

THE LOSS  
OF OUR  
NOT KNOWING

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*For my parents. And for those who spend their lives  
caring for the sick and debilitated.*



If I should meet thee somewhere in a dream

And then again upon this planet, Earth,

Shall I know thee, or thee me?

Or will we pass without a second glance

And never feel the loss of our not knowing?

*E. Green-Davis 2015*



# Wales

## Its Language and Symbols

The Welsh language is an ancient one that has survived over centuries and preserved by the tribes who settled in the British Isles. It is a Celtic language, distantly related to Gaelic, the old language of the Irish and the Scots. Roman invasion of Britain failed to put its stamp on the Welsh culture but modified the language to absorb many Latin words.

The country of Wales is *Cymru* (pronounced *kumri*.) The Welsh call themselves *Cymry*: fellow countrymen (pronounced *kumree*.) The language of Wales is *Cymraeg*, (pronounced *kumra-eg*.) It is a mandatory subject in Welsh schools. The more modern Welsh, *Cymraeg fodern*, and some of the older poetic Welsh are spoken freely. The more dominant language of the country is English. The following is a brief introduction to pronunciation. Some find it not a difficult language to learn.

There are **7 vowels** in the Welsh alphabet:

*a*: as in man;

*e*: as in bet;

*i*: either as in pin or queen;  
*o*: either as in lot or moe;  
*u*: as in keen;  
*w*: either as in zoo or bus;  
*y*: either as in win, been or ‘*ub*’ as in myrrh

There are **21 consonants**:

*b, d, h, l, m, n, p, r, s, t* are the same as in English. All the letters are pronounced. The *h* is never silent.

*c* always hard as in *cat*, never soft or silent

*ch* as in the Scottish *loch*, never as in church

*dd* as in *thief*: digywidd pronounced dig-ee-with

*f* as *v* in *five*

*ff* as *f* in *food*

*g* always hard as in *good*

*ll* as *thl*, e.g., Llewellyn pronounced Thlew-ethlin

*ng* as in *sing*

*ph* as in *pharmacy*

*rh* combined and said quickly as *hr*

*si* as *sh* in *shop*

*th* as in *the*

The letter *k* was dropped from the language in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when printers had too few of the letters to print the New Testament in the Welsh and substituted *c*.

Other letters not found in the Welsh language are: *j, q, v, x, z*. They are finding their way into modern Welsh through technological terms: joule, kilo, volt, etc.

## Diphthongs

Two vowels placed together should be said separately but smoothly.

<i>ae, ai, au,</i>	as <i>y</i> in <i>my</i>
<i>aw</i>	as the <i>ow</i> in <i>cow</i>
<i>eu</i> and <i>ei</i>	as in <i>pray</i>
<i>ew</i>	as <i>eh-oo</i>
<i>i'w, y'w</i>	as in <i>yew</i>
<i>oe</i>	as in <i>toy</i>
<i>ow</i>	as in <i>tow</i> or <i>low</i>
<i>wy</i>	as in <i>win</i> or <i>wee</i>
<i>ywy</i>	as in <i>fluid</i>

The Welsh is a musical language and pleasant to the ear. The emphasis falls on the next to last syllable. The last syllable is unstressed and at a higher pitch, similar to French. Music (*cerddoriaeth*) is an important part of the Welsh culture; its male choirs are renowned.

**The National Eisteddfod** is the largest and oldest celebration of Welsh culture and music, dating from the twelfth century. It is an annual event and held in a different part of the country each year. The word *eisteddfod* means: 'a sitting.'

**The National Flag** is a red dragon on a green and white background. The red dragon is believed to date back to the times of King Arthur and the legend of the red dragon of Wales in battle with the white dragon of the Saxons. The green and white background represents the colors of the House of Tudor, the 15<sup>th</sup> century royal family who were of Welsh origin.

**The National Anthem** is *Land of My Fathers*, written in 1856 by Evan James and his son, James James. A memorial to them was erected in their hometown of Pontypridd.

**The Patron Saint** is St. David.

**The Leek**, a humble root vegetable, is a symbol of identification in battle when Welsh soldiers were said to have worn it in their helmets to distinguish them from their enemies. Legend is that the Tudors issued leeks to palace guards to wear on St. David's Day.

