

DUDLEY HOOD

# FLASHBACKS & FILM SCRIPTS

FEATURING  
HIGHWATER  
HIGHWAY



## HIGHWATER HIGHWAY

One of Faith's early memories was laughing with her parents. The petite seven-year-old was full of energy and curiosity. Blessed with loving parents and having shoulder-length auburn hair, she resembled her mother, Emma. Her father James was tall and strong but possessed a gentle nature. The family was enjoying a picnic lunch, but Faith found herself attracted by what *might* lie beyond the grassy field. Jumping up from the picnic rug, she ran towards the forest. 'Now, don't wander off too far, do you hear?' Emma called out to her as she disappeared from sight into the nearby stand of surrounding trees.

Sunlight pierced the enveloping green revealing a shallow stream, its mossy banks erupting in yellow wildflowers. Balancing on the bank's edge, the little girl picked a yellow flower when her mother appeared. 'How many times have I told you not to wander off without me?' her mother scolded.

‘But I found your favourite flower,’ she responded, handing it to her mother.

A line of vehicles turned off the highway to enter the Rosehill Gardens Racecourse. James was behind the wheel of a bright red, 1955 Thunderbird, open-top convertible. Faith sat between her parents. Looking up she observed the ornate arched entrance, and beyond a bank of cumulus white clouds filling the sky. Turning into the parking area, a field of horses were being led from the stables into the marshalling yard.

With the atmosphere of excitement building, wearing their colourful silks, the jockeys walked their charges around the parade ring preparing for their first race of the day.

Alighting from the Thunderbird, Emma removed a sheath of yellow flowers from the back seat. Taking hold of her daughter’s hand she led her to

the race committee room to watch her mother prepare the winner's flower garland.

James made his way to the parade area to inspect his preferred charge. He had placed all his money on Grand Hope, a long-odds outsider. Wishing the jockey good luck, James then made his way through an excited throng of race goers to join his family in the stand. Training his binoculars on the horses, they were led from the parade ring into the starting gates. Hearing the starters signal the gates flew open. Jumping from the barrier the field galloped toward the first turn. Watching on James raised his glasses following the field jostling for position along the straight. Racing into the last turn he spotted the jockey's green and gold silks of the leading horse gathering pace. Jumping up from their seats urging on Grand Hope, it streaked over the finishing line in first place by a nose. James jumped to his feet, wildly waving the winning ticket; Emma looking on in disbelief.

Inside the committee room, Emma felt privileged to assist the Lord Mayor in presenting the garland of flowers to the winning jockey. Collecting his winnings, James stuffed wads of cash into his bag, unaware he was being watched. James and Emma had joined the owner and the jockey to celebrate their win in the restaurant. as the waiter popped a Champaign cork when she suddenly realized that her daughter was missing. 'Where's Faith?' she asked looking around the restaurant. 'I thought she was with you?' James replied concerned, equally alarmed.

Scanning the crowded room, they jostled their way to the bar to find the restaurant manager. Proceeding to make an announcement regarding Faith's disappearance over the PA system, his voice was lost in the hub-hub of the crowd.

Unawares, Faith was happily wandering through the Rose Garden when a stranger appeared, blocking her path. Looking up at him, he extended his hand towards her.

Searching the premises in vain they left the restaurant and looked outside.

‘Perhaps she went back to the car,’ Emma surmised as they searched the marshalling yard. Hurriedly they made their way to the car park.

‘She’s *not* in the car,’ Emma cried.

Joining her, James was reassuring his wife when two men approached. Pulling out a gun from his jacket, one confronted James and stuck the gun into his side and grabbed his bag of money while the other pushed Emma into the back seat of the Thunderbird, pressing a chloroformed soaked cloth over her face. Forcing James into the boot of the black Daimler they drove off followed closely by Emma’s assailant carjacking the Thunderbird. Speeding from the racecourse the two cars turned onto the highway and disappeared over the hill.

Interrupting the still of a fading sunset the Thunderbird followed the Daimler driving north along the highway and finally slowing, turned off

into a deserted gravel track. Coming to an abrupt halt dark angry storm clouds brewed overhead. Semiconscious Emma lay bound by her hands behind her back inside the Thunderbird when a flash of lightning illuminated two figures removing James from the Daimler's boot. Resisting, the men forced a groggy James into the bush. Attempting to escape they tackled James to the ground and fighting back he was finally overcome by the two assailants and repeatedly stabbing him, they left him for dead. In view of Emma terrified she helplessly watched on to the ominous sound of thunder releasing the storm in a deluge of rain as they drove off leaving their diabolical crime scene behind.

Fourteen years later in the autumn of 2021, a flurry of autumn leaves swept down the street in front of the Surry Hills apartment building. Jenny sat in the lounge room watching the news on television. An on-screen reporter stood on a dock beside a new police marine vessel.

‘The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has just announced the addition of three new Sea Class patrol vessels fitted with the latest technology for search and rescue and to detect criminal activity,’ the reporter said.

Phaedon was in her bedroom packing her clothes when her stepmother entered. Kim sat on the bed and handed her a small jewelry-sized leather case.

‘I want you to take this with you and give it to Noel,’ Kim said. Phaedon opened the case revealing its contents. ‘It’s his Afghan war service medals. Perhaps you’ll have time to see him. The veteran’s clinic is close to Armidale,’ Kim told her. ‘Since I simply have to travel so much there’s days it’s been a struggle for me to visit him lately. Noel’s a resident in the Hartford Hall rehab clinic.’

‘Sure,’ Phaedon responded as she examined the medals. ‘So, you’re off again?’

‘Yes, I’m afraid so. I fly out on Tuesday for a conference in New Zealand. But now my girl,



with your job you'll be nearer to Noel, and you can explain to him why I haven't been able to visit.'

Turning off the television, Jenny made her way into the bedroom to join them and gave Phaeton a book. 'Look! I put together a photo album for dad, to remind him of happy memories,' Jenny smiled. 'I'll sure miss you, sis.' Giving each other a warm hug, Phaeton resumed her packing.

Jason was in a deep sleep, dreaming of driving a classic Chevy Pickup. His reverie was broken by Shirley shaking him awake revealing the early morning sun streamed through the bedroom window of his home in the Southern Highlands.

'Jason... come on, it's time to get up,' his mother said waking him. Dragging himself out of bed, Jason pulled on his clothes. Still half-asleep thinking about the Chevy, he joined his mother in the lounge room. She'd turned on the television to see a story on the upcoming Sydney

Motor Show. She ran her fingers through Jason's sandy hair, proud of her only son.

'This year we expect the entry of some fine classics,' commented the reporter.

Jason didn't respond. Instead, he sat down at his laptop and googled up vintage pickup trucks for sale.

'What are you up to now? Come on Jason, breakfast is ready,' she called from the kitchen.

'I'm looking for classic Chevy pickups but there's none for sale,' he said dejectedly. Shutting down his laptop he made his way to the kitchen.

'Huh. I suppose not. They're as rare as hen's teeth. That truck was very special to your father. I'm sure he loved that darn pickup more than he loved me!' she laughed, placing her arm affectionately over his shoulder.

'And what happened to it?' Jason asked.

'He lost it in a dispute with Uncle Sid,' she replied.

'What was it about?'

‘You remember “Black Diamond”?’ she said, pointing out a photo on the wall.

‘Of course, dad owned him. I had to get up at the crack of dawn every morning to prepare him for his training run,’ he recalled.

‘Well, if you remember, Black Diamond had a big win at the Spring Racing Carnival. The following year, your dad was certain that Black Diamond could win again. Gus had spent so much time and money training the horse that he was flat broke,’ Shirley explained.

‘I didn’t know that.’ Jason aired his disappointment. He loved his father, who was always there for him.

‘Your dad borrowed heavily from his brother to bet on Black Diamond. Uncle Sid loaned him twenty-five thousand dollars and Gus placed the whole darn lot on Black Diamond,’ Shirley lamented. ‘I remember it like it was yesterday.’

‘And did he win?’ Jason asked.

‘Sadly, no. Black Diamond lost by a nose. Uncle Sid was so mad, that he demanded his money

back straight away. He always put his business before family. He never could have enough money!’

‘And did dad ever pay him back?’

‘At first, your father pleaded with Sid to give him more time to repay him, but Sid refused. Gus was a gentleman and Uncle Sid always dominated him,’ she said with a sigh before going on.

‘They really didn’t get on over the years, but that was the straw that broke the Camel’s back. Despite Uncle Sid having no genuine interest in cars, your dad offered to give him the pickup as compensation.’

‘You mean he gave it away?’ Jason replied dumbstruck.

‘I’m afraid so, and your dad loved that pickup as much as Black Diamond. I’m sure it broke his heart. We didn’t see hide nor hair for your Uncle Sid after that. He just hopped in the pickup and drove off the same day. Your dad couldn’t

believe that his brother would do that. After all, Uncle Sid didn't really like the Chevy, anyway.'

'And what happened to Black Diamond?' he responded.

'The next race meeting, he stumbled and fell badly, damaging his fetlock. Unfortunately, it became infected, and Gus had to put Black Diamond out of his misery. It was all too much for your father and I'm sure that's why he had his heart attack,' Shirley surmised sadly.

Jason cupped his chin in his hands. 'You know mum I'd love to get hold of dad's old pickup. Where does Uncle Sid live these days?'

'He did come to your dad's funeral and as far as I know, he still lives on his farm in Armidale. Last I heard, he still had the pickup,' she concluded as she walked away, leaving Jason with his thoughts.

Picking up his mobile, he called his best mate.

'Hey Jimmy, what are you up to?'

‘I was just looking through my latest car magazine. You know the Motor Show’s on next month.’

‘Yeah, saw it this morning on TV, and I have a prospective entry for it. I need to check it out. Want to join me?’

Arriving at Sydney’s Central Railway station Jason looked up the arrival time of the Armidale express on the digital display board.

‘We just made it. It arrives in three minutes. Sighting the electric blue Express slowing around the bend it came to a halt at the platform as passengers bundled their bags from their trolleys into the carriage. Boarding, Jason and Jimmy made their way up the aisle and found their assigned seats. Producing a glossy car show magazine Jimmy buried his head flicking over its pages searching through the glossy photo images inside. A young girl, checking seat numbers and struggling with her bags attracted Jason’s

attention. 'Look at this,' Jimmy said pointing to a photo of a 1950 Packard clipper.

Jason was still focused on the girl as she found her seat and struggled to lift her backpack into the overhead locker.

'Let me help,' he said taking hold of her backpack and slotting it into the compartment.

'Oh, thanks so much,' she replied. 'I always seem to pack too much luggage when I go anywhere!' She said exchanging a smile as he resumed his seat.

Pulled out a book from her handbag she settled in preparing for the seven-hour journey.

Jason gazed out the window taking in the scenery as the electric blue Explore flashed through the changing countryside, over bridges, and bypassing small towns. Removing his mobile phone from his pocket Jason texted his mother. 'I told mum I'd keep in touch,' he said, interrupting Jimmy.

'She's apprehensive about us meeting up with Uncle Sid.'

‘Don’t worry,’ Jimmy replied, lifting his head from his magazine. ‘What happened was a long time ago.’

‘How about we try out the food in the dining car? I’m starving,’ grinned Jason.

Jason’s short, sandy hair complimented his perennial tan. Fit and wiry from working with his father on the horse stud-farm, he was uncertain about the future, and took life a day at a time. Unfolding themselves from their seats, Jason and Jimmy made their way up the aisle to the buffet car. Glancing up, Phaeton put down her book and followed. Jason and Jimmy placed their orders and sat on the diner’s bar stools. Phaeton reviewed the menu.

Jason eyed off Phaeton. Compact and athletic she had auburn shoulder-length auburn hair and green almond-shaped eyes, Jason felt an instant attraction the moment he set eyes on her.

‘Could I have a Caesar Salad with light mayo on the side please?’ Phaeton placed her order.



Playfully, she took a seat on a barstool beside Jason and Jimmy. Thundered over a steel bridge at speed, the sound filling an awkward silence between them.

Jimmy was the first to break the tension and introduced himself.

‘My name’s Jimmy, and um, this is Jason. We’re getting off at Armidale.’

‘Yes, me too. Hi Jimmy, I’m Phaeton. Thanks again Jason for helping me with my luggage,’ she responded, flashing a warm smile.

‘Yeah, Jason can be a proper gentleman sometimes,’ Jimmy replied sarcastically.

Behind his classic aviator sunglasses Jimmy was a bit of a rough diamond.

‘I hope the burgers are good?’ Jason butted in.

‘My alarm croaked early this morning, so I missed out on breakfast. I’m starving.’

‘Me too,’ agreed Phaeton.

‘So, what takes you to Armidale?’ Jason asked her.

‘I’m starting a new job at the bank.’

‘Really. I wouldn’t take you for a bank robber in a thousand years,’ Jason laughed.

‘I just completed twelve months of training in accounting at one of their Sydney branches. Now they’ve offered me a job in Armidale.’

‘Cool. That’s much better than being a robber!’ Jimmy chuckled.

‘You bet,’ Phaedon grinned. ‘I’m tired of the city,’ she said. Looking directly at Jason she asked.

‘And what do you guys do?’

Jimmy promptly produced his magazine, flipped it open, and showed her a page.

‘I restore classic cars. Like this one. It’s a 1953 Single Spinner Ford Convertible. See?’ he asked folding out the page.

