

**MURDER SQUAD DETECTIVES JOSEPH LIND
SHELLEY SHIELDS AND DALLAS COURTNEY**

**A
Crime
Novella**

A close-up photograph of two hands, one slightly larger than the other, clasped together in a firm grip. The hands are positioned centrally in the upper half of the image, with fingers interlaced. The skin tone is light, and the background is a solid, bright yellow.

DARE

**TO
BE**

DIFFERENT

Peter C Byrnes

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DARE TO BE DIFFERENT ©

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"It's been a long time since I've been around this part of Town." I mused as we sat at a set of lights. Glancing at the pedestrian traffic that was surprisingly thick and fluid at this time of night.

The motor slowly ticking over.

I'd half forgotten about those that frequented this shadow world. The people, who the majority of the conservative middle class wanted to ignore as living and breathing souls.

"Frequent it some time in your youth, did we?" Dallas looked nervously about him at the passing parade. A close inspection revealed a wonderful mix of humanity. From straight through the spectrum back to straight again.

If you get my drift.

"It apparently has a sordid past. A 'No-Go place,' one of my Teaching Brothers used to say." Dallas glanced across at me as I wheeled the Unmarked around the corner of the major intersection into a narrow, ill-lit side street.

"Yes, it was always part of the beat, so to speak.....before the Aids epidemic, it was the known hang-out for the male prostitutes. Mostly young guys looking for relatively easy money. See that high stone wall there at the back of the park? That was known as the Wailing Wall....or Crying Wall....I wouldn't be surprised I suppose, if it still is. Anal intercourse can be rough at times, so I was once told....I can only imagine.....then as the Aids Virus bit, the whole area and the practises fell out of favour except for the hard head types. They didn't last that long.....the HIV bug got them in the end, no matter how well they tried to protect themselves.....gradually the harder drugs took control and it became a necessity for the guys to ply their trade just so's they could get their nightly fix. You wouldn't dare walk around either section of that Park without shoes. You'd get stabbed for sure by some-one's discarded needle. It went downhill quick during those times. Punters were taking their lives in their hands just looking for a score....a head job or a fuck.....now, look at it. Gentrified.....during the day, but at night....this time of night, the night time guys still are out in force, so it seems.....some things never change, eh?"

"So it was a part of your beat? Back then?"

"In Undercover Narcs, you had no beat. You just had to fit in somewhat...anywhere, to make that important connection, mostly drug sellers. Small timers. You were always looking for the taller Poppies, so to speak.....unfortunately rarely finding them....the small fish are the expendable ones and they rarely talked out of school. The stories that some of these guys would tell.....made you

lose faith in human nature.”

I fell silent, lost in thoughts of characters that I had known in those days. Fifteen-twenty years ago. Most of them would be dead, I would imagine. Aids. Drug overdoses or suicide.

Not happy thoughts, Joe.

Not happy at all!

“I’d like to know the full history of this place and why it became the haunt of the male prostitute trade. You’ve got Kings Cross a stone’s throw away to the north with its famous strip, then here which was never integrated into the Cross business....well, not in my time at least.....and further down Oxford Street, since before I commenced in Narcotics, you had the Trannie Area which went almost to College Street. In the three separate areas, all the proclivities of human desire were catered for.....and rarely was there a mixing of the types. Strange, eh? Similar services offered to the particular Punter type so to speak, but a divergence in the Punters’ wishes and requirements. All generated by the huge variation in desires of the General Public. Back then, as I said, there was never any merging of the boundaries. Each stayed within the unspoken understanding of their region. Not like to-day, where mingling, suffusion and integration is the accepted norm. The lines of their surreal reality are now so interspersed.”

“I bet you saw some sights...”

“Bloody oath, yeah....and some really nice people who chose, were given no option or were forced to tread a different path, that’s for sure. Of course, in those days when I was in Undercover, just about every aspect of the different behaviours was considered illegal, debauched and depraved. In my job back then, you tended to turn a blind eye to that fact. How people chose to interact and get their jollies was not my concern. What they sniffed up their noses, plunged into their veins or sucked into their lungs was. Times have changed, eh? Do you reckon the various sexual behaviours have been accepted as reasonable in this day and age?”

“Of course. Well, most of them. We understand the dispersion more. We are a more tolerant society...more understanding of the human condition.....though my parents would kick me to Kingdom Come and back if they ever heard me murmur those words.....”

“Mmm....I wonder....your parents? Very conservative religious types?”

“Yeah. You could say that! Their wish was for their boy to enter the Seminary. The Cop Force? Way down on their wish-list, let me tell you. When I made the decision, they almost threw me out, actually. Very conservative, devout Catholics. All this talk of Priests buggering young kids? That’s going on at the moment? The work of the Devil and loose tongues trying to destabilise the seat of religion.....they do not believe that those things are actually happening. Even when I give them proof or they sat through a News item on TV about the Royal Commission.....”

“Mmm.....there were a lot of people who wouldn’t believe what was happening to 6 million Jews....and the Gypsies, old people, handicap persons, homosexuals, outspoken Catholic Priests and

even political enemies.....even when they could smell the odour of burning flesh spewing from the chimneys....or see the train loads of cattle carriages filled with people going only one way.....people will only believe what they want to believe.....which is hard to fathom when the facts are hitting you in square in the face every time that you turn around.....”

“You're a bloody cynic, Detective Lind. A bloody cynic. Knowledge is power. Truth will set you free.”

“Yeah, well.....who said that? Wasn't he hanged or something?....and jeezus, let a few of those persons come with us for a couple of weeks and then let them tell me whether the truth set them free.....it might make a couple lose their minds, become depressed or even slit their necks.....most I'd say! The general population live in a cocooned world of their own making. This nether-world is beyond their comprehension, interest or belief.”

There was silence.....I thought that he may have agreed with me but with Dallas Courtney, like a closed book, you could never ascertain the story of him.

2

We were on “Slip Team” Duties again.

When I say again, it was a cyclic roster duty of about every tenth week-end involved.

Usually.

We tended to trade those week-end Duties as valuable commodities.

Some guys liked that extra bit of cash in the Pay Packet. While on “Call-out” duties, you were paid a nominal amount for the entire period from Friday night midnight through to Sunday midnight.

Being “On-Call” more times than not didn't involve an actual 'Call-out'! And if it did, then normal penalty rates were the go.

We were actually very unlucky, being called out for the past three times that we were on 'slip-team' duties.

It was especially difficult if the Call-out occurred on a Sunday evening. Twelve midnight was the latest that you could “officially” work if you intended being in the office before nine on the Monday morning.

It was a crazy situation!

That arrangement often was dependant on the case involved.

I'd been in the situation were I was called out late on the Sunday evening, well before midnight, and finally, getting to bed the following Tuesday morning. Getting up a couple of hours later to appear at work bleary-eyed and exhausted on the Tuesday before noon!

With some Officers, the whole week-end duty clashed with the favourite Football game, a Birthday celebration or some such family thing. It was obvious who was on the "Take" for these week-end duties, though no-one complained, chastised or criticised anyone who might dominate the duty.

It was for the young ones, usually! The older you got, the less flexible your body was to the crazy Duty. A good sleep-in on the Sunday morning was a critical thing for us older Officers!

Me? I could really do without it, but both of my junior partners revelled in the extra money that the duty benefited from. I guess I may have been like that in my younger days when house payments and family demands dwindled the available cash flow.

A Day Shift team was placed on stand-by over a week-end to be called upon if the Night Duty guys had their hands full and couldn't take another call-out to a Murder Scene. This was the third consecutive week-end while on that cyclic call-out duty where me and my team were called upon. Sometimes it wasn't too bad, with a simple Murder Investigation the consequence, with the Arrest, Report and Paperwork completed rather easily. Other times it wasn't, with the investigation crowding out the day duty responsibilities.

Good penalty rates for the entire week-end though!

But then you got a messy case that required weeks of investigation and a lot of pounding the footpath. These cases tended to mingle in with our normal work load and make things extremely difficult.

I have never understood how the hierarchy could permit this practise to continue.

Blind Freddy could see that the Night Shift was totally under-resourced!

Mumbles of Staff ceilings, Government cut-backs and unsuitable candidates were the normal avenues of excuse. The number of Resignations and requests to be moved from the Murder Squad Night Shift teams was reaching epidemic proportions with the Hierarchy still ignorant of the reason.

Being overworked was the biggest problem. Tacked onto that was the need for these guys to appear in Court quite regularly to give evidence on a particular case. Coronal Enquiries. DPP Conferences. Forensic Meetings....all these in the 9-5 time-frame that meant these guys were hungry to catch up on lost sleep. Always! Maybe a catnap afterwards before commencing at their normal shift time. A physically sapping arrangement which was not appreciated. It was not uncommon to find exhausted bodies bunked down in the small "Sleeping Living away from Home Quarters" tucked away in the Basement area of the building. All bods were usually Night Shift guys trying to catch up on some sleep.

Going home was not an option as the general humdrum of life did not stop because Detective Two John Smith had worked night duty and two consecutive days of Court Appearances on several different cases that he was in charge of. The Missus still needed to vacuum the house, do the washing and keep their three month old Bubs from screaming her lungs out because Daddy was asleep.

It didn't work like that!

Marriages were the first to show signs of cracks!

I would like to know the proportion of broken marriages amongst Night Shift Detectives.....against us Day Shift guys.....it had to be bloody high, is all I'll say!

3

It had just gone two on the Saturday evening/Sunday morning.

Dallas parked the Unmarked at the far extremity of the small sliver of park that was dotted with large Gum and Plains Trees. The area not much different from when I had last visited two decades ago. The only difference was that the myriad light poles that had once dotted the grassy area had long been removed. The local Council giving up on the continuous need to replace bulbs and light covers that were angrily shattered by the night-time inhabitants of the Park. Now, large floodlights in shatter-proof casings were positioned high on the ancient stone "Crying Wall" or cantilevered high from timber Telegraph poles nearby, leaving only minimal areas of shadow or darkness.

These areas frugally defended by the occupant.

A large Coffee and Restaurant building sat squat in the centre of the larger section of Park across the road. Newer buildings. In the parallel Victoria Street, parking positions altered to "nose to kerb" allowing more vehicles to park on the street. The street considerable narrower than my former memories of it because of this change. As I said, the area becoming more gentrified.

Regardless, it still looked as though the Park was a night-time gathering point of guys lounging about, waiting for an interested Punter to cruise by in his car. It was surprising the number of Beamers, Audis and Lexus vehicles that crawled along the street looking at the prospective "goods". Some had regular Clientele. Others just took pot luck.

Many a crack-down had occurred throughout the years. The trade went underground for a couple of weeks to only emerge once again in the Park. At least it was only a shout from St. Vincents Hospital, is all I'll say.

We ducked under the Police Tape after signing in on the Crime Scene Attendance Sheet. Walked slowly towards the small tent and the gathering of white garbed personnel.

I gave Dominique a hug.

“I thought you were going home at the start of this month, Sweetheart?”

“Yeah...well...so did I. I was asked to stay over for an extra couple of weeks. Bernie Ford and your good mate “Muscles” Sarvich can be so persuasive....with Marge backing him up. Next week. At Bernie's place. My farewell. I will not be made to change my mind again. I miss my home and husband too much. You are invited. You and Tellie.....six thirty. A bottle of good Red. Do not be late.....and a little going away present for me if you are so inclined.”

That sexy smile as she went up on tiptoes to give me a kiss on the cheek. She was the only female form that I knew of that could make a white 'Onesies Forensic Boiler Suit' look sexy.....then again, she made anything draped over her body look sexy!

Once upon a time it had been me!

I remembered only too well!

We had history!

“We'll be there, with bells.....though I'm a little concerned at the way that you and Tellie got on last time that we got together for your supposed farewell...like a house on fire. I thought for one ghastly moment I was going to lose my lovely partner to you....”

Dominique Sherbaverst gave a quiet chuckle.

“Once upon a time maybe.....” That sexy look that she mastered flashing across her beautiful face.

Dom was not known to favour one side of the street early in her career.

“I think that I may know more about your better half than you, loverboy. She continued with a girlish giggle. “It's amazing what husbands, ex's and former partners will let slip about their wives and better halves while in that post-coital euphoria.”

