilt an be-in ledit outby intil the stourie sunnschein o frieryke contined tho. Than wi a sair strussil the sairie trewth cam til hir. The meirakil o bairn-heid an the trigidie o auld aige wes the samen. Ye wes saiprit frae the dewties an ties o rale lyfe an wes flaitin in a fantise. Yit thon fantise wes cryed frieryke.

Tittie tirmed owre in bed. Shae wesna gaun ti spyle sicna deleicious morning bi onie sairie thochts. Nivver agane wuid shae hae ti skreive anither wurd ontill the day shae cam ti hir lang hinneren. Thon idaia alane wes eneuch ti fess a quate smyll til hir faiss. Nae publishars, nae illustratours, nae reserrs in distie leibrars, an nivver, nivver, nivver, chappin at thon tirrorand kie-buirds an glowerin at the mirk skrene o ordinateairs.

Maist o aw tho, the puir deid mannie at bene beiriet yestrein, peingin an grummillin til the mament whan he died in hiz ain cheir on the verandae, efter haein a lest caup o koffie, wuidna ivver hae onie moyen on hir ivver agane. Fur Tittie hed mairret on a tirrorand, the'r nae dout about thon.

Hir guid man wesna Tittie's ertest chyce. Durand the weir shae listit voluntarlie fur the Weimen's Ryal Navyne. Kiz hir faither wes a Reir Ammirall shae wes gied a sauf postin whaur the wes a fouth o ying offishers ti entertene hir. In course shae fawit in luve, bot shae teltna hir faither the nemm o the ying man, an hiz schip gaed aff intil the cauld Nor Sie ti tak wappins roun the tap o Norroway fur the Roushianes.

Tittie an hir ying man wrate ilk ither dailie day. A hale lyfetyme

Chapter One – Titty

Titty was awake. She lay still and enjoyed the sense of freedom. The light of the morning was hers. The fresh air coming into the room through the window belonged to her. The soft sounds of the doves from the garden, in the same way, were in her ownership. The last time that Titty recollected such an experience was from her girlhood, when she awakened on the first day of the holidays and looked forward to the delight of the long summer before her, with her family and friends, sailing on the lake, sleeping under canvas and cooking at an open fire. But that was long ago.

Now she was in a strange land, and was aged by life's struggles. The sensation of being released from prison, unchained and led out into the dusty sunshine of freedom continued though. Then with a painful struggle the sad truth came to her. The miracle of childhood and the tragedy of old age were the same. You were isolated from the duties and the ties of real life and were floating in an illusion. But that illusion was called freedom.

Titty turned over in bed. She was not going to spoil such a delicious morning with any solemn thoughts. Never again would she have to write another word until the day she came to her own final episode. That idea alone was enough to bring a quiet smile to her face. No publishers, no illustrators, no research in dusty libraries, and never, never, never, tapping at those tyrant keyboards and staring at the deluded screens of computers.

Most of all though, the poor dead man that had been buried yesterday, whining and complaining until the moment when he died in his chair on the verandah, after having a last cup of coffee, would ever have any power over her again. For Titty had married a dictator, there was no doubt about that.

Her husband had not been Titty's first choice. During the war she had enlisted voluntarily for the Women's Royal Navy. Because her father was a Rear-Admiral she was given a safe posting where there were plenty of young officers to entertain her. Of course she fell in love, but she did not tell her father the name of the young man, and his ship set off into the cold North Sea to transport weapons round the top of Norway for the Russians.

wes reinged throu in pross. Thai tyned nae tyme in sweit naethins bot telt o aw thair paust an deskreived thare fuither thegither on peyper wi penn an unk.

It is no possibil ti tel o the outcum bot wi sorrae. The ying man wes drounmit, no brunt ir blawn ti bittoks, Tittie howpit, bot onie gates the Airtik Sie tuik hiz corpus an aw Tittie's warl fauldit until a bunnil o pistils insyde hiz uinifurm.

Bot Tittie nivver doutit at hiz dewtie wes ti tyne ivveriethin on behauf o the Roussianes. Ein tho thai wes a fell harsk impyre at bene allyat ti Germanie in the devydin o Poland an the daith o monies o thair ceitizans, an ein tho Bretane be-in allyat ti Fraunce an Poland hed bene fessit until the weir bi nae mair nir mensk, Tittie hed nae douts. Ti hir the Bret Navyne wes the lamp o dewtie whaurivver its pinnet wes hystit.

Thusgates Tittie wrate fur aw the lave o hir days. Shae kent wha shae wes wrytin til, bot naebuddie els did. The hunners o thousans at redit hir buiks juist kent at the owthar hed a waarm hert an spak til thaim direk-lik, wi quate patients gied ti ilkane pairt o the skreivar's craift. Hir buiks cam sic spede at shae hed ti ware mich tyme in hir publishars offishis an wes traitit as a hie-heid-yin. Shae wes alse a dentie ying weiman, clair, sempil an furthie.

