

The
Return
Of
Seven

Kenn Gordon

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my loving and long suffering wife
She has supported me in my quest to become a novelist
To my father I say Thank you for encouraging me in following my
dreams whatever they were
To all my sons

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Act 1

My name is Andy McPhee. I still live in the Highlands of Scotland. I love Scotland and I love the area in which I live. I live on a mountainside at Old Kinbrace. It is right out there in the middle of nowhere, which is the way I like things. Kinbrace is about four miles from my doorstep. The closest village would be Helmsdale, which is 17 miles in the opposite direction. Most folks have never even heard of hamlet of Kinbrace, let alone the fishing village of Helmsdale. If you ask a Southerner where Sutherland is? Then 90% of them still, would not have a clue. That is one of the main reasons I have chosen to live here, for the seclusion and the beauty not to mention the Scottish and the Highland way of life. I love the solitude of the Highlands. I love the clean and fresh air that I breathe. I even love the weather because it changes the whole look of things. In the summer the Gorse and Whin bushes are in full bloom, with their dazzling bright yellow flowers on a backdrop of dark emerald green. The Ferns cover the floor of the woodlands in a carpet of succulent greens. The mountains have a covering of purple from the Heather. And the sky is a beautiful baby blue with wispy white clouds. All the crofters and the farmers are gathering their crops. The local folks, are digging the peat in the long summer evenings, while they fight off the incessant attacked from the scourge of the hillside, clouds of midges, a mosquito like insect that get in your ears and in your mouth when you breathe, or the dreaded horseflies that are as big as bumble bees and their bite is equally as painful. Even with this they will work to help each other, without too much complaining. The midges can be kept slightly at bay by pipe smoke. It was

not unusual to see young boys with a pipe stuck in their mouths puffing clouds of smoke hoping to engulf themselves in an aromatic cloud of anti midge smoke. Even women and girls would 'take to the pipe for the peat cutting'. There are trout and salmon in the rivers, rabbits and deer on the mountain sides. There are game birds a plenty in the sky. Then comes Autumn and the hills change colour from purples to browns. The smell of peat fires fills the air and hangs like a mist in the glens and valleys. The rivers start to pick up pace, as the rains roll off the mountain sides. In the Highlands we call it a 'Spate'. That is when the rivers that are normally slow and calm, suddenly become full to bursting point with the water that rolls down and runs off from the high ground. They look like rapids in the Rockies, except these are brown with the colour of peat. This is not a muddy brown that you see in the rivers of the lowlands. The Highland rivers run with the colour of stout beer. The Stags and Hind's come down into the Glens and feed on what is left of the summer vegetation. The migratory birds fly off and the Canada geese fly in. Winter comes, and the floor of the forest is now brown with the dead bracken and the larch needles fall. Any deciduous trees have given up their foliage, the sky turns grey and the nights lengthen to the point where the sun rises at 9am and sets again at 3:30 to 4pm. On the clear and frosty nights, we can easily see the northern lights or the Aurora Borealis, if you want to be technical. Up here in the countryside of the Highlands there is little or no light pollution. The beauty of which is just so difficult to describe. My mother used to call it God's Disco Lights. Winter would bring other things, like the snow, rain, wind and of course the cold. Even some

of the animals change colour to blend in with their backgrounds. Weasel's turn from brown to white, the Mountain Hare like the stoat or Weasel, changes his coat to match the peaks of the mountains. The Ptarmigan's feathers change to predominately white. The Highlands of Scotland, always famous for its abundance of wildlife, some of which are now extinct. Many of the previously extinct species are now being reintroduced back into the Highlands as well as an attempt to re-establish the Caledonian forest, by the planting of millions of trees. The Wolf was a threat to travellers, so much so that in Sutherland, 'spittals' were built. These spittals were rock or wooden shelters that were built along the roads and mountain paths, to provide a safe place to rest, without being in danger from wolves. In the Highlands, wolves were a threat to the dead as well as the living. So, the Highlanders of Ederachillis started to bury their dead on the Island of Handa. As told in the book of Highland Minstrelsy

On Ederachillis' shore

The grey wolf lies in wait

Woe to the broken door,

Woe to the loosened gate,

And the groping wretch whom sleety fogs

On the trackless moor belate.

The lean and hungry wolf,

*With his fangs so sharp and white,
His starveling body pinched
By the frost of a northern night,
And his pitiless eyes that scare the dark
With their green and threatening light.*

*He climeth the guarding dyke,
He leapeth the hurdle bars,
He steals the sheep from the pen,
And the fish from the boat-house spars,
And he digs the dead from out of the sod,
And gnaws them under the stars.*

*Thus, every grave we dug
The hungry wolf uptore,
And every morn the sod
Was strewn with bones and gore:
Our mother-earth had denied us rest
On Ederchailis' shore*