I had forgotten Dom's previous life here in Sydney as a ball-breaker. She was one of those free spirits who loved everyone. Literally.....and everyone loved her. It was as if her personality was too big and powerful for any one person. Male or female. It didn't matter....though her wings were now severely clipped. He must be one extraordinary person I was heard to say over the Dinner Table at our last combined meal at Marge's and Muscle's place only weeks back.

An extremely delightful night I must say.

Tellie and I still referred to it.

I had no idea if Tellie knew that her ex-husband had been unfaithful to her with Dom....and I'd

say that if she did know, it would not have made one iota of difference to her on her opinion of Dom as one very strong personality and delightful woman.

It explained heaps as to Dom's attitude and character when she had been overlooked for the top job in the Forensic Laboratory Section of the City Morgue for that numbskull who had taken the job. Dom just up and quit and with no guarantee of obtaining a similar grade position, had summarily moved to Perth, WA.

She was now head of the Coroners Office Morgue and Post Mortem Laboratory over there.

Good on her!

She had said that she would have taken the lowest job available so long as she was well removed from the influence of that obnoxious twit from London!

It was estimated that during the obnoxious twit's tenure at least a third of all professional and Office duty Personnel departed from the Area leaving the Department extremely short staffed. It was only just now obtaining the staff numbers that had been lost during that reign of discontent! Largely to do with the hard work of the new Head and his 2IC, Brian "Muscles" Sarvich.

4

Two Forensic Tents had been set up in the Park some ten metres apart. Portable Light Poles set the area ablaze. Several generators hummed away near the back of an Emergency Response Truck. Its multi-coloured bar-lights jumping about in the still night.

We ducked under the side flaps of the first 'tent' following Dominique who was mentoring a young nervous Intern on her first Homicide Crime Scene. Straight from Medical School. The two of them murmuring away to one another, heads close together like lovers in a secret embrace discussing the movements of their upcoming love making.

Shelley was knelt down beside a twisted body lying partly on the footpath and partly in the gutter. Blood running down the gutter-line for some metres. The Victim's head at an unnatural position. The back of his head a mass of gore, blood, brain matter and matted bleached blond hair.

"No ID on either boy. I understand that is the norm around here when the lads start their shift." Dominique stated as she turned back to us. Shelley looked up at me and Dallas as we had ducked under the side flap.

Dominique shuffled uncomfortably. She always felt that the Crime Scenes were her world with no one permitted near the bodies or disturbing them until she gave the word. Shells needed to be

reminded of the recognised protocol.

She did not move from her hunched position over the body.

“The lad's nose is broken....I'd say by having his head slammed into the vehicle door....window sill....” She muttered, as she looked up at me.

“And a good morning to you too, Shells. A little crisp.....can you recommend a Coffee joint nearby? I need another before my mind will click into gear.....”

She gave me a scathing look from her squatted position. She continued as though I had not interrupted...or even appeared! Continuing on where Dom had finished off. They had both discussed the possibilities well before my arrival.

“A 4WD then, more than likely. Merely because of the height of the window sill over that of most sedans these days. If it was a sedan, the lad would more than likely have had to bend down, possibly with his fore-arms resting on the sill.....his head further away from the side of the vehicle....”

“.....or bent with his hands on the window sill....or arms straight.” Dallas gave a fair pantomime of what he was talking about. “The Assailant grabs the Victim around the back of the head and pushes his face straight down onto the vehicle window sill line....could be a sedan, Shell. The lower window sill line may have helped in smashing the boy's head down.....”

The both of them were straight into it, no “how's ya father or nothing!”

I let the two of them ramble on, not wanting to sprout possibilities so early in the proceedings. I needed to tell them that their theorising was just that. Guesses. Suppositions based on nothing at all. These should not be adopted as gospel and run with without considering as many other considerations as possible.

Their banter however, was how a team should operate, so I held my counsel. I remembered my former partner, Marge Hendricks and I carrying on in a similar vein. Many a scenario was discussed and aborted in this manner.

It was good to see the two of them at it.

“....I think I agree with both your suppositions, guys. A 4WD or a Commercial Van or some-such having the window sill higher.....or even lower.....that stuns the lad. Then he is hit from behind straight into the back of the neck....that kills him before he even hits the ground. The blow to the back of the head is pure extra anger as Dom has offered....the other guy realises what is happening....possibly he was initially standing close to his mate...at or near the vehicle in question....starts to run....again is belted from behind in the small of his back. He goes down from the force of the blow. They do the same thing. A blow to the back of the head.....like a golf swing....standing over him. But the summation of the vehicle type? Leave that conclusion open as time may prove to offer up a different scenario.....”

Shelley stood. Nodding her head. Her knees creaking from her effort and of the time that she had squatted over the boy. She continued to shake her head, looking over at me with tears in her eyes.

“He had a manicure. A pedicure. Recently. A professional job. Is there one close by?”

His fingernails and toe-nails were painted black. A high shine.

I was surprised to see Shelley apparently so affected by the two bodies. Well, she shed a couple of tears but the gory bit did not seem to phase her. It had taken her some time to be able to hold down what-ever was in her stomach when viewing a dead body with some extreme injuries. I was proud of her. Dallas still lurked in the background pretending to hammer away on his Laptop, not wanting to get 'Up close and personal' with the Victims.

This he needed to attend to.

Then again, I knew of Officers with years of experience who never really got used to viewing a gory body. Or one bloated and pale suffering from being in the water for some time. Bits missing from what-ever may have been pecking at the extremities. Or the eyes or mouth! The eye-balls and tongue a particular favourite of many of a water creature!

5

“Neither lad comes up on the National Codex file. Fingerprint Data Base. No form.” Dallas informed me quietly. I nodded my head in acknowledgement, looking around at the extremities of the Park.

Several guys were still plying their trade, though they had now moved to the far end of the Park on the busy cross street. Burton Street I think it was called from memory. They now located the furthestest point away from our position but still within the perimeter of the Park precinct. As though there was an unwritten law about boundaries or something.

The Punters having followed them. Still cruising the block in their vehicles knowing of the knot of Cops not that far away. Their needs far outweighing the risks involved of being pulled over by a Cop and slapped with a Misdemeanour Charge. Or having their name and photograph in the morning Newspaper.

Life goes on.

I knew that as soon as I headed in their direction, the Boys would be off like startled rabbits. Even if we could interview them, they would not offer one word of assistance. These guys, the

Punters and the 'Boys' especially, had been belted over the head by authoritarian figures all their lives more than likely. No way were they going out of their way to help us Cops, even if the two still lying in their own blood were close mates....which probably they were! This area closely defended with any Outsider trying to gain entry quickly repelled!

I strolled up the length of the Park in the opposite direction to those still plying their trade. Towards the major intersection with Oxford Street. Indicating to Dallas to accompany me.

“Those traffic lights....they've got video camera feed for traffic flow. Same as the intersection at the opposite end of the Park. Get onto the City Traffic Bureau and see what other cameras are in close proximity. Get them to send you their taped feeds for the period between say midnight to 0230 this morning. Of all cameras in the area. Down Oxford Street....to the Park....or at least where Burton Street meets onto Oxford Street.” I turned to look across the road. Further down, between the stands of tall Gum that dotted the small Park, the Hospital Entrance could be seen. “Check with the Lead on Scene Constable. See whether they have done a trawl that includes the Hospital over there....their camera locations also. OK?”

I started to walk back towards the Forensic tents as Dominique had gestured for my return. I stopped and turned on my heel.

“Dallas? That's the East Sydney Tech on the other side of that high stone wall. Or used to be way back when. Could have changed. See what, if any security cameras they may have that would give views of the Park and/or the roadway. OK”

“Those Restaurants on the main drag? They could have something that gives us a glimpse of the area....”

“Yeah. Good one. Take a note of the names and get on to them later in the day.....you may have to trawl them sometime during the week between normal Business Hours. OK? That should just about cover it, I reckon....Dom wants me. OK?”

I walked slowly back to the Tents that were bathed in light, pulling aside a loose flap to duck inside.

Shelley was assisting the Crime Scene Photographer to obtain several shots of the Deceased. Full face. Leaving as much of the gore and blood out as possible. We would need the shots for a trawl of the Commercial Section of Taylors Square later in the morning. Early next week or at least until we obtained better, less gory Morgue photos at the time of the Post Mortems.

For now, these would do.

“Joe? We're just about finished here. Same as the Forensic Team. It's a complete waste to expect them to do a hands and feet search of the Park area. Too much shit. Too much activity over the entire area and we'd have Buckley's trying to obtain DNA sample exemplars from any person who may frequent the area. They'd prefer to run a mile as soon as we tried to approach them! I think

it will be just a lucky break for us to even identify the two. Sad, huh? I want to get the bodies back to the Morgue. I've had a long night and want to knock off, anything else?"

I shook my head in the negative.

We all appeared to be on a downer.

More subdued then normal at a Body Site.

Why? Who could tell. They were just street kids who society and family had ignored. Disowned. Rejected. Forgotten.

Maybe that was it.



In these situations, it was encouraged to hand as much of the “leg work” over to the local Uniform Constabulary. They knew the area. The local people and Businesses. This was also to ensure that the “Slip Team” Units didn't use up the entire day and half the following night on the investigation. Claiming maximum overtime privileges, as though we all were on the “Take” wanting to maximise the effect of the overtime on offer.

How bloody-minded of the hierarchy to even think that!

I just wanted to go home and climb back into bed!

But to tell you the truth, I was averse to hand complete control over to the Uniforms, wanting to have total steerage of the Case as it unfolded for me and my team.

Too often, the Uniform guys' work, especially in interviewing persons of interest, had to be repeated by me and my partners. This obviously caused some friction with said persons and often the attitude of fuck it! Refusing to cooperate any further, accusing us of being bumbling idiots in basically asking the same questions as the Uniforms some days previously. I could not in all honesty, blame this reaction as over the top. Especially in areas such as this where the shadier pulse of life was for-ever just below the surface. And Cops not the flavour of the month....for a bloody long time now.

My two young partners looked as though they were here for the duration. Here to midnight on the Sunday night so that the eight hour separation between shifts was not broken. Taking full benefit of the overtime available.

It was a bleak, weak sun-up.

The early morning sunlight suffused through thin high cloud as we stepped from the brightly lit Entrance Foyer of the nearby Hospital.

Dallas was in his element and would spend hours viewing the Security Stream for likely vehicles of interest from several packs of DVD footage in Evidence Bags tucked tightly under his arm. It was perhaps the only way that we were going to break this case. Mind numbing hours of scanning video footage of the traffic coming and going from the area.

The bodies had been removed. The Forensic tape rolled up and the guys packing away their equipment. The Clean-up team was already at work cleaning up the spilt blood and gore. It was considered a waste of time trying to surgically protect the area. Nothing more would be gained that the last four hours hadn't produced.

I had just instructed the Sergeant-in-Charge of the local Uniforms who would continue this day to do the local trawl. Knocking on the front doors of nearby houses asking for any assistance. Trawling the Commercial area with photographs of the pair trying to determine their identities. I specifically requested that they pay particular attention to any Beauty Salon or Nail Joint that may have been recently attended to by our John Doe junior.

Dallas had been invaluable in providing reams of A4 photos of the faces of the Victims. With his faithful Laptop, he had downloaded the images taken by the Forensic Crime Scene Photographer and then married his computer to the Scanner/Copier/Printer that was an integral part of his "Office" in the back seat of our Unmarked.

His expertise in this regard was exceptional. Way above the skill of this old fashioned Dee. I was not looking forward to the day, pretty soon I imagined, when I would lose the two young Detectives to form a successful team on their own.

I wondered what in hell I would do then!

Barry Bellamy unfurled his generous frame from an Unmarked that had just pulled up near us.

"Joseph....How are you?" He puffed as he came towards me.

"Hanging out for a coffee and something to eat. It's been four hours since I was rudely awoken by your Head Clerk on this 'Heads-up'. What you doing? Checking up on us?"

"Kind of.....I 'll shout you that coffee in a while.....where's the other two of the triumvir?"

The fact that I had two junior partners was a precedence that was not warmly received by most of the Rank and File of the Murder Squad Room. Night or Day shifts. I knew what he was trying to do. Get me to rise to the bait. I'd known him long enough to ignore the stir.

"Both of them are helping with the trawl down through Oxford Street....I know its a bit early on a Sunday morning for most Businesses to be even open, but there's a couple of early-opening coffee joints and Newsagent that they wanted to canvass.....bloody street kids.....it never stops, does it? It's like a conveyor belt in a bloody factory. Kids thrown out of home to live on the

streets.....getting in with the wrong crowd perhaps. Drugs. Confusion over gender base.....it never stops. You'd think that after all this time, people would learn....but no, we just keep on making the same mistakes.....”

