



‘One can almost see the words
slipping off the page, remoulding
as pictures in our heads.’

– Jessica Stewart,
The Newtown Review of Books

KIM KELLY

Walking

Walking

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ONE

DR HUGO WINTER DEAD

Dr Hugo Jacob Winter, leading Sydney orthopaedic surgeon, died in his private hospital at Rushcutters Bay, on Wednesday, aged 75.

A reclusive man, he was largely unknown except by his fellow surgeons, eminent colleague, Dr E. A. Slade, said yesterday evening.

Dr Winter graduated in medicine at Berlin University, Germany, and practised in New Zealand before coming to Australia a few years prior to the First World War. He was debarred from joining the Australian Imperial Force because of his nationality.

The funeral and cremation took place at the Northern Suburbs Crematorium on Friday.

Sydney

November 16, 1948

LUCY BRYNNE

The papers print some rubbish, don't they? 'A reclusive man'? 'Largely unknown'? I can't imagine Dr Slade saying these things about Hugo to a news reporter. Surely he knew his colleague better than that.

I can't imagine it's been almost one week since Hugo left us.

I can't imagine this tiny scrap of half-wrong nothing will serve as his obituary. But it seems it will. Not even a mention of his passing at yesterday's or this morning's ward meeting at the hospital. No official notice posted by anyone from the British Medical Association, either. Have we all seen so much death and destruction that the loss of an extraordinary man is no tragedy today?

Grief slips through every nerve; I'm not sure that I can make my muscles move to get off the tram. I clench the newspaper in my fists, staring out at a blue-sky slice of dusk between the grimy terrace rows of Bayswater Road, where it's just another Tuesday, and no-one knows:

Dr Hugo Winter is dead.

The bell jangles for Rushcutters Bay and my legs know what to do: they know the way down Waratah Street to Aurora House – without which, without Hugo, these legs

wouldn't be walking as they do. Without him, I wouldn't have a right leg at all to do the walking business with. I wouldn't be who I am, today, this minute, these feet upon this footpath, if it weren't for Hugo Winter.

Twenty years ago – twenty years and four months ago, to be more exact – I first saw this view of Hugo's clinic, its crisp, bright white façade, large sash windows all gazing north towards the harbour beyond the picket fence of a sports oval, framed by figs that sprawl across a foreshore park. I was seven, the dark, silky ends of my plaits tied off with slim rose satin bows, and I wasn't walking anywhere then. Seized with guilt and fear and loneliness, I was – despite the best efforts of the lady who brought me to Sydney on the train. *It won't be long now.* She held me tight on her lap in the taxi the rest of the way. I don't remember her name: someone lovely from the Lithgow Cripples Fund, she had beautiful red hair that kept slipping out from under her hat.

Hero. That's the word I would use in my obituary of the man who remade my leg, my life.

Outspoken. Impatient with fools. Unceasingly kind. Astonishingly generous. Firmly gentle. Gently firm. Dauntless.

I knew him as Doctor Hugo when I was small – Old Hugh Shoe in a laugh. I came to know him as my best friend when I returned at fourteen, orphaned and destitute: he and Jo, his glamorous, incomparably elegant Jo, took me into their home, managed to find me a place at this city's most prestigious school for girls, paid my way through to university matriculation, then looked after me throughout the following year, that mostly horrendous year of 1939, in which he completed his remaking of my tibia, once all my

bones had fully grown. He was my mentor, always encouraging me to do more, to join the Army Medical Service by way of learning to swim at the deep end of physiotherapy if that's what I really wanted to do, and I did, and in May this year he just happened to nudge me with the full force of his enthusiasm into the rather choice position I have now at Sydney Hospital. It's impossible to calculate how much I owe him. How much he has meant to me.

Hugo Jacob Winter.

Orthopaedic surgeon.

Erstwhile thespian and terrible clarinetist. Consummate party-thrower at his impeccably stylish home on Darling Point.

Amateur naturalist. Social documentarian. Occasional Australian correspondent for *Der Welt Spiegel*. Author of two books: one on the New Zealand Maori, and one on the flora of coastal New South Wales; both set to the steady rhythm of his gait, hiking hill after hill. A mind that never stopped even, I'm sure, when he was asleep.

A loved man.

