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Justin Thyme

Written by

Panama Oxridge

Published by

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Justin Thyme

Justin Thyme – The Tartan of Thyme – Part One
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Visit www.justinthyme.info

The TARTAN of THYME
Part One

Justin Thyme



by
Panama Oxridge

INSIDE POCKET

CAST of CHARACTERS

The Thymes

Justin Thyme – 13 year-old inventor and billionaire
Robyn – his older sister
Albion – their baby brother
Sir Willoughby – their father, Laird of Thyme
Lady Henny – their mother, a celebrity explorer
Lyall Austin Thyme – their long-lost grandfather

The Staff

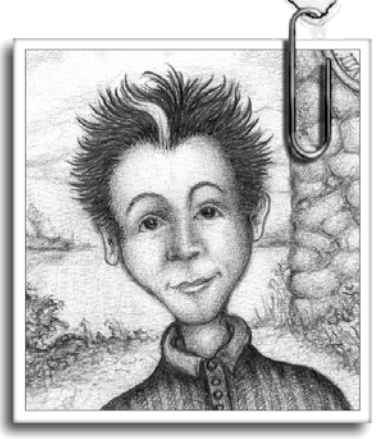
Verity Kiss – the nanny
Professor Gilbert – Justin's private tutor
Mrs Kof – the cook
Angus Gilliechattan – the gardener
Morag Gilliechattan – the housekeeper
Peregrine Knightly – the butler

Outsiders

Jock – a postman
Hank and Polly – Lady Henny's film crew
Sergeant Awbrite and PC Knox – local police

Pets

Eliza – a computer-literate gorilla
Burbage – Mr Gilliechattan's parrot
Tybalt – Mrs Gilliechattan's cat
Fergus – Jock's Scottie dog



O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle hour;