—*from The Book of Highland Minstrelsy, 1846*

Rightly or wrongly they were hunted to extinction from the highlands. The last known wolf, in Scotland, was killed in 1888. Plans to reintroduce the Scottish wolf have been talked about for many years but so far that is all we had, was talk. The Scottish Lynx was hunted to extinction almost 700 years ago. The Pine Marten almost became hunted out of existence, but numbers are now increasing. Pine Martens look like a large Polecat. They and the Scottish Wildcat are bringing a natural order back to the countryside of the Highlands. This is another of the reasons I love living in the Highlands. Then comes my favourite time of year, Spring when everything is reborn or becoming new. The young of most animals are being born and the plants are starting the cycle once again. It is a busy time for the farmers and crofters as the lambing season starts and the fields require lowing and planting to provide the next years winter feed. Some folks have asked me over the years. “Don’t you get bored living up there with nothing to do?” I have always found that there is so much more to do and so many more choices. Everything I eat is fresh and eaten during the correct season. Nature has a set up, that is balanced, all you must do is find that balance. Then set your life to align with it. So back to my house, the one I had originally grown up in. I say originally. My home had been rebuilt after a rogue agent, who worked for the UK’s SIS, destroyed it in a deliberate explosion, which Lachie and I were theoretically to have died in. So consequently, now we had all the mod cons in our newly

rebuilt home. By mod cons really I mean all the things that we never had in our old home, when we had previously rented it from his Lordship. Those were basic things like mains electricity, mains water and still we had our large gas tank, although now it was situated, not quite so close to the home. Although I had not been born here, I had grown up at Old Kinbrace with my parents. We were normal hard-working folks and my father had worked hard all his life. Even after the premature death of my mother to cancer, he had continued to work a smallholding. From the days I went to school at Kinbrace, then Helmsdale and finally Golspie. I had one true and lifelong friend, Lachlan Henderson or Lachie to his friends. From boyhood and then later in manhood we had played and worked together. I, like Lachie, had been in the Royal Air Force as lifers. We had hoped that we would end our official working lives, in the British Military. Lachie had chosen the RAF Regiment and would have probably gone on to transfer to the SAS, had things worked out the way they should have done. In our life before SIS decided to interfere. I was in the RAF Medical branch. Before it all kicked off, Lachie had been a Corporal and I had been a Sergeant. Then, there was an incident on the Brecon Beacons, one of those incidents that are never properly reported and always emphatically denied. We were both immediately promoted, so Lachie was a Sergeant and I got a Crown to go with my three stripes, making me a Flight Sergeant. Sounds great? You would think so, wouldn't you? Then you would be so wrong. We were posted to The Nuclear Biological and Chemical Research Centre at CDE Porton Down. The official line is, that CDE Porton Down are looking for a cure for the

common cold. It was at this point things took a big downward spiral. There was some nasty shit going on. We got Court Marshalled and kicked out of the RAF. We had done nothing to warrant this. It just suited SIS, for us to be disgraced and disgruntled ex-servicemen. Then things just went from bad to worse. We ended up working as Team Seven for SIS. The only problem was that Most of SIS did not get the memo. So, we were placed on a black list and whilst trying to save the world from a doomsday weapon that a rogue member of SIS had stolen from CDE Porton Down. Meanwhile the rest of SIS, CIA, MI5, MI6, MOSAD and a dozen other members of the alphabet soup, that makes up the worlds secret services. They were all trying to kill us as the Terrorists. Does that sound complex to you? It was, or should I say it still is. I know what you are thinking at the moment. Who the fuck are SIS. So to make things easier to understand from the get go. SIS are the Secret Intelligence Service of the UK. SIS had promised that we would get our lives back, if we saved the world. We did, and then they sort of kept their promise. So, after a six month break to rebuild our homes and our lives, it looked like SIS had once again called us back in. I had left the main gate up to the house open, as my father was going to be taking his tractor over to Borrobol farm, with some wood for the gamekeeper, who lived about four miles from us. As such the postman came to the door with the post, rather than leave it in the wooden box at the gate. I knew the moment the letter came through the letterbox. I had gone to the door as soon as I saw the postman coming up the path, but the postman was faster than me, and the letter slipped through the slot in the door and glided to the

floor. It landed face down on the mat. Just a plain white envelope which had my name and address typed on the front and a rubber stamp on the back. I had spent six months enjoying a simple and pleasurable life. Jane, who I had met in the initial SIS caper, was now my significant other. She had moved in with me in the home that I currently shared with my father. This was the home, which we three shared with Kyla, my Japanese Akita and my father's new companion, Raven II. Raven II was a replacement for my father's Great Dane, Raven, that had been killed, whilst trying to save my life. Jane had bought Raven II, as a gift for my father. He was another jet black Great Dane. Now my father and his gangly companion were inseparable. So in reality, there were five of us that shared our new home. Three with two legs and two with four legs. All of team seven had kept in regular contact with each other. We had formed a bond that I thought would never be broken. Hans had gone back to Iceland and was now the acting Security Commissioner for the IDF (Iceland Defence Force). To give him his full military title he was now Colonel in Chief of the IDF. Abdalla had gone back home to Kenya. He left the Army and was now working on a wildlife preservation project around his homeland village. He had built a small Village Medical Practice and even paid for the Doctor and Nurse out of his own pocket. He now lived back in his father's home, on the edge of the Malka Mari National park. Abdalla had paid for these projects himself, using part of his payment of £1,000,000 awarded to him by SIS for his part in saving the world. This should more accurately have been described as hush money rather than a payment. Lachie still lived just a

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