So very loved. Not only by me, not only by Jo and their real daughter Claire, but by the countless children he fixed over half a century of fixing them, and their parents. The sort of man you can't take shopping in town without being stopped by someone wanting to thank him, shake his hand. Again and again.

The fact of his absence stuns me at the front door of Aurora. Coronary artery disease, that common thief came for him – and he knew. I can see that now: the shortness of breath, the weariness, the excuses not to come to the pictures with me this past month or so, the making certain I was safely into a secure job with my army work winding

up. He died here, in his clinic – somehow, he made sure of that, too.

‘Lucy . . .’ Mrs B is striding up the central corridor as I grasp the iron curl of the stair-rail, and stop there on the bottom step, wordless for a moment with too much to say. We look at each other, Hugo’s indispensable matron and I, history clattering between us like a stack of clipboards falling and falling to the floor. I am crushed; we both are. We’ve each had our hearts wrung out too many times to count, we are each tough ducks, but this blow is . . . tougher than the pair of us combined. I am stunned all over again by the memory: the shrill ringing of the telephone, crashing up the corridor of the nurses’ quarters and into my room at eleven pm last Wednesday night, *Lucy, Lucy – it’s for you*. What? Then Mrs B on the line, her voice shaking: *Hugo. It’s Hugo – he’s gone*.

Her voice is steady as ever as she says to me now: ‘There’s no rush to get it all done, you know – the building won’t be sold until after probate is sorted out. That’s months away.’

‘I know.’ No rush to get his office sorted out is what she means, no rush to keep coming here every evening after work to do a bit more, as I did yesterday and as I am tonight; but: ‘I’d rather get it done while I’m still half mad.’

She nods; she knows my need for doing, for keeping busy, when I’m mad, half or completely: Matron Marjorie Benson has been my nurse through the worst of horrendous, as well as my friend.

She says: ‘Corned beef and mash tonight – shall I have a tray sent up?’

‘Thanks.’ I’ll make an attempt at it: whatever comes out of Aurora’s kitchen is always excellent; and I am a little too ragged from missing proper meals. I ask her, already

moving up the stairs: 'Is there anyone you need me to see?'

She frowns under the thick wave of no-nonsense, steel-wool hair bobby-pinned across her brow: 'Absolutely not. Dr Adinov has everything in hand.'

Dr Adinov is not far off eighty; wonderful orthopaedist that he is, he's retired – unsuccessfully retired, but retired nevertheless. There are only three patients left here, none of them serious, none of them children, but they're all bed-bounds still waiting for beds elsewhere: two ruptured ligaments of the knee, one belonging to a rugby forward, the other a dancer; and a wealthy Mosman dowager with an old lumbar fusion that's caused an acute spondylitis in the vertebra above it, so painful and intractable she probably won't get out of bed again. There's probably some helpful thing I could do for one or all of them. I begin to make a mental note to see Dr Adinov about it – when? Perhaps I should phone – no. Mrs B is right to frown at me: I have too much to do as it is; a pile of reports waiting for me back at my desk at Sydney and —

Keep on up the stairs. He carried me up these stairs once, Hugo, when I was small and the lift had broken down. A storm was sweeping across the water and belting against the windows; I think I'd been down in the basement for an x-ray. I can smell the apron he always wore under his white coat: a rubber apron the colour of a faded cricket ball, a tradesman's apron, an artisan's apron.

A humble man for all the ferocity of his arrogance, his temper where the welfare of a patient was concerned.

How I will miss his eyes: warm black-coffee brown; sympathetic, curious and challenging, all at the same time. No photograph has ever shown him as he truly appeared: the light that burned and danced in him, constantly.

I open the door to his office and I know why I am really here: to be with him. I smile at the towers of paper that teeter and lean on every surface, including the floor. I don't want to touch any of it: this is his brain displayed; his world. He could find anything within a few seconds of anyone asking, although there seems to be no logical organisation among it all: old letters and musical programs, patient files and personal notebooks, tram tickets and x-rays; and above this glorious mess, along the two side walls, his cherished drawings and cards from the children are pinned on boards that reach to the ceiling – hundreds of them. I'll leave them until last, make up some keepsake albums full of them, for Jo. She will be too sad to look at them, possibly forever, but maybe she'll appreciate having these precious pieces of him somewhere near.