‘*Sweet*. Is that your car?’ Phaedon responded, eying off the image.

‘No, but I wish it was. It’s my favourite classic,’ Jimmy replied before turning the page.

‘So, what about you Jason?’ she quizzed. ‘Are you into classic cars as well?’

‘Actually, I prefer old pickup trucks,’ Jason replied, pointing out a Midnight Blue Chevy pickup featured in the magazine. Hesitating momentarily, Jason produced his mobile and showed her a photo. ‘This me when I was twelve sitting on the bonnet of my father’s Chevy Pickup.’

‘He sold it to his brother years ago and Jimmy and I are going to buy it back.’

‘And where does he live? Phaeton asked.

‘Sid Handcock has a farm near Armidale.’ Jason replied.

Phaeton studied the image. ‘Is Sid Handcock’s farm near the Chandler River?’ she asked.

‘Yeah! That’s right. Are you a mind reader?’

‘The name’s familiar. I think I knew his kids. We were at the same school,’ Phaeton recalled.

‘Really? You must have an excellent memory,’ he replied. ‘How about your parents? Do they live in Armidale?’

‘Actually, my foster parents came from Armidale. We lived there before moving to Surry Hills in Sydney,’ Phaedon told him.

‘I was also about twelve at the time, I guess. Since then, my foster dads moved back to Armidale. He’s an Afghan war vet!’

Finally, just past midday the Explorer appeared on its final approach to Armidale’s autumn tree-canopied streets and slowed to a halt beside the station platform. Armidale was a popular time for tourists visiting the Northern Tablelands and joining the line of tourists Jason, Jimmy, and Phaedon exited from the train and hailed a cab. Passing through the main street they dropped off Phaedon outside the Hunter’s Bed and Breakfast before driving out of the suburbs along a clay dirt road, leaving a cloud of red dust behind. Jason pointed to a sprawling building set among rolling farmlands.

‘It looked oddly out of place way out here.’

‘That’s Hartford Hall,’ the driver remarked. It’s a psychiatric hospital.

‘Oh, you mean a mental asylum,’ Jimmy responded peering through the cab window.

‘It’s the kind of place to avoid,’ the driver replied.

‘I’m told it has a dark history.’

Speeding past Hartford Hall their taxi crossed over the Chandler River Bridge and finally pulled into a remote homestead. Seeing them approach, Sid got up from a rocking chair on the veranda and extended his hand to greet them, he offered to drive them to the barn in his new Ford dual-cab truck.

‘I haven’t used the old Chevy since I bought the Ford five years ago,’ he said as he led them to his truck and hopped in behind the driver’s seat. ‘It’s just too old and parts are almost impossible to get. I need a more reliable truck,’ he told them.

‘That’s okay. I’m a mechanic, so it’s not a problem. Let me look. I’m sure we can get it going,’ Jimmy replied confidently.

‘You can hitch the Chevy to the tractor and tow it out if you like. There’s a chain in the barn somewhere, along with some tools,’ Sid said, pointing in the general direction of the barn. Returning to his truck, he promptly drove off. Prizing the heavy, double barn doors open, a cacophony of chickens flapping their wings scattered in all directions. Inside next to Sid’s farm tractor, Jason and Jimmy saw the dilapidated Chevy Pickup buried beneath hay bales and covered in dust. Removing the bales, Jason and Jimmy stood back to assess their find.

‘*Far-out*. It looks like it needs a lot of work,’ remarked Jason, kicking away some hay to reveal more bumper bar. ‘Maybe but remember that old Buick we restored. It was full of rust but after we cut it out, it came up like brand new,’ Jimmy said as he looked inside the cab.

‘Yeah. Cool enough for those girls to ride with us down to the bay,’ Jason laughed.

‘We’ll need some parts for this one,’ Jimmy quipped looking it over. ‘Restored, it could be a

winner at the Motor Show. Doesn't your Uncle Sid realize how valuable this pickup is?' Jimmy said passing on a wry smile.

'He hasn't got a clue. Look how he's left it! He knows nothing about cars, and he doesn't know what they're worth these days! We'll have to pump the tyres, check the oil, and top up the radiator. And the battery is probably as dead as Moses!' Jimmy responded from under the bonnet.

'That's a long time ago,' Jason laughed.

'Lucky, I brought my jumper leads,' Jimmy grinned pulling them out from his backpack.

Setting to work they began overhauling the pickup. Starting the tractor, Jimmy connected the jumper leads to the pickup's battery and waited. Blowing out clouds of black soot and smoke from its exhaust, the pickup finally sputtered to life.

Looking on from his veranda the sun had set as Sid looked on rocking back and forth in his

rocking chair and watched the orange glow of the headlights of the old Chevy pickup passing through his farm gate and dim out of sight as Jason and Jimmy headed back towards town.

Built in 1854 the Armidale hotel was the social hub for the town. Its handsome restoration echoed its colourful past colonial glory. Parking outside the boys dusted off their day and making their way inside they caught the last few bars of the band before they left the stage.

Phaedon had just bought a glass of wine and turning from the bar, accidentally collided with Kimberley Walton. Kimberley immediately offered to replace Phaedon's spilt drink and despite Phaedon's protest the two instantly connected.

Kimberley was the lead singer in 'Zephyr Blue', the hotel band, and had just finished her set. Phaedon caught sight of Jason and Jimmy. 'Look, a couple of blow-ins!' she called.



‘I ran into them on the train from Sydney,’ she explained to Kimberley. ‘The blonde guy is Jason, and the other wearing those cool shades is Jimmy his mate.’

Taking a nearby seat Kimberly introduced herself. ‘I’m Kimberley,’ she said as Max joined them.

‘Hi, I’m Max the drummer,’ he explained.

‘Neat. So, it’s a blues band?’ Jason replied.

‘Correct. We call ourselves the Zephyr Blues Band and Kimberley is our lead singer.’ Max said.

‘And the rest of the band?’ Jimmy asked looking over at the stage.

‘Well, tonight we have Keith sitting over there; he’s our guitarist and Jenny our base player. We all know each other from school. Kimberly and I started out together in a gospel choir,’ Max explained.

‘So how did you two know each other?’ Jason inquired directing his question to Phaeton and Kimberley.

‘Us? Well, it’s funny you ask,’ Phaeton replied.

‘We just spontaneously hit it off,’ Kimberley laughed.

‘And what do you do Jimmy?’ Kimberley asked.

‘I restore classic cars and pickup trucks.’

‘*Pickups?* I bet.’ Kimberley laughed flirtatiously, eyeing him off.

‘Yeah, we’ve already got one on the go. It’s parked outside,’ boasted Jimmy, missing Kimberley’s flirtation. ‘The seats are pretty dilapidated and need replacing, and it needs a new paint job,’ Jason reminded Jimmy.

‘Well, I’ll catch up after my next set, OK?’ Kimberley told them. Making her way to the stage Kimberley joined her fellow musicians and sitting down behind the piano keyboard introduced the next song.

‘Our next number is a sixties classic,’ she announced. To the tap of Max on his drums, Kimberley raised her microphone and began to ease her way into the blues.

Pausing, the bar staff along with the audience all listened on mesmerized by Kimberley's voice weaving her magic through the song.

Relaxing over their drinks Jason, and Jimmy listened on intently to the end of the final set and leaving the stage Kimberley and Max rejoined them.

'Now I believe this reunion with your pickup deserves a special celebration,' Kimberley said.

'I have a surprise for you all,' she grinned as the barman arrived and delivered a bottle of ice-cold Champagne in a silver bucket and set it down on the table.

After the barman announced 'last orders' Jason walked Phaeton to her lodgings next to the hotel. His instinct was to attempt a goodnight kiss but feeling unsure he just saw her safely inside the building before returning to his hotel.

Jason and Phaeton were enjoying breakfast and each other's company when the sound of a Harley appeared turning into the main street and

pulled up in front of the café. Dismounting, Kimberley and Jimmy removed their helmets and joined Phaedon and Jason at their table.

‘I’m tagging along with Kimberley tonight,’ Jimmy said. ‘The band’s got a gig at the Trenton Gate hotel.’

Kimberley removed her leather jacket and slid it over the back of the chair.

‘I want to be ready for the Byron Bay Blues Festival at the end of the month and the hotel’s a good place to sharpen up our act. The word’s out that a well-known producer is scouting for new talent.’

‘That’s awesome. You guys will blow them away.’ Jason approved nodding his head.

‘How’s the food at the B&B?’ Kimberley asked Phaedon turning the conversation away from herself.

‘It’s okay, but I *kinda* miss my favourite restaurants back home,’ Phaedon said.

‘Hey Kimberley, that’s a mean-looking bike,’ Jason replied, looking over her bike.

‘The only riding I do is on horseback,’ Phaedon quipped. ‘You mean horse riding?’ Jason laughed.

‘Don’t laugh. My mum...well my foster mother loves horses,’ she hesitated. Well, she enrolled me at a riding school in Camden Park,’ Phaedon recalled tossing back her locks of hair.

‘Camden Park? Ah! The trainers are almost as famous as the Rosehill Spring Carnival,’ Jason recalled as he sipped his coffee.

‘My late father used to racehorses at Rosehill.’ Jason recalled.

‘Really!’ Kimberley exclaimed.

‘Yes. And he died over them,’ he recalled soberly.

‘I’m sorry!’ Phaedon was taken back.

‘It was a while ago.’ Jason replied dropping his eyes from Phaedon’s, stirring his coffee.

‘So, do you love horses?’ she asked.

‘Yes. It started with horses and just like my dad, I love classic pickups like the Chevy,’ he said. ‘So, when do you start at the bank?’

‘In a couple of days, but in the meantime, I might visit my stepfather.’

‘Do you know where he lives? I can give you a ride if you like.’

‘Maybe. It’s okay, I need to think about it first. You guys go ahead and enjoy Kimberley’s gig. I’ll catch up later.’

‘Sure. I understand.’ Jason retreated not sure of his ground.

‘So, when are you guys heading back home?’ Phaeton asked.

‘After Kimberley’s gig at the Trenton Hotel, I’ll be staying on in Armidale to arrange a paint job for the pickup at a local garage. I go back to work in two weeks actually,’ Jimmy said as Kimberley draped her arm around his shoulder.

‘How about I swing by some time before we leave?’ Jason smiled directing his question to Phaeton.

‘Sure thing. I start at the Bank on Tuesday,’ Phaeton replied returning his inviting smile.

The sun had set when Phaeton finally returned to the B&B. She lay on the bed, half watching a war movie on television. Through the chatter of machine-gun fire, she began to recall some bitter memories from her life lived with Noel her stepfather. Her foster mother had just helped Phaeton dress when an argument broke out between her foster parents. Kim had separated from her Korean husband and immigrated to Australia with her daughter Jenny when she met Noel. Kim and Noel adopted Phaeton who embraced a relationship with her new stepsister. In his youth, Noel was a robust man. Since, enduring severe post-traumatic stress after his service in the Afghan war, at times his behaviour was unpredictable. Noel had been leading a patrol when his companion stepped on an IED hurtling them both into the air. Suffering horrific wounds, Noel dragged his companion into a ditch trying in vain to stem the bleeding from his severed leg in his attempt to save his life while ignoring a severe head wound to his head.

Phaedon recalled Noel's reactions a week after Noel returned from Afghan. Noel had arrived home very late one night, and Kim was very upset that he had been drinking. Shafts of lightning suddenly lit the sky causing Noel to hide behind the couch. Violent thunderclaps reverberated around the apartment. Fearing he was under attack he angrily accused Kim of collaborating with an invisible enemy.

Following a physiological assessment, Noel was transferred to a military hospital, and finally honourably discharged and reunited with Kim and his family. As his medical condition did not show improvement, he was admitted to Hartford Hall Veteran's Clinic for long-term treatment.

Phaedon's reverie retuned interrupted by the television transmitting a loud electronic snowstorm, ending her vivid ruminations leaving her exhausted, she fell into a deep sleep.

The head nurse at Hartford Hall sat relaying the patients reports to Cindy Mathews, the therapist



responsible for the drug rehabilitation unit. Listening on to the head nurse's instructions Cindy wore a permanent hardened expression.

'This is Ivan Antonov's file,' the nurse explained. 'It's his third admission over the past few years. He was a fisherman operating from the Trial Bay fishing Port. He was dockside when a steel cable snapped and hit his head. The doctor's report refers to this event being most likely responsible for a subsequent bout of erratic behavior,' the nurse said handing Cindy the report.

'This time, I recommend he's cared for in the drug therapy unit. But before you follow him up, I want you to check on the patients in the Veterans' Wing. We're short-staffed today.'

Making her way to the adjoining Hartford Hall's Veteran's Wing provided a serene setting for its patients and checking the patients one by one until she ended her day and left the building.

Collecting Phaeton at the B&B and riding pillion, Kimberley motored down the long, pine hedged

driveway and followed the parking signs and came to a halt.

‘I hope the medals don't upset him,’ she frowned as she hopped off the back of the bike.

‘He earned them trying to save the life of his best friend.

‘I'm sure you're doing the right thing,’ Kimberley replied. ‘You love your dad. I can tell and he needs to know that you support him.’

Directed by a nurse, they found Noel seated in the garden reading. He seemed a shadow of his former athletic self.

‘Hello dad,’ Phaeton said as she bent down to hug him. For a moment he didn't respond. Then looking at her he tearfully replied ‘Darling girl. Oh, how I've missed you!’

