

## **Last but not Least**

### *Presence is Present*

Over the phone, Jack's mother told him, "Mr. Belser died last night. The funeral is Wednesday."

Memories of his childhood days flashed through his mind like an old newsreel. In the rush of his busy life, Jack had little time to think about the past. He was busy working on his future, and nothing could stop him. Scarcely had he time to spend even with his wife and son.

"Jack, did you hear me?"

"Oh, sorry, Mom. Yes, I heard you. It's been so long since I thought of him. I'm sorry, but I thought he died years ago," Jack said.

"Well, he didn't forget you. Every time I saw him he'd ask how you were doing. He'd recall days you spent with him," Mom told him.

"Yes, I loved that old house he lived in," Jack said.

"You know, Jack, after your father died, Mr. Belser stepped in to make sure you had a man's influence in your life," she said.

"He's the one who taught me carpentry," Jack said.

"I wouldn't be in this business if it weren't for him. He spent a lot of time teaching me things he thought were important... Mom, I'll be there for the funeral," Jack said.

Jack caught the next flight to his hometown.

Mr. Belser's funeral was small and uneventful. He had no children of his own, and most of his relatives had passed away.

After the funeral Jack and his Mom walked to the old house next door one more time.

The house was exactly as he remembered. Every step held memories. Every picture, every piece of furniture....Jack stopped suddenly.

"What's wrong, Jack?" his Mom asked.

"The box is gone," he said. "What box?" Mom asked.

"There was a small gold box that he kept locked on top of his desk. I must have asked him a thousand times what was inside. 'The thing I value most' was his constant reply," Jack said.

It is gone. "Now I'll never know what was so valuable to him," Jack said. He figured someone from the Belser family had taken it.

It had been about two weeks since Mr. Belser died. Returning home from work one day Jack discovered a note in his mailbox.

"Signature required on a package. Please stop by the main post office within the next three days," the note read.

Early the next day Jack retrieved the package. The small box was old and looked like it had been mailed a hundred years ago.

The handwriting was difficult to read, but the return address caught his attention." Mr. Harold Belser" it read.

Jack took the box out to his car and ripped open the package.

There inside was the gold box and an envelope. Jack's hands shook as he read the note inside.

"Upon my death, please forward this box and its contents to Jack Bennett. It's the thing I valued most in my life."

A small key was taped to the letter. His heart racing, as tears filling his eyes, Jack carefully unlocked the box.

There inside he found a beautiful gold pocket watch.

With shivering hands he unlatched the cover. Inside he found these words engraved:

“Jack, Thanks for your time! Harold Belser.”

“The thing he valued most... was... the time I spent with him, my presence!!!”

Jack held the watch for a few minutes, then called his office and cleared his appointments for the next two days.

“Why?” Janet, his assistant asked.

“I need some time to spend with my wife and my son,” he said.

“Oh, by the way, Janet... thanks for your time!”