For the moment, though, I'll return to hunting for all things easy to identify and remove: newspapers for binning; copies of both the Australian and Hebrew medical journals, and their German equivalent, *Deutsches Ärzteblatt*, which I will donate as a job lot to the student library at Sydney; and copies of all the botanical and natural history publications Hugo subscribed to, which I will donate to the Mitchell Library up the road, to do with what they will.

Only now do I realise my right hand remains a fist around the *Evening News*. Anger streaks through me as I toss it at the binning box: how easily we discard what's truly important. Whole lives worth of immeasurable importance. Among all the things that Hugo did, the gifts he gave, the man he was, why did that reporter choose to mention, 'He was debarred from joining the Australian Imperial Force because of his nationality'? What does that

even mean? That Hugo didn't march off soldiering in the First World War? What a surprise. What a bizarre detail to include from a life so rich. Why bother mentioning his passing at all if it's only worthy of such a desultory afterthought? Published six days after his death, four tiny paragraphs wedged between the shipping news and an advertisement for motor oil.

Perhaps someone made a complaint to the press at the oversight: there was a sizeable horde at the funeral service on Friday morning, people from all over the state, people who'd dropped everything at once to travel miles to be there, people who must have all contacted each other about the service, because it wasn't advertised – it didn't need to be. The chapel was crammed with people, scores more spilling out across the lawn, so many of his children who'd grown and flourished, so many friends, including a contingent of nuns from the Sisters of Charity, both a rabbi and a pastor saying words – beautiful words I could hardly hear, because I was too sad. I am too sad. I don't understand why there wasn't an entire edition of every newspaper in this city dedicated to the celebration of all he achieved.

But then I would think that, wouldn't I.

I adored him.

I always will.

HUGO WINTER

To a boy from the coal-slashed hills and factory mills of the Ruhr, Berlin seemed the centre of the universe: a place where art and science met – and tangoed in smoky bars, arguing about Marx until dawn, before making love in a laneway off the Unter den Linden. Hugo embraced every moment of university life there. He forgot, most days, that he was the son of a surly, conservative lace-maker and his cold, dismissive second wife, both of whom would have preferred he hadn't gone to university at all but stayed on in the Ruhr trading in lace and totting up the accounts, doing what an eldest son of a middle-road businessman from a middle-road town such as Hagen should do: follow his father. It was only owing to the open envy of others, telling Herr Winter how proud he must be to have such a brilliant son, that they let him go.

And go he did, three hundred miles east, as fast as the train would take him. Hugo rarely wrote home, except to his little sister, Irma, who received at least a letter a month from him. She was twelve years his junior and he missed her funny face; sometimes he missed his three brothers, too, Kurt, Ernst and Wil, but not often: he was far too busy learning the tango, arguing in smoky bars with

fast-talking Berliners and craving the kiss of a girl called Karoline who would never look at him – because, said her friend Marie, he was too short and too Jewish. None of the other girls minded these failings; his autograph book – an essential student accoutrement in those most romantic Belle Époque days – was full of sweet love notes from all sorts of young ladies. He read them often, and reminded himself that while he was not tall, he was strong, solidly built, confident in his physique. As for the other – religion – he didn't much care; it was mostly merely a necessary word on a form for him and, more vaguely, good for business, or might be when he discovered what business he would do.

Having always scored highly in mathematics and physics, Hugo had assumed during his schooldays that he would go into engineering in some way, perhaps build bridges and factories, but he'd enrolled in medicine when the time came because those high scores said he should. He hadn't thought about it in any depth: he was too busy learning – everything. New ideas, new theories, new mechanical inventions, drew his fascination more than any kiss might, and in the German university pool of the late nineteenth century, the first years of one's degree were devoted to just that: everything. Young people were encouraged to try on all hats before finally deciding on the one that fit, and that's how, in Hugo's first year, in 1891, he managed to study the English language, political philosophy, immunology, anatomy and the clarinet all in one go: because he could.

'You must continue with medicine,' his anatomy professor said in the middle of his second year, partly as a joke in response to hearing him play the clarinet one afternoon in a café near the School of Surgery, but mostly because of

his perfect understanding of the body and all its functions. 'You should think about orthopaedic medicine. There is a lecture you must attend on Tuesday evening.'