Phaeton placed Jenny's keepsake photo album into his hands and wiped his tears. ‘Dad, this is my friend Kimberley.’

Noel nodded, gathering his thoughts. ‘So, how's your mum? I haven't seen her for a while.’

‘She's busy as usual, with another conference. She never stops, and I'm a poor substitute!’

‘Never! I know it is a long way from Sydney.’

‘I'll be able to visit more often. I'm starting a new job at the First Bank tomorrow,’ Phaeton explained.

‘I always knew you'd do well Phaeton. You're a fighter. Just like me.’

‘And you Kimberley? Do you work here in Armidale?’

‘Well, sort of. I sing in a band, and it takes me all over the place,’ she replied giving Noel a warm smile. ‘Luckily, I bumped into Phaeton in town.’

‘You'll never look back after meeting my girl,’ Noel chuckled. Tentatively Phaeton handed him the box containing his service medals and studying them, his eyes brimmed with tears as he gently opened the box.

Leaving Hartley Hall, riding pillion Phaeton held Kimberley tightly around the waist as they sped along the open highway and then turned down a

small path off the bridge down to the Chandler River and dismounted. Visiting her stepdad had been emotional for Phaeton but it was exhilarating to ride with Kimberly and a welcome distraction.

‘It’s so peaceful out way out here,’ Phaeton observed absorbing the serenity. Picking up a flat stone from the riverbank Kimberley skimmed it across the water and sat down on a rock ledge beside Phaeton.

‘It’s so calm and so distant from my life in the city,’ Phaeton related.

‘Oh, how’s that?’ Kimberly was curious.

‘As you could see from our visit, my dad suffers terribly from PDS and before that it was pretty tough dealing with that.’ Phaeton replied.

‘Was it tough for you?’ Phaeton asked gazing into the water.

‘Ah. Originally, I was teased about the colour of my skin and frizzy hair.’ You know, just cheeky naive kids.

‘I thought I had it tough, but I can’t imagine what it was like for you?’ Phaedon replied hugging her. ‘When I was at school, they called me *Dolly Girl*.

‘Girlfriend. That’s just body envy. I know all about that. I struggled with name calling all my life,’ Kimberly replied.

‘That’s gross.’ Phaedon replied. ‘And what about your music?’

‘That came from my dad. He had a passion for the blues. He loved Muddy Waters and BB King.’ Kimberly recalled. ‘He was mad about them. He was an Afro American serviceman and met my mum when he was on leave in Darwin. She was a Larakia woman.’

‘Wow. I could have never imagined. Fate moves in so many mysterious ways,’ Phaedon smiled.

‘He often played in the green room with his mate at the old Darwin Hotel. It was known as the Grand Old Duchess. He played the Piano, and his mate was a double bass player’, she explained further. ‘When my dad taught me to play, he told

me that the blues lives in our souls. It's the power of our inner truth he said.

'And so how did you end up in Armidale?' Phaedon asked.

'Well after leaving the army, he found peace with god and became a paster with the Baptist Church and was offered a position here in Armidale.'

'*Alright!*' Phaedon replied taking it all in.

'That's when I started to sing in the gospel choir and that's where I met Max actually.

'Okay. When was that?' Phaedon asked.

'I was just about sixteen then. And now Max's my drummer in our band.'

Casting an infectious smile, Kimberly took Phaedon by the hand and pulled her to her feet.

'Time to go,' she said as they made their back along the riverbank to the bridge.

Mounting the Harley, they rode back along the riverbank. Nearing the Armidale, town centre

Kimberley pulled up outside the historic Armidale Baptist Church.

‘This is my church!’ Kimberley said stepping from the bike and leading Phaeton inside. Clutching a cross around her neck, Kimberley sat in silence with Phaeton.

Sunlight from the windows beamed into the chapel lighting their faces. Highlighted by the colourful leadlight figures etched into the windows; Images that instantly evoked Phaeton’s fragmented memories as she wrestled to come to grips to uncover the hidden past about her biological parents.

Fifteen years earlier, Phaeton faintly recalled that her father had farewelled her as she boarded the school bus before he dropped Emma outside the Armidale Bank.

Emma had made her way inside to be greeted by her manager before sitting at her teller’s cubicle, waiting for her first customer. Yuri Antonov,

sporting a black Akubra and thick moustache entered the bank and strode towards Emma and handed her his bank card.

‘Good morning, Mr Antonov,’ she remarked.

‘Yes, today I will close my account,’ he said.

‘I’m sorry to hear that. Nothing to do with the bank I hope?’

‘No. You’ve always taken good care. But I’m sure we will soon meet,’ smiling wryly. I see you often, with James at the races.

‘Oh yes, James loves horse racing. A break from his regular work,’ she replied.

‘And what’s that?’

‘He’s the Lighthouse Keeper at Byron,’ she explained.

‘That’s a good distance from here.’ Yuri remarked.

‘Yes, but I need to keep busy and there’s no work for me there, so except for an occasional visit to see James I stay over in the hotel.’

Handing Antonov his closing bank receipt he promptly turned and walked out of the bank.



The following day at the local races, Yuri Antonov stood urging on the field from the stand as the horses approached the finishing post. Flashing across the post he tore up his ticket in disgust seeing his charge canter to halt at the rear of the field.

‘Looking for a winner?’ a fellow punter asked Antonov as he checked through his remaining tickets. ‘Any good tips?’ Yuri asked.

‘You might try number seven in the next race. But if you want a sure winner, I harvested some real good green stuff yesterday.’ The man lowered his voice glancing over his shoulder.

‘Meet me in the car park after the races.’

Yuri walked through Hartford Hall’s impressive reception when a nurse in her mid-thirties caught his attention. Cindy hid a cold-hearted figure beneath her white starched uniform. Ever the opportunist, she had manipulated her moves from one institution to another to advance her career.

‘Ah, your Ivan’s brother. He tried to walk out of the place yesterday,’ she said.

‘Really?’ Yuri grunted.

‘Yes, that’s right. I’m Cindy Matthews and I take care of him. He’s a very troubled man, Mr Antonov. We should talk, so I can explain more about this condition.’

‘Why don’t we share a drink after you finish your shift?’ He offered. ‘Come over to my Aunt Dorothy’s place for dinner.’

Ending her shift, Cindy wasted little time in taking up Yuri’s offer and rounding the corner on her Kawasaki Cindy came to halt outside Dorothy’s boarding house. Greeted her at the front door Yuri led her inside to the dining room. Dorothy was middle-aged and sturdy for her age. Vigorously chopping up a chicken she was busy preparing a meal as Cindy arrived and looking on took a seat at the dining room table.

‘So how do you know Yuri?’ Cindy asked as she produced a wine bottle from her bag.

‘These days Yuri stays here when he visits Ivan,’ Dorothy explained as she served up their meal.

‘Years ago, I ran a boarding house at Trial Bay, and I looked after the two boys when his father was away at sea.

‘What about their mother?’ Cindy asked.

‘She ran off with a boarder, and we never heard from her again. It was me that raised them after their father died,’ she said.

‘So, you’re not even related?’

‘No. One day I had a visit from the Russian Ambassador who told me what happened.’

Yuri picked up the story. ‘One of my father’s crew members told me that they were trawling off the Solomon Islands during the cold war when a paroling American naval ship collided with their trawler. It killed my father.’

‘And was your father a true Russian patriot.’ Cindy asked.

‘The capitalists try to control everything,’ Yuri grunted taking a swig of wine.

‘The boys were only young men at the time. No one was left to look after them, so I stepped in. I even sent Yuri to Uni,’ Dorothy told her.

‘Uni?’ Cindy asked.

‘Yes, I studied Information Technology,’ Yuri replied. ‘But big money’s my game,’ he smiled wryly.

Collecting the dinner plates Dorothy headed for the kitchen. ‘Now I’ll do the dishes and you two can have a nice chit-chat.’

It was a warm bright summer day when Phaeton walked the short distance from the B&B to the Bank. Arriving early for her first shift she sat in the foyer waiting for the Manager.

In his late sixties and disposed with a cheerful demeanor he sighted Phaeton and made his way to greet her from his office.

‘You must be Phaeton,’ he said after introducing himself. ‘Wait, haven’t I met you somewhere before?’

‘I don't think so,’ Phaedon replied. ‘I only arrived here last Friday.’

‘I’ve got a good memory for faces. I know I’ve seen you before; I just can't place where I have seen you. Never mind, it’ll come to me. Now I’ll give you a tour, and you can settle in.’

Responding to Kimberley text message, Phaedon Jimmy and Jason met Kimberly at her apartment for dinner the following night.

‘So, how was your first day at the bank?’ Kimberley asked.

‘It was great.’ Phaedon smiled readily. ‘People are so friendly, compared to Sydney. Mr Martin, my new manager, thought he recognised me from somewhere, which was *kinda* odd.’

‘Does he know about your family history here?’ Jason asked as Kimberly delivered a platter of food onto the table.

‘Not that I’m aware,’ Phaedon replied. ‘Hey, I didn’t know you could cook?’

‘Nah. I just hashed up some KFC and added some salad garnished with toasted bread croutons. Come on dig in,’ Kimberly chuckled picking up a drumstick and dipping it in a side plate of Cranberry Sauce.

Across the farmlands, at Hartford Hall, the head nurse was speaking intently to the Hospital Administrator. ‘Cindy was on duty the night Ivan Antonov disappeared and I have reason to believe she helped him escape.’

‘And *what* makes you think that?’ she asked.

‘It’s just a suspicion. But I’m sure that she’s the one selling hospital drugs to inmates.’

‘Really? In that case, she’ll be stood down while we investigate.’

Phaedon arrived promptly at the bank to prepare for the morning when George Martin arrived.

‘How long have you been with us now?’ he asked before stepping into his office.

‘Over two weeks now Mr Martin,’ she replied

politely.

‘Well, this week I’d like you to serve our customers with Garry at the service desk. Phaeton, smiling and nodding to her new colleagues, settled into her new role at the service desk.

‘You’ll probably find this more challenging than standing behind a glass window all day,’ Garry laughed.

‘That’s okay. I like helping people,’ Phaeton reassured him and turned on the computer to greeting her first customer with welcome smile. The morning fell into a lull and Phaeton was considering taking a break when an eccentric-looking customer strode intentionally towards Garry and sat down. The brim of his black hat shaded his eyes, and his heavy black moustache dominated his face. Sliding a note across to Garry he partially opened his jacket to reveal a knife.

‘You mean you want sixty thousand dollars now,’ Gary reacted looking at his note.

Listening on, Phaeton froze in disbelief. Was this

happening? Or was it some sort of ill-conceived initiation?

‘Listen, mate, I mean now,’ the man leaned over Garry waiting for his response.

‘We don't keep that level of cash out here,’ Garry choked.

‘You'd better show me to the safe then.’ He leant closer to Garry, revealing the blade of the knife. Reaching under his desk Garry attempted to press the silent alarm but was thwarted when the man pushed him back into his chair. Now Phaeton knew this was real and tried to think what to do.

‘This gentleman needs some help, but the safe is time-locked,’ Garry said hardly able to speak. Unexpectedly the man grasped hold of his knife revealing a prominent scar on his hand and plunged the long blade into Garry's arm. Enraged, he then turned on Phaeton swinging wildly at her with the knife. Phaeton reeled back, stumbling over her chair, and crashed to the floor. Threatening her, as he leaned in closer with



his blade, she kicked his knees with her high heels bringing him crashing down onto the floor in pain.

Hearing the commotion, George Martin flung open his office door to see a man on the floor with Phaedon standing over him as two women ambled into the bank unaware of the attempted robbery. Staggering to his feet the assailant raced out the door, still brandishing his knife and pushing past the alarmed customer's.

Hurriedly Phaedon ran to the bathroom, grabbing a towel and rushed back applying pressure on Gary's gushing wound. 'It looks like a nicked artery, 'she told the manager.

Calling emergency and still on the phone, Martin caught a glimpse of the man as he fled along the street. Jason arrived just in time to see the assailant tumble into the passenger seat of a black sedan. Turning sharply out into the traffic, it nearly colliding with a passing car and careered onto the wrong side of the main street. Swerving violently to avoid the kayos, Jason hit his brakes

hard when a car in front of him broke suddenly. Furious Jason popped his head out the window. 'You idiot, he yelled waving his fist before seeing a black sedan veer into the opposite side of the road and rapidly speed from the scene and turning the corner and disappeared.

Hearing the police and ambulance sirens Phaeton, realising the gravity of the situation tied a tourniquet around Garry's arm. Outside, curious onlookers began to gather and jumping from his pickup, Jason ran inside the bank to see Gary bleeding and Phaeton distraught tendering to Garry on the floor.

Bundling himself out of the patrol car a burly police sergeant made his way through the crowd and entered the bank. The paramedics quickly followed.

'This has been the second attempted robbery in Armidale this week. It's the same MO,' the sergeant said to the assembling witnesses. 'He escaped in a black sedan, is that right?'

‘I’m pretty sure it was an old Daimler,’ Jason corrected the sergeant. ‘Yes, I think so. It looked like a rare 1950 model.’

‘Are you sure about that?’ The sergeant scratched down a note in his pad.

‘Yes, he must be right.’ Phaedon interjected.

‘Jason restores classic cars. He knows them all!’