He shook his head sadly. Looked down at where he thought his feet may have been hiding beneath the expanse of his stomach.

“Keeps us meaningfully employed.” He muttered. A weak smile on his face. A certain sadness displayed.

Bellamy was the Officer-in-Charge of the Night Duty Murder Dees. At this time of morning, he should have been thinking of calling it a day, though he was known to exist on a couple of one hour catnaps per day.....and his shift completion according to a clock was not in his nature.

His plate was always full to overflowing but you would never know that from the manner of the big man. He took it in his stride. Everything. The most verbose and strong talking that I had ever heard was against the inconsistencies and ineptitude of the Hierarchy. He was a constant complainer in that direction. A very good Boss who looked after his crew like a Mother hen, much in the same mould as Abbey. My illustrious Boss.

“You been in a bit of poo lately, Joe. Not like you at all....upsetting the Policy and Procedures Manual....” A smile on his face. He liked the renegade in any person. ‘Give ‘em heaps’, was his common heard mantra.

“Yeah, well....I think that I very well could be on shakey ground for a while....I need to tuck my horns in a bit....”

“Don't do that Joe. Keep giving them heaps. We all need something to talk about around the Morning Tea Break table!” He slapped me on the back and chuckled at his own joke. “You did a good job rescuing that young Constable pinned down at that DV homicide case, a while back. So I heard....very gutsy on your part.....you sure gave the S&E Panel guys a thorny ethical conundrum, so's I hear.....look, can you get your two partners to join us down the end of Oxford, near College. That Pub shaped like a triangle near the south-eastern side of the Park. The Oxford I think it's called. Doh.....time to knock off soon and get some sleep.....you too, by the looks of it. We've got a body which I think maybe related to your two John Does.....”

Shit!

I could see what he was doing. Adding another onto me and my partners. Insinuating that the two homicide scenes were related so that we would remain at the helm of both Investigations, thus minimising the effect and workload of his night guys.

I gave him a look.

He guessed at my thoughts. Gave me a wink.

“C'mon mate. What else you got on your plate? Nothing, so's I hear!”

7

Bellamy and I parked our cars near the mouth of a narrow alleyway. A former Service Lane that divided large lines of terrace houses in this part of the City. An area that was usually used by Druggies and Drunks sleeping it off.

This Alley though, appeared to free of the usual flotsam and garbage. It ran in behind the Pub and then continued on. Its rough bitumen surface backing onto the commercial buildings facing onto Oxford Street and onto the mix of residential and commercial properties facing onto Burton Street. The area was brilliantly lit by several light towers even though the sun was making its weak morning appearance.

“What are you two doing down here? You guys wanting to fill the day out, eh?”

“We had just come out of the last Coffee joint on the strip as Dominique drove passed. She beeped us and told us to follow her....”

“Huh, I've had my position usurped by the lovely Forensic Pathologist who broke my heart and disappeared....as she is going to do again!....”

“Hush, my little boy....and pay attention....”

“It's sure a busy night.....”

“I'd die for those shoes.....”

“She did, I reckon....” Responded Dallas. I noticed that he too was bent down over the corpse. Shelley again was squatting over her.

We sure had turned one big corner.

“He....” Replied Dominique quietly.

Dallas spun his head around to stare at Dom.

He stood nervously, a look of incredibility on his face.

Dom shook her head. A smile on her face. “Yes, my young man....she is obviously your first Crossdresser, eh? I'll tell you what, I'll be taking that gorgeous dress off her nice and easy....with a tuck and cut, I reckon that I'd make it fit...it's gorgeous. She definitely had a good fashion sense.....a lot better than some women that I know.....and a fair bit of money to be able to purchase it! I'd love to see her wardrobe.....”

“Her collection of shoes too.....” Shelley added. “The dress is Designer label.....”

“I'll bet that she has some beautiful lingerie on...top class.”

“How do you know....that....she is a he?” Dallas had not regained his composure.

“C'mon, Dallas. The false breasts are a dead give away, pardon the pun....and in checking the core body temperature, you can't help but feel his balls even though they're strapped down pretty tightly.....”

She and Shelley shared a smile. Dallas didn't look amused.

I shook my head, trying not to laugh at their display. Jealous of a guy dressed in drag. Women could be so shallow! I said as much knowing that the black humour was intentional and meant to get a rise from the two. All I got was sullen stares.

Dallas seemed to cower from the image. He nervously looked around. Embarrassment etched on his face.

“A guy! Shit! You'd never guess.....just looking at him....a guy!?”

“He's a lot better than most of them, let me tell you. They're usually a little easier to spot, especially for women which says something about men and their innate sense of observation. Which at times is nil, especially when it comes to people....they never get above the breasts so I hear.....” A giggle accompanied the comment.

“OK. OK. C'mon guys. Remember that we must show due respect to all Victims, regardless of their circumstances. Dom? What killed him?”

“ Oh, for a pair of legs like that....half the population would ogle over them....”

I gave her a stare that was meant to nail her to the nearby wall.

She gave me a snide smile in return that suggested, 'So kill me!'

“Dallas, less than six hours ago weren't you mumbling something about how we were much more of a tolerant society than in past times? What's changed?”

I had to get it in.

He waved away my 'stir' and went to take a closer look over Dom's crouched position.

“Blunt Force Trauma. A single blow to the back of the head. Base of the neck. Can't tell whether the same implement was used in both crimes....initial indications says no. It snapped the neck of the Vic.” She moved his head from side to side with her fingers holding the neck. “Death more than likely instantaneous.....it looks as though they may have caught the victim to place him hard up against the wall. Pushed these Wheelie Bins up to the body to conceal it....Death between midnight and three I'd say by the lividity marks on the body....body temp.....it wasn't cold last night, was it? Quite mild in fact.”

“Why have you surmised that they caught the body and carried it to this spot?”

“The way that the body is displayed.....The dress for example. The blow...I'd say, to cause the Vic to collapse immediately.....that is gauged by the bruising of the implement across the body. A powerful swing, let me tell you. No grazing or bruising that one would associate with the body having been dragged...both shoes still on.....stockings not laddered or soiled. If you guys had ever worn that particular style of shoe, then the chances are if he was dragged to the spot, both would have come free of his feet....The dress appears to have been straightened as he was laid in that positioned....I'd go as far as to say, he was gently placed in that positioned.....”

“The Perp knew him.....personally. Had some feelings towards him...even in death.”

“There's no blood....”

“No...massive internal bleeding is my guess. The fracture of the neck is very severe....that would have killed him instantaneously....yet his head has been positioned carefully in relation to his body...it should have been almost at right-angles.....”

“Do we have ID of the vic?”

“Yes. William Dean Worseley. DOB 12 February 1985. Address in Pymont.....a UNSW ID security card in the purse....which is unusual. They do not normally carry such ID clues about when they are out in their Fem role....dressed up.”

“You have such a way with words Dom....as though you're a part of the scene....Do you think that the same Perps are responsible for all three homicides?”

She stood and took off her two pairs of latex gloves. “You know, the Gay Scene in Perth is very active with only a small but friendly group of Crossdressers and Pre- and Post-Op Transsexuals. A fair proportion of the crowd came from the Eastern States. Disowned. Thrown out. Ostracised from their families back here. They ran as far away as they could from their family base and former friends....a bloody pity actually.....a real shame....there was a spike in the number of CD Bashings....two homicides from memory. You get to mingle with the crowd....just nice people. Not freaks....or perverts. Most just feel more comfortable dressed up. Only a few want to progress to that final cut of wanting to lose their masculine role during normal hours....its strange really. Woman would not think twice about getting dressed up for an important date....or night out. Dressed to the nines. Part of the process is in getting ready. Pampering themselves. Very few men experience that same buzz.....these guys do.....in regard to telling whether the three crimes are linked....the same Perps?....bit early to tell....at a guess I'd say yes....based on the body markings, bruising and method of hitting the three Vics, but still a guess at this stage....”

“This homicide being the first, one would think....but this Vic does not have the back of his head staved in....”

“No.....something that is a worry actually...as it could point to a different set of Perps thus a different reason for the attack.....unless they did not want to upset the lie of the wig...or cause any damage to the face as they thought it too beautiful to damage....”

“If that is the case, then that is weird...”

“Either way, it looks to be our Case. Dallas and Shells? Looks like that you may get your wish....to be on duty until late to-night!”

8

“C'mon. We are not going to learn any more by milling around here.....let's get some breakfast, eh?” Bellamy suggested. “The Uniforms can continue their trawl though nothing will be learnt, I suspect. Anyone of interest left for their beds several hours ago....you should come back here around late afternoon, early evening to-night to catch the crowd starting to gather. By then the Night Bar Manager of the Pub will have come on duty. If anyone would have seen something....or know something it would be she/he.....”

“Why can't we go wake.....um.....the Bar Manager up?” Dallas asked nervously.

Bellamy smiled.

“You've got a problem with those who walk on the wild side, don't you. She would have hit the sack around 5 this morning....after being on her feet since 5 maybe 4 yesterday afternoon. She is not the type of person who likes to have her sleep broken, let me tell you.....she is just as likely to tell us to go to hell and to talk to her at a reasonable hour....sometime after midnight, usually!”

“What about the Pub Owner?”

“He'd be pissed by 3 last afternoon. Sleeping it off down in the Cellar more than likely....with his Teddy Bear....”

“Teddy Bear?”

“Hmmm.....a big one. Had it since he was a little girl apparently.....”

His face lit up with a broad smile. He nodded his head to assert his truthfulness. I still had my doubts. We passed several Cafes and Coffee Lounges half full with the morning trade. Most sitting stiffly, blurry-eyed, reading the Sunday morning papers. We crossed over busy Oxford Street and up a side street. Down a set of stairs into a Basement Shopping Arcade that was blocked off except for the entrance into a cosy Cafe.

The smell of coffee and Bacon, Sausages and Eggs hung heavily in the air.

“Hello Stranger....” was our greeting. A broad, buxom woman seemed to have trouble extricating herself from a small, semi-circular booth. Several other people sat around the table.

Heads bowed. No cheer in their demeanour. She waddled towards us, holding out her arms to embrace Bellamy. That was not achieved! By either one of them. A quick round of introductions. A look up and down, especially of Shelley. Sizing her up, I thought immediately.

“I guess you're snooping around because of Billie's death, huh Bells?”

The big man nodded his head. Looked carefully around the room.

“News travels fast, eh, Dolls?”

“Yeah, well.....stuff like that in any case.....um....your usual table.....there are a few people here who it might be worth your while having a talk to....if you get my drift. Been here since I opened a couple of hours ago. Before that, what would you Lady and Gentlemen like? Something to eat? The House Special? With a large Coffee?”

“Yes, Dolls. The same for all of us.”

Again he glanced around the room, nodding his head slightly to one or two persons. Sat with an audible sigh in a larger semi-circular Booth that accommodated all of us without much trouble. We were not sitting shoulder to shoulder, that's for sure!

“It's Shelley isn't it?” He looked at Shelley.

She nodded her head.

I thought that Bellamy was just making conversation.

“Shields? Shelley Shields? Your old man. Harry? Harry James 'Jimmy' Shields...or Rusty Shields he was known as later in his career.” He nodded his head, not waiting for a reply. “Heard good things about you, girl. Good things. Not your old man's daughter, eh? Here's hoping.....”

Shelley lifted her head. Jutted out her chin.

“Yes, I'm his daughter though I hardly knew him. He and Mum divorced when I was around 10....so I really don't remember him much.”

“Mmm...good thing I reckon. Maybe a good thing.”

I was completely in the dark.

Bellamy turned to Dallas Courtney.

“Heard things about you too.....a whiz when it came to the theory, but a little nervous in the real world. Always known to bury yourself in a computer....Son, ya gotta look people in the eye. Watch the way that they react. Their body language. Their tone of voice....you won't get that in a computer screen.....though people are hoping high things from you eventually.....when you get your head around that fact.....”

He leant back against the red leather back rest. A slight grin on his face as he watched the two

intently. He broke eye contact as large cups of coffee were placed on the table.

It was then that I realised that Shelley had been stooped over the first Victim in the Park as Dallas and I had driven up. She was there ahead of us.....that was bloody impossible if she had come from home. Up the Leppington Road. Out past Liverpool. I mentioned as much.