He almost didn't go to that lecture; there'd been a play he wanted to see with his friends, Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* – or *Intrigue and Love*, as it was in English. But he'd seen the play before, in both languages, and he didn't know all that much about orthopaedics. Bone-setting, wasn't it? Not much to it, he'd presumed: either the bone repaired itself with the assistance of splinting or surgery, or it didn't; and if infection or necrosis set in, the bone was excised, limbs amputated, before death ensued. One of his friends, Friedrich, had slipped on an icy step only a few weeks earlier, breaking his arm at the wrist, and Hugo had been more concerned Friedrich would miss an excursion to Prague they'd had planned – cheapest to go in the frozen month of January. At that stage, he was far more interested in the infections and diseases that attacked the skeleton – tuberculosis, infantile paralysis, rickets – and it had never occurred to him that the deformities caused by them or other abnormalities could be fixed.

Inside the lecture theatre, his professor beckoned him to the front row, where he sat fixed to his seat for the next two hours as a young surgeon from Leipzig told of a revolutionary approach to correcting such structural faults as club feet, congenital hip dislocation and curvature of the spine by stretching and manipulating the body into its proper alignment during childhood. This was the theory of an Austrian surgeon by the name of Adolf Lorenz, who performed these wonders without the cutting of any flesh.

'Impossible!' so most in the room that night declared. 'Ridiculous!'

‘What do you think?’ Hugo asked his professor afterwards, as they walked through the thick snow outside.

‘I think it is genius,’ the professor replied. ‘It also works. I visited the Lorenz clinic in Vienna, last year. No child should ever be crippled by these rectifiable problems.’ And then he told Hugo again: ‘You should think about orthopaedics.’

‘Why me?’ Hugo asked him.

And the professor said: ‘There are two things an orthopaedist needs – physical strength and intellectual daring. You have them both.’

The thrill of the compliment didn’t last long, though. When he returned to his family in Hagen that next summer break and told his father he was contemplating orthopaedic medicine, his stepmother interrupted: ‘The fortune your father is spending on your education and you want to be a bone-setter? Why not tell him you want to be a blacksmith instead?’

It was true that bone-setting was not a highly regarded specialty in those days – it would be three years yet before Röntgen’s discovery of the x-ray at Würzburg would change all that, much to the benefit of limbs like Friedrich’s arm, which had had to endure some painful guessing until it was put right. It was also true that every time Hugo looked at the tight, hard face of his stepmother, he remembered his longing for his own mother. He was only four when she died, giving birth to his brother Kurt, and he knew virtually nothing of her apart from that – a fact that made up his mind now. He said nothing more to anyone about it, but his course was set: he would put away that thought of orthopaedics and do something even worse, even less respectable – he would specialise in gynaecology. He would

devote his strength and his intellect to mothers, to spite the one that showed him no love.

‘No! Don’t go!’ His little sister Irma dragged on his coat-sleeve. ‘Don’t go back to Berlin before the holiday is ended,’ her little funny face begged him.

But he said: ‘I have to go.’ He held her in his arms and danced her up the hall: ‘One summer soon, I will take you with me to Berlin and teach you to tango.’

That would never happen. Five years he spent at completing his undergraduate studies and establishing his gynaecological specialty, taking up his first job at an obstetrics clinic down in Munich, and discovering that, among his many talents, he was pathologically obsessive about his work. Once the responsibility for the lives of all these women settled upon his broad shoulders, he could never seem to justify taking any time to get away for more than a few days, and Hagen, over three hundred miles north, was always a trip too far. The process of gaining a woman’s trust, when she was at her most vulnerable, was not something that could be picked up and put down at will. He was obsessive in his learning, too. He learned enormous amounts about the strength of the so-called weaker sex; if he was fond of women before, he became somewhat in awe of them now. He learned a lot about joy as well, about that most sublime reward of life itself. And he learned a lot about loss, when things didn’t go as planned. He learned how much life could be saved by the simple act of washing one’s hands – and how reluctant his elders were to grasp this not-so-extraordinary innovation.

None of it could prevent or prepare him for the loss of Irma, though. *Your sister has died from Scarlet Fever*, the telegram from his father said, such simple words, such

a hammer-smash to his heart. She was two weeks from turning twelve years old, and Hugo had not seen her since she had turned eleven. The new doll that he had bought her sat on the desk in his apartment, unposted. Shame pounded at him that he had not intended going home to celebrate her birthday this time; that he would never teach her to dance.

