

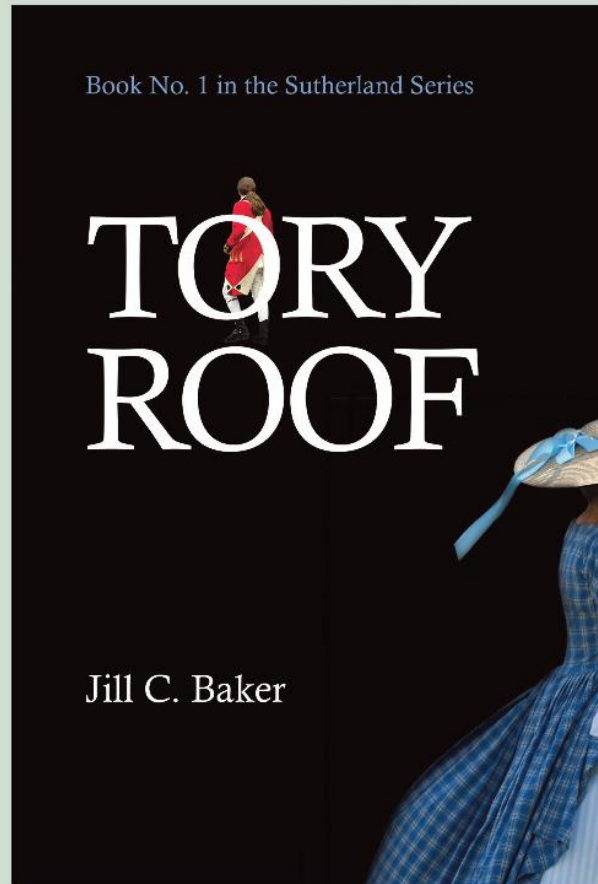
Visual Excerpts: TORY ROOF

Book No. 1 of the Sutherland Series

By Jill C. Baker

*“Time is but the stream
I go a-fishing in.”*

-- Henry David Thoreau



Sarah Sutherland didn't go looking for the adventure that consumed her.

She was an average woman,
a real estate agent, a busy Mom.

The Randolphs were a middle-aged couple looking to live in a vintage home. They were moving north and had heard of the Covington estate. Sarah wasn't exactly sure what they did for a living, but she knew they were affiliated with a college.

She was encouraged in thinking their intellectual capacity would make them ideal buyers for a house steeped in history.



The property boasted a large barn, shed and smokehouse...
a root cellar, stone walls, and gnarled apple orchard...
all earmarks of a quaint New England past.

As Sarah turned down the winding road to Baker's Cove,
she noticed that autumn was taking hold, and with it,
a glorious blaze of color. Massive oaks were laden with
crowns of yellow. Maples shuddered in shades of rust.



Sarah looked around the eave and saw a bright lantern hanging from the rafters. Reaching to turn it off, she heard a whisper. “Wait,” the voice said.

She spun around, heart racing. Again, no one was there. Frozen in place, daring not to move, she became aware of the smell of lavender and lemon.

The Tory Roof
seemed to be
a portal
into his world.