**The National flower** is the daffodil. It was said to have been introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to replace the leek. David Lloyd George, the only Welshman to date to be British Prime Minister, was the advocate of the narcissus, the Latin name for the daffodil. It is a symbol of optimism, its appearance in early spring coinciding with St. David's Day, March 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Iechyd da i chwi yn awr ac yn oesoedd**

Good health to you now and forever.

This message was written in Nasa voyager, launched in 1977, as a representative of the Celtic language.

# Prologue

Diana

California April 7, 1972

You never know what the day will bring when you wake up in the morning. Ceri always woke up to the expectation of a good day. She was like that: positive in her thinking. But today had not been a good day. It had been bloody awful. Literally bloody, horribly awful.

It didn't start out that way. It began pretty much as usual for Ceri: a light breakfast, a quick shower; the same California morning sun; the same drive along the coast road, lightly trafficked at this early hour. The view of the wide, deserted beach and expanse of ocean was always a welcome sight and a relaxing one.

Then the turn east, down the broad main road that cut through compact tract homes and apartment complexes, would put a blight on her pleasant mood and she had to search for a tree, a flowering shrub; some evidence of beauty along the way to revive it.

By the time she drove into the hospital parking structure thirty minutes later she was ready for the day; anticipating

admissions, eager to learn something new. She had been crisp, clean and clinical in her white uniform then.

And Diana had been alive.

Things went downhill from the moment she arrived on the Med/Surg floor. All fifty-six beds were full. One clinic assistant and Mollie, the ward clerk, had called out sick, leaving her short staffed.

As Nursing Care Coordinator (NCC) Ceri was responsible for the whole floor: supervising the RN Team Leaders and their assignment of patients to their team according to patient acuity, and with Diana's primary nursing care objectives in mind. Although not an expected part of her role, Ceri often opted to choose for herself the total care of a patient: one with an unusual diagnosis or time-consuming needs; one she could research and write an informative nursing care plan for.

But that wouldn't be possible today because of the sick calls. Now she would have to fill in where needed, in addition to taking over the ward clerk's duties, and transcribing doctors' orders onto nursing care cards, until replacement personnel could be found.

By nine a.m. when no replacements had reported, Ceri had gone down to the supervisors' office on the third floor to discuss her staffing situation. Diana had been coming out as Ceri walked in.

"How's it going?" Diana asked her, aware of staffing issues today.

"Fine. We're muddling through," Ceri answered pleasantly.

Diana had given one of her rare smiles. "Well, if anyone

can *muddle through*, you can. I know I can always rely on you, Ceri,” she said, touching Ceri on the shoulder as she passed by. Diana had walked to her own office then, the one with *Director of Nurses* on the door.

Three patients were discharged mid-morning, which eased the workload. The nursing team pulled together. Ceri took over Mollie’s duties. They had almost made it through to the end of shift when everything changed for the worse, suddenly and without warning. The phone call came to the ward clerk’s desk from Dora, the clerk on the third floor, expecting to reach her peer, Mollie, on the fifth.

“This is Ceri, Dora. Mollie is out today, so I’m acting ward clerk. No time for a chat.”

“Oh, Miss Maitland. There’s a shooting happening – somewhere near the Director’s office. I’ve just paged security.”

There was no mistaking the hysteria in Dora’s voice. Maybe Ceri should have paused a minute, given it some thought before hanging up and dashing down the two flights to the third floor. But she had automatically switched into crisis mode; ready to assist where help was needed.

There was no help for Diana. Ceri knew that as soon as she found her, on the floor in the corridor outside her office. She knew as the last spurt of blood spread across the cavity in her chest, onto her white lab coat, the visible ebbing of a life force. She knew by the clammy, ashen face, the failed pulse. She thought she saw a faint flicker in Diana’s eyes: recognition, a plea, before they changed to lifeless blankness.

Dr. Andruss had arrived on the scene before her. He had quickly assessed the situation, realizing Diana was beyond resuscitative measures and running down the corridor to the

second body lying there, this one showing signs of life. There were no bullet wounds on Paula Jansen, RN. The butt of a weapon had left its mark above her left ear. Blood ran down onto her cheek, and dripped from her chin. She was coming to, returning to dim consciousness when Ceri reached her side. She muttered words, barely audible. Ceri had to lean close to hear.