“No....I stayed at Mum's place, which I think I'll do when-ever we are on 'Slip Team' Duties. It's a lot easier....though a bit unfair on Brett. He's left to manage the Farm Duties by himself for the entire week-end.....”

“Where's your Mum live?” I asked.

“Still at Bondi Beach...overlooking the Beach?” Bellamy broke in.

Shelley nodded her head. Bellamy never failed to surprise me. I thought then that a huge memory file was a certain pre-requisite for becoming a DS on Day Duty or a Sergeant-in-Charge of Night Duty. Any oversighting position that involved a large number of subordinates. That takes me out of the equation to progress further up the promotion ladder, I thought to myself. That brought a smile to my face. As though I would ever make the next grade going on my past record. People would shudder at the thought!

“One thing I will say, is that your Old Man knew a good deal when he saw it staring him in the face. That joint has got to be worth millions now.....”

Shelley nodded her head slightly. You could tell that she did not like the conversation. I again realised with a jolt that I knew little of Shell's family...or life! Dallas's also. Bellamy knew more of them than I....and he didn't even work with them! My former partner Marge Hendricks had seemed like an open book compared to these two. I knew Mar's entire life history within about six months of partnering with her.....

These two?

Very little.

When I thought about that, I did not really like the truth. Instead I blamed them! Their combined reticence in that regard, but if the truth could be faced, it was more to do with me and my complete disinterest in that side of my two young partner's lives.

Why?

I don't know whether I could give you a reasonable answer!



“Dolls, you knew William Dean Worsley, then?”

We'd finished our meals and were all sitting like contented fat cats after having too much cream!

Contented but uncomfortably full!

If we were sitting out in the sun, I'm sure we'd be like that contented cat and fall asleep!

“Billie....we knew him as Billie. A beautiful person. Inside and out.” She said sadly.

“He doesn't live at home. In Willoughby.” It was a statement from Bellamy, not a question.

The overweight woman shook her head.

“Hasn't since before he did his HSC....got thrown out when he was caught trying on his sister's Grad gown.....never been back, so's I been told. Hasn't spoke them either, though his sister contacts him occasionally. Just to keep in contact though she don't understands his need. Shares a Unit in Pymont with a lovely girl. Bennie. A Dyke though you would never know it. An extremely feminine little thing, a real pixy whose androgynous life-style cannot hide the fact that she is one beautiful person.....she'll be gutted. I would like to go with you when you go see her, if that is alright. Yes, Bells?”

“I'm bushed Dolls....and it's not my case. I'm sure that Joe here won't object to your company. You can in fact direct them to.....Billie's? Is that right? As in Billie Holiday? How come you know where they live?”

“It's a rather small world, especially in this hemisphere that these people orbit in. I've been there several times.....Billie? She was high up in Academia...had been offered a Professorship at UNSW. He said that he wasn't ready for it. Maths. Physics and Computer Science was his speciality. He'd been head-hunted by Silicon Valley people in the States, he was held in that high regard. She couldn't leave Bennie.....which in itself caused the occasional rift. Ben blamed herself in those moments of holding her back.....but they were so good together. Dovetailed beautifully together I think would be a good description of the two.”

“You're having trouble with this, aren't you?” Bellamy asked suddenly of Dallas. He had snapped his head around to where Dallas was sitting beside me.

Dallas reddened. He shifted uncomfortably.

“It's just.....who is she and he? He is dressed like a woman. All the time? No? She is androgynous but also dresses like a woman? A butch sort of way? I have a bit of a problem.....”

“So....you classify yourself as a normal, red-blooded Australian male?” The large woman leaned towards Dallas. He leant backwards. “You are aware of this *other* world, right? Like a vast proportion of the populace, you know of its 'beingness' but chose not to admit its existence. Then there is another section of society who know of its existence but as long as it doesn't effect the sensitive equilibrium of their lives, it really doesn't exist to them and then there is a section who know of its existence but wish that it would go away, which it might if they do not have to think about it or are confronted by it....which leaves this small...very small section of the community, the vast proportion by the way who are highly motivated, ultra-intelligent, very nice people, in this no-man's land. The vast majority of these people ostracised by their families and friends.....why? Because they are not considered normal!!! Such a stupid word!” The large woman flung her arm out. “This world around you.....gay, lesbian, bi, trannies and drag queens represent almost 10% of the total population. One in ten.....maybe slightly less....through no fault of their own but by a fluke of nature. Of birth. Of gestation....not saying that these people suffer from a birth defect but.....like your "normal" people, they had no choice in the matter. Whether they were gay, lesbian or trannies.” Bellamy offered. “You consider yourself normal.....like....you prefer the warmness of a computer screen over the interaction of another human being....and you consider yourself normal....????”

She looked across at Dallas with a look of sorrow. Patted his hand as a favourite old Aunt would do.

“I agree, such a stupid word!” Bellamy spat out as he looked down his nose at my young partner.

Dallas cleared his throat....”Um.....I....there are those who say that to-day's break-down of Society is because these....these....minority sections have come to the fore and are demanding acceptance....”

“Or is Society's breakdown as you call it, which I do not agree is happening by the way, is it being caused by the ignorance and intolerance of a majority of the inhabitants....to any minority group that they have trouble with accepting.....” I growled out. Completely disappointed in Dallas's attitude. If he wanted to remain my partner for a long period he needed to rid himself of that point of view!

“I'm not saying that I have that point of view, just that it was something that was never spoken of in my upbringing....and Gays? They were a tribe of the Devil.....”

“They're people, son. Just like you. With the same likes and dislikes. The same things that give them joy and tears....we have this need to label people. Put them in boxes.....these people around you.....look at them. Most of these people in here now knew Billie as a person.....and can you pick out the male and female amongst the lot here now? Does it really matter when all should be treated as just persons.....Most do not fit into one box...much the same as you don't, I would suspect....normal? The most over-rated condition of the human psyche. Our likes, dislikes, our emotional wants and well-being, our physical and sexual wants and desires, our psychological

make-up and progression belongs to just the one person. You. Learn to accept that we are all different and not just because we do or do not wear the same clothes, the same shoes, walk the same way or think in the same manner....because we don't. Isn't that what makes being a Cop one of the best career paths? Because we get to see that huge smorgasbord of the human condition? In all its diversity? Its differences?" Bellamy was red in the face after this little dialogue. He was angry.

I couldn't agree more.

I'd often been asked why I remained a Cop, especially when I was on a "downer". Like all people in their chosen career, it has its moments. But the reason why I remained a cop was encapsulated completely within that small speech by Bellamy. I could only nod my head in agreement.

There was no need to add anything else.

10

Julia 'Bennie' Anderson was a pixy. A slight, petite thing of extreme attractiveness. She had that inner glow. A smile that reminded me of Audrey Hepburn. The eyes, also. Her hair a short, boyish cut. Tracky-daks and a loose T-shirt. Her small, boyish breasts hardly noticeable. Small hips. Tiny feet.

She had been told the news of her partner's demise already. Her face streaked with tears and anguish.

"I'm sorry that we have to barge in on you like this at this moment....is there anyone we can call to be with you?"

"No...not really. Dolls here. She will stay with me for a while. Won't you?" An imploring tone to her voice.

I had noticed that the large woman had flitted heavily around the Cafe while we were devouring our breakfast. Small groups of people needed her presence. A hug. A smile. A quiet laugh to help them get through the loss of a friend. We spent an hour or two interviewing each and every person there obtaining bugger all, but impressed with Doll's mothering and the respect that she was shown.

Additionally, I was taken by the respect that all of them showed towards our Victim, Billie.

He had been a part of the scene for around five to seven years. Helping out those who felt very uncomfortable within themselves of the way that they were. Of the strange feelings that overtook

them. Dominating their every waking moment. While I had trouble trying to understand this uncontrollable urge to “dress up”, to be like a woman and not necessarily wanting to be a woman, there were those who did want to tread down that path to the final cut, I could still empathise with them.

It is not an unknown thing to hear a felon, a criminal mutter that the urge to steal, to kill, to bash some-one was an uncontrollable urge that was impossible to ignore.

“The Devil made me do it!” was not an unusual excuse.

We stayed at the Unit for around an hour, being filled in on “Billie's” life and character between rounds of sobbing and hand-wringing. Several people came to offer their respect to 'Bennie' Anderson, leaving food and flowers, promising to come back within the hour to be with their friend. Not wanting to be so close to a bunch of Cops. I was impressed with the closeness of the “crowd” and the sympathies offered, mostly by a younger generation. Dallas too, was moved by the display of very intense emotions and the ease with which they showed those emotions in front of strangers.

Us.

Coppers were not held in that high regard by those that did enter the Apartment. That was obvious!

As we climbed into the Unmarked, Dallas muttered something along the lines that this was not how he was led to believe these people of the shadows conducted themselves.



In complete contrast, William 'Billie' Dean Worseley's aging parents sat stony-faced as we offered our condolences. Their parting comment was, *'thank you, but he is not our son. Our William left never to return some years ago.'*

Dallas slumped into the back seat of the Unmarked. Let out a stream of air. In frustration? In exasperation? I don't know.

“Now, they reminded me so much of how my parents would be under the same set of circumstances.” Dallas mumbled as we headed away from the address.

“Stoic, you mean?” I replied.

“Stoic!? No.....Completely divorced from the reality of the situation. Having disowned the lad when he was about 18, he no longer existed for them. Cold. Heartless....loveless.”

“Your parents?” I asked, surprised at the revelation.

“Yes....in a way. Bigoted, narrow-minded, religious zealots in their own way.....if it is rejected by the priest or the Religious teachings, they have tamped down any feelings that they may have had for the *wayward* son. That was an easier solution to live with then having to admit that their son was not of the same ilk as all the other good Catholic boys.....was somehow warped. Impure. Daring to be different through no fault of them or their parenting skills would be how they looked at it.....they must have been swayed by some-one else.....some-one else's nurturing.....some-one else's fault.....OK, never admitting that it was no-one's fault. Just a tragedy of birth.....but oh! No. Not from my body...my loins!”

There was both anger and sadness in his tone. Shelley gave me a warning glance to leave it be.

“You still live with your parents, don't you Dallas?”

“In a sense...but I think it is about time that I did fly the coop for my own good.....I don't wish to discuss the matter any further. OK?” There was a coldness in his tone.

“Dallas, if you need any help...anyway at all...please let me know. OK?” I looked back at the young man in the rear vision mirror. He seemed to be slumped low in the back seat. Staring out the window at nothing in particular.

“OK?” I enquired. Wanting to stress the point.

He fell silent for some time before he continued.

“Here I thought once upon a time that what we just saw in the old Worseley couple, was the accepted norm....the reaction of God-fearing persons against those that had turned to the Devil's work.....”

“Yes...the perceived norm...what is considered the normal behaviour of responsible adults...do you think that the narrow opinion is based on religious teachings and fervency?”

“It certainly looks that way which is kind of a quandary....I can still remember those teachings when I was but a lad. Of God loving all his children. Red and yellow and black and white....what has happened?.....Joe? I think that I may have had too much of a good thing for breakfast.....it's not that far out of your way. Do you mind dropping me home?”

“Sure....you be OK?”

“Yeah. I think.....”

“Um.....we are going back into town to the Pub to interview the Owner, the Bar Manager and as many people as we can who may come through the doors of the establishment throughout the night. Up until around closing time. Hopefully well before midnight! I understand that a Forensic team will also be there taking fingerprints and DNA samples.....that's all that may have been found on-site. Some examples of fingerprints and a little DNA trace. At least a little better than the two

young guys' final resting place. Hopefully, we may get something to-night....”

“We've got to go back into the vicinity in any case. I've got to pick up my Unmarked.” Shelley added.

“If it's still in one piece, that is...now that will involve a mountain of paperwork if it has been trashed....”

“...or burnt....”

“Don't go there, Shells. Don't go there!” I responded, part grimace, part smile on my face.

12

Joshua Hamilton Blayney was born Jocelyn Helene Blayney.

He was the Registered Owner of the Freehold and in a relationship with the Bar Manager and chief beer puller, A.C. Hughes. They'd been together as a couple for more years than they would want to admit, both of them laughingly contended.

They'd met while at University in Melbourne. Having fled there after being unceremoniously ejected from their respective family homes in NSW because of their “unsavoury” and “decadent” behaviour and dress.