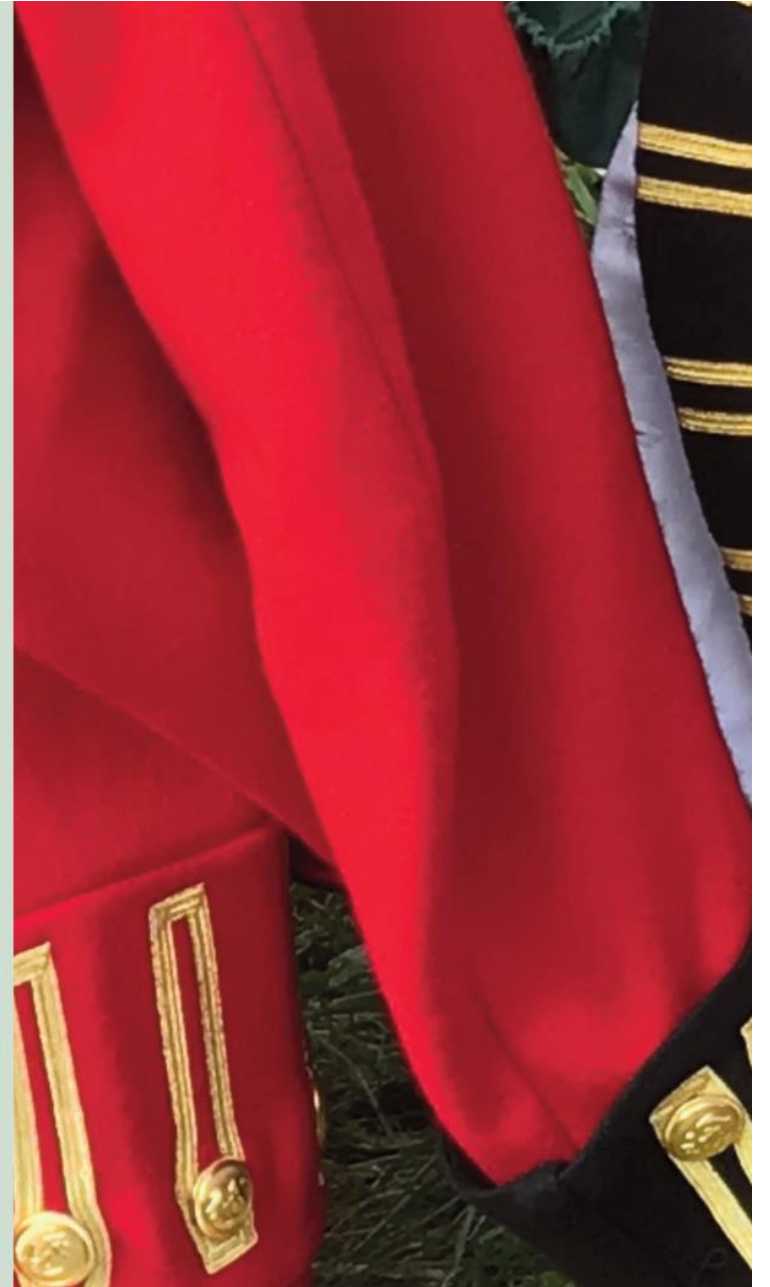
Sarah took a deep breath.
“I don’t know how to say this,
and I can’t believe I am,
but he was very real,
only set back in time.
I wasn’t afraid of him.
Just the opposite.
I was drawn to him.”



She looked up into his eyes—piercing blue eyes—trying to size them up, delve into them. They held her fast, dismantling her modern liberation, dissolving her professional reserve, relegating her present-day husband and family to another age. She stood there, vulnerable and unguarded, a woman with a fiery heart, who lived centuries ago.

Drifting. Drowsy. The scent of lavender and lemon was upon her.

She could hear the accelerated breathing of a man...a man who was enveloping her, pleasing her, forcing nothing but tracing her curves as if mapping a familiar road.





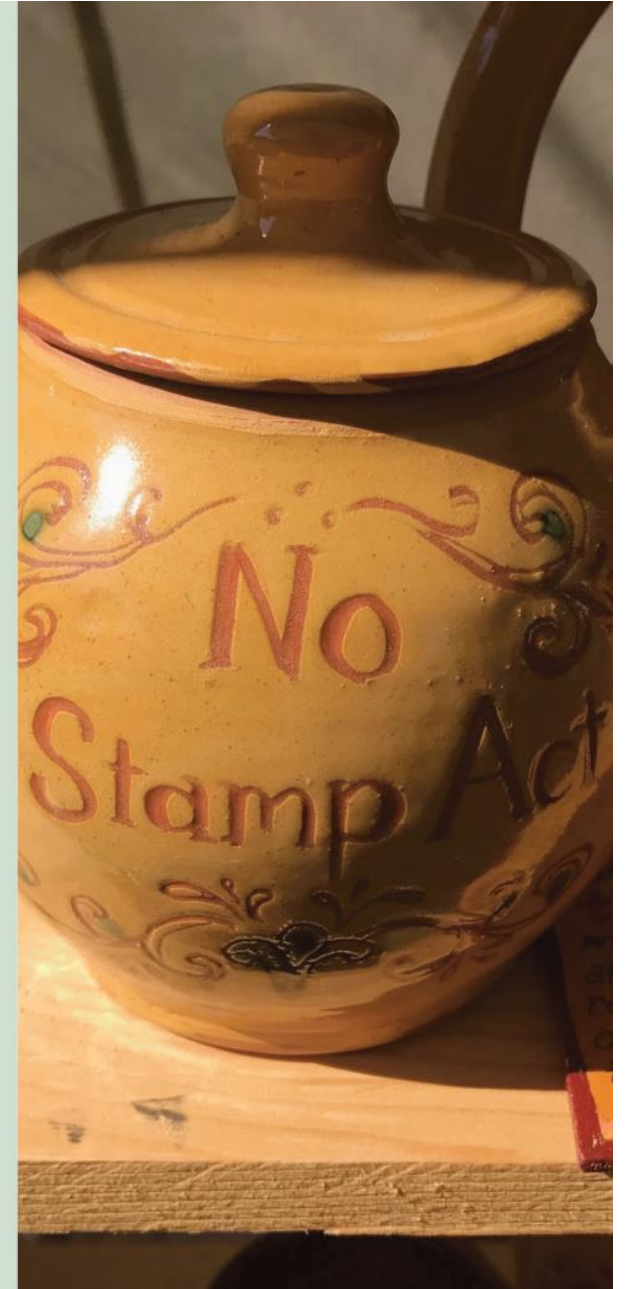
Next to Terrence's grave was a pure white stone etched with the profile of a woman.