‘Well, not all the classics, but I’d certainly like to get hold of one like that,’ Jason said.

‘Yes, and so would we,’ the sergeant replied.

‘We’ll put out a description. Hopefully, track it down.’

‘We’ll need your CCTV footage,’ he continued turning back to George. ‘I suggest you take extra precautions and post security guards inside over the next few weeks until we find these criminals.’

‘Okay now Miss,’ the sergeant responded. ‘Can you come to the Police Station and complete your statement? You can talk to our sketch artist, to build a composite. Help us identify this man.’

The next morning, Phaedon returned to work and was greeted by her manager. ‘You were

remarkable yesterday,' Martin said giving her a warm smile.

'Why thank you,' Phaeton blushed. 'I visited Gary in hospital yesterday afternoon. It was a deep laceration, but he said he'll be fine.

'Oh, I suppose you already know all this,' she replied.

'Yes, I spoke to Gary yesterday.' Martin hesitated and continued. 'You recall that I told you, that I couldn't help feeling I'd met you before. Last night I found this photo at home. It was taken at our annual Church Picnic. I kept it framed along with these other photos of the staff mounted on the wall ever since,' he said handing it to her.

Studying the image, she made out a woman leaning against the door of a Red Ford Thunderbird convertible. Then she returned her focus to the woman's face in disbelief.

'It's like looking into a mirror! Who is she?'

'Her name was Emma. Emma Henry. She does have a remarkable resemblance to you,' Martin confirmed taking a closer look at the photo.

‘Didn’t I say your face looked familiar the moment you walked into the bank.’

‘That’s remarkable.’ Phaedon said taking another close look. ‘The only thing I remember is that my foster parents hinted my mother came from this area, but I don’t know this person. Emma Henry, did you say?’ ‘That’s right. So, you never knew your biological parents at all?’

‘Perhaps there is a family connection. Let me get you a coffee,’ Martin said and called to his secretary. ‘Jean, we’ll have two strong black coffees please.’

‘So, what happened to Emma?’ Phaedon asked him.

‘Emma was with the bank for about a year. I knew very little about her. She was the quiet kind. One day quite out of the blue. A stranger delivered a note to her saying that her father had suddenly taken ill, and she had to leave. So odd. I never heard from her again,’ he said as his secretary delivered the coffee.

‘Look I hope I haven’t upset you, but this might help,’ he said handing her a business card.

‘I’m giving you stress leave after yesterday’s shock. Ring my lawyer friend in Sydney. He may be able to help you with some answers about the past.’

‘But I’ve only just started here,’ Phaeton said sipping her coffee.

‘You should take the leave,’ he said firmly. I’ve already arranged a temporary replacement. Let me know what you find out. I often wondered what happened to Emma.’

Arriving the following day Jason met Phaeton at the B&B. Watching on she was busy packing her clothes.

‘I still can’t believe it. You actually kicked that bastard in the...’

‘Knees,’ she answered. ‘It was instinct, but I don’t have a black belt in Tae Kwon Do for nothing,’ Phaeton replied with a wry grin. Jenny my Korean stepsister and I trained with my stepdad at the Marshall Arts centre at Surry hills.

He was a Special Forces veteran and self-preservation is in his blood.

‘Just take care,’ Jason replied with a note of concern. After that kind of trauma, you need a break. I’ll catch up with you in Sydney, okay?’ he responded warmly.

Pressing her body close to him, they embraced before she went on to prepare to leave. Giving Jason a parting kiss she walked from the Bed and Breakfast to the train station.

Flashing through the countryside Phaedon contemplated the photo of Emma in her hand. Drifting off to sleep she dreamed of her mother tying a neat ribbon in her hair.

‘Now it’s off to the beach. We’re having a picnic with your dad,’ her mother told her picking up a basket from the kitchen table. Running ahead to the front door, Phaedon saw a bright red car and her dad, wearing a broad-brimmed hat at the wheel. Her mother took her by the hand and led her to the car. With the convertible hood open to

the sky Phaedon watched the green treetops passing overhead until she made out the image of a lighthouse. Parking at a deserted beach they followed a boardwalk to the sand-

Her parents watched on as Phaedon built a sandcastle and collected shells, decorating it.

‘Look mother it’s a lighthouse.’

‘Your Grandmother would be proud of you!’ her mother laughed.

Longingly Phaedon looked at her mother’s emerald ring. ‘It was given to me by your grandmother and one day it will be yours,’ she said giving her a warm smile. Suddenly an incoming wave crashed onto the beach, washing away the sandcastle.

The sound of a passenger slamming the interconnecting carriage door of the train abruptly woke Phaedon. Flashing by the steel arches of the Sydney Harbour Bridge rushed by as the train sped over the bridge heading for Sydney’s Central station.



Deboarding, Phaeton joined the crowd of passengers leaving the station and wandered toward nearby shops. Stopping, she gazed in some windows and came across an old jewellery shop.

‘And how can I help you?’ the shop assistant inquired.

‘I’ve read about Brazilian crystals. Can I see that ring in the cabinet? It looks so nice. Is it genuine?’ she asked, pointing out the ring.

‘Yes, it’s a natural green crystal. It’s the water sign. Try it on.’ Removing the ring from its case she handed it to Phaeton who slipped it on her finger.

‘It matches your Irish eyes perfectly,’ the assistant said.

Taking a look, tears welled up in Phaeton’s eyes, and removing it she placed it in the shopkeeper’s hand. ‘It’s very beautiful but I can’t take it. It’s not quite the one I had in mind,’ she stammered, before quickly leaving the store.

Outside, a loud crack of thunder was followed by a downpour of heavy rain pounding the pavement. The street flooded awash filling with rainwater as Phaedon waved down a passing cab to get out of the rain and home to Surry Hills. Pulling into the curb outside the apartment she tipped the driver and ran indoors. Inside she removed her backpack and settled back into her old bedroom. Making a cup of tea she lay down on the familiar couch. She fell asleep scanning a Hawaiian travel brochure that was lying on the coffee table.

Phaedon awoke to the front door opening. Her half-sister rounded the doorway of the living room. Jenny was a consummate professional, with perfectly styled hair, manicured nails, and always fashionably dressed.

‘Hi, Sis, what a surprise! You only just left the other week to start your new job and you’re back already! What’s going on?’

‘I had a bit of a rough start and I’ve been given some compassionate leave!’

‘A rough start. What do you mean?’ Jenny asked sitting down beside her.

‘There was an attempted bank robbery and I got caught up in the middle of it. But I’m okay.’ Phaeton sighed. ‘So, how’s the travel business?’

‘It’s always so busy I need a holiday myself,’ Jenny replied.

‘Look, tell you what. I’m going on vacation to Hawaii next week. How about you join me? The break will do you good,’ she urged.

‘Yes, I saw the brochures. Phaeton replied glancing at them again on the coffee table. ‘No, it’s okay. I have something arranged already. By the way where’s Kim?’ Phaeton asked looking at the travel brochures.

‘She’s at some conference in California. And how’s dad? Did you get to see him when you were in Armidale?’

‘Yes. I think he looks a little better. It’s a pity Kim hasn’t seen him more often. I ended up being the only one looking after Dad, and I was only thirteen at the time. Kim was so absorbed with

her career as a broker, and you were so busy, I had to cope with everything. Noel was a real handful,' Phaeton lamented bitterly almost breaking down.

'I'm so sorry Sis but I suffered as well, and I couldn't do anything to help you at the time,' Jenny responded defensively.

'Sometimes I felt that Kim treated me like a companion dog for Noel. But at least you know who you are,' Phaeton sobbed. 'I don't even know who I am or for that matter where I even come from!'

'I had no idea you felt that way. You've always been my one and only little sister,' Jenny said taking hold of her hand.

'You know I love you and you know Kim does too. You have always known who you are. Strong and independent. Right?'

Outside the bedroom window, rain swept across the sky. Phaeton retrieved the bank manager's

card and rang the lawyer he'd recommended. After a short delay, the receptionists answered.

'Yes, *that's* right. I think her name is Emma,' Phaeton explained to the receptionist. 'And she possibly lived in Armidale. Her mother's name is Molly Watts and that's pretty much all I know,' she explained. 'I was referred to Mr Jacob's by his friend George Martin. Yes, that's right. He's the bank manager I work for in Armidale. 'Mr Jacobs is busy with a court case for the next two weeks so I can make the appointment on the 14<sup>th</sup> at 10.00 am?

'Yes, that's fine,' Phaeton replied and hung up.

Jimmy was behind the wheel of the band's yellow van. Turning the corner, he pulled up in front of Kimberley's house to find Kimberley polishing her Harley under the awning. Stepping from the van they playfully flung their arms around each other. 'What do you think?'

'Not bad,' he replied.

‘Thank you. That’s a compliment coming from a car guy. And where’s Jason?’

‘He collected the pickup from the local paint shop yesterday and he’s on his way by now to meet up with Phaedon in Sydney,’ Jimmy replied.

‘So, you know Jason well, right?’ Kimberley asked. ‘Absolutely. We’ve been through a lot together.’

‘Like what?’

‘Like, well, for one when Jason arrived in Sydney he was pretty messed up and he and Shirley was left to pick up sticks from a hard life in the country’.

‘Do you think Phaedon’s good for him?’

‘Yes, I do. He’s had a few “interesting girls”, but Phaedon seems different. She’s special.’

‘Almost as *special* as *me*?’ Kimberley gave him a playful hug.

‘Ah, um, I’m not sure how I answer that!’ joked Jimmy. ‘Am I special?’

‘You’re raw and sexy and I like raw and sexy,’ Kimberley teased.

‘Raw and sexy? I’ll take that as a compliment, shall I?’ Jimmy gave a broad smile.

‘Okay, well I’m ready,’ she said pragmatically, taking hold of his hand. ‘You drive. We don’t want to keep Max waiting at the hotel.’

When they arrived at the Armidale hotel Max was busy packing up the gear and preparing to load it into the van.

‘Is the PA system packed yet?’ Kimberley asked as Max looked over their gear.

‘Not yet,’ he replied collecting the microphone stand.

‘Make sure you check it first. It sounded a little scratchy last night.’

‘No sweat. One of the speakers croaked but I’ve fixed it okay. Have you heard from Phaedon?’ asked Max as he picked up an amplifier.

‘Yes. She contacted her lawyer but there’s some sort of delay,’ Jimmy responded as he helped Max load the van.

‘Geez. I hope she can make the festival in time,’ Kimberley said.

‘It’s okay. If we leave now, we will have plenty of time.’ Max responded.

The headlights lit up the deserted car park of the Gunnedah Bowling Club as a van reversed up to the back door. Two hooded men armed with a crowbar, pried open the door and headed for the ATM.

Unexpectedly, the night shift security guard confronted the men and in a brief struggle, they struck the guard over the head silencing him.

Appearing on the police security system, a flashing light appeared alerting him to the break-in. Grabbing his keys the police constable dashed to his patrol car.

Dislodging the ATM, the two thieves dragged it onto a trolley and wheeled it to the van. Starting the engine, they saw a police car’s flashing blue and red lights illuminated the night approaching and roared off into the night and disappearing in the opposite direction.



Outside an office building, Phaeton read the brass name plate inscribed Anderson and Jacobs, and then made her way inside. Taking a seat in the waiting room she picked up a Cosmopolitan Magazine to read. Before she had time to look at the first page the receptionist invited her into the lawyer's office. Extending a welcoming hand Jeffrey Jacobs offered her a seat in a plush leather chair in front of his desk. In his mid-fifties, Jacobs looked quite distinguished in his tailored suit and having a dark well-groomed head of hair accentuated his fine facial features and grey eyes directed at her.

'Thank you for taking the time to see me,' began Phaeton nervously. 'As I told your receptionist on the phone, I feel my foster parents have sheltered me from my past. Not that I'm ungrateful for their care,' she hurriedly explained.

'I'm sorry about the delay,' Jacobs responded. 'I was in the middle of a court case. Martin

explained your role in foiling the attempted robbery. How long ago was that?’

‘Nearly three weeks ago now I guess,’ Phaeton replied.

‘I see. You Know, Sometimes Foster parents are often overprotective,’ Jacobs replied factually.

‘I know they’ve been very good to me but now more than ever, I feel I need to know something about my biological parents.’ Phaeton commiserated.

‘Sometimes it’s best *not* to know. They probably had their reasons. I understand from Martin that there you seem to have a strong resemblance to an Emma Henry. Is that right?’ Jacobs asked. Phaeton.

‘I made a preliminary search to discover there was a woman named Emma Watts who lived in Armidale. I’m sorry to say that most of the records have been obscured by watermarks. The archive building is long overdue for repairs from rainwater damage. I’ll make a further forensic search for more information,’ he explained.

Phaedon searched through her handbag and extracted the photo of Emma Henry standing beside the red Ford convertible and handed it to him.

‘So, you feel this Emma Henry resonates with you?’ ‘Yes. It seems like a crazy coincidence, but she looks terribly like me, don’t you think?’

‘Perhaps,’ he said studying the photo.

‘Don’t worry, I’ll do the best I can. The documents are very sketchy, so I need some time to do some digging for conclusive information. Is there anything else?’ he asked.

‘My grandmother could be Molly. When I was seven, I remember her name mentioned.’

‘Well, it’s a *start*,’ he said rising from his chair.

‘I’ll keep in touch.’