“It was Jack – Jack ...” searching for his name. But Ceri knew. So did Dr. Andruss. They looked at each other over Paula’s prostrate form: a look of disbelief then puzzlement, and finally understanding.

Dr. Andruss and Ceri had changed into scrubsuits. He admitted Paula to a private room on the fifth floor under Ceri’s nursing care. Diana’s body had been taken down to the basement morgue, awaiting the coroner.

“Did Diana say anything?” Ceri asked him.

“Yes. When I arrived on the scene she just took two steps outside her office before she collapsed. *Why?* she said. That was all.”

Neither one of them had time to linger for further discussion. Dr. Andruss left and Ceri returned to the nurses’ station. There was a phone call from Luke. The relief in his voice was palpable when she answered it.

“Thank God! I heard about the shooting. I was afraid it might be you. Are you okay? I’m coming there to get you out.”

“Yes. I’m okay. Why would you think it was I? Thank you, but I don’t need you to come and get me. I’m not leaving. There’s plenty to do here. Everything is under control, but I really can’t talk now.”

It was sweet of him to call, to be concerned. She should have told him so, she thought fleetingly, after she hung up. She returned to her duties: making rounds, answering questions with brief, assuring responses; calming the concerns of patients and staff. She felt like an automaton, mechanically programmed and feeling nothing whatsoever. Keeping busy held her own fears at bay, her own question. Why?

There was another call for her soon after Luke's. One of the nurses put the call on hold and went to find her. "A man – didn't give his name," she said. He'd hung up by the time Ceri picked up the phone.

Now she had retraced the route driven eleven hours earlier, a lifetime ago, her day lengthened by the police response and more sick calls from the evening staff than was usual. She was home, weary and bewildered, still dressed in the same blue scrubs. Her white uniform was rolled up in a plastic bag carried under her arm. She should have thrown it away, she thought in hindsight. She'd certainly never wear it again. The blood had dried on it by now: Diana's blood. It had probably dried on her shoes, too. She'd cleaned off the uppers with alcohol swabs, but the soft soles would still hold traces in the crevices of the treads.

She stopped on the outdoor steps leading up to her second floor apartment, the upper unit of Gemma's duplex, and took them off. The lights were already on in Gemma's place below. She hesitated, resisting the impulse to drop in. The pause gave her time to look up and out to the beach. The sight never failed to thrill her. The sun was lowering itself into the horizon, turning the evening sky to a fiery

glow and dappling the ocean with its light. Now, though, the scene was made poignant by the tragedy. Diana, a lover of all things beautiful yet a champion of the plain and worthy, would never be able to appreciate a sight such as this ever again.

Her mind drifted back to the events of the day. The police officers who responded to the emergency call seemed to conduct only a cursory search of the hospital premises. She'd escorted them around the fifth floor, and when they glanced into the patients' rooms had questioned them:

"You know, there are private bathrooms and closets inside. Don't you think he might be hiding in there?"

"Miss, this is routine. He is long gone," they'd answered.

They seemed immune to the horror of the situation, taking it all in their stride, their feelings dulled by the unfortunate commonality of it. Pretty much as she had become conditioned to blood and to death in the hospital. But it was the patients who bled and died, not the nurses. And if it had to happen to one of them, why Diana of all people, one of the best?

And where was the perpetrator? Where was Jack? Ceri was weighed down with the guilt that *she* may have played a part in Diana's death by her inaction. Hadn't she seen signs in Jack of something incendiary and overlooked them, because they seemed outbalanced by other signs of the better man she had also perceived him to be? The police said he was "long gone." Not hiding in the hospital. Not on the grounds. Not at home.

The beach was less than half a block from where she stood. The ocean was eternal. She was mesmerized by the

soft to and fro of the waves carrying the gold glints of early sunset. She timed her breathing to its movement to relax the clamor of her mind. The certainty came to her on the incoming tide and without the effort of thought.

She knew where Jack was.