Abby's attention shifted to the carved marker. "This one's pretty. The lady looks like you when you wear your hair up," she observed.

Long after darkness fell and only when the last guest was gone, did Terrence lift Sarah into his arms and carry her across the threshold to their room.

There was no need to rush this time. They stood in front of a blazing fire, enveloped in the flickering light.

“In just a few minutes, Lord Bennington is coming to call. He expects me to rally with him tomorrow night on the town green to show my loyalty to the Crown. I have always taken his side and he knows the Covingtons to be staunch Royalists,” Terrence explained.



She picked up
the broadsheet
and saw the headline.
“Suspected traitors
captured by British...”

Terrence Covington was
now being held in custody.



Sarah waited for total darkness to descend... Using her tinderbox to light one of the candles in her basket, she walked through the woods...

She fell in line with a group of revelers en route to the tavern...hoped to go unnoticed, but a rakish fellow with a small, portable violin tucked under his chin—a *pochette* as it was called—pranced around her playing a version of *Highland Laddie*.



Strong and comforting arms
extended a welcome as blankets
were offered for warmth. Soon
the ripe smell of strawberry leaves
and chamomile filled the air.

Four cups of Liberty Tea were
raised high in a toast of solidarity.

“Help her! Help her!” she screamed, waking herself up. Sarah was ...trying to catch her breath, hand on chest to quiet her thumping heart. “I have to get back to the house....

“Not now. Not at night,” Carter insisted.

“Day. Night. What’s the difference? It’s all the same. Real. Not real. What do I know?” Sarah sputtered...

THINGS GET TENSE IN MODERN TIME:

“That’s not fair, Carter,” Sarah accused. ...

“I didn’t tell you to start messing around with a ghost,” Carter jabbed. “I can’t compete with someone who’s not there!”

“Well, maybe that’s the precise way to look at it,” Sarah retorted. “If this is in my head or in some other dimension, then no one *is* there. This would be my own private fantasy, wouldn’t it? No harm. No foul.”

Sarah's eyes went to the directory on the wall.

"Barrows," the woman said, extending her free hand ...

"Dr. Sam Barrows."

Dr. Barrows was a psychiatrist with a long line of credentials after her name.

"Would you believe it?" Sarah joked to herself as she headed for the car. "Here I'm convinced I'm crazy, and I collide with someone who can tell me if I am."



Thoughts of Terrence coalesced in her mind as she struggled to sleep. They re-emerged with the frost in the morning.

Quiet times were the toughest. She'd stare out the kitchen window imagining him working in the woods behind the house, sleeves rolled up, veins popping, thigh muscles straining to move a boulder.

She could almost see him ...pushing back his blond hair that had escaped the tie.

Other than the creaking of a saw-whet owl and the sound of the river gurgling over the rocks, the night was still, and Terrence fell asleep. A snuffling at his feet woke him ... The sky was turning gray and the moon was almost gone. ...

Within minutes, there was a blast of musket fire downstream and then the subsequent volleys. He felt his adrenalin kick in as his hands locked around his long rifle.







