

Excerpt from A Kind of Family by Bonnie Meekums

Published by Between the Lines Publishing

A letter from Down Under

Rachel's hand shook. The letter, written on old-fashioned airmail paper, was as flimsy as the future she had once imagined. She remembered being twelve years old, looking up to her brother who by then was six feet one and a half inches tall as compared to her five feet six. Being the tallest in her class, it mattered to her that her big brother was bigger than her. He made her feel secure. He used to smile at her softly, telling her with his eyes that whatever she did she would always be his little sis. Loved. Or so she thought.

He had written in brown ink on shiny blue paper. When she saw the airmail envelope, her heart leaped. Perhaps he was coming home? Silly thought really. She knew he was settled in Perth. He had children. He had a new family. And he hadn't made it home when their parents had died on separate wards within hours of each other. Nearly a year ago. Rachel forgave him that, though. He was busy. Flying a plane all over the world, why would he want to fly back just to support his little sis? He told her he would say goodbye to their mother in his own way.

Why were you so stupid as to think he would still care about you?

Oh yes, she could always count on her inner, snide little 'best friend' at times like this. The voice that never quite left her alone. The voice that started the day her brother went to Australia. It got in there, now that no one was around to protect her from the bully inside herself.

Rachel decided to read the letter aloud, as if hearing the words spoken, she might more easily take them in. The top of her back hurt. There was a knot in her right shoulder. She tried to knead it with her left hand as she carefully laid the pages out in front of her on her oak table, smoothing each one out carefully, for fear of tearing them.

'Dear Rachel', she began. So formal. No 'Smuggins.' Not even 'Rache.'

'I write to say I will not return to the UK, now or at any time in the...'

 Rachel's voice cracked. Tears mixed with brown ink, tributaries that led to nowhere.

'...future. I find that, with our parents gone I wish to focus completely on my life here. It is a long time since we were brother and sister to each other, and you have never made the effort to come out here to see me. I can only conclude that I mean no more to you now than you to me – a mere memory of childhood. My family is here, and you must make yours there.'

Rachel stared into the garden, her eyes stinging as she screwed up the paper until it reduced to an insubstantial little ball. Annie sighed, and put her head on her paws as close to Rachel's feet as she dared.

If you would like to hear or read more, Bonnie's book launch is at Lees Library in Oldham on March 9th, 2020, 7-8.30 pm. FREE. Tickets can be obtained here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/bonnie-meekums-author-event-tickets-82940235477>

A Kind of Family is available through Barnes & Noble:

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/a-kind-of-family-bonnie-meekums/1135279907?ean=9781950502073>

And Amazon:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Kind-Family-Bonnie-Meekums/dp/1950502074/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=bonnie+meekums+a+kind+of+family&qid=1583163734&s=books&sr=1-1

Praise for A Kind of Family:

'...an exquisite study of relationships and what constitutes family - and overcoming adversity.' Jacqueline Ward, Amazon review.

'Bonnie Meekums delivers a graceful yet heartbreaking tale of love and loss.' Kimberly, Goodreads review.

'...it quickly draws you in and I found it engaging and fast-paced. It's full of twists and turns and hidden secrets.' Richard Hooton, Goodreads review.

'Moving between NZ and the UK, and several generations of family, this powerful story is a compelling read.' Jean K, Goodreads review.

'From its atmospheric opening to a moving conclusion, A Kind of Family considers the way friendships, fellowships and familial bonds play into the notion of family. A novel for our times!' Lizabelle, Amazon review.