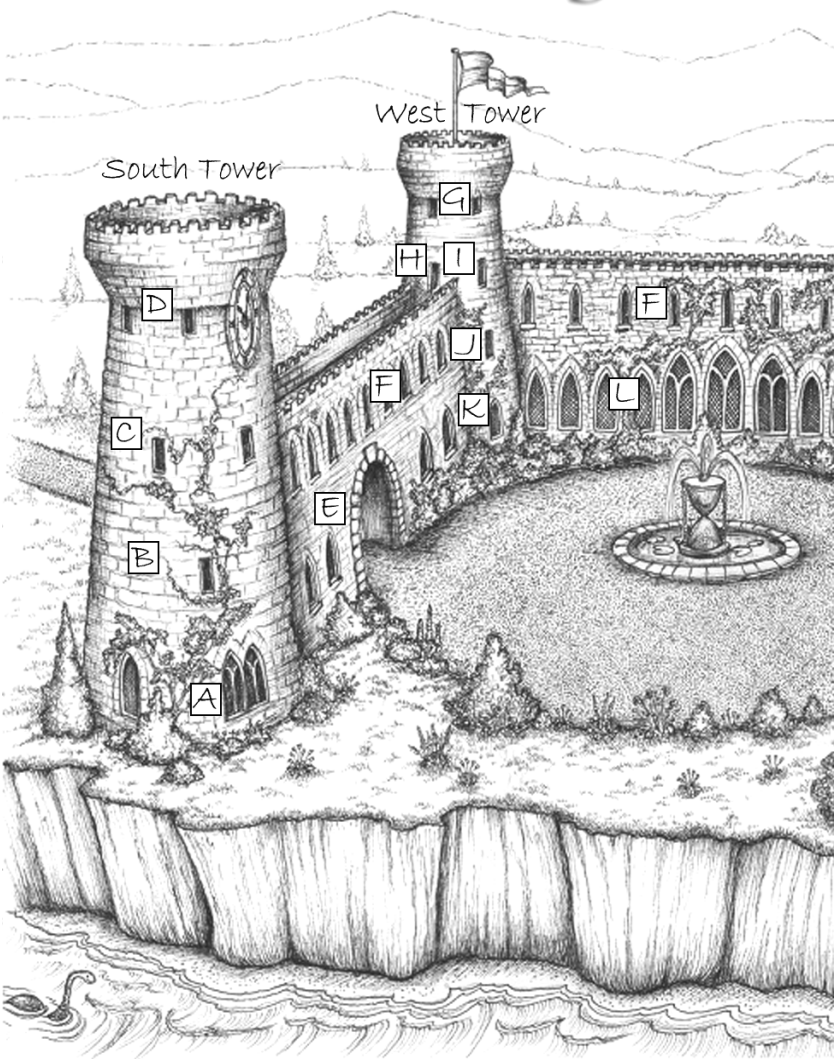
William Shakespeare



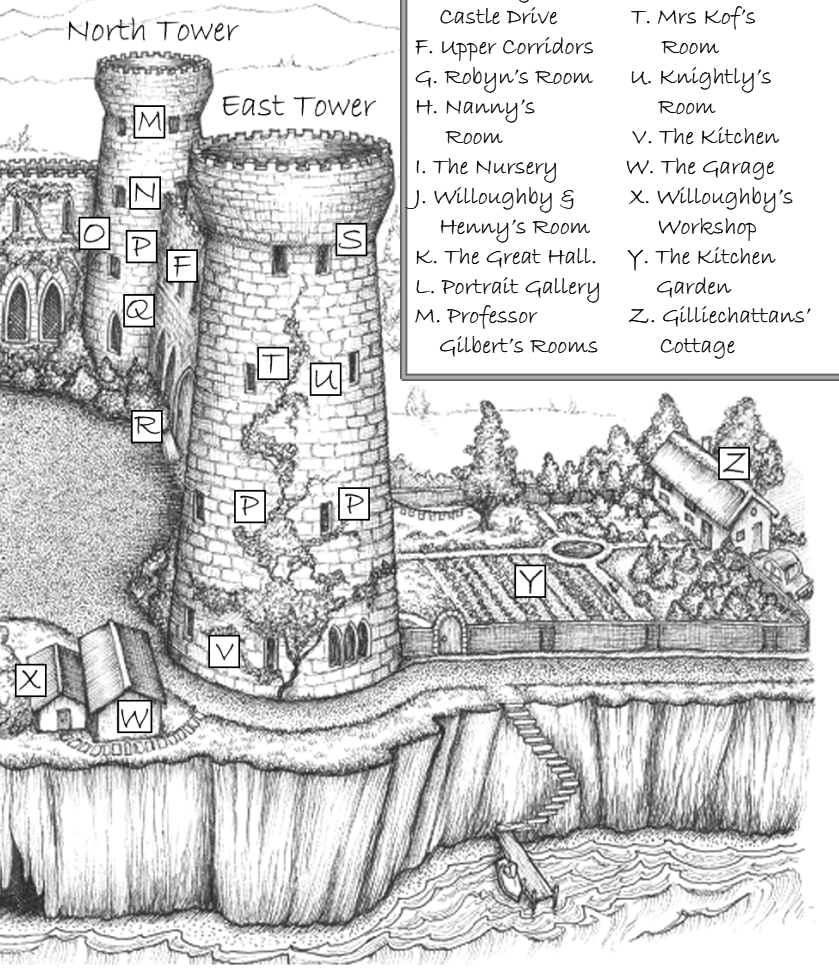
A paradox? A paradox!
A most ingenious paradox!
We've quips and quibbles heard in flocks,
But none to beat this paradox!