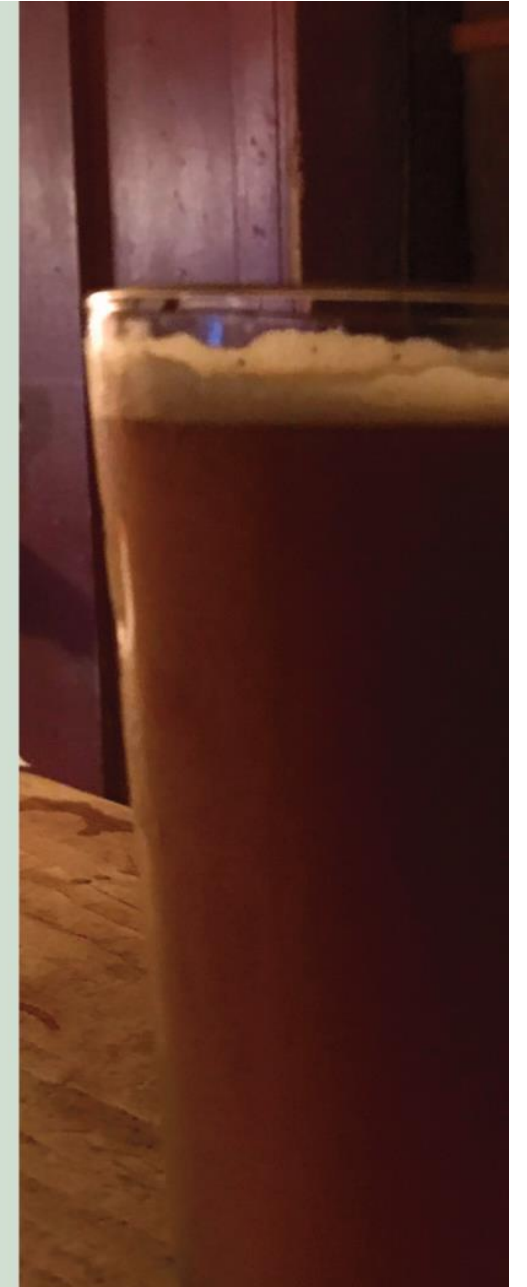
She sat down on the straight-backed chair and fetched a freshly cut quill.

She carefully pulled a single sheet of paper from the Rittenhouse box, prized Colonial stock couriered up from Pennsylvania....

She dipped the quill into a well of brown ink and wrote in a flourishing hand:

They headed toward the Green Dragon Tavern. As they approached the building, Sarah could see the copper beast hanging above the doorway, its metal scales corroded green from the briny ocean air. She immediately knew where the establishment had gotten its name.

Sarah was dressed in barmaid's attire, thanks to some creative assembling by Mehitable.





The woman stared back at Sarah and mouthed two words. Sarah strained to hear but couldn't. The woman's lips formed the words again. "Help me. Help me." It was then that Sarah realized the woman wasn't speaking out loud.



Dr. Barrows elaborated.
“People are extraordinarily
capable of being receptive
to each other, to animals,
and to the forces of nature —
but we tend to ignore it,
suppress it. We become afraid.
We don’t practice these skills,
so we lose them.”

PRESENT DAY DECEPTION

Although it was summer, the house was cool and damp. Sarah felt a suffocating stillness she had not previously noticed. The drapes hung like shrouds, and oblique shadows cut across the sitting room... The pendulum of the grandfather's clock swung steadily—a ponderous heartbeat.

The threesome sat stock-still ...

The only noise they could hear was ambient room tone coming across the amp with a whoosh-whoosh reminiscent of an ultrasound. Carter's eyes darted from floor to ceiling as he contemplated ways to escape.

On the third day at the lake, Sarah was standing on the dock when Carter returned from the raft with a weathered shard of pottery he had found in the silt. It appeared to be the lip of a cream colored bowl decorated with a pink transfer pattern. As soon as she picked it up, Sarah felt a jolt shoot up her arm. She dropped the ceramic piece into Carter's hand as if it were on fire.