*Chapter 1*  
Charles, Claire, Cerys, Thomas  
and Bryn

**Wales California Wales 1944 - 1966**

CERI'S PARENTS WERE buried together in the old churchyard of the Welsh village and on the same day, even though their deaths had occurred six years apart. It was a cold day in November, 1966, when Claire and Charles were united once more and then forever.

They had met in this village – twice, her Welsh mother born there and her American father on temporary “stop-overs” both times. They first met in 1944. World War II was approaching its final year. Charles, a U.S. Air Force pilot, was on short rest and recuperation from his base across the border in England. He'd been exploring the village and stopped for refreshment at the quaint teashop on the narrow main street. Claire's parents owned it. She helped out there on weekends and served him a pot of strong, hot tea with dainty sandwiches and small cakes served on a tiered plate-stand.

The second meeting was on his return after the war. He'd

never forgotten the teenager with the auburn hair and freckles or the lilt of her Welsh accent. He was on a walking tour, revisiting old scenes, now slower paced in the peaceful aftermath of the war years, yet somehow the same. The teashop seemed unchanged. Would she still be there?

Claire recognized him immediately as he walked through the door, the tinkle of the doorbell causing her to look up from her task. Despite his casual attire and without a uniform, it was the face she remembered: the quizzical gray eyes, the dark blond hair now longer and windblown. That face, from first sight, had been superimposed on every boy she'd kissed; had invaded every dream. Now she thought she must indeed be dreaming.

There was no need to wait. It wasn't as if they'd just met and rushed into things, as the villagers thought and gossiped about. They both knew that the attraction sparked three years earlier had stayed with them, a quietly burning ember now reignited. A month later they were married in the ancient gray stone church. Claire resigned from her teaching position at the local school. When Charles returned to California, Claire went with him.

It was there that Cerys was born, called Ceri by those who knew her, followed by Thomas and Bryn at four-year intervals. Ceri's memory of life then was as close to idyllic as any family life can be. Charles, an aeronautical engineer and Claire, a homemaker, raised their children with devotion and lenient yet consistent discipline, instilling in them a thirst for learning. Their love of family was evident but Ceri saw their love for each other as a "different kind of love." It seemed to encapsulate them in a singular aura, shutting out anyone or anything

outside its space. It was evidenced by a tender touch, a sudden look passing between them, spontaneous laughter triggered by something only they seemed to find humorous. Ceri noticed and treasured these moments and, as she grew older, wondered about the emotions wrapped up in them, and if she'd ever experience this special kind of love.

Ceri was twelve years old when tragedy struck. The accident that killed her father was so difficult to comprehend. The day was clear, the road dry, traffic no heavier than usual. He'd merely swerved to avoid the semi-truck traveling toward him and veering into his lane. Even the incline his car went over wasn't very deep. But it was enough to be fatal.

Claire retreated from life then. Ceri found an inner strength she hadn't known existed in her, never before having need of it. Her paternal grandparents, Gemma and Poppa, came to help. They were their only local relatives and, despite the loss of their son, showed the same ability to cope. Between them, they comforted and consoled Thomas and little Bryn. Ceri held her own sorrow in check while caring for her mother and brothers. Even in the privacy of her own room she found it difficult to cry, the sense of loss being too deep to be assuaged by tears.

When Claire snapped-to she had a new sense of purpose. She decided to return with her children to Wales. Gemma and Poppa were sorry to see them go, but Poppa had his business and Gemma was of an independent and philosophical nature, with many friends and pursuits to fill her time. She made no objection to Claire's pathetic hold on the urn containing Charles' ashes, and never voiced her preference that he be laid to rest in American soil. She had ceded part

of him to Claire when they married, but the memories of his years before that were hers to keep.

They returned to the village nestled in the misty Welsh hills. Ceri and her brothers had come to know their maternal grandparents, Tomos and Linor Davies, at brief intervals and through letters, greeting cards and gifts. Claire and Charles had twice taken their children back to Wales. In between, her parents had visited them in California. When Claire and her children returned, Tomos and Linor had retired and moved to a seaside town, leaving the teashop to the management of their only other child, Constance, who welcomed home her younger sister with warm affection and opened her heart to her niece and nephews.

