

# The Pastures of Jordan

There was a distinct feeling of neglect about the old farmhouse. Cracked white weatherboards, with a rusting corrugated iron roof and a well-used veranda that stretched across the front of the old building, assaulted the eyes on approach. Two, dirty brown ruts, moulded over time with a strip of bright green grass up the centre, led from the gate to the home front. When the weather was wet they would turn to mud and it was near impossible to negotiate.

She called the farm Jordan because she liked the name. At least, that was the story Peggy Sherman told. Several titles had adorned the pale wooden sign which swung from a post at the entrance to the driveway. With each owner, a different name burnished the lacquered timber. It was tradition.

In the small family cemetery that graced the property, Peggy placed the multicoloured bouquets of flowers in front of the worn grey stone heads. The monuments were chiselled with the names of those who had lived in the farmhouse before her. A final resting place of family members who had worked the pastures for many years. She liked to visit them regularly, just to remind herself where she had come from. Green grass surrounding the headstones was neatly manicured without a weed in sight. A well-kept white picket fence was scrubbed and painted every summer, and enclosed the small area. This singled-out zone was a fenced lot. Who would place the flowers and nobody to care for the intimate graveyard. What would happen to the property? Would the small plot be moved? She hoped not. She prayed that the name would stick forever, and her family's remains would always grace Jordan.

Fields of wheat that waved in the wind like a golden ocean stretched for miles, interrupted by snaking streams and long dusty tracks, encompassed the small farmhouse. Every year the wheat was harvested and ground at the local mill to make flour. Peggy never saw any of the fine white powder, it was shipped off to different parts of the country to make bread and other baked goods. The money contributed to a mediocre lifestyle she had adapted to. There was nothing extravagant in the slightest about the spending habits Peggy had formed, but the farm was comfortable, and she enjoyed the solitude. At times though, she wished for just a little companionship.

An open fireplace was her one luxury, and the wood was chopped elsewhere and delivered to Jordan before the cold weather set in. She would slowly stack the fuel in the large shed and every few days, she filled her wheelbarrow and transported the tinder to the house where it would be arranged neatly by the hearth. Using a hatchet and a chopping block by the back door, Peggy chopped a few of the larger