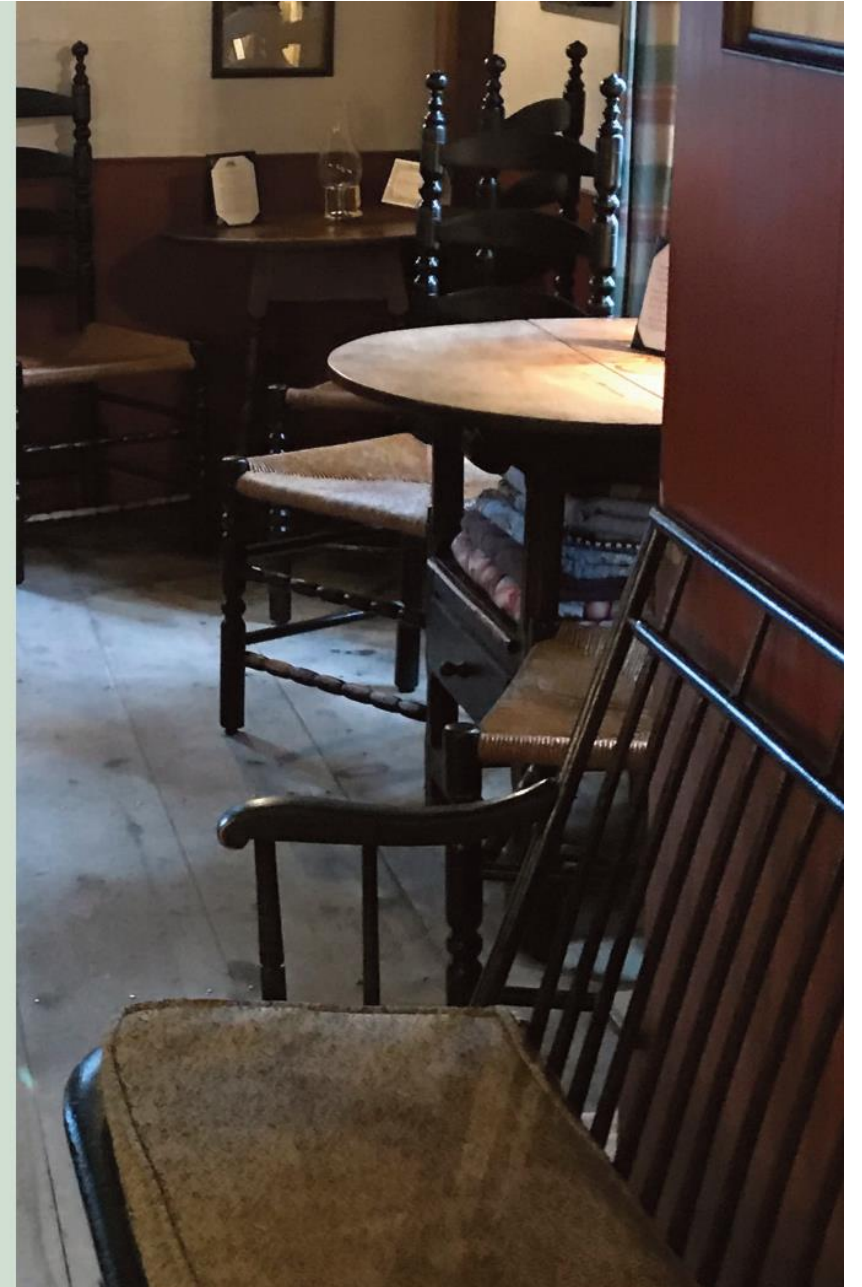


There was one more thing she did before she left
and that was to find Martha Quiggley, the midwife.

Sarah and Martha sat quietly on the Quiggley porch,
sipping cool mint tea, discussing the birthing experience....

She had special requests to convey to Martha,
and Martha assured that she would honor them.

Terrence awoke
in a place he didn't know,
tended by a wife
who wasn't his.



In that split second,
two SWAT officers armed with
SIG Sauers barged in the front door.

“Thank you,” Carter said as he gathered the children close. Sarah slipped her hand into his. Together they watched the vehicles disappear into the darkness, leaving behind a peaceful summer’s night and a profound appreciation for what they had almost lost.

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“I love you,” Terrence said...

“And I love you, too”...

White noise buzzed in her ears.

Her surroundings fell away.

TORY ROOF is...the house nestled in
the honey-colored fields at Baker's Cove.

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Print ISBN 978-1-949283-00-6 eBook ISBN 978-1-949283-01-3

“Historical fiction meets Dr. Who.” -- S.M.

“Fun. Unpredictable. A roller coaster.” -- N.G.

“TORY ROOF is so frickin’ good.” -- S.H.

“Not what you’d expect. It’s so much more!” -- M.O.

“Didn’t want to stop reading it.” -- M.S.C.