Phaedon walked the street bordering the bustling entertainment strip and entered a crowded hotel bar. The pub music was deafening. Pushing her way through the crowd of drunken patrons Phaedon felt dozens of ogling eyes follow

her every move. Turning back, she squeezed herself through the pack and fell out the door onto the sidewalk. Collecting herself, she made her way along the busy strip and hailing a taxi, she directed the driver to take to her back to Surry Hills.

Falling into a troubled sleep, Phaeton dreamt of sitting beside her father in the red Thunderbird. The headlights shone through a torrent of rain, with the windscreen wipers barely clearing the screen. Lightning struck the lighthouse showering sparks and blowing out its powerful lamp.

Coming to a halt at the lighthouse James had entered the doorway into pitch black with the young Faith following closely behind. Striking his cigarette lighter he found the kerosene lamp and negotiated their way through the dark to the basement. Sighting a crack of light under the storeroom door her father opened it to find two men playing cards. 'What's going on here? I don't pay you to play cards! You're supposed to be on

watch.’ Taken by surprise one of the men jumped up to confront her father. In a brief struggle, the lamp crashed to the floor erupting in flames, enveloping one of the men until her father smothered the flames with a blanket from a bunk bed inside the room.

Outside the lighthouse, under the grips of a violent storm, mountainous waves burst over the parapet wall revealing a flailing Ketch crashing onto the rocks and flinging its crew overboard into the turbulent waters.

The sound of loud hammering woke Phaeton from her nightmare. Wrapping herself in a dressing gown she partially opened the front door to find Jason outside.

‘Wait until you see our Chevy,’ Jason said excitedly. ‘It’s Midnight Blue, your favourite colour. Letting him in, Phaeton still felt disturbed from the lingering emotions from her nightmare.

‘How’s Jimmy?’ she asked.

‘He’s sweet. He’s driving Kimberley to the festival. I’m sure there’s something going on between them.’

Jason had just turned on the TV and slumped down onto the couch when Phaeton’s phone rang. Picking it up it was Jacob’s secretary on the line.

‘This is Sandy from Mr Jacob’s office. He’s in court this week but he has time during the lunch break today and asked if you could meet him outside the City Central Court building at midday.’

Finding the Court House courtyard a flock of pigeons scattered in front of Phaeton and Jason. Sighting Jacobs he was seated on a bench waiting for them. After greeting Jacobs all three walked to a nearby wooden table and sat down.

‘I’ve come across some disturbing information, Jacobs greeted them. “What I’m about to tell you will not be easy to hear. Are you okay for me to continue?’ Jacobs’ tone was serious.

Holding Jason's hand firmly Phaeton nodded to Jacobs. 'As I said, I'd rather know the truth,' she replied. 'Arriving at the truth is best in the long run.' Jacobs offered.

'So, *what* is it?' Phaeton asked bracing herself.

'I searched for more records and found that the Emma in the photo was married to a James Henry.'

'So, you think these could be my real parents?'

'Yes, it appears that your foster parents changed your name. Faith is your original Christian name. I called your stepmother to confirm this. 'But she never told me.' Phaeton, sounded indignant.

'She told me that she wanted you to have a fresh start,' Jacobs said passing her a file. 'She renamed you Phaeton, "one who gives light". It's an ancient Greek name.'

'Your family history is quite unusual too. Police records, list the incident as a cold case,' explained Jacobs. 'I'm so sorry Phaeton, but sadly James Henry was the victim of foul play. The report states he was a murder victim. His body was

found in Oxley National Park a month after being kidnapped.'

'Kidnapped and murdered! What happened?' she struggled to take it in clutching Jason's arm.

'I'm sorry but there's no other way but to tell you this. His assailant was never found. There was speculation and gossip, but the investigation led to a dead end. Your father owned a property near the Spring Point Lighthouse. He inherited it from his father, but I need to do more research into the property matter.'

'And my mother. Do you think she could still be alive?' Phaedon looked incredulous.

'Well, I don't want to raise false hope. After all this time she is most probably deceased. I will check out every lead I can, just in case. You have my word.'

Returning his files to his briefcase Jacobs glanced at his watch, ready to go.

'It's about time we left as well,' Jason responded. 'You say the lighthouse is down Spring Point Road near Byron Bay?'



‘Yes, that’s right,’ Jacobs replied. ‘It’s a historic site about a ten-hour drive north of Sydney.’

‘Hey that’s interesting. Kimberley band is performing at the Byron Bay Blues Festival,’ Jason said. ‘Were planning to meet them there,’

‘I’ll keep you informed Phaeton in the event I come across more information about Emma,’ Jacobs said as they parted and left the square.

Crossing under the harbour tunnel the high-pitched sound of Cindy’s Kawasaki echoed through the tunnel on her approach to China Town.

Pulling up in front of a red neon sign advertising the Golden Dragon, Cindy headed towards the back of a crowded restaurant scanning the room for a familiar face. ‘I’m sure you and your friend will be happy with my deal,’ he said. ‘Just make sure you look after my friends.’

‘I always do,’ she responded confidently.

‘‘So, you came up with the cash?’ the man asked airing his satisfaction.

‘Fifty grand, right? Half now and the other half when you deliver the goods,’ Cindy responded handing over a backpack of cash.

‘That’s very good. I plan to rendezvous with the yacht next Wednesday night,’ he said in a low tone. ‘Once it’s delivered, don’t worry, I will let you know. And of course, we will all benefit. I expect it’ll be worth at least five times more on the Sydney market alone. Meet me at this address,’ he concluded handing her a phone number and disappeared among the patrons.

The office of Blake and Simson overlooked the city centre. The rather portly Senior Partner, John Blake perched on the edge of his chair sorted through files at his desk. Extracting a file, he passed it to his secretary. ‘Can you check this Lighthouse Property file?’ Blake directed. ‘I need to update it.’

‘That’s been on file for quite a while now,’ she responded. ‘I received the final payment from Yuri Antonov yesterday and I need to check the date to keep his squatter claim alive,’ Blake

insisted. 'Can you check on it as soon as possible?' he directed looking over the document.

At the Land and Titles Record Office Blake's secretary carried out Blakes instructions searching the file when she discovered that an additional claim on the property had been lodged by Anderson and Jacobs. Making a photocopy she hurried back to her office to deliver it to Blake. 'Look at this.' she said to Blake. 'An additional claim has been added to the Lighthouse mansion property.'

'Damn, I was about to process the Yuri Antonov's claim next week,' expressing his anger.

'It's been filed by Anderson and Jacobs on behalf of a Phaeton Henry,' he said pointing out the reference at the bottom of the page. 'I'd better contact our clients. They've already paid us a substantial cash payment. Can you speak to your friend first at Jacobs's office?'

Nodding, she was soon on the phone to Jacobs's receptionist. 'Yes, that's right. It appears that

Phaedon is the daughter of the original owners of the property and he's with some bloke driving a midnight blue Chevy pickup and apparently, they're planning a trip north to the blues festival she informed Blake's secretary passing on the information. Immediately Blake was on the phone to Yuri Antonov.

'And how should I have known she would suddenly turn up,' Antonov stammered his alarm.

'And you should know that need extra money to squash her lawyers claim,' Blake telling Yuri abruptly.

'Don't worry I can arrange that. I expect some extra funds very soon,' Antonov assured him and ended the call.

Off the coast, the white sails of a yacht moved effortlessly along the horizon. Darting through the waves a patrol boat quickly approached them. Pulling alongside the yacht the patrol boat crew boarded to carry out their search. In the

mansion, Cindy repeatedly paced the length of the room with her mobile pressed to her ear. After ending the call, she rummaged in the cupboard and produced a bottle of Vodka. Pouring Antonov and herself a glass of Vodka she slumped down in her seat.

‘It’s not good news. The yacht has been intercepted, and our shipment has been seized by a marine authority patrol boat.’

Throwing down a shot of Vodka, she gestured a toast to an unimpressed Anatov seated at the table. ‘Za Nas! To your health!’

‘Damn it woman!’ he yelled, slamming his fist on the table. ‘You told me your friends knew what they were doing.’

Crossing over the Sydney Harbour Bridge Phaedon and Jason headed north. Close behind a black sedan followed Phaedon and Jason, ducking in and out of the traffic. Approaching a roadhouse, they pulled out of the steady stream of traffic for a rest break. The roadhouse was a

hub for road travellers making their way out of the city along the old Pacific Highway. Turning into the dinner Jason found a parking space and they made their way to the diner. Pulling into a nearby parking space a heavysset man left the black sedan and sauntered towards the pickup. Ensuring he remained unobserved he crouched down and fixed a tracking device underneath the pickup chassis.

Ordering their burgers Jason and Phaeton took a seat in a dinner cubicle.

‘Yes. I really do like the Midnight Blue,’ Phaeton said looking out from the diner.

‘You were right! It sure looks good,’ lauded Jason.

‘You know, ever since Jacobs mentioned the lighthouse, I’ve had a weird sensation.

‘Like what?’ Jason asked.

‘I remember my father arguing with some man at the lighthouse. They were shouting at each other, and I felt afraid.’

‘Do you recall what your father was saying?’  
‘It was something about a boat that was wrecked in a storm and crashed onto the rocks.’

The road had emptied by the time the two resumed their journey north. Cuddled up besides Jason at the wheel, the sun was fast beginning to set by the time they reached Port Macquarie. Wheeling off the highway, Jason sighted a motel vacancy sign and checked them both in. Seated outside on their balcony overlooking Port Macquarie harbour they admired the distant funnels of light reflecting on the water.

‘That’s a pretty effect,’ Phaedon remarked, ‘It reminds me of a light from a lighthouse.’

‘Everything reminds you of a lighthouse,’ Jason teased, pouring her a glass of Champagne.

‘I’ve just remembered my parents taking me to the beach. One night we stopped at a lighthouse, climbed to the top and looked out over the sea. I still remember its light reflecting on the ocean.’  
Sipping on a glass of wine they observed a dark

cloud passed by above revealing the light of a half-moon. 'I know it must be hard to accept Jacobs's story, but it's for the best. After the festival we can drive down to Spring Point and take a look at your old home,' Jason said.

Returning to their room Phaeton slipped out of her clothes and showered, letting the water run over her face she felt a welcome relief from the days heat of the sun. Following suite, Jason joined her and drying off, lay down in the bed beside her. Wrapped naked in each other's arms they tenderly caressed and entwined in each other's arms they drifted off to sleep.

A heavy thud pounding against their motel door abruptly woke them. Instinctively they threw on their clothes and grabbed their belongings just as an axe-head split open the door. Pushing open the balcony sliding door, they ran outside and clambered down the fire escape to the parking lot and sped off in the pickup.

Phaeton dialled 000.

'What is your emergency?' the operator relied.



‘We’re at the Port Macquarie Harbour Motel and some maniac just broke down our door with an axe!’

‘I’ll send officers over immediately,’ the operator replied. ‘Is anyone hurt?’

‘What is your situation right now?’ the operator asked.

‘Someone tried to break into our room, but we managed to escape, and right now we’re on the highway heading north,’ Phaeton stammered.

‘I suggest you call into the nearest police station and make a report,’ the operator responded curtly just as Phaeton’s mobile battery died.

The early morning sun pierced the pickup’s windscreen and slowly coming down from his adrenaline rush when Jason’s pickup spluttered to a stop. The petrol tank was empty. Checking his map Woodburn was only five kilometres down the road. ‘Phaeton. Lock yourself inside, I’m sure the towns just a short walking distance from here and there should be a local garage there,’ Jason told her grabbing a petrol can from

the back giving her a tap on the widow. 'Don't worry I'll be back soon.'

Dozing in the Chevy's cabin Phaedon turned on the radio to pass the time. Confirmed by the broadcast news thirty-five minutes had passed since Jason set out. Pulling up behind the pickup a black car came to a stop on the road behind her. Unaware of its presence a rough-looking character exited the sedan and made his way toward the pickup. Reaching in through the open driver's window he unlocked the door.

Panicking at the sight of the masked man, she leapt from the passenger door and tumbled to the ground. Struggling to her feet, she began to run but the man grabbed her and dragged her towards his car.

'Let go of me!' she screamed.

Another car turned the corner and pulled up opposite the black sedan. Jason jumped out, dropping the fuel can, and raced towards the man dragging Phaedon towards his car. Looking on the Good Samaritan who had given Jason a lift

froze in his seat. Phaeton lay kicking and screaming on the ground and grabbing hold of the crazed man Jason released her from grip on Phaeton and delivered a blow and kicked the assailant sending him careering into a ditch leaving him lying unconscious on the ground. Hastily Jason filled the petrol tank as the bewildered Samaritan watching drove off.

Jumping into the pickup, Phaeton jumped inside the cab beside Jason who threw the pickup into gear and crossing a high curb unknowingly dislodged the tracker from the underside of the pickup. Glancing into his rear-view mirror, Jason caught a glimpse of the man crawling out of the ditch and heading for his car.

Just on mid-day, rounding a bend the Byron Bay Motel came into sight and turning into the Motel car park they booked in. Returning to the pickup Jason drove off leaving Phaeton to find Kimberley's Jimmy, Kimberley and Max kicking back watching TV.

‘Hi, it’s so good to see you,’ Kimberley greeted them excitedly. Where’s Jason?’

‘He’s gone to get some burgers. Can I use your phone.’ My phone needs a charge Phaeton replied still distraught.

‘Sure-thing girlfriend. Here you go.’ Kimberly replied handing over her phone.