JHB while disowned, became the sole benefactor of a sizable fortune left by a reclusive and “eccentric” Uncle who was only referred to by the rest of the family in whispered asides. This legacy seemed to be the last finger poked at a straight-laced family which attempted unsuccessfully to wrench said fortune from the delighted by still disowned son come occasional daughter!

JHB could see the irony of it all and often stated that he could still hear the mirth of the “eccentric” Uncle. Upon leaving Court, JHB reflected his Uncle's wishes in “giving the finger” to his entire estranged family as his Uncle before him had also done for most of his life. One of the conditions in the late Will And Testimony of the old man which he was only too happy to abide by!

A portion of the money was used to purchase the Pub deliberately in that part of town where the flocks of similar clad and like-minded persons could congregate and enjoy themselves without fear for their lives.

During the early days of the Establishment, the Pub was regularly raided by the over-enthusiastic local Cops and members of the feared 21 Flying Squad. This slowly abated as persons caught in the raids were regularly very public persons in the Entertainment Industry or often Members of Parliament who it was said, were only there to rub shoulders with various persons of

their constituency!

No Law against that, now is there?

JHB was tall and lean. A bad excuse of a moustache that failed dismally to “bush” out no matter how he tried to influence its growth. A very quick wit and a scathing tongue if he so chose.

On the other hand, AC was a very poor example of those witty Drag Queens that were liked by one and all. He only wore a full body set of tights that were favoured by male Ballet Dancers that left nothing to the imagination. Sometimes adorned with a short Tu-tu. A pair of bright red stilettos that had to have hurt after a very short time of them being worn for the duration of the shift. Eye make-up that was very pronounced and coloured and a hair-style that was extremely colourful and over the top. The style and colour changed at least twice a week. Bright red lip-stick that was lathered on by Blind Freddy so it seemed, and face foundation that gave him the appearance of death warmed up. He wore so many bracelets, bangles and chains on both wrists his arm muscles, along with his pecks, were in continuous work-out mode.

No-one knew what the A.C. stood for.

Not even AC himself/herself!

The two of them were a synergy of opposites though their senses of humour and repartee could keep the Patrons amused for hours.

The duties of the Bar were left to two Bargirls of questionable sex as Shelley and I crammed into the small Office with AC and JHB. The evening rush had not as yet materialised as it was still only late afternoon.

We had viewed the previous evening's four video feeds of the interior of the Pub and the external cameras that focused on both the front entry and footpath of Oxford Street and the narrow Service Lane where Billie's body had been found. Unfortunately, the suspected 'kill area' was just outside the vision of the one camera in that area. We would take the originals which we would give to Dallas on the morrow for his forensic examination.

“Doesn't help much, huh?” AC lamented.

“Maybe yes. Maybe no. We do know that who-ever the Assailant is, he knew of the range and scope of that particular camera.....Billie was distracted by something...or some-one and walked out of camera range to meet her Killer.....you could also assume that she knew her Assailant by the way she smiled and seemed at ease when she was first beckoned....it begs the question what was she doing out there....did she smoke? Did she sell? Did she take other drugs? Was she into sex when she was dressed?” I enquired.

“Billie...no! No way!” Both AC and JBH strongly chorused as though they had practised the line for-ever.

“How can you be so sure? So positive of that fact?” Shelley rejoined.

“Billie had a superb mind....he was in demand let me tell you, by various Research Organisations. Here and overseas. He would always say that it was the luck of the drawer on both counts....his want to dress up and his excellent mind. He would not even consider abusing those gifts that had been given to him...either one.....he worked for a CSIRO small off-shoot Research Company that was on the doorstep of a huge Scientific break-through that was going to be unveiled next week actually....the patents had already been tabled and accepted....that would have enormous benefit world-wide.....he was so excited.....he was the Lead Researcher on the project. Thirty years of age. He would have had the world at his feet, he said the other night. He was so excited.....”

“When could you have such a conversation with him? Did you mix socially with him?”

“The Pub doesn't open at any time on a Monday and we just have the temp staff on Duty for the Tuesday and Wednesdays.....gives us a bit of time to ourselves. We would often have Billie and Bennie over...or vice versa. They were a so interesting couple. Both of them superb Dinner guests.....” AC sniffled. Apologised.

“The name of the firm that he worked for....do you know it?”

“Umm...yes. I think.” JHB uttered uncertainly. “Mobile Sunscope P/L....was that it, dearie?” He turned to AC for confirmation.

“I think so....check with Bennie....she'll know?”

“What does Bennie, Julia, do? For a job?”

For all the time that we had sat there in the Apartment and listened to her talk of Billie in such endearing terms, none of the three of us had enquired into the man's professional standing or place of work in any detail. Neither had we enquired into Julia's background too much! A terrible oversight as we would need to interview close work mates and colleagues of both of them on the morrow.

“Um....she works as a Research Assistant in one of the UNSW Laboratories. Mainly cellular and biological research, I think.” Again JHB turned to AC for confirmation.

“The wheeled Rubbish Bins? When are they collected?”

“They're the commercial grade sized bins. Once a fortnight. Tomorrow....”

“The Lane appears to be too narrow for one of those big Trucks to enter...”

“Yes.....we have to push both bins to the mouth of the Laneway. He still blocks off one side of the street while he empties both bins. He lifts them up over the front cabin.....”

“Who wheels them out?”

“I do, usually. Sometimes AC helps me if he hasn't got his heels on.” They both giggled at that.

“So your fingerprints? Your palm prints would be all over them?”

“Yes...as you can see, we have already given our souls away.....” He raised his hands to show the remains of fingerprint ink on them.

“No-one else?”

‘No...not usually....’

“So occasionally there is? They are not normally on that side of the lane-way?”

“No.....they are usually under lock and key in that small roofed....um...like a half-a-garage. It was a Council requirement when we changed over to that style of wheeled Bin.....”

“Under lock and key.....” I repeated. They both nodded their heads in unison. “But not last night? And I think we could safely assume that they had been wheeled into that position so as to hide the body....it seems strange that they didn't put the body into one of the bins....especially if they were to be emptied within 24 hours.” This I said almost to myself. I noted the point in my Note-book.

“You'd think that moving the bins to that location would highlight the inconsistency. Not the normal arrangement....”

“Only if some-one knew of that fact....”

“But.....JHB? You said that they were kept under lock and key? Usually?”

“Yes. No...it would seem that way...one of us...or the Day Shift Manager forgot to lock it up after the inside cleaning job was completed....maybe the Cleaners, perhaps.”

“Contract Cleaners?”

“Yes....”

“They have keys? Access?”

“Yeah....bloody hell, we're usually still asleep when they come in...if the Day Manager doesn't let them in, then they have a key themselves...to the Garbage Shed too. They know the security sequence on the alarm set-up.”

“Can we get those video feed copies of the last evening? All camera feeds? And the name and addresses of all your staff. Night and day shift....the Cleaners too. OK?”

“Who discovered the body and called it in?” I asked Shelley as we filed from the small Office and out into the back of the Main Bar. AC remained behind to provide our list of requirements.

“Person or persons unknown. Crime-stoppers. No ID offered.”

Both Shells and I knew that there could still be a way to identify the Caller if the call had been made via a Mobile phone. I nodded to Shelley to follow it up when we were finished here.

“Thanks for these tapes....we'll be out amongst the Patrons asking questions for a while. I'd say

that the Forensic Team will be here for most of the night. What time do you close up shop?”

“When the last patron leaves. On a Sunday such as this with most patrons feeling heavy of heart, maybe well before midnight. If not, our usual closing time is one in the morning....Friday and Saturday nights it can be a darn sight later.....Three. Four. It's known to go even later....earlier!”

I let out a groan. We had been awake and going since 2 AM that day. If we stayed here until closing time, we both would have been on duty for twenty-three hours!

Just the thought made me feel tired!

13

We headed back towards Julia 'Bennie' Anderson's Unit in Pyrmont. It had gone past 10 and I intended knocking off as soon as we had obtained the name and address of Billie's employee plus his boss and close colleagues' names.

From the Hotel I had driven Shelley back up to the Park to her Unmarked which was still sitting there unscathed.

Surprise. Surprise.

“That was Dallas in his car, Joe. With Julia in the front seat and Dolly in the back. I'm sure.”

The hackles on the back of my neck and across my scalp rose and thrummed in the chill of the night. That was a bloody big no-no. Mixing or becoming friendly with persons involved in an ongoing homicide investigation, especially when it was so 'fresh'.

“Sure?” I asked. Still not wanting to believe her.

I had seen the car pass us but I had not registered that it was Dallas....then again, I did not even know what kind of vehicle Dallas drove if he wasn't driving the Unmarked! Again, the lack of knowledge on my two junior partners played across my brain. That part that held all my guilt trips....a bloody big part of my brain, I had to admit!

“I'm more than sure, Joe. That was Dallas's car all right.”

“Nothing we can do now Shells. We'll speak to him about it tomorrow.....”

“Can I have first dig at him, Joe. It's just.....you can go like a bull at a gate sometimes.....and this case...and the Gay guys homicide deaths has really got to him. Turned his belief system upside down, is all.”

“Is he homophobic?”

“No. I don't think so, Joe. Oh....maybe a little. It has more to do with his parents' outlook on life. Which understandably, he follows to some extent. It's only natural. As you have no doubt gathered, they are ultra-conservative and ultra-religious with a very narrow outlook on what is right and wrong as far as human nature and behaviour is concerned. There is no grey in their concept of life. It is all black and white. They were apparently not over the moon when Dallas told them that he wanted to become a Cop.....they had wanted something like a priest in the family....and then when he was accepted into the Murder Squad....jeez, not a career path for a normal God-fearing person so they let it slip. I think they sort of thought that Dallas was going to become some sort of caped crusader and rid the city of all the unsavoury types.....not walk around dead bodies....too much gore for them.....childish, eh?”

By this stage we had knocked on Julia's door several times.

Rang the chimes.

Gave up and walked back to our vehicles.

“Let's call it a night eh, Shelley? You staying at your Mum's place again to-night?”

“I hadn't intended to but if I head for the farm, I won't get there until after midnight I reckon....I don't think that I could make it, so yeah. Mum's the word. I more than likely will give her a heart attack all the same....creeping in....” She gave a giggle. “See you around 9 tomorrow morning.”

'Down in the Basement for a couple of quick laps. It will ease the sore muscles that I now feel.’

“Yeah....”

It was eleven-thirty by the time that I made up a bed on the 'Pull-out' lounge, not wanting to wake Tellie, my partner. At least she had left the pile of linen and a doona on the folded out bed. How much more obvious could she be without leaving me a note!

Which she had. Tucked under the Coffee Machine.

She would not appreciate the peck on the cheek good night so she stated, so I refrained from the temptation to get my own back!

Nothing is black and white except for a note left daring me to wake her up for fear of my life!

It had been a long day.

14

“Dallas? A word in private? If you will.”

“Joe....I know that was you and Shells following behind you last night as we came out of Julia Anderson's street....I know what you are going to say and I haven't anything to say in my defence for being there. With a person who is front and centre in an ongoing investigation....but there is nothing that you can say that will change my mind on the subject....”

“That you should not see the Anderson woman again until this Case is resolved satisfactorily....”

“I can't agree to that Joe.”

“If you continue with it, then you could be jeopardising the outcome...or at least giving the Defence one large reason for a mistrial if it comes out in Court....which has a more than even chance of occurring, my young man. You know the Manual. The Policy and Procedures reams of Clauses.....”

“So do you Joe, but you seem to take pleasure in disregarding them....”

“No, Dallas. That's not exactly the situation. You should not compare the two circumstances. On each occasion where I have been hauled in front of the Standards and Ethics Committee Panel for not adhering to the P&P manual, I have thought seriously about what I was doing regardless of what the P&P may have stated. In each case, a person's life or my actions highlighting an inappropriate standard of conduct has been front and centre in my mind.....knowing I might add, what the outcome was going to be on each occasion. You have not taken that road, my good man....and the other thing, your career has just commenced where mine is on the downhill slope.....”

“Which means that you have more to lose, Joe, in monetary terms and in being able to find an alternate career path....I can always get a job in IT....”

“Well thought out, Dallas, but I doubt that you really want to make a conscience effort to leave the Force for.....over some-one else.....such a decision should be based on what is right for you....and you alone. Not a decision over another person. OK???”

“That's just it, Joe. I really don't know what made me revisit her residence except to say that I was drawn to her....”