The man at gyed hir ertest buiks wes cryed Edward Farncombe, ane airmie offisher in the weir at bene mertet in Normandie. He hed a wife an smaw failmie bot thair expairiences o sax eir o saipret leivin hed twyned thaim, an he wes sune ti hae a divortioun. Maist fowk, whan thair failmie upbraks ettil ti gang awaw an stert agane. Edward Farncombe hed leirit at ti owredryve in weir ye maun disyde fest. He mairriet on Tittie as sune as he cuid an thai gaed awaw ti Nyow Zeiland, an plauntit a grapefruict trei in thair nyow gairden.

Tittie didna objek ti the Antipodes. Hir ain mither cam frae Australiae an hed aften telt hir bairns o the happie youthheid shae a hed thare. Hir guidman wes ti set up a nyow publishin cumpanie in Auckland, an Tittie wes ti be thair ertest fawmous owthar, straucht out o the Mitherlaun in hir potestatar.

Titty and her young man wrote to each other every day. A whole lifetime was travelled through in prose. They wasted no time on sweet nothings but told of all their past, and described their future together, on paper with pen and ink.

It is not possible to tell the outcome without sorrow. The young man was drowned, not burned or blown to bits, Titty hoped, but anyway the Arctic Sea took his body and all Titty's world folded into a bundle of letters inside his uniform.

But Titty never doubted his duty was to lose everything on behalf of the Russians. Even though they were a cruel harsh empire that had been allied to Germany in the division of Poland and the death of many of their citizens, and even though Britain allied to France and Poland had been fetched into the war by no more than honour, Titty had no doubts. To her the British Navy was the paragon of duty wherever its standard was hoisted.

As a result Titty wrote for the rest of her days. She knew whom she was writing to, but nobody else did. The hundreds of thousands who read her books knew only that the author had a warm heart and spoke to them directly, with quiet passion given to every part of the writer's craft. Her books succeeded to such a degree that she had to spend a lot of time in her publisher's offices and was treated as a very important person. She was also an elegant young woman, clear, simple and frank.

The man who steered her first books was called Edward Farncombe, an army officer in the war, wounded in Normandy. He had a wife and a young family, and was soon to have a divorce. Most people when their family breaks up seek to go away and start again. Edward Farncombe had learned that to survive in war you need to decide quickly. He married Titty as soon as he could and they went away to New Zealand, and planted a grapefruit tree in their new garden.

Titty did not object to the Antipodes. Her own mother came from Australia and had often told her children of the happy youth she had had there. Her husband was to set up a new publishing company in Auckland and Titty was to be their first famous author, straight out of the Mother Country in her prime of life.

In course Tittie cuidna eschape frae the Navyne. Buik efter buik anent saulers, thair warl on the bosie o the tydes an thair weiman-fowk laed ahent on the schore, cam frae hir penn. Thur stores wuid hae cum furth oniegates an it wes anerlie eftir monie eirs at Tittie cam ti sei at shae wes nae langir obleiged ti wryte thaim, an cuid follae ither gates ir skreive about ither subjeks. Shae kent at hir faimlie in Bretane wes nou faithers an mithers an hed a greinin fur hir ain smaw faimlie.

Hir guid man wesna gaun ti dae it tho. Hiz sair merterin i the weir, an the sorra o tynin hiz ain faimlie hed pit hiz thochts siccarlie agin it. Tittie nou wrate ti mak up fur hir nyow los, an redars recogniseid it.

Mair on mair o'm bocht hir buiks, tho Tittie wuid sein it as a blissin gif thai hedna. The ak o skribbin awaw wes aw shae hed. Hir guidman's cumpanie growit ryke on the bak o't. Puir Tittie wes nou a prisoner in a massiemore o hir ain biggin. Dewtie hauddit hir mair sturelie nir cheins, an thusgates a lyfetye passit. Ken, thai ettilt ti gae hamewith fur a veisit, bot Edward hed a hert onset, an wes in ospital ontil he wes weill eneuch ti gang bak ti Nyow Zeiland wi Tittie wi yit anither yokin, o nouriss. Tho hir guid-man didna mene ti be onkynd he med an excaise o hiz puir halth ti lat hir kin cum ti veisit, an in course ti traivel hissels, ir dae wiout Tittie. Sae shae wrate, an dailie day shae wrate, an Edward Farncombe growit auld an died an wes beiriet, an that wes the enn o him, anither o Hitler's marters.