‘I don’t know where to start but we were assaulted on the way here.’

Dialling out she connected to Jacob’s receptionist. Transferring Phaeton to Jacobs, he was surprised to hear her voice trying to explain the assault.

‘Did you report it to the police?’ Jacobs asked.

‘Well, yes, but it was awful,’ she sobbed.

‘Are you hurt?’ Jacobs asked.

‘No, I’m okay now.’ Phaeton replied.

‘Look, just be careful. There are lots of crazy people out there these days. I’m going to talk to a detective to see if we can get more information,’ Jacobs said. ‘So, what are you going to do now?’ his calm voice echoed over the

phone.

‘Well, we both plan to go to the blues festival tonight,’ Phaedon replied.

‘Good idea,’ he reassured her. ‘Just take it easy and call me if you need anything at all.

Phaedon hung up the phone feeling reassured by Jacobs. ‘Sounds like you two had a rough ride,’ said Max.

‘That’s an understatement!’ Jason replied. ‘So, the bands playing tonight?’ ‘

‘Yes, and we’re really looking forward to the gig,’ Kimberley said. ‘And it’s a special Halloween night,’ Max replied twirling his drumsticks. ‘Hey, it’s still early. Why don’t we go windsurfing? The water looks great today and there’s a good breeze,’ Jimmy said pulling up Kimberley from the couch and giving her a squeeze.

‘OK, come on let’s do it,’ Max agreed, tossing his drumsticks onto the couch.

Jason had returned and sharing the burgers around, went outside to look at the ocean. Taking

Jason's hand Phaedon led him to the Manager's office.

'Is the lighthouse far from here?' she asked.

'It's about a twenty-five-minute drive. It's closed to tourists at the moment and the roads are in pretty bad shape. It floods easily and it looks like the weather's going to change. They're talking about some Spanish effect. La Niña or something like that,' he said directing his gaze towards the sky.

Jimmy and Max joined Phaedon and Jason outside and bundling themselves into the van they set off toward the nearby beach. Unloading the gear from the van's roof racks and put on their wet suits. A brisk wind formed white sea caps across the bay. Bracing themselves in the prevailing wind they navigated their way through the surf. They followed each other as far out as they dared, and in turn, caught as many waves as they could. Phaedon felt the rush of adrenalin as she leaned hard into the wind. Reaching the shallows, she re-set the sail and jived back to

start over again. A pod of playful dolphins appeared beside Phaedon and rode beside her on the crest of a giant wave carrying her to the beach. Behind her, Jason, Jimmy, and Kimberley finally caught their last wave and met Phaedon, waiting for them drying out on the beach.

A ferry edged its way into Circular Quay wharf as Jacobs and Inspector Ross relaxed at a quayside restaurant. Ross was keenly intuitive and as a prominent female detective, she excelled in the investigation department she led. 'After all these years it's so good to see you again,' Jacobs said pouring her a glass of wine.

'Yes, last time was when I was promoted to the Cold Case Squad,' Ross replied.

'I upset the boys club, especially when I worked out in the gym.'

'I don't think I've seen you since the Donnelly case, Jacobs remarked. 'He was quite a nasty customer. Deserved life, but we all did our best.

Come to think of it he must be up for parole by now,' Jacobs noted topping up his glass.

'That's true. Not a comforting thought.' 'And your marriage?' Jacobs asked Ross.

'Divorced, I'm sorry to say. Moving up through the ranks put an end to that,' Ross responded.

'Well, thanks for your time, 'Jason said. 'That's okay, I'm retired now. When you rang, I must admit I was a little intrigued. So, what's on your mind?'

'Look, I need a fast track on something. It involves a property called the Spring Point Lodge Lighthouse estate. He was direct. 'My client's mother disappeared fifteen years ago following the Rosehill Carnival and I need your help.' He gave Ross a broad smile.

'Yes, I remember that case.' Ross recalled. 'James and Emma Henry, is that right? He held the lighthouse lease and had a bookmaker's license. I worked on the case when I was a young detective.' 'Yes, that's right. The last sighting



before their disappearance was at the Rosehill Races.'

'Did you ever find out anymore?' Jacobs asked before calling the waiter to their table.'

'No. That's where the trail ended until Henry's body was found dumped in the Oxley State Forest. But I'm afraid that we had no joy in trying to solve the case and it ended up another one of those mysteries. Even their red convertible disappeared.'

'It's interestingly the daughter has turned up,' Jacobs said. 'Really, that's quite a surprise,' Ross responded.

'The victim owned a mansion at Spring Point. I only discovered today that the inheritance went to James Henry's brother in England.'

'I've recently met the daughter who has a possible claim on the estate. I also spoke to her stepmother who told me that she was found wandering alone in a bit of a dream at Rosehill Racecourse. She kept asking for Molly, according to her stepmother,' Jacobs explained.

‘I see,’ Ross replied.

‘Police couldn’t identify her parents, so she became a ward of the state and fostered and re-named Phaeton by her foster family. There was confusion over her name. When they found her, she answered to the name Faye, but I discovered that her real Christian name was Faith. The authorities misinterpreted Faith as Faye.’

‘So, Faith became Faye who became Phaeton.’

‘I just need your help to pull this all together for me,’ Jacobs asked.

Delivering a new bottle of wine to the table the waitress displayed the label before opening the bottle. ‘Your favourite Cab Sav, Mr Jacobs.’

‘So, you’re a regular here?’ Ross smiled, as examining the 2012 Chapple Hill label. ‘Yes, my office is just around the corner.’ Jacobs replied pouring them another glass.

‘So how exactly can I help?’ Ross picked up from where Jacobs had left off.

‘Well, I carried out a title search which unearthed something very interesting. I

contacted the governing trustee who handled the title matter at the time of Henry's murder. He had a hell of a time tracing his elder brother. Arnold turned out to be a farmer in Chester, England. James hadn't left a will, but his property was finally awarded to Arnold Henry. He had disowned James when they had a fall out over running the farm and James left the country. As far as I can make out Arnold never knew that his brother had married Emma. It appears the property was too far away for him to show interested in it.'

'I guess as a farmer his priorities lay at England,' Ross replied.

'However, there's more. Searching the current status of the property I found a claim has recently been lodged by a Yuri Antonov. 'You see under the occupation law; a squatter claim is open to anyone who has occupied the property undisturbed for twelve years or more.' Jacobs told Ross.

'Really. And who might that be?' Ross asked as

he poured another glass of wine.

‘A Yuri Antonov used to work for James Henry more than twelve years ago as it happens. ‘I’m trying to contact Arnold Henry but no luck so far. In the meantime, I have lodged a counter claim on behalf of Phaeton.’ Jacobs revealed.

‘As it happens, a man called Yurie Antonov took over the lease to maintain the lighthouse and mansion exactly fourteen years ago. You see James Henry who was Phaeton's father held the original mariner’s license for the lighthouse. He had a big fallout with the maritime authority over a boating accident regarding an incident at the lighthouse.’

‘Oh yes now you mention it I do recall.’ Ross replied. ‘A fishing ketch was dashed on the rocks killing two crew members.’

‘Yes, that’s the one.’ Jacobs nodded. ‘The operation of the lighthouse keeper lease is now shared with Antonov and his brother. From my research, the Antonov brothers were employed by James Henry as relief keepers.’

‘That’s all pretty interesting,’ Ross replied sipping on her wine. ‘I found the report confirming the failure of the lighthouse during a storm. This all came out in an inquiry at the time and the coroner ruled that the sailors’ deaths were due to the unavoidable events of a natural disaster and not able to prove any negligence at all contributing to the tragedy,’ Jacobs summarised.

‘I also inquired as to the current leaseholder of the lighthouse from the Marine Safety Authority. According to the records Yuri Antonov is the latest leaseholder and the current lighthouse keeper,’ he concluded.

‘Ok. You’ve certainly sparked my interest,’ Ross responded. ‘I’ll investigate it for old times’ sake. Leave it with me.’

Set in a carnival atmosphere hundreds of campervans arrived through the day at the annual festival campground. Centre of the grassy

green field, roadie crews went about setting up the stage and testing the sound systems.

Arriving early Jason identified Max's van and parked alongside. Met by Kimberly and together with the band they all made their way to a food stall.

'Hey quite a turn up already,' Max said.' The organizers expect over fifteen thousand fans this year,' Kimberly replied. Looking on Phaeton and Jason were sampling the local fish and chips.

'Not bad. Take some. We haven't had a bite all day.' Jason said handing around a cardboard plate of chips.

'Keith and Jenny are on the way,' Max chimed in.

'I hope so,' Kimberly replied.

'It's okay, I brought their guitars with me to make a sound check before we go on tonight,' Max assured her.

At nightfall, the blues festival was buzzing in a hive of activity. Taking the stage the host introduced The Zephyr Blues. Kimberly sat

herself behind the piano. Behind, Keith Jenny and Max opened their performance accompanied by a backing group of gospel singers from the local Baptist Church. Centre stage Kimberly began projecting her soulful voice into the microphone; her sound carrying into the fans packed around the dance floor in front of stage and into the crowd beyond with Phaeton, Jason and Jimmy looking on from the wings.

Taking her hand Jason led Phaeton down onto the dance floor and held her close dancing their way into the crowd. It was Halloween and caught up in the theme a group of fans were wearing masks and fooling around trying to scare each other.

On stage Kimberly completed her set and left the stage. The next band in the lineup took over with a performance by the Tedeschi Truck blues band from New York. Finding Phaeton, Jason, and Jimmy caught up in the exuberant crush. Taking Jimmy by the hand they gathered together and danced late well into the night.

Phaedon sat recovering at the motel enjoying a hearty breakfast with Jason and her friends.

‘You guys put on a great show last night,’ Jason remarked.

‘Sure thing,’ Phaedon replied. ‘What was it that your dad told you Kimberly? You really did have the soul power last night.’

‘Thanks guys. I couldn’t do it without you all,’ Kimberly replied. ‘Yes. I think he would be proud. So, what are you guys up too today?’

‘How about we take a drive to the lighthouse?’ Jason responded downing the last of his beacon and eggs on his plate.

‘That’s cool. You guys go on,’ Kimberly replied, taking a sip of coffee. ‘I’ve been invited to meet the promoter today. He’s interested in putting together a national tour for us.’

‘*Alright!*’ Phaedon replied.

‘We’ll meet you back here later this afternoon,’ Kimberly said propping her chin in her hands and smiled. ‘Jimmy and I have lots to do until then.’



‘And what about you Max?’ Jason asked.

‘The van badly needs a new tyre so I’m taking it down to the local garage to get it fixed,’ he said.

‘Yeah, go ahead,’ Kimberley agreed.

‘We’ll just hang out until you get back.’

Travelling along the Pacific Highway, a partially damaged sign pointed toward their destination, Jason turned off the highway and headed down Spring Point Road toward the Lighthouse. Ominous clouds filled the sky. Descending from the heavens a down paw of rain increased with intensity, Jason was unnerved by the repeated bolts of lightning flashing in front of him, struggling behind the wheel to see his way ahead. Finally, they came to a flooded causeway and attempted to cross. Caught in the flash flood, water surged into the engine bringing them to a halt and stranding them midstream.

Back at the Blues Festival, Jimmy answered his mobile. ‘Jimmy is that you? It’s Jason. Listen, we need help. The engines flooded and we’re

stranded about a kilometre from Spring Point on the old Lighthouse Road.’ Before Jimmy could respond, the line dropped out.

Exiting Armidale Airport, Ross collected her rental car and headed off to meet George Martin at the bank. When Ross finally arrived, she sat in Martins’ office while he searched through his computer files.

‘Yuri Antonov opened an account in September the day before the attempted robbery. But it was only opened for a week.’ Showing Ross, the records he flicked back through the file.

‘I’ve found an account here in the name of Yuri and Ivan Antonov was opened and then closed it within a week.’

‘That’s odd, don’t you think?’ Ross asked. ‘Do you remember what the brothers looked like?’

‘No, but I have an account address.’

‘Yes. It called Parkland. Number 35 Hill Avenue, Armidale. It’s an old boarding house run by a woman called Dorothy Turner. I’ve heard she’s a bit cantankerous, but she might be able to help.’

‘Do you have any CCTV of the day of the robbery?’

‘Yes, but the man’s face was disguised, and the police haven’t identified him yet.’

Leaving the bank Ross headed for Hill Avenue and pulled up outside number 35.

Ross’s knock was met by Dorothy Turner peering out from behind the fly screen door.

Ross presented her badge. ‘I won’t take much of your time. Do you recall a man called Yuri Antonov? I believe he boarded here.’

Opening the screen door, Dorothy took a close look at Ross and then her badge.

‘Yes. I raised him after his father was killed but he hasn’t lived here for a long time now.’

‘Do you recall if he had a car?’ Ross asked.

‘Yes, he had an old black one that looked like one Hitler would own! I remember it very well because Yuri loved that car. Silly memory!’

‘No, not silly at all Ms Turner.’

Ross produced the photo of Emma beside her red Thunderbird and handed it to Dorothy. ‘Do you

know this girl?’

‘No. But she’s a pretty thing. I do remember Yuri turning up in a real flashy-looking red Convertible like the one in the photo. Yes, I think so. He used to fill up both cars at Smithy’s garage.’

‘And which garage was that?’

‘It’s a Shell Garage on Vine Street. Smithy owned the garage for years. He races a yellow stock car on the weekends.’