“....and she to you?”

“I don't know.....it would be unfair to surmise such a thing especially where she is standing at the moment....but I just needed to help her, that's all.”

“Very noble, but bloody stupid. Leave her be until we put the case to rest. I will not mention this again or to anyone else...but mark my words, if there is any suspicion that you are continuing to see this woman, then I will not be able to shield you from a talk with our DS Church...which will lead to a summons from the S&E Committee. OK? Now, we have work to do.”

15

I realised later that my attempt to chastise Dallas for his indiscretion by tying him to his desk for a couple of days, may have been counter-productive...and downright stupid!

Overnight the Traffic Camera feeds had come in.

Twenty-one in the near vicinity!

We also had several feeds from the Private Hospital nearby and the Pub down Oxford Street. The Uniforms would be continuing their trawl of local Businesses on the Commercial Strip throughout the Sunday and later into this following week. By then, Morgue Photos would be available to pass out to the Business people and known Taylors Square regulars, hoping for an identification. Also, shops on and around the Oxford Street and Darlington Road intersection would be asked for any video feeds that they may have of that time early Sunday morning that may give us a clearer picture of vehicular movements or pedestrian traffic in the vicinity.

Dallas would be in his element!

Additionally, the Post Mortem on the two John Doe lads and William 'Billie' Dean Worseley would be conducted on the coming Tuesday. The next day, Dallas had sighed a visible sigh of relief when told that he was confined to his desk until at least the middle of the week.

He was two steps ahead of me!

It would have been pure enjoyment for him to spend as much time as possible peering at a split computer screen playing the images of vehicles turning into Darlington Road for the three hour period that we thought was the window of opportunity. We had discussed the very real possibility that the Assailants had cruised the area for several circuits to suss out the lay of the land and to select their quarry. Any such vehicle so caught on film would be high on our “Probables” and would be tracked further afield as it both came into the area and left the scene of the crime.

That would be an exhaustive detail and would more than likely tie Dallas to his desk for more than a week.....of pleasure for him!

Grrr!!

But then again, if there was anyone better suited to what most would consider a boring and tedious task, it was Dallas Courtney who revelled in this sort of challenge!

This kind of assignment.

Shelley and I were on the way to William 'Billie' Dean Worseley place of employment when we took a call from Dallas.

About another of our 'open' cases.

The “Body in the Ute” Case, the Cold Case homicide death of one Bradley Mc.Cormack-Hughes maybe close to a solution. I had that feeling about the case, so we headed back to the Office to pick up our repentant young Officer and headed towards Newcastle.

The “Guys in the Park” Case and Billie's demise would have to put on hold for a day or two. The autopsies of the three was being conducted first thing on the morrow. Dallas would again be confined to the Office.

An arrangement which he agreed with, while Shelley and I had to stand on our feet for several hours listening to the chatter from around the Autopsy table!

This clash of priorities often occurred.

Our time was always a balancing act between Cases that were under investigation. Nothing new.....yet it could be frustrating at times when one case had to be put aside for another even though that smell of success was most obvious. You just had to clench your teeth and run with what was occurring at the time, which occasionally was detrimental to the Case that you had to put on hold.

So be it!

It was impossible to be at two places at once!

16

“Sleeping Beauty....” Dominique Sherbaverst commented as she peered at the naked figure on a stainless steel cutting table. “I've 'bagged' all her garments and sent them onto Forensics....natural nails. Slightly longer than the accepted norm for males and of a shorter dimension that a lot of females prefer. Still well-manicured and looked after though. The body has been examined minutely for any trace and any so detected has been removed and bagged also.....I will now wash the body down....a pity really as the make-up has been expertly applied. I wonder how long it takes him.....”

“According to his partner, less time than most of the women she knows....”

Dom glanced across at me with a look of condescension.

“What-ever....he certainly is one good looking guy. Just goes to show how beauty can bridge the accepted norm of what is considered a particular gender 'look'....”

“I guess there would be very few who would be so blessed.....I bet that there are a lot of Trannies? Crossdressers?.....who would be envious of his ability to pass off as a woman so easily yet still appear to be one very handsome guy in a delicate sort of way.” I countered.

That comment pulled me up short.

I have no idea why, but on thinking about it, it was an avenue to be considered. A fellow CD envious of Billie's look and shape.....maybe!

I made a note of the thought in my Case Notebook.

The guy was slim. Narrow shouldered. The chest bulk not like an athlete or football player. Not the typical male torso. More feminine. A distinct waistline though the hips were typically male. Long slim legs that had shape and definition. Small feet like a dancer's. The entire body hairless, even the pubic area. I was a little taken aback by the size of his manliness, thinking beforehand that it must be small. Below average size. A preconception that proved to be totally wrong. I wondered where he managed to put it. I'd seen several photographs of Studio quality which I was impressed with, framed in a series of montages on the Hallway wall at his place of residence. One in a bikini. Another in tight slacks with no sign of “*its*” place in the scheme of things. Perhaps Photoshopped out! I cynically thought to myself. Its flaccidity gave the appearance of an above average size which blew me away. It was the subject of discussion between the women, including two Laboratory Assistants and a Forensic Assistant for quite some time.

I felt uncomfortable at the snide chatter!

Go figure.

The bruise mark across the base of the neck was very distinct.

“A fatal blow. Snapped her neck. Instant death.....”

She lowered a large lighted magnifying lens over the bruising. Running it backwards and forwards several times over the distinct marking. A lot of up close and personal photographs were taken. Skin scraps were taken. “There's trace in a couple of those abrasion areas.....wait while I get some for examination.....”

Several X-rays were hanging in a wall-mounted Light Box. The damage to the neck vertebrae easily noticeable, even for me.

“As was suggested at the Crime scene, it is safe to assume that the Deceased was carried, not dragged to the position where she was found. Hard against the wall of the building on the other side

of the lane-way. Then the large Commercial sized half-bins on wheels, three of them, were wheeled from their small shed so that the body was concealed.....”

“Yes....even if a shoe was dropped, they seemed to want to lay her in a respectable position with her shoes on....we said at the time....or some-one mentioned that perhaps she was not hit in the back of her head so as not to dislodge her wig or damage her gorgeous face.....could be....but that is her own hair. Not a wig!”

“We could assume that when he was in 'mufti', men's clothes, he would wear his hair in a tight pony-tail....not out of place at all.....an acceptable hair style for one in academia.”

“I find it hard to picture her in men's clothes..perhaps non-gender gear, perhaps..androgynous for want of a better description.”

My head was spinning. One minute we were referring to the Deceased as she...then he.....now asexual....it was getting all too much for me!

“Did he smoke?”

“No. Why?”

“What was he doing outside there in that back alleyway, then. No smoking in the Pub permitted any more. That is where they, the Patrons went for a fag. Not on the footpath out the front of the Pub. On the main drag.....the Owner, JHB, said that they discouraged that practise....made the joint look like a brothel with the 'girls' out front looking to hook business.....”

“...Cops. Punters and unsavoury types....well, those that maybe offended by men dressed in drag standing about....it was a problem in the old days, apparently.....”

”Was he meeting some-one?”

“For sex, you mean?”

“No. We put that to his partner. No way according to her. He wasn't into it....”

“Well....it wouldn't be the first time that the hubby....the....you know....the partner strays....”

“Nah. The way that Billie has been described by all who knew him, he wasn't at all into that side of things....at all! A Saint! A Princess!”

“Then what was he doing out there, then. Is that where the Patrons went for sex?”

“Yes. Apparently...those two nudge bars on the side of the Shed. Out of the field of the camera video. I thought that they were positioned there to protect the wall from those big wheeled Bins...no! They called them hump bars.....”

“What do you mean?”

“Male on male. Female on female. Male and female. Hung onto the bars with their hands. Bent

over. Down with the trousers...skirt and knickers....up with the dress. Know what I mean? You wouldn't lie down in that alleyway. Spoil the gear....puts runs in the stockings. Wrecks your shoes.....”

“No evidence of anal penetration that I can tell. Ever, I would say. The lad not into it....”

“According to his partner, their sex life was both lively and within normal boundaries...experimentation was enjoyed though not in any sort of...you know...abnormal way....”

Shelley gave me one of her looks.

She did not like the tone that I had adopted towards the Vic and the people that were in his life.

I knew that I was wrong to adopt this smarmy attitude as I knew enough to know that the vast majority of these persons who chose this life-style in the shadows, could not be regarded in any way as some sort of freaks.

I knew this.

One of my long-lost step-sisters had a little boy who was showing all the symptoms of such behaviour. An absolutely delightful young lad of 9 now. Had done since he was 3 years of age preferring girly things. Dolls. Slept in a Princess nightie. At the age of 8 had stated to his mother that he knew that he was born a boy but loved to “dress up.” He couldn't expand on that except to say that is what he wanted to do....he seemed to accept it himself. Both his parents and siblings were extremely supportive but I wondered as he grew how life was going to treat him, especially at School. The Bullies would be out in force if you dare to be different!

“Bloody hell! No. Fair dinkum? Normal, you reckon.....now that is a statement to jolt the sensibilities!”

“There was at least two dozen condoms in the bins....”

“At least they are tidy....”

My sphincter muscle suddenly went tight. The thought of sex in that manner made my blood run cold. I could not understand the need.....or the attraction for that matter.

“The Forensic guys went through the three bins....nothing found, like a discarded weapon...but plenty of condoms.....Forensics reckon what with the DNA swabs taken on the Sunday night of all Patrons that visited the Pub, plus these condoms, they'll be several months before they can give a comparable list of partakers.....so to speak.” The Forensic Assistant offered. “...and they are going back each week-end for a couple of weeks....just in case the Perps miss a night or two at the Pub....until things settle down....so DNA evidence, finger-prints and swabs are not in short supply in this case.....OK?”

“I think we can bundle this stuff up. All organs good and healthy....blood samples for tox taken....we can confidently say that the Victim died from suffering Blunt Forced Trauma.....a

broken neck to be precis.”

“...and the weapon” I asked pointedly. “What do you think killed him? A baseball bat....something like that to allow a decent swing.....perhaps a Golf Club?”

“No...something smaller in diameter. I suppose it could have been the shank of a golf club....I don't think it was a length of gal pipe.....but it was rigid. Not like a hose-length filled with lead shot...or sinkers. I'd definitely say something stiff....at both Scenes. A similar weapon....in that way. How-ever, the bruising would indicate something of smaller diameter than that used on the two lads in the Park....maybe a tyre lever? A wheel brace, like some cars have.....a length of about 45 centimetres long around 10, maybe 12 millimetres in diameter which then turns at 90° with the nut socket on the end.....or....as I said, the shank of a Golf Club.....there is no indication that if it was a Golf Club, that the head hit the Vic's body.....”

“Are you suggesting that the two are connected? That the two homicides sites could have been carried out by the same Perps? That these crimes were committed against.....members of a minority group....as a hate crime?”

“I am not suggesting that as fact, but it's something to keep in mind as the Investigations proceed. I think that it is more than an advantage that you have ended up with the three cases....only because of the similarities with the victims, as you have stated, from Minority Groups.....”

“Less people will mourn. Less will be interested.” I groaned.

There was ample evidence of hate crimes having been committed before with a low rate of solve. Especially on gay guys. That is not how I wanted to view these three deaths.

Beaten before we had really commenced the Investigations.

17

By the time that the two unknown Vics from the Park were autopsied, it was well past Lunchtime. Muscles shouted us a Chinese at his favourite little Chinese a block or two away from the City Morgue Precinct. All during the extended meal, Muscles endeavoured to force Dominique to again extend her stay here in Sydney for another couple of weeks.

To no avail.

She was hanging out to return to Perth and to her partner.

“You're going to have a problem solving the two lads' homicide murders, I reckon.” She commented as we left the Restaurant feeling absolutely sated.

I nodded my head in agreement.

It had that feel about it.

“Maybe we'll get lucky with all those video streams on the make and model of vehicle that the Perps used....but as far as ID'ing the Vics, I think that we'll have to spend an inordinate amount of time on the Missing Persons records....”

“I wish you luck....but with a lot of those kids....they were booted out of home so there will not be any record of them being missing....”

“Maybe friends.....siblings....other family members....”

“Maybe....” She didn't sound convinced.

Shelley agreed with Dom's assessment.

Me?

I was still hopeful.

Dom went up onto tip-toes to kiss my cheek.