W S Gilbert

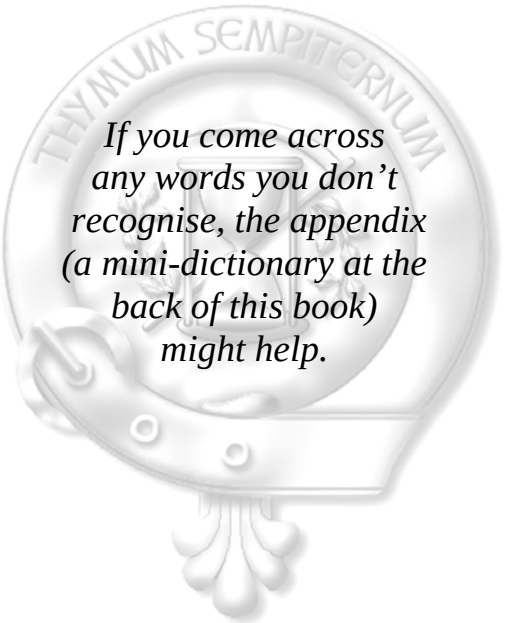
thyme



CASTLE



A. The Library
B. Justin's Sitting Room
C. Justin's Bedroom.
D. Justin's Lab
E. Archway & Castle Drive
F. Upper Corridors
G. Robyn's Room
H. Nanny's Room
I. The Nursery
J. Willoughby & Henny's Room
K. The Great Hall.
L. Portrait Gallery
M. Professor Gilbert's Rooms
N. Schoolroom
O. Grandpa's Room
P. Guest Rooms
Q. Dining Room
R. Front Door
S. Eliza's Room
T. Mrs Kof's Room
U. Knightly's Room
V. The Kitchen
W. The Garage
X. Willoughby's Workshop
Y. The Kitchen Garden
Z. Gilliechattans' Cottage



If you come across any words you don't recognise, the appendix (a mini-dictionary at the back of this book) might help.

– CHAPTER ONE –

Once Upon a Thyme



Justin Thyme chose not to celebrate his birthday. No cards, no gifts, no fuss. So when he awoke that morning and found a small, neatly wrapped package on his bedside table, he couldn't decide whether he felt excited or annoyed ... or both.

With a deep sigh, he wandered off to the bathroom, leaving the parcel untouched. After all, he *knew* what it was; the ticking was a dead giveaway. It was either a bomb or yet another wristwatch ... and since his parents had started grumbling about his lack of punctuality – *again* – it was hardly a case for Scotland Yard.

'I can't help it,' he told the pale, spiky-haired boy in the bathroom mirror. 'When I'm busy I just sort of ... lose track of the time.'

Justin told his parents the same thing a dozen times a day, explaining how, when inspiration struck, he became oblivious to everything: lessons, meals, bedtime – even the deafening chimes of the old tower clock. Time seemed to move at a different rate; Einstein had proved that. But, being parents, they refused to accept Relativity Theory as a valid excuse.

'They just don't get it,' Justin grumbled to the mirror. 'And now ... *another* watch!'

The reflection shook its head sympathetically, then grinned as Justin remembered the fate of all the previous wristwatches. He could never resist prising them open and tinkering inside. Within weeks, each had been dismantled, their cogs and wheels used in

one of the strange contraptions whirring and puttering away in his lab.

Justin dressed mechanically, his eyes fixed on the parcel. There would be no debate this year, he decided. He was thirteen now; old enough to be treated like an adult. He would return it unopened, politely pointing out that he'd stopped celebrating his birthday four years ago.

A deep, resonant chiming rang out from the top of the south tower, reminding him that breakfast had already started.

'Bother!' he gasped, stuffing the package into his pocket. Seconds later he was hurrying along the castle corridors, hoping, for once, to avoid the annual joke about how he'd been born *just in time* but had been late for everything ever since. He pushed the dining room door open and stepped inside.

Robyn, his older sister, stood at the sideboard, helping herself to cereal. Their parents were sitting at the far end of an impossibly long rosewood dining table. Justin gazed at them, astonished as ever that an American TV celebrity and an absentminded Scottish Laird were so perfectly matched. They seemed such an unlikely couple. Lady Henny had returned from her last expedition a week ago, yet still wore a khaki shirt and jungle fatigues. It suited her, complementing her tanned skin and short, sun-bleached hair. Sir Willoughby, on the other hand, looked every inch the country gent in his old green jacket, faded and crumpled, its worn elbows patched with leather. Neither had noticed Justin enter. Sir Willoughby had his nose buried in a newspaper, while Henny gazed out of a window, a faraway look in her eyes.

Once Robyn returned to the table, Justin reached for the parcel and took a deep breath. But before he could utter a word, the door swung open behind him and a middle-aged woman in a crisp nanny's uniform bustled in. She had rosy cheeks, and dark hair pinned beneath a starched cap. In the crook of one arm she carried a baby and, as she swept past Justin, the aroma of freshly ironed nappies and talcum-powder wafted in her wake.