In that strange way grief has of pushing us where we need to go, Hugo packed his bags and returned to Berlin, thinking he would resume study in immunology, prove that the bacterium streptococcus had killed his sister, but it was his old anatomy professor who got to him first: 'Immunology will make you insane looking for needles in haystacks. Go into orthopaedics, you can rescue the lives of ten children a day. You can do it *now*.' So that is what Hugo would do: if he couldn't see his little Irma again, he would spend the rest of his life obsessively fixing other children, so that they might walk – so that they might dance.

For the next decade, Hugo did nothing else at all: no women, no bars, no theatre but a surgical one – and that one was a hundred miles south of Berlin in the city of Dresden, in what had quickly become the best orthopaedic clinic in Germany. He quickly became one of the best orthopaedic specialists in all of Europe, and possibly the world. He was thirty-four years old. There was nothing he wouldn't do for a crippled child; if the deformity or the injury was beyond fixing, he would at least make it more bearable, more workable. He straightened what was crooked, he pieced together what had shattered, and, as if by some magic or perhaps incredible luck, he never ever amputated, not so much as a fingertip: if a limb was in danger, he always found a way to rescue it.

He learned a lot about the business of compassion there at the clinic in Dresden. In those days, Dresden was arguably the most beautiful city in the Reich, gracious buildings strung along the River Elbe like jewels, its suburbs and spacious parks all studies in the marriage of art and science as it should ideally be in everyday living. An astoundingly wealthy city, at its centre. But that's not where most of Hugo's children came from: they were the sons and daughters of factory workers and miners from outside the gleaming hub. They were children for whom a disabling affliction could mean worse than a life of ordinary poverty: it meant begging on the street and, inevitably, a life cut short because of it. Fortunately for them, the civic-minded Dresdners didn't like the idea of fixable children going about unfixed – that was bad for Empire, as much as it was aesthetically displeasing; it was also cruel – and so they provided funds from their deep pockets to accommodate them at the clinic and to pay for Hugo's fixing genius.

To make up any shortfall in funds, the clinic extracted exorbitant fees from those who could pay: medical students from America eager to learn every new trick; politicians and their sore backs; military mishaps; bankers and their skiing snaps; high heels and ice skates yielding valuable crops of summer and winter ankle sprains. 'I think we must admit you overnight, Madam, to be safe and sure.' Hugo became adept at playing the game. He wanted his children to have the best equipment, swimming baths, gymnasium, the most up-to-date technology, and there was only one way to make that happen, a way Hugo would also stick with for the rest of his life: robbing the rich just enough to finance treatment of the poor.

Naturally, as Hugo's reputation grew, so too did his

number of Jewish patients, who'd travel from all over the globe to see him – from Amsterdam, Budapest, Barcelona, London, even from Palestine. But it was one from New Zealand who would change his course again and irrevocably, in the autumn of 1907.

Moe Frankel was a grain merchant from Christchurch who was returning to Prussia and his native Poland to visit his elderly mother, but also to explore the possibility of having his knee repaired while he was in Europe, the joint having been crushed several years earlier when he was knocked down and run over by a dray at the docks. An eccentric character, always on the move, he told Hugo at the clinic: 'I have a week spare.'

Hugo laughed: 'It will take months.' And he wasn't playing any game about it: 'First, I would have to reconstruct the kneecap. Second, I would need to take some muscle from the back of your knee and transplant it to the front, attaching it with wire. Finally, but crucially, I would then have to try to repair the damaged tendons as well. It's very complex, and the injury is so old, I couldn't guarantee these operations would restore function. I must be honest, I can't promise a successful result for you at all.'

'Oh,' said Moe Frankel, as if he hadn't heard half of what had been said to him. 'Well, could you come back to New Zealand with me?'

Hugo laughed again: 'No. I'm quite busy here.'

'Oh.' Moe Frankel shrugged and sighed. 'That's a shame. We don't have anything near to an orthopaedist in New Zealand.'

'No-one at all?' Hugo's interest was piqued.