“Arrh, Joe. For-ever the optimist. You know, along with the Professor, you are my two most favourite people whom I miss the most when I'm back home in Perth.”

She hooked her arm dramatically through mine as we headed back towards the Morgue Building.

Quite a couple. She just over the five foot mark and me six foot almost, in the old scale.

18

“What do you do here....um....Mister Stephenson?”

“Professor Stephenson, if you don't mind.”

“Yes. Of course.”

“We're a fully funded entity...an off-shoot of the CSIRO. We specialise in solar energy and power derived from the energy of the sun. Hence the name. Solen Research Corporation. Formerly Mobile Sunscope P/L. The name was changed not that long ago....We are on the eve of announcing to the world a break-through in power derived from not only the sun and indirect sunlight but from any light source. It will have massive ramifications in power generation and the reduction on the

reliance of fossil fuels world-wide. Easy. Inexpensive. Greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by a massive 85% within ten years if the Governments of the world take the science of it on board. The Australian Government sees the wisdom in investing in the product with a massive factory complex almost completed to manufacture the "Worseley Powermat"....it was after all, mainly his contribution that enabled the product to be developed. We have managed to keep it under wraps until this Announcement is made and Patents approved....."

He misunderstood my question. I was looking for an explanation, as a non-scientist, of his role in the scheme of things. Perhaps his enthusiasm for the scientific breakthrough knew no bounds!

"I see, Professor. As much as this development seems to benefit the World at large, we are here investigating the homicide death of William 'Billie' Dean Worseley on Saturday evening just past...."

"Yes. Yes, of course. You must understand though, his legacy will loom large for mankind....."

The guy was more excited than shattered at the death of one of his employees. This did not sit well with me.

"Professor....can we discuss the homicide, please? We wish to speak to all of Worseley's colleagues....is there anyone that you would deem of more interest than another? Who were his close friends amongst his work colleagues? Would anyone gain any arbitrary advantage in the death of Worseley....and why has this apparent break-through in research been considered the saviour of the world?"

I felt that I needed to get a handle on the work that our young Vic was involved in. To understand possible motives. To comprehend the importance of the man.

The Professor stood to walk around in a small circle, wringing his hands nervously. He seemed to suddenly come to some conclusion, as he suddenly sat and looked earnestly at me.

"You must understand, Detectives.....The information that I am about to impart must remain a secret for about a week or two until the miracle can be introduced to not only the scientific world but to the population in general. It will make not only the small team who have been involved in the research work millionaires...no billionaires, but this Firm, the CSIRO and the Australian Government who has invested heavily in the research, will inherit a huge amount of wealth....."

He looked steadily from Shells to I. Looking for our assurance and heart-felt promise of secrecy.

I was tempted to shed blood with a nick of the finger in a small boy testimony of loyalty and commitment!

The Professor seemed to be lost in a state of euphoria with very little concern displayed on the demise of his Chief Research Scientist. That to me generated suspicion, regardless of the magnitude of this scientific break-through that was purportedly going to save the fate of the world. Then again, past experience had shown me that these "brainy" types can glide in a world far removed from the

realities that may swirl around them. I was instantly reminded of the extraordinary behaviours of Professor Salisbury during the investigations into the homicide murders of both his wives.

That case some years ago now. The Professor still in Prison and by all accounts completely oblivious to any form of contrition as he conducts weekly Science, Mathematics and Logic Classes for interested Inmates! Totally lost in his own little world of mathematical and chemical equations and the Science of Logic.

19

We eventually left the Research establishment well after dark after having interviewed every colleague and supposed friend of William 'Billie' Worseley.

Perhaps only one friend, supposedly his closest friend at the research laboratory, a Research Fellow by the name of Kristan Dhari was aware of Billie's need to present to the world in female form as much as he could....or was permitted so by the norms of society. She was a regular visitor to Bennie and Billie's place of residence, both as a Dinner guest and friend.

She had been introduced to her husband through such a pleasant evening at their home.

Both she and her husband, who had only recently signed on to the Team as a Lab Assistant, were visibly devastated by the death of their dear friend and had spent most of the Sunday afternoon with Bennie....and a house full of other friends who had come to offer Bennie their heartfelt condolences.

"It looks like only a small number of people....maybe two dozen, were going to benefit enormously from this scientific advancement.....did you get the gist of the thing?" Shelley asked. A puzzled look on her face.

"Yes, I think so.....electrical generation not only from the direct rays of the sun but by daylight, evening moonlight.....amazing really. The micro chip in question has been known about for as long as the silicon chip but has not been able to be harnessed. It agitates when hit by light....any source of light, emitting a very small electrical current. The problem has been to locate enough of these chips into an electrical series and convert it into usable AC current. It was that matting that located thousands, millions of these chips into each square metre and constructing it into a stable, moisture-proof, micro-thin membrane which was the true breakthrough invented by Billie while he was at UNSW. It was old research that he refined, controlled and harnessed. Brilliant. It can be incorporated onto whole roofs as a film, on window glass, on building walls within the paint smear and completely over the shells of vehicles that generates or harnesses sufficient electrical power to ensure that they can be self-sufficient.....imagine....a whole Office building generating enough power night and day to be totally self-sufficient in lighting and air-

conditioning power and to still export power into the power grid! No more coal burning Power Stations. No more coal mining.....no more vehicles powered on fossil fuels....that example...that was so cool.....can you imagine, a convoy of four Roadtrains. Two trailers each. All loaded to capacity with hay bales covered with tarps that has this “power-matting” impregnated into the canvass. They have been on the road between Darwin and Adelaide now for six weeks. Continuously. Less than 100 litres of diesel fuel has been consumed by all the trucks combined in six return trips totalling just under 50,000 kilometres for each truck! That's around 300,000 kilometres in total for around 100 litres of diesel consumed. Diesel fuel was only used when the torque could not be supplied by the electric motor of each truck...going up a sizable incline, then the diesel engine would cut in.....now that is amazing....and it is still going as a travelling research bed....I can understand why the Government would want to be involved and not just a private firm.....it will mean millions of dollars for the revenue coffers.....”

“Still...yeah....I think I understand....but....why was he murdered? Did it have anything to do with that side of things?”

Shelley's question deflated my surging enthusiasm.

Brought me back to earth and reality.

With my enthusiasm so fuelled, I could now understand the seemingly 'so what' attitude of the Professor on the death of his Star....this was something that could save the world!

Literally!

Whether his death was related to his yearnings or was tied up in his work was a little hard to fathom at this stage. If we knew the answer to either one, we would be well on the way of solving this senseless homicide.

I wondered how-ever, if it wasn't for Worseley's brilliance as a Research Scientist, whether any interest at all would be displayed in his passing.

20

“I want to call into the Cleaning Firm.....that do the cleaning at the Pub....”

“What? Now? It's close to seven....”

“Yeah. I know, but this is about the only time that I expect them to be home....”

“You know them?”

“Yeah.....we interviewed them, Marge Hendricks and I, during the Case into the IVF scam and homicide murder and suicide. A really sad case in fact. Besides, the missus makes the best Stew that you will ever taste. Fair dinkum.”

I drove down the tree lined street in lower Balmain looking for a two storey Victorian terrace that would jog my memory. After thinking that I had found it to be proven wrong by the blank looks of the gentleman who answered the door, I swore softly to myself as I slumped back into the Unmarked.

“Don't tell me I've forgotten already....it wasn't that long ago....” I turned to Shelley who sat stony-faced beside me. I could tell that she wanted to go home.

“I don't suppose that Dallas would still be in the Office? He could look up the address in the old files on the Computer.....”

Shelley made a point of looking at her watch before scornfully turning to me to inform me that she doubted it. Dallas would have headed for home a long time ago, she informed me coldly.

“Maybe the White Pages on your Smart Phone, Joe? Or your iPad?”

Her comment didn't compute as I crawled further down the street, propping briefly when a house-front looked familiar. Continued on getting more frustrated at each turn of the wheel.

“There! That joint.”

I didn't even sound convincing to myself. I had not thought that it was this close to the end of the road and the Harbour foreshore.

“That's it!” I said again in a more credible voice.

There was no available parking spots, so I double-parked in front of the place leaving the hazard lights a-blinking. Strode up the front steps leaving Shelley behind. She felt that she didn't need to mount the steps as this also was the wrong address.

“Yes.....Detective.....Lim? Line? Something like that....what do we owe the honour of a return visit to this time?”

“Yeah. Joseph Lind. My partner, Detective Shelley Shields....”

“You've got a good taste in female partners, Detective. Come through...” He held out his hand to shake mine as I passed him at the threshold and headed down the corridor ahead of him. “Um.... Bill Wynyard. Janey, me wife.....” He advised Shelley as we entered the familiar kitchen. Janey gave a wide, toothy smile at seeing me. Kissed me warmly on both cheeks.

“Your other partner?”

“Marge Hendricks. She left the Force to give birth to three bouncing babies. About a year ago now.”

“All well?”

A typical female response, especially one mother enquiring of another.

“Yeah....couldn't be better. She loves them.....um....stew?”

“And you call yourself a Detective....” Janey giggled. “The last time you were here it was the middle of winter and deserving of a good warm stew....”

“Fair dinkum....” I muttered to Shelley as I turned to her. “The best stew in the world. Without a doubt....”

“How about a coffee.....and a warm Roast Beef sandwich....with some gravy?”

“OK....just the one.”

We sat down at the table that I and Marge had sat at some years ago. Munched into the sandwich as we small-talked away thirty minutes.

“So.....it's good to see you and all that, but why the unexpected visit?”

“You've changed the name of the firm...though I kinda thought I knew the name....”

“Mmmm....yes, well....we had a bit of a falling out with our...um....partners. In-laws....never operate a business with the in-laws.....we stayed afloat...only just.....started up again with the new name. Mostly Commercial. Some private residential. We kept Surrey Towers, thank God. That is a good money spinner.....what can we do for you?”

“You...um....do the Pub on Oxford Street? Towards Taylors Square.”

Bill Wynyard nodded his head slowly.

“A lovely couple...if ever there was a pair who defied the accepted gender norm, it has to be those two.....” A warm smile on Janey's face as she thought of JHB and AC.

“You have keys that will get you into the Pub....and unlock the Bin receptacle?”

“Well, those two have usually only just got to bed by the time that we turn up....hard to wake up. Either pissed or in the clouds if you get my drift. We're been doing the Pub for about 18 maybe 20 months now. Good people. The Bin Receptacle is never locked. The doors have never been rolled down for as long as we've been doing the Pub.....that is where you often find some-one. Battered and bruised. Been belted up, hiding in behind the bins, usually. We got to call an Ambulance about once a fortnight or so....was more regular like back a couple of years ago so JHB tells us.....the Pub was visited regular like after evening prayers by those who think that they have a right to police society's standards.....it apparently cooled down a bit when AC and JBH got jack of it and called in some of their friends from that side of the street.....muscle bound, steroid users who were handy with their fists. Plus some Maori mates who don't have a problem with gays, lesbian and CD's. Apparently Bouncers. It wasn't widely publicised and the Cops stayed away, but

apparently the Park down the street was red with blood. Those eastern Mediterranean types took a beating. Took them a while to start up again...do you reckon that they may have been behind that killing last Saturday night?"

I ignored the question but it was something to keep in mind. History repeating itself and getting a bit out of hand. I didn't think so but it was something that should be followed up, none-the-less.

"Were the local Cops ever called to any of those bashings?"

"Nah....AC and JHB says that it was always a waste of time. Their attitude, the Cops, was if people are gunna dress as they did, then they are asking for trouble....nice, eh?"

"Did you know the deceased?"

"No....though apparently he....er....she was a very popular person in the movement. So's JHB said."

"So you've seen Joshua Hamilton Blayney and A.C. Hughes since the homicide on Saturday night?"

"Both of them were up on Monday morning when we started our shift. We do the Pub first then go over to the Surrey Towers....they've been knocked for six by the death, let me tell you. AC especially. They knew the lass personally. She often was over for a meal at their place above the Pub. On a Monday or Tuesday night. Apparently she was a real brain, so's they said."

"Your two boys? The twins. Where are they?"

"Yeah....since the bust up with the Sister-in-law, we've had trouble trying to find some-one to look after the boys to allow us to start at 4 AM....we've enrolled them into full-time Boarding School with St.Ignatius College. Katoomba. It works out cheaper than having a full-time, live-in Nanny, in fact."