Returning to her car Ross looked up the address on her phone. Turning into Vine Street she saw a dilapidated Shell sign outside an old garage with a single petrol bowser. She found the owner working on a stock car engine. Introducing herself she asked him if he knew Yuri Antonov.

‘Yes, he owned a 1958 Daimler. I told the police it was the car used when we were robbed,’ Smithy said leaning over the engine of his car.

‘You were robbed?’ Ross responded.

‘Yep. They arrested Antonov’s brother, caught red-handed trying to rob a bank in Tamworth. He

was sent for a stretch in Hartford Hall for his trouble. Ivan's his name.'

Leaving the workshop Ross sat in her car and rang the Administrator of Hartford Hall and introduced her.

'I believe that you have a patient named Ivan Antonio?'

'Yes, he was a patient,' the Administrator replied.

'What do you mean was?' Ross asked.

'He escaped from a low-security unit about seven months ago now,' she explained. 'He was admitted into a new drug therapy program. Our internal investigation indicated that the nurse in charge may have been complicit in his escape. She's also suspected of supplying patients with illicit drugs, and we dismissed her.'

'And what was her name?' Ross inquired.

'Cindy Mathews.'

'I see. Anything else you can tell me?' Ross asked.

‘Ivan had several visits from his brother before he escaped,’ she replied shuffling through some papers.

‘We reported all this information to the police and interviewed his brother, but there was no evidence he was involved in his escape!’

Returning to her car Ross called the local police station. The duty officer checking the records found only one 1959 Daimler recorded under the name of Yuri Antonio revealing Spring Point Lodge as the address of the owner.

Stranded in the flooded crossing, unable to start the engine, Phaeton searched for her phone.

‘Where’s my phone?’

‘I don’t know, and my phones useless. The battery died when I was speaking to Jimmy,’ Jason replied.

‘Let’s try and made a call from that house over there,’ Jason said.

Leaving the stranded pickup they waded through the rising water to safety.

Inside, Yuri Antanov was watching television when the broadcast was interrupted by braking news.

*A category three storm weather event warning has been issued. The Bureau of Meteorology has reported that it will hit the northern coast of New South Wales at 5 p.m. eastern standard time and residents are advised to take all precautionary steps to avoid injury or damage.'*

Turning off his television, Antanov walked to the kitchen when he heard a knock at the front door. Partially opening the door, he found a drenched Jason and Phaedon standing outside.

'I'm sorry to bother you but we were wondering if you can help us. Our truck broke down not far from here. Do you have a phone we can use?' Jason asked politely.

The man drew closer, staring at Jason and Phaedon standing at the door soaked by the rain. Wearing thick horn-rimmed glasses perched on

his nose it exaggerated his somewhat dishevelled appearance. Opening the door, he ushered them into an enormous entry room. Once spotlessly maintained, now a repugnant musty odor permeated the faded interior.

In the dining room, Phaedon observed an old photo of a lighthouse hanging on the wall.

‘Ah, you noticed the lighthouse! It's just down the road from here. Have you seen it before?’ he asked in a thick accent.

‘Well, no,’ Phaedon replied. ‘Not really. We’ve heard about it. We were on our way there to take a look but now we’re stuck in this dreadful weather, and I’ve lost my phone.’

‘Mm. The weather here is quite unpredictable. That's why they built the lighthouse here years ago. Before it was built many ships foundered at sea.’

‘In the era of the old windjammer sailing ships, I suppose,’ Jason replied. ‘But they don't need it these days, right? GPS navigation has changed everything?’



‘Uh. I don’t trust those newfangled gadgets. Give me a chart any day,’ he said leaving them standing in the hallway as he went to the kitchen. ‘There’s a fireplace in the lounge room. You can dry out there. You must be hungry. I’ll be with you soon.’

Huddling by the fireplace Phaedon and Jason overheard the muffled voices of the man and a woman and the sound of someone sharpening a knife in the kitchen sent a chill through their bones.

Reappearing Antonov laid out some plates on the table balancing a tray of roast meat. Appearing in the hallway, Phaedon glimpsed a woman disappearing down a corridor.

‘Is that your wife?’ Phaedon asked airing her curiosity.

‘No, that’s just my housekeeper,’ he said placing the platter on a table. Stabbing a slab of meat, he handed them each a sharp-bladed knife.

‘Eat up, I slaughtered the pig myself,’ he said forking the meat onto their plates. ‘Ah, no forks.

I never use them, but I'll find some for you,' he said and left the table to promptly return with a set of forks.

'You're interested in navigation?' Jason asked, pointing to a sextant on the wall.

'That's an heirloom. My father was a mariner,' Antonov said stuffing a piece of meat into his mouth.

'Really? A seafarer?' Jason was intrigued.

'He captained a cargo ship years ago.'

'So, is that how you ended up here?'

'Oh yes. On his last voyage during WW11 he was shipwrecked just off the coast near here.' He was lucky to survive, but as a Russia Ally during the war he was granted Australian citizenship.'

'Did he have anything to do with the lighthouse?' Phaeton asked curiously.

'Indeed. After he was employed as an assistant keeper. Now it's my job.'

'And who was the keeper at that time?' Phaeton asked.

'What's that?' he replied sharply.

‘Have you ever heard of a James Henry?’  
Phaedon stammered.

‘James Henry, you say. Yes, I believe he was the keeper here years ago,’ he said brushing her question off. ‘And what brings you down this way?’ Antonov asked suspiciously eyeing them off.

‘We have come to see our friends at the Byron Blues Festival, and we just wanted to see the old Lighthouse.

‘Yes, that’s all,’ Phaedon replied. We like looking at old historic landmarks.’

‘And their history.’ Jason added.

‘History. Is that right?’ Antonov barked. ‘My father always admired Lenin and his revolution.’

Feeling uncomfortable Jason changed the subject. ‘Can we possibly call for assistance on your phone now?’ Jason asked.

Ignoring Jason’s question, Antonov’s eyes glazed over, and he became disquietingly calm. Wiping his mouth with his hand he left them and climbed the staircase in the hallway.

Reaching the attic, he switched on a video surveillance camera and brought up the images of Jason and Phaedon sitting in the lounge room. Zooming in on Phaedon and studied her face for a moment before he clicked open a lap top computer file displaying images of a woman dressing in front of a mirror.

Returning to the lounge room, he found Phaedon and Jason looking at a painting of his father. 'My father was not only a great mariner, but he was also a great Soviet patriot,' he gloated. 'Now we'll go to the Lighthouse.'

'Okay, but first we need to use your phone if we may?' Phaedon said balking at the idea.

'It's out of order,' he responded bluntly. 'But you can use the phone at the lighthouse. It's only a few minutes from here.' He said leading them outside through the kitchen service door to his car.

Immediately after they had left Cindy appeared in the kitchen. Opening a small cabinet on the wall and retrieved a glass vial. Inserting a syringe

into the vile she slowly withdrew its contents before making her way into the basement. In the confines below, a man sat restrained in a chair struggling in fear as she approached. Pulling back his sleeve Cindy administered the dose from her needle into his arm.

Opening the rear door of the car Phaeton and Jason took a seat in back. 'I like your old car,' Jason told Antonov as he slid next to him the driver's seat. 'Wow, is that a genuine mahogany dashboard?'

'The best wood comes from Northern Brazil,' Antonov replied starting the car.

'How did you come by such a classic?' Jason said peering out through the front windscreen at the chrome three-pointed star symbol on the bonnet.

'It belonged to my father,' he said checking Phaeton out through his rear-view mirror. Making their way from the mansion Antonov drove through a wooded forest toward the

lighthouse running into a squall, streaming in from the south, intensified.

The flooded causeway had subsided, allowing Kimberley's to pull up the van behind Jason's abandoned pickup. Looking inside the pickup's cabin Max was startled by Phaedon's ring tone. Searching for the source of the sound he found the phone on the floor. 'Hello, who's this?' Max asked.

'This is Inspector Ross. Have I got the right number? Can I speak to Phaedon please?'

'This is Max, a friend of hers. Her boyfriend called for help earlier but he cut out. We found his pickup abandoned near the lighthouse. This is her phone all right, but she's not here. She's with her boyfriend, Jason.'

'*Look*, I don't want to alarm you, but I believe that they may be in danger. Just wait there, I'm already on my way.'

The sun had long set over the mansion and a dark sky closed in. Max, Jimmy and Kimberly made

their way from the van to the mansion. Ignoring Ross's warning, Max nervously knocked on the front door only to be greeted by silence. Making their way to the side annex they found the kitchen door ajar and entered cautiously. 'Look I'm sure that's Phaedon's scarf,' whispered Kimberley identifying Phaedon's familiar blue scarf draped over a chair.

Kimberley checked upstairs and was attracted by the light from the computer in the attic. Activating the computer filled the screen with images of a burly man with his arm around a woman clad in riding leathers and surrounded by a group of bikies. Looking around the room she saw a box lying on a table containing a false black moustache and makeup.

Suddenly, an angry voice broke the silence of the house. Kimberley hurried down the staircase to see Cindy confronting Jimmy and Max. 'What the hell are you doing here,' Cindy yelled. 'Get out of my house right now!'

Through the torrential downpour, the Daimler's headlights illuminated the foot of the Lighthouse. Scrambling from the car the three ran to the lighthouse basement door. Antonov led Jason and Phaeton inside. 'There's a phone inside the basement storeroom over there,' Antonov directed Phaeton. 'Jason, you go ahead and take a look around upstairs while your friend makes her call.'

The moment Jason was out of sight Antonov slammed the storeroom door shut, trapping Phaeton inside.

Half blinded by the rain peppering her windscreen Ross reached for his mobile phone and made a call. 'Emergency line may I help?' 'Yes, this is inspector Ross. Please send a firearm backup crew to the Spring Point Lighthouse. This is an emergency.'

Overhead, in the lull of the storm a full moon made a brief appearance overhead. Inside the mansion Kimberley, Jimmy and Max retreated



from their confrontation with Cindy. Once outside, Jimmy flashed his torch to get their bearings. Through an open side door of the garage, he made out the shape of a car covered in a heavy dust cover. Lifting the cover, it revealed a bright red Ford Thunderbird Convertible parked in the garage.

Looking over the car Jimmy opened the driver's door and slide behind the wheel. Looking on Kimberly and Max were startled when they heard the roller door suddenly rattling open, setting off an alarm. Outside the piercing sound filled the surrounding woods, scattering hundreds of birds nesting in the treetops.

Appearing outside the roller door, a man with a bulky frame, brandishing an axe, loomed outside. 'Leave my car alone!' he screamed outrageously. Wildly taking a swing of the axe he accidentally embedded it into the timber wall. Struggling to release it, Jimmy broke free with Kimberly and Max hot on his heels and raced through the garage doorway and made off toward the woods.

Pursuing Kimberley, Max and Jimmy into the woods. The assailant saw them hiding behind a tree and desperately took a swing sending the axe-head into its trunk. Horrified they took flight and breaking out of the wood they sprinted toward the shore and took shelter hiding behind an outcrop of rocks. Visible above they sighted the searching eye of the lighthouse casting its warning beam of light far out to sea.

Reaching the creek crossing Ross sighted the stranded pickup and the deserted van and sped on toward the lighthouse.

Locked in the storeroom, in panic, Phaeton recalled a dire memory herself as a child. Pinned against the storeroom wall her father was shouting angrily at two men. One grabbed her father's arm, knocking his kerosene lamp from his grasp, engulfing the other man in flames.

Pulling up outside the lighthouse, Ross bolted from her car and ran into inside to hear Phaeton yelling and bashing at the storeroom

door with a crowbar. 'We ran into a madman,' she cried.' I don't believe it. 'Where's Jason Ross,' yelled helping Phaedon from the storeroom.

'He must be up on the bridge,' she gestured toward the spiral staircase.'

On the bridge Lighthouse Antanov found Jason peering out looking out to sea. A huge ocean wave crashed over the rocks at the foot of the lighthouse sending spray and foam high into the air. 'The tide's almost at its peak,' Antonov yelled standing menacingly behind him.

Drawing out a butcher's knife from his jacket, Antanov lunged at Jason, slicing the air.

Jason threw up his arms in self-defence and in desperation Antonov took a wild swing striking Jason over his head with the butt of his knife sending him crashing head long onto the deck semiconscious.

Proceeded by two hours of solid heavy rain, the category three storm struck the lighthouse. Met by its force, Ross and Phaedon appeared from

the stairs outside on the top of the lighthouse bridge. 'Wait here.' Ross yelled to be heard above the howling din.'

Drawing out her revolver she began to make her way around one side of the bridge and coming across Jason, she found him struggling, trying to get to his feet.

Ignoring the inspector's instructions, Phaeton buffeted by the storm began to edge her way pulling herself along the rail against the fury of the storm on the other side of the bridge. Antanov had sighted the inspector's car pull up below. Climbing a steel external ladder attached to the bridge, he made his way up toward a hatchway leading to the Lamp room when a shaft of lightning struck the dome above and losing his grip he fell backward in a shower of sparks and crashed onto the bridge.

Regaining his feet, he found himself confronted by Phaeton standing directly in front of him.

‘So, you escaped,’ he growled. ‘But not this time. I'm not going to let another 'Henry' get in my way,’ he menaced.

‘You crazy animal. So, it was you who murdered my dad.’

