

# Bourne toWrite...

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## The Healer

by Mary Brannigan

Doctor Neil Jenkins had returned to work after his annual holiday in the Lake District. On his desk was a referral from a local GP asking him to see a young boy aged thirteen. Jenkins was an up and coming psychiatrist who specialised in treated adolescents. He was gaining something of a reputation for success in the most difficult cases.

It seems that young Ajax Aquinas was facing time in a young offenders institute if he failed to attend for counselling. His father had died a year before. Until then the boy had been a happy and well behaved child. The shock of the sudden death had sent him off the rails and he had taken to persistent thieving from local shops. He had been given several chances to mend his ways before the police decided they must take action. It was only his mother's pleading that had led to the choice of counselling as an alternative to taking him into custody.

Thus it was that on this Monday morning he sat in front of Dr Jenkins, who had greeted him with a handshake and introduced himself as Neil. His actions were rather different to his colleagues who kept themselves rather aloof from their patients. Jenkins' approach was a conversational method used to gain the trust of his young clients.

This morning he had tried his usual relaxed approach to engage with the youngster. Try as he might to elicit a response, the boy sat mute. This continued for some weeks till one day Neil asked if the boy liked cricket. To his surprise the ploy worked as Ajax shook his head enthusiastically.

They were on their way. A door had been opened through which to reach the bereaved child. After this the young doctor was able to show the lad that there was another man who cared about him. After many tearful sessions the floodgates opened and the grief was released in a safe environment. Young Ajax never offended again and grew up a useful member of society.

Neil Jenkins went on to save many others who had previously failed to respond to counselling. His fame spread till one day he was asked to see a young girl who had mysteriously lost the use of her legs. Andromeda Musselwhite had woken one morning unable to get out of bed. She was sixteen years old and had till then been in perfect health. On the morning in question her mother had twice called her to breakfast, before going to her bedroom to rouse her. The girl said she couldn't make her legs work. As she looked at her mother in fear, Mrs Musselwhite lifted each leg which merely flopped back down on the bed. The family doctor was called but professed himself at a loss as to the cause.

Various tests at the local hospital also failed to find a reason for the paralysis. Scans of the girl's brain and spinal cord showed no abnormalities. Finally one of the consultants suggested there might be a psychological reason for the problem. The parents were advised to seek such help. Their GP had heard of doctor Jenkins' experience in such cases and referred Andromeda to him. As he read the notes to the case he wondered at her strange name. It seems the father was a scientist and the mother a keen student of Greek mythology.

When he met them he noted that they were quite unemotional and wondered about the family dynamic. In due course he went to visit Andromeda as she lay bedbound. He asked to speak to her alone. After chatting to her for while, Neil suddenly leaned towards her and said "you can't walk because...". The rest of this sentence is confined to the psychiatrist's notes, but the result was that Andromeda got up and walked that night.

Another result for this brilliant man. Not quite. Three days later the young girl was dead by her own hand. Doctor Jenkins learned the biggest lesson of his professional life. He never again used shock tactics in his work.