I drove into Central Station to catch a train back up the line allowing Shelley to take the Unmarked home.

"You seem to take his words with some degree of weight....he's an ex-Con, you know, Joe."

"Oh...how can you tell?"

"The tatt on his hand. The one on his neck. They're Prison tats...."

"He's a good man, Shells. A bloody good man. Do not judge the proverbial book...."

There was anger in my words.

"Seems that is what this case is all about, eh Joe? Some-one has forgotten that the Vics are human.....the three of them!"

I lent back down to the driver's window at that comment.

“You're right, Shells....and to be honest, I'm having a problem with it also, so don't you tell me that you are too. The Hierarchy would take a dim view of that in this politically correct times.....”

I straightened up, turned on my heel and headed towards the City Trains Platform.

21

Over the next week or two we had our hands full with the slow but eventually successful completion of the “Body in The Ute” Case.

The homicide death of a guy who had the world at his feet and as Heir Apparent should have been the benefactor of a large enterprise of variety that included perhaps one of the largest parcels of land as a Cattle Station still in Private ownership in Australia.

Because of the developments in this Case, Dallas was permitted to sever the ties that had bound him to his desk. Consequently, the task of going through the hours of video stream to try and locate the vehicle that may have been used in the slaying of the two young guys in the Park behind Taylors Square was referred to the Forensic Laboratory.

We had slumped into our desk chairs after several hours of formal questioning and charging of a young woman for the stabbing murder of Bradley Mc.Cormack-Hughes in the back of his Ute in the large Parking Area above the main surfing Beach of Newcastle. The DPP's Prosecution Lawyer sat with us for some moments to congratulate us on the successful investigation.

There were no real winners in this case, just a family who were pulled apart by suspicion and innuendo who would slowly heal the wounds and become strong once again. To the extent that a family can repair itself when one of the main players was no longer present. The parents would always wonder whether they knew their eldest son, especially when all the facts of the case were examined in fine detail in Court. This again would place great strains on the family unity.

It would seem to never end, with the whole process extended over several years...not including the four years when the case mired in inactivity and whispers of cold and thoughtless inferences.

Abbey, our illustrious Boss, better known as DS Robert Clifford Church, had come up to shake our hands on another Case being solved.

Sometimes there was elation. Sometimes a feeling of thank God it was over and at times there was just plain emptiness and sadness. Sometimes a mixture of all those emotions was experienced at times like this.

It would seem that we didn't have time to celebrate as my mobile chattered in its dock, before

blurting out the opening notes of Meatloaf's pivotal tune "Bat out of Hell".

I listened for some moments before hauling myself to my feet. Enthusiasm depleted.

"OK guys. We have been summoned to the Forensic Lab....to view some footage of a possible vehicle of interest in the 'Lads in the Park' Homicide Bashings."

22

"The white van?" He pointed up at the large multi-screen.

Sixteen separate images were playing simultaneously. All in sync as to time and date.

My eyes went cross-eyed!

Dallas let out a low whistle and leant into the screen as though he wanted to leap into it like Alice through the Looking Glass.

A white van was clearly visible in several of the split screen images. "It's done the circuit four times. Unfortunately, we don't get a good look at the driver or passenger. We've tried several enhancement programs to see if we can improve the image. No good, I'm afraid. By the movements of the heads of both the driver and the passenger though, we could safely assume that there is a person or persons in the rear of the van.....that's the good news. Not much.....funny though, he could have done a tight circuit of one block but he chose to travel the length of Burton Street until it intersected with Oxford Street where the Pub is located. In fact we have him stopping at the mouth of the lane-way on every occasion that he went that way.....suspicious don't you reckon?"

We watched as the van made multiple laps of the elongated circuit. The route captured by numerous Traffic monitoring cameras.

"Really giving both areas the once over.....and bloody really carefully....both sites." Dallas mumbled to himself. "He's eyeing off his victims. Picking them from the crowd....."

I nodded my head in agreement. We had thought that there may have been a connection to both Crime scenes early on, but then disregarded the hypothesis. Now it came clearly back into focus again.

"The plates.....the Registration Plates belong to a van owned by a one man Plumbing Firm owned by....arrh.....home address out Campbelltown way. Macquarie Gardens, actually."

"That's it! A Plumber's van. They'd have all sorts of shit like small lengths of pipe in the back of the van. Maybe pinch bars or small crow-bars. Stuff like that that could leave such bruising on

the skin.....”

“Don't get too excited, Detectives....the plates were reported stolen from a Plumber's Tradesman's Van four days before the attack. The said Plumber has a brother in the Force who will verify the character of his brother as not being a Gay Hater or a person who would even think of bashing another person to death. Gay or CD.....um...trans-gender person or what-ever....I don't know the correct.....the politically correct name for these people. It keeps changing....I knew them in my youth as Drag Queens....”

“Wrong.....CD's for Crossdressers.....but then there is several sub-species of the animal....” Shelley chimed in. “Transvestite or Trannie is no longer the preferred name....because of the connotation involved.....then you have Pre- and post-operative Transgender persons while Drag Queen would still apply to the over-the-top Stage Dancers or Dolly the MC and in-house Singer that graced the Pub.....you know....up behind The Rocks for years. To confuse it even further, there are those CD's who just need to 'dress up' and that's the vast majority of the type, those who would like to go further towards the whole sex-change thing, those who, as men in mufti would never think of having any sort of funny business with another man....but in his 'Dressed-up' mode, actively seeks out that relationship. The Taxi Club is a favourite hang-out for these....and then you have those CD's who seek out the company of lesbians and bi's.....”

“Struth....the lines are bloody blurred, aren't they?”

“About as much as what is considered the norm.....hetro male and female relationships with their slightly kinky inter-behaviour behind closed doors that others would consider abnormal....it's a wonderful world of variety and as long as it doesn't get violent or overly affect others, then what the heck....”

“You a recent expert on the subject....” I smirked. “What would you classify our victim, Billie as?”

Shelley gave me a withering look.

“From the evidence and remarks of those who knew her, I'd say that she fell into the earlier category....likes to 'dress up' and nothing more, though her relationship, which was long term with Julia 'Bennie' Anderson, may muddy the waters somewhat....we like to categorise everything into boxes....it makes us feel comfortable...and somewhat normal, but the the name....and the boxes are not a fait compli....and if you must know, since the homicide of Billie and the knowledge that he was well-liked, an absolute genius and a good, all-round guy, I have been doing a fair bit of reading.....on the Web and books out of the local Library.....it is rather interesting. Any woman will be able to tell you what it feels like to pamper herself, to get herself ready for that important night and to squirm into a new dress for the occasion...it can be a rather sensual process.....so these men get to experience the same thing, looking at their reflection thinking that they are beautiful....you men don't realise what you are missing out on....a little molly-coddling....” She smirked as she looked over at me. “What? You guys have a shower, maybe a shave and then put on the same boring variety of clothes that you always wear...nothing spectacular. Sexy. Sensual. That makes you

feel so good on the odd occasion.....think about it!”

“Mmm....” I nodded my head. I wanted to say something in response but felt that I'd be very much on thin ice. Instead I turned to the tall, elderly Forensic guy. “So....that's about it then? We have not progressed that far on the Homicide Bashings.....”

He glanced across at me.

“Well, no. Not exactly. We've managed to plot the Van in question as he left the area....for quite some time actually.....he got out of the middle of town very quickly.....but he forgot that all roads leading out, especially the Motorways, are particularly closely covered by video feeds. Took us a while but we tracked him down the south-west Motorway.....he exited onto the Minto Industrial Estate feeder road. Lost him....but a Security camera mounted on a Factory wall recorded the flash of a vehicle exploding. Some moments prior to that, the roof of a Stationwagon was seen just in shot speeding from the area. We are pretty sure that it was the roof of a Toyota Camry Stationwagon. At oh-three-forty-seven there was that flare of the explosion. Perhaps ninety seconds prior to that, a Toyota Camry Stationwagon sped down the entry ramp back onto the Motorway, similar if not the same colour as that glimpsed near the factory complex....even though all these images are in black and white, we can compute the colour of a specimen pretty exactly...um....near where the burnt out remains of the Van were located. I should state that at that time of morning, traffic is extremely light, especially in that area.....the vehicle exited onto Campbelltown Road off the Motorway some kilometres on. We picked him up at the intersection of Macquarie Gardens Road and the Camden By-pass road. He was not noticed further down that road towards Camden.....there a quite a few intersections along that length of road which he could have turned down.....Macquarie Gardens Estate is located off one of those intersections. Four occupants. We got a couple of good shots with a series of fuzzy photos of the Registration Plates.....”

“You manage to nail the guy? In the Camry Stationwagon?”

“Enough to warrant a visit.....there was little left of the van. The local lads attended.....noticed the stolen plates. From the VIN Number of the vehicle, it would appear that the van was also stolen from a local Greengrocers two days before the attack at Taylors Square. A small Shopping Centre at Macquarie Gardens. Several items were recovered from inside the van. Three lengths of 32 mil. diameter gal. steel pipe about 80 centimetres long. Unfortunately the vehicle fire obliterated any usable trace....”

He shook his head.

“Have you got a name and address?”

This guy liked to drag things out to show how clever he was.

He nodded his head.

“Unfortunately there is a red flag out on two of the occupants of said address.....”

My stomach did a flip-flop. Here we go again, I thought to myself.

23

We talked over the matter with Abbey, who sat silently throughout the discourse.

“Boss, we got a chance to nail the bastards for three homicide murders. The subject and the household are devout Muslims.....they do not like such examples of depravity in their society, from what I understand about Sharia Law. You know, those that walk on the other side of the street. There has been several other Gay Bashing deaths which have never been solved with a similar MO with Eastern Mediterranean types seen in the vicinity. Never identified. Never interviewed. Those deaths languishing in Cold Case Files probably never to be solved. We have the opportunity here of nabbing four guys for our three homicides.....”

“You don't know that for certain, Joe.....”

“We'll be more advanced on our three homicide murders in interviewing them then if we didn't.....or couldn't because there is a 'Detain and Hold' Order on two of them by the AFP.....and their reason for such a Red Flag is one purely of 'Guilt by Association' so it would seem! Nothing more concrete than that!”

“Joe. Joe.....calm down.....you've just gone out on that proverbial limb again. You have no proof to back up that statement....so...let me have a talk with the AFP Liaison Officer-in-Charge first up. We'll see what happens after that....you are sure of your facts, now Joe. On the probable guilt of the persons.....”

“The van was tracked doing at least four circuits that included not only the Park but also the Pub, which is a fair detour, let me tell you. The van was then tracked down to the Minto Industrial area where they changed vehicles, setting the van alight. The second vehicle was tracked heading towards Macquarie Gardens. The van was stolen from the small community shopping precinct at Macquarie Gardens. The Plates were stolen from a similar van located nearby in Campbelltown. The Van from which the plates were stolen is garaged at an address in Macquarie Gardens. The Toyota Camry is registered to one Kesrit Sundrasanaram whose address is in Macquarie Gardens. The family is Lebanese of Indian descent. Coming to Australia as refugees during the first Lebanese civil war. The whole family is devout Muslims and the four younger sons have been most vocal in their opposition to any person who they consider to be depraved and not of Allah's making.....”

“Circumstantial, Joe.”

I knew what he was doing. Pushing me to the edge to squeeze every detail out of me that would help him to come to a decision, either way.

“Yeah, you're right....but the dots are joined, Boss. Often it is the circumstantial that is the basis of an airtight case once the alleged perps have been formerly interviewed.”

I knew that Abbey was on our side. He just needed the facts to help him put a case to the AFP for a joint strike on the premises, regardless of any AFP procedures pending on the family.

“OK, Joe. Leave it with me.”

24

“Shelley? Dallas? If you can leave us , please? Close the door on your way out, will you?”

He looked at the retreating forms of my two young partners as they filed out of the Office.

This wasn't good!

Abbey stood and walked to the floor to ceiling narrow window that gave views out over Parramatta Park. He stood there for some moments, jiggling the loose change in his pants pocket as was his want before turning to face me.

“Joe? Your Update Report on the progress of both Shelley and Dallas was very good. As a consequence, I feel that they ready to be a two-man team on their own. I must inform you that I have spoken to both of them. Together and separately. They are a little nervous to be given their freedom, but....time will tell. Good job, Detective. After this 'Lads in the Park' and the 'CD Lane-way' Homicides are resolved.....I'll let them loose as a team.....” He looked