Lunging at her with his knife he slashed her arm. Grabbing hold of Antonov's arm with the other he struggled, contorted in rage trying to break her grip; Phaeton finally overpowering him twisted his wrist, forcing him to release his knife. Recovering momentarily, he delivered a blow with his fist and sent Phaeton sprawling onto the deck. Blinded by a bolt of lightning, Antonov hesitated and seizing the moment Phaeton regaining her feet charged headlong at Antonov, catapulting him over the railing. Letting out a blood curdling scream he plummeted onto the rocks below. Horrified, Phaeton looked on to see him consumed in the foaming tide and disappear into the murky depths below. Appearing from the other side of bridge Ross and Jason found a

stunned Phaeton, bleeding from the wound to her arm dazed and crumpled on the deck.

Sighting the flashing lights of two police cars and an ambulance they burst into sight from out of the woods and sped towards the lighthouse. Jason slung Phaeton's arm over his shoulder and together they staggered their way down the lighthouse staircase. Reaching the foot of the staircase Phaeton collapsed onto the ground, finally overcome by her ordeal. Coming to her aid a Medic administering his treatment to stop the flow of blood from her arm led Phaeton and Jason to the Ambulance. Hastily making his way outside Ross met the police sergeant and proceeded to lead his men to a disoriented Ivan standing on ledge. Gazing motionless looking out to sea he dropped his axe and handcuffing him they escorted him to a police car.

Emerging from behind the rocks Kimberley Jimmy and Max made their way to the scene to find Jason waiting by an ambulance. 'What happened to your head?' 'We saw someone fall

from the bridge,' Kimberley stammered as Jimmy and Max arrived. 'And where's Phaeton?'

'She's okay now,' Jason assured them. 'She's being taken care of in the ambulance.'

Inside the Ambulance the Medic was applying a bandage to Phaeton's lacerated arm.

Issuing her final instruction to the arresting police sergeant inspector Ross made her way to her car leaving Phaeton and Jason trying to understand what had just happened.

It was early morning and the storm had well passed when Jimmy, Kimberley and Max arrived at the Byron Bay police station. Inspector Ross led them inside to join Phaeton and Jason. Bearing a sling on her arm Phaeton sat sipping on a mug of coffee beside Jason.

Phaeton was completing her written statement when Ross entered the interview room. 'As it turns out Yuri Antonov had an older brother,' Ross began. 'Ivan suffered extreme trauma from burns to his hands and face and spent time in a

psychiatric hospital,' she said producing a document from Hartford Hall.

'I also ran through Antonov's home surveillance videos. He was quite clever technically. He installed CCTV and alarms on all the doors, presumable to control Emma's movements. Both men shared quite extreme macabre behaviour,' Ross explained. 'It appears Yuri and Ivan followed your parents from Armidale to the Rosehill Racecourse. They had planned the kidnapping and robbery and murdered your father and buried him in the Oxley National Park. Yuri was the mastermind.'

'They took over your parent's house and sedated your mother and locked her in the attic.

*'Oh my God!'* exclaimed Phaedon trying to come to grips with it all.

'It seems she planned an escape and left this note,' Ross said passing it to Phaedon.

'It's a slim lead. I don't hold too much hope as it's been so many years here take a look.'



*I am writing this letter in the hope that I can escape. I have been cut off from the world for so long that I have almost lost any hope of freedom. I pray that my daughter Faith is safe. Molly Watts can tell her everything she needs to know. Emma.*

‘Apparently, Watts was my mother’s maiden name before she married my father,’ Phaeton said. ‘I will have our Missing Person Unit investigate the matter,’ assured Ross.

‘But how could they get away with it for so long?’ Jason asked. ‘They should have been discovered years ago.’

‘We found the remains of a hoard of money hidden under the floorboards along with your father’s bookmaker bag and betting tickets,’ Ross went on.

‘Your father collected a large windfall of over six hundred thousand dollars at the Rosehill Spring Carnival, the day the Antonovs kidnapped your parents. Our original investigation came to a dead-end,’ Ross summarised. Entering the room the sergeant arrived with a tray of coffee.

‘The Antonov’s lived off the cash for years to avoid a money trail,’ the sergeant reported. ‘

That’s right and they never used credit cards and never filed taxation records. They briefly opened a bank account to survey the bank’s layout. Ross continued, ‘More recently, the brothers were involved in stealing the ATM from Gunnedah bowling club. A security guard disturbed them, and they attacked him. Fortunately, he survived. They rented a van for the robbery, and the rental agent identified them. Six months later there was a series of attempted bank robberies. Acting alone, Ivan was caught red-handed at Tamworth attempting a hold-up. Apparently, he took a train to Tamworth station which was not far from the bank.’

‘Ivan masked his disfigured face to avoid being easily identified,’ the sergeant added placing a black balaclava on the table.

‘Previously Ivan always acted as the getaway driver. We think that he acted alone purely out of desperation. Ivan was returned to Harford Hall,

but he broke out a week later. Undoubtedly it was Cindy who helped him escape. As the money started to run out, they reverted to dealing drugs. Cindy was Yuri's mistress,' Ross explained further.

'It appears that Ivan's behaviour finally became so erratic they kept him in the basement to keep him under control. The doctors told us that the lack of proper medication probably caused his rampage. A lawyer appointed for Ivan's defence has filed a claim of insanity on his behalf.

'And what about Cindy Mathews?' Jason asked Ross.

'She's being held under custody facing serious pending charges. Regarding ownership of the property, I have been in touch with your lawyer Jeffery Jacobs. Your father had an older brother in England.'

'Oh, is that true?' Phaeton gasped.

'Yes, your uncle's name is Arnold Henry. As next of kin, he inherited the property after your father's death. According to Arnold's neighbour,

he was tired of keeping up the rates over the years and finally decided to come to Australia to sell the house.

‘So, he’s still here?’ Jason replied.

‘Unfortunately, he wasn’t found alive. We discovered his deceased body buried in the basement. It appears when he visited the house the brothers murdered him. Our sergeant contacted Scotland Yard and learned he only flew from London five months ago.’

‘So, what was the motive for his murder?’ Jason asked. ‘Yuri Antonov had lodged an ‘adverse possession’ or ‘squatter’s rights’ claim with the court to take ownership of the property. When Arnold Henry turned up claiming his inheritance, they cut his throat. So now the property will revert to you Phaeton as the next of kin.’

Dozing off watching Kimerly’s TV Phaeton heard the familiar sound of her Harley pull up outside.

Phaedon stirred and turned off the TV as Kimberly made her way inside and removing her helmet put it down on the table.

‘How did your gig go tonight?’

‘Friday nights always packed.’ Kimberly replied. ‘Carl Jackson the promoter turned up and we went over some tour dates.’ Kimberly said.

‘George Martin the bank manager sent me a text message tonight. He wants’ me to meet me at the bank in the morning.’

‘Girlfriend. That’s really good news.’ Kimberly replied. ‘He must want you to start. I know how much you have suffered and getting back to work would take you mind off things,’ she said giving Phaedon a hug. ‘Well go together in the morning. I’ve heard so much about your manager.’

Turning into the curb outside the Armidale Bank they dismounted from the Harley as Kimberly pulled the bike back onto its stand alongside a parked police patrol car and made their way inside.

‘I came by as soon as I got your message. Don’t tell me there’s been another hold-up?’ Phaedon chuckled giving Martin an affectionate hug.

‘Do you mean the sergeant’s car outside? No thank goodness, there’s no bank robbery! But he has some news for you.’

Following Martin into his office, he swung the door open finding herself to coming face to face with Emma in the company of the sergeant. Instantly, flooded with emotion Emma flung her arms around a stunned Phaedon embracing each other in sheer delight. ‘You found her!’ Phaedon sobbed.

‘You’re *just* as I pictured you,’ cried Emma, taking a long look at her daughter. ‘Though I never saw a single photo of you.’

‘But where have you been all this time?’ Phaedon asked ecstatically.

‘In Brisbane?’ Emma replied wiping away her tears.

‘But why Brisbane? And *why* didn’t you contact the police?’

‘The truth is I was terrified of the Antonovs,’ Emma admitted shaking with emotion.

‘And who is your friend?’ Emma asked.

‘This is Kimberly. She gave me hope and the strength to find the truth. I knew nothing about you all this time you were no than a faint memory,’ Phaeton remonstrated. ‘It drove me mad ever since I was a child. Kim my stepmother even changed my name to protect me.’

‘You have every right to feel so angry’. I knew even less but I understand now. Your lawyer explained it all to me.’ Emma said sharing every moment with her. ‘I believe Phaeton means ‘a bright light’ and my darling that’s so true! Mr Jacobs also told me what happened to your father. James was such a wonderful man and I miss him so dearly,’ Emma stammered, tears welling up in her eyes.

‘You were such a beautiful child,’ she said hugging her again. I did try to look for you on social media at the library, but I was scared that if I had found you, I might risk your life as well.’

‘I knew in my heart that I would someday somehow find you,’ Phaedon told her exchanging a warm smile. ‘So how did you get away?’

‘I faced unspeakable abuse at the hands of those monsters. After a while, I convinced Yuri that I was useful in the kitchen. That’s where I discovered a medical cabinet. One evening preparing a meal I spiked Yuri’s drink with sleeping pills. He was out long enough for me to take his keys. I found enough money in his room to help me to escape to Brisbane.’

‘It must have been terrifying,’ Phaedon exclaimed taking hold of Emma’s hand.

‘Yes, it was. But I had the presence of mind to plan my escape. Nothing was going to stop me from getting as far away as I could. I thought he would track me down, so I and changed my name to Molly Watts and managed to get a job in a flower shop.

‘Oh yes I do remember how much you loved your flowers.’ Phaedon replied.



‘And luckily we eventually connected the dots,’ the sergeant said with a beaming Kimberly and Martin standing beside Emma looking on.

With that, Emma hugged Phaeton and removing an emerald ring from her finger she passed it to her. ‘It’s a Brazilian emerald. It’s a family heirloom. It was first passed down to Molly in the eighteenth century, and Molly passed it down to me, and now it’s yours!’

‘And Phaeton I heard that Jason was quite a hero,’ Martin said. ‘What’s he up to now?’

‘He’s hanging out with Jimmy his mate at Byron Bay.

‘There pretty much into surfing and the Northerly swells are near perfect this time of the year,’ Kimberly laughed.

‘Yes, but I believe they have something else in mind,’ Phaeton said holding Emma in her arms, ‘you’ll soon have an opportunity to meet him. He’s someone very special!’

Reflecting the night lights of the city skyline, the glass exhibition hall housed the Sydney Motor Show displaying the latest automobiles on offer from around the world.

A centenary year celebrating classic cars, centre of the exhibition hall was devoted to a dazzling display of classic vehicles, restored to their former glory.

Three entries vying for the most outstanding restorations were on display. The first was the bright red 1955 Ford Thunderbird Convertible. The podium's second-tier spotlighted Jason's immaculate Midnight Blue Chevy Pickup and on the third tier the spotlights revealed the 1958 Black Daimler sedan.

Surrounded by an enthusiastic patron audience and international television camera crews Phaeton looked on, proudly watching Jason and Jimmy step up to receive the 'Wheels Best Classic Show Car Award' trophies from the Motor Show President.

In a blaze of lights, linking their arms together Phaedon and Emma shared the glory raising the winning trophies high above their heads into the air.

‘Welcome to the spiritual home of classic cars,’ the show president announced stepping forward onto the display dais introducing Kimberly and the Zephyr Blues gathered on stage in the foreground with the Armidale Gospel choir. Taking a seat behind the keys of a grand piano Kimberly began her arousing tribute rendition of Highwater Highway. Caught in a blazing burst of lights a new star was born; her voice carrying across into the patron audience together with sound of the gospel singers being broadcast across the nation.

Dear Reader. I trust that you have enjoyed Highwater Highway. In Greek mythology, Phaeton is the endearing gift of light and in turn my gift to you all.

In return, now online at the Amazon.com on demand Bookstore, the Paperback and Hardcover entire versions of the FLASHBACKS AND FILM SCRIPTS six story series is available to purchase online.

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HIGHWATER HIGHWAY

MODELS INCORPORATED

FORBIDDEN COURIER

FLINCH

THE PORTRAIT PAINTER'S DAUGHTER

AND LADY CROSS

## **FLASHBACKS AND FILM SCRIPTS**

There are six riveting stories in this compilation, that span the centuries, the globe, even travelling into outer space. The first story, *Highwater Highway*, takes readers on a rollercoaster ride of suspense, coincidence and rediscovering long-lost memories. These six stories are beautifully written, inviting the reader to join with these well-defined characters as they overcome breath-taking challenges, outsmarting villains, building friendships and finding their soulmates.

## The Author

*Unuque son genre Inspired* by his mother Doreen Standard was the granddaughter of Thomas Stannard a professor of music with a degree in music from New York immigrated to Australia in 1898. Thirty years later his son Sidney formed an eight-piece string orchestra in Brisbane and was flown around Queensland by WW 1 aviation ace, Bert Hinkler tuning outback hotel pianos. Dudley was the third son of Dudley Vincent Hood and Doreen Stannard. Gifted with his Uncle Sidney's *Harmony Nevada* guitar Dudley Hood studied with Australian Jazz guitar legend Don Andrews went on to founding the successful Sydney group the 'Executives' in 1962 contributing to several hit records with the Executives.