Sae the grapefruit trei in the gairden wuid drap its hairvest on the gerss ti nae vissiers this eir. The houss wuid be tuim. Tittie wes gaun hame. Bot sic wes hir hyste at shae wuidna veisit Singapore ir Bahrain ir Bali on hir wey. Shae wes gangin straucht ti the laun o hir drames, ti the loch whaur shae swoummit an fushed as a lass, and nivver agane wuid shae lat onie ither buddie skair hir pleisur. Ilk vyow an saur, ilk test an soun, wuid be fur hir ti bruik alane. Nae ither buddie wuid mak Tittie deskreive the cauldnes o the wattir, the caller souch o the win aff the hul ir the bizzin o bies in the hedder. It wuid be hirs anerlie.

Of course Titty could not escape from the Navy. Book after book to do with sailors, their world on the bosom of the oceans, and their women folk left behind on the shore, came from her pen. These stories would have come out anyway and it was only after many years that Titty realised she was no longer obliged to write them, and could follow other directions or write about other subjects. She knew that her family in Britain were now fathers and mothers, and she had a desire for her own young family.

Her husband was not going to do it, though. His bad wounds in the war, and the sorrow at losing his own family had put his thoughts firmly against it. Titty wrote to make up for her new loss, and readers recogniseid it.

More and more of them bought her books, though Titty would have seen it as a blessing if they had not. The act of scribbling was all she had. Her husband's company grew rich on the back of it. Titty was now a prisoner in the dungeon of her own building. Duty held her more unyieldingly than chains, and in this way a lifetime passed. You understand that they attempted to go home for a visit, but Edward had a heart attack and was in hospital until he was well enough to go back to New Zealand with Titty now having yet another job, that of nurse. Though her husband did not mean to be unkind he made an excuse of his poor health to prevent her family coming to visit, and of course to travel himself, or do without Titty. So she wrote, and every day she wrote, and Edward Farncombe grew old and died and was buried, and that was the end of him, another of Hitler's victims.

So the grapefruit tree in the garden would drop its harvest on the grass to no watchers this year. The house would be empty. Titty was going home. But such was her urgency that she would not visit Singapore or Bahrain or Bali on the way. She was going straight to the land of her dreams, to the loch where she swam and fished as a girl, and she would never again let anybody share her pleasure. Each view and scent, each taste and sound would be for her to enjoy the possession of by herself. No other person would make Titty describe the coldness of the water, the fresh breath of the wind off the hill, or the buzzing of the bees in the heather. It would be just hers.

Thusgates eftir a curn days Tittie cam til the loch. Stappin the kerr on a hie pynt o the rodd shae sein the lenth o't liggin afoir hir, onchynged, the inschis staunnin out lik jeit kervins agin the meirrou o the wattir. The rodd wes grytely chynged tho, an shae awmaist cuidna finnd the houss o Nancie, at aye bad in the auld hame o hir youthheid. The trein wes aw deifferand bot a mair sair surprise cam whan shae sein Nancie staunnin afoir the duir. The auld frein wes unco lairge in bouk. Howsomdevir it wes clairlie the samen wumman, quik, shairp an wiouten clavers.

“Walcum hame, ye puir fremm buddie. Ye wul waant ti gang owre the loch ti mak yeir pace wi the kelpies, nae dout.”

Sae thai daunnert doun ti the wattir's ege an Tittie gaed forrit an syndit hir hauns in the cauld mirk loch. The lichts wes on ben the houss an baukies flittert owreheid gilravagin on the mochs an midges at wes attrakkit bi the lemes.

Nancie tuik Tittie bi the airm an gyed hir bak til the houss, an fedit hir an pit hir ti hir bed. Tittie wes sairie ti sei in the buiskelfs o the dennerin ruim a copie o ilkane buik at shae hed ivver wrate, aw in ordour an nate-lik reinged.

Thus, after a few days, Titty came to the loch. Stopping the car on a high point of the road she saw the length of it, lying before her, unchanged, the islands standing out like jet carvings against the mirror of the water. The road was greatly changed though, and she almost could not find Nancy's house, who still lived in the old home of her youth. The trees were all different but a more painful surprise came when she saw Nancy standing at the door. The old friend was extremely generous in size. However, it was still clearly the same woman, quick, sharp and without nonsense.

“Welcome home, you poor forlorn stranger. You will want to go over to the loch and make your peace with the water spirits, no doubt.”

So they strolled down to the water's edge and Titty went forward and rinsed her hands in the cold dark loch. The lights were on in the house and the bats fluttered overhead feasting on the moths and midges that were attracted by the beams.

Nancy took Titty by the arm, and steered her back to the house, and fed her and put her to bed. Titty was sorry to see in the bookshelves of the dining room a copy of each book she had ever written, all in order and neatly arranged.