'Good morning Sir Willoughby, Lady Henny,' she called, bobbing as she spoke. 'Come and sit down, Justin. Och, don't *slouch*, Robyn; we don't want to be a hunchback now, do we?'

Nanny Verity Kiss beamed at everyone, her eyes twinkling like rain-washed blackberries. She settled the baby in his highchair and fetched him a bowl of porridge and a spoon.

'Did Albion have a good night's sleep, Nanny?' enquired Lady Henny.

'Bone-dry all night, your Ladyship,' Nanny Verity replied, with her sunniest smile. 'Then a tiddly-widdly the size of Loch Ness two ticks before upsy-daisy time.'

Sir Willoughby guffawed, inhaled a toast crumb and coughed until his eyes bubbled.

'Never you mind, I told him,' Nanny continued, tickling Albion's feet. 'You're just thirteen months old. Even the family genius wet the bed at that age.'

Robyn exploded with laughter. 'I think he must've wet it again this morning; he isn't usually down this early.'

Justin blushed a fiery red. 'For your information, I thought I heard someone in my room. When I woke up I found *this*!' He tossed the package onto the table and looked at each of his family in turn. 'I thought we'd agreed to put a stop to all this gift nonsense.'

'What gift?' asked Sir Willoughby, peering round his newspaper.

'Duh ... the *WATCH!* Honestly Dad, you couldn't act your way out of a paper bag; you might at least *try* to be convincing.'

Sir Willoughby looked at his wife, eyebrows raised quizzically. Lady Henny shook her head – and from her puzzled frown, Justin felt sure she was genuinely mystified.

'Do *you* know anything about this, Robyn?' she asked.

'*Fffhuhhh*! You've *got* to be joking. The last Rolex you gave him ended up as part of that miniature robot-thingy Dad stood on.'

'Microbot,' Justin mumbled. 'And I ...'

Robyn picked up the parcel and shook it vigorously; Justin winced, then immediately tried to look as if he couldn't care less.

'Aren't you going to open it, Poppet?' asked Nanny Verity.

'No Nanny. I've told you a hundred times; I want the 1st of May to be like any other day.'

A moment of awkward silence followed while the adults

exchanged baffled glances – then Lady Henny spoke brightly:

'Why, if you hadn't inherited your dad's brains, I'd swear I'd brought the wrong baby home from hospital. You Brits! I guess I'll never understand your eccentricity.'

'Scots,' muttered Sir Willoughby, looking faintly irritated.

Lady Henny shrugged. 'Scots, Brits, whatever. You're a Thyme; that's what matters,' she said, ruffling Justin's hair. She took hold of a narrow silvery tuft and gave it a playful tweak. 'Here's the proof. And you *know* how much your sister envies it.'

Robyn snorted like a carthorse. 'As *if!* That Goth look is *so* five minutes ago.'

'Five minutes?' gasped Sir Willoughby. 'Five centuries more like! The Thyme streak's been a distinguishing feature of every male Thyme since ... since ...'

'... Thymes began?' concluded Robyn. She paused, pretending to stifle a yawn with her fingertips. 'I *know* Dad. I walk through the portrait gallery a dozen times a day and there's not a single Laird without it. But why not us girls?'

'Genetics, of course,' said Justin, spying an opportunity to steer the conversation away from his birthday. 'Y-linked inheritance. Females – well, female mammals that is – have two X chromosomes, whereas the gene for this particular form of poliosis is always carried on ...'

The sound of tearing paper interrupted him, and everyone turned to stare at Robyn, calmly unwrapping her brother's present.

'HEY!' yelled Justin. 'Who said *you* could open it?'

'Somebody had to shut you up before one of us died of boredom. Anyway, I thought you didn't want it.'

'I don't.' Justin poured himself a cup of tea, feigning complete disinterest as his sister opened a small velvet-covered case ... but her gasp of admiration made it impossible.

'WOW! This *rocks*! It's even got your name on it.'

Justin gave the watch a desultory glance. 'It's written upside-down.'

'No it isn't.'

'Yes it is; I can read it from here ... unless ...' He reached across the table and turned the case around. 'Cooool! It's an ambigram.