Charles had left Claire comfortably off. The cottage she rented in the village was much smaller than their California home, but it was cozy and charming in its own small plot of flower-filled gardens. She had no need to work, and helped out at the teashop only for something to do. She renewed old friendships; seemed to merge back easily into village life. But Ceri was aware that a light had gone out of her. She never relinquished Charles' ashes, keeping them in an urn of polished wood on her bedroom dresser.

Ceri, Thomas and Bryn adjusted with the ease of youth; quickly made friends; enjoyed their schools. Ceri found her education to be quite different from the US. Wales was still under the old tripartite system, which was in the process of being replaced. The schools that taught the higher academic curriculum were private and students paid fees to attend. Educational acts mandated that at least twenty-five percent of placement be held open for scholarships. It provided an

opportunity for the most intellectual pupils from the elementary school, the “cream of the crop,” you might say, who couldn’t afford the fees, to gain entrance by passing the age eleven-plus examination and attaining one of the prized seats.

Claire had been one of these scholarship children. She attended the all-girls secondary modern grammar school that paved her way to Teachers’ college. It was Claire’s intent, on their return to Wales, that Ceri attend the same school. Intellectually qualified, Ceri at twelve was above the age limit to sit for the exam. Claire was focused when it came to her children’s education and enrolled Ceri in her old school as a private, fee-paying student. Thomas passed the scholarship when he reached eleven and moved on to the all-boys grammar school. Bryn never got the chance to sit for it.

Ceri was in her final year of school when Claire fell ill and was hospitalized in the nearby town. Claire faced her illness with a fatalistic acceptance and wry humor. The loss of her beautiful, abundant auburn hair, always allowed to flow unpinned and rarely fussed with, was summed up,

“I used to just wash, blow, go. Now I only need to wash and go; so much easier to handle. I should have shaved my head years ago!”

Her one complaint was with bedpans, which she called “an insult to the bum.” She was graciously appreciative of the nurses’ attempts to ease her discomfort. Before she died, Claire had assured Ceri.

“You’ll be all right, Love. You have Aunt Constance, and nain and taid Davies and Gemma. And you and the boys will always have each other. And remember to talk to me,

whenever you feel like it. I talk to your Tad often and he always answers.” Claire had a soft smile on her lips, thinking of him, as she rested back on her pillow. Her death came quickly, mercifully.

Ceri phoned Gemma with the news.

“Mam has asked to be buried here. What do you want me to do with Tad’s ashes?”

“Whatever you think your Mom and Dad would want you to do,” Gemma told her.

Instead of the handful of soil customarily dropped on to the coffin as it was lowered into the ground on that cold November day, Ceri, Thomas and Bryn released their father’s ashes from the polished wood urn and scattered them there.

Claire’s parents, Tomos and Linor, were baffled by the upside-down vicissitudes of life that had taken two of their children before them. After their daughter was laid to rest they hastened back to their seaside town, which didn’t hold reminders as the village did. Before they left, Tomos and Linor assured their grandchildren there was always a place for them. Aunt Constance and her jovial husband, Uncle Huw, offered to take them all into their own home. They were childless and comfortably so; set in their ways.

Ceri had completed her advanced levels. She had made her career choice long ago and was preparing to take the college courses for the teaching profession. With her circumstances abruptly changed, her concentration shifted from school to family. Ceri decided that now, at eighteen, she was well able to take care of herself *and* her brothers.

Gemma had kept in touch, asking, “Well, are you coming *home* now?”

Ceri and the boys conferred on their choices. Bryn, now ten years old, had little memory of his early years in America. Thomas, age fourteen, remembered childhood friends and long sunny days at the beach and Gemma's loving acceptance of his faults. Yet it wasn't an easy decision.

They would be leaving behind the familiarity of six years of life confined in the traditions of a small village. They would be leaving behind their parents, lying together in the old churchyard.

Then there was Riordan: *Rory*. Ceri and Rory: a long entanglement struggling to ripen into something more. But not yet come to fruition, so not of serious account, she decided, pushing the thought of him aside. She would have to see him, though, before she left.

Maybe a change of country was what they needed to bring them all out of the doldrums.