'No,' Moe Frankel replied. 'There's a clever chap at the Children's Hospital in Melbourne we send the youngsters

over to when we can, but Australia is a long way to go for treatment. Other than that, there are the usual unhelpful dunderheads who say no to everything.'

Hugo frowned at the idea of there being a place in the world, a civilised place, where there was no orthopaedist.

Then Moe Frankel made the offer that couldn't be refused: 'A thousand pounds, Herr Doktor. Come back to New Zealand with me for six months and I'll give you a thousand pounds – more, if we can raise the money to have you do some teaching at the hospitals. I can arrange a tour.'

Hugo laughed his loudest at that. He wasn't sure of the exchange rate between goldmarks and pounds, but that was a lot of money. In a flash of inspiration he saw himself setting up his own private clinic on his return, perhaps in Berlin.

He told Moe Frankel: 'All right. Six months.'

It would end up being four years. As predicted, Hugo couldn't work a miracle on Moe's knee, but he eased the pain and improved the movement in it enough that Moe bellowed his praises all over the North and South Islands on that initial tour, which in turn brought such a flood of people, mostly children, to his door that he couldn't leave. He set up a makeshift clinic in Christchurch instead, in the front room of his rented house, and travelled all over the islands whenever he could.

Something of his youth returned to him there: an excitement for new learning, a reinvigoration in the crispness of the air and the bright, wild blue of the Pacific Ocean. He particularly enjoyed any opportunity to be among the Maori people, studying their powerful physiques, their formidable athleticism and superiority on the rugby field; their striking ceremonial war dances; their hymn-like love

songs and lullabies. He wrote many articles about New Zealand for *Der Welt Spiegel*, his old university friend, Friedrich, being the foreign news editor at that paper by then. In lively detail, Hugo described the majesty of the alps, the colonial quaintness of the cities, and marvelled at the surprisingly progressive politics throughout – a kind of sensible socialism under which women were allowed to vote and children didn't tend to starve. He made good comedy, too, from the lack of anything resembling champagne or theatre or orthopaedists, but all things said, he had a wonderful time.

So wonderful and so busy, he didn't really hear the rumblings of discontent coming from the medical establishment. 'Quack.' 'Upstart.' 'Charlatan.' 'Rude and pretentious little shit.' He'd heard all the German equivalents over the years anyway. That the hospitals in New Zealand weren't overly eager to have him demonstrate his techniques – on the grafting of tissue and bone, on massage and manipulation, on splinting and exercise, on anything – didn't bother him, either. It had taken five or so years for all these theories to be accepted in his homeland, and not universally; it would take as long for them to be accepted here. Surely these advances would be accepted eventually, though – when people saw the proof. When they saw the children grow into healthy adults.

It was a disappointment to have passed on so little knowledge to so few while he was there, but it was time – beyond time – for him to go. He was almost thirty-eight years old: he had to return to Germany, get on with his career. Already there had been new developments in fixation pins and x-radiographic imagery in his absence; he had to get home.

But the evening before he had planned to book his passage, he went to dinner at Moe's house, as he often did, and this time, among Moe's small though invariably interesting collection of guests, Hugo would meet a young woman from Sydney, the daughter of a very successful biscuit manufacturer to whom Moe sold a great deal of wheat. A young woman by the name of Joanna Levine, who was in Christchurch visiting her aunt and cousins.

Perhaps that crisp New Zealand air had replenished and repaired something deep in his heart that had been broken since Irma's death; perhaps it was just the right time for him to fall in love, that day, a Sunday, April 9, 1911.

For Hugo Winter fell in love with Joanna Levine not so much at first sight, but with the back of her head, the gloss of her dark hair luxuriantly coiled beneath its silver combs, before she even turned around there in the drawing room to smile at him: 'Good evening, Dr Winter, isn't it?'

Like him, she was short and Jewish, but that's about where the similarities ended. She was fourteen years younger than him, she was breathtakingly beautiful – so beautiful he was momentarily lost for words. Only a brief moment, though, before he was having to counsel himself to shut up and play this one game very carefully.

'So, Dr Winter, you're about to leave for Germany, I hear?' she asked him a little later, across the salmon bisque.

And he replied: 'I had been but I find my ship is suddenly delayed.'

She blushed, and if he'd fallen in love an hour ago, he was from this second irretrievably devoted. Joanna Levine was not the sort given to blushing. She was sophisticated, cultured, but unassuming, aware of her beauty and expert at its accentuation, and yet aware, too, of its superficiality.

She was the woman at the party who made others feel welcome, the one who spoke in questions that drew out the light from those around her. She played the piano, sang like a lark, and laughed like one too, with a sharpness of wit that never cut another. She loved music and her Persian cats, three of them whom she'd named Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; she loved plants and flowers and walking. She was the woman for him.

Not a man given to wasting time, he didn't waste any now: within a fortnight, he invited her to picnic alone with him at Godley Head and there, as they walked together above the clifftops looking out to sea, he asked her with no other embellishment than the bright, wild blue before them: 'Would you possibly consider marrying me?'

'Hm.' She pressed her dainty fingers to her lips, thinking; she'd felt he might ask but it seemed too soon, too much a whirl. For all that her parents would approve of every dot of him, she wasn't sure. But she matched him for speaking the truth; she told him: 'I don't know that I could marry a surgeon, up to his elbows in blood every day. I'm afraid I tend to be a little squeamish.'

He laughed: 'I'm not asking you to be my theatre nurse. I won't bring any blood home, I promise.'

'Hm.' She smiled; such a glorious smile. Then she said, more seriously: 'There's one other thing.'

'What is it?' he asked her. 'Whatever it is you want, Jo, I'll give it to you – anything.'

She sighed, supposing this would end the affair: 'I'm a Sydney girl, Hugo. All my friends, all my family are there, or here in Christchurch. I know it probably seems perverse, parochial, even silly, but I don't want to go to Europe. I don't want to live in Germany, or anywhere but my home.'

‘Oh.’ Hugo sighed too, but with relief. Whatever thought he’d had of establishing his own clinic in Berlin, it flew away on that April breeze. ‘We shall make our home in your home then, my darling. We shall make our life together in Sydney.’ He swept his hand across the Pacific, across the world: ‘We can do anything we like.’

And so it was that Joanna Levine became Hugo Winter’s wife, all blessings bestowed at the Great Synagogue in her sparkling city of Sydney. Their celebrations were made under the grand chandeliers of the Emerald Room in the Australia Hotel, making Hugo Winter the happiest man on earth – not to mention that by mutually beneficial coincidence he’d stepped straight into a job at St Vincent’s Hospital, in Darlinghurst, almost identical to the job he’d left in Dresden, where he could be both practising surgeon and teacher, and continue to treat the poor for free.

Just a week before the wedding, he’d picked up the keys of the house he’d bought for his Jo, the smallest house on the best street in one of the most expensive suburbs, Darling Point, where the city glittered day and night across the harbour. The most beautiful harbour. The most darling wife. And now, after they’d been cheered away from their lavish reception, he carried her across the threshold of their new home, their new life, and he taught her to tango there.

ALSO BY KIM KELLY

Black Diamonds

This Red Earth

The Blue Mile

Paper Daisies

Wild Chicory

Jewel Sea

Lady Bird & The Fox

Sunshine

Her Last Words

The Truth & Addy Loest

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‘Kelly’s writing is always fluent; sometimes it is so lovely, one can almost see the words slipping off the page, remoulding as pictures in our heads.’

– Jessica Stewart, *The Newtown Review of Books*

Sydney, 1948. Brilliant German surgeon, Hugo Winter, is dead, and his protégé, Lucy Brynne, is tasked with sorting his papers.

Among them, Lucy finds glimpses of Hugo’s past that paint a disturbing picture of war and prejudice – a portrait of Australia she can barely recognise.

That same week, an intriguing patient comes into her care on the orthopaedic ward at Sydney Hospital: one Mr Jim Cleary. Lucy’s experience as an army physiotherapist, as well as her own very personal knowledge of pain, tell her there’s more to this man’s fractured leg than meets the eye.

As she pieces together who Jim Cleary really is and the truth behind his injury, she not only falls for his laconic charm, but discovers the rival surgeon who relentlessly persecuted Hugo – a man who will shatter Jim’s life completely now, unless Lucy can stop him.

Inspired by a true story of medical genius and betrayal, *Walking* is a crisply told tale of bigotry and obsession, love and devastation, one that charts the path of a young woman finding her feet in the world, and the transformative power of kindness that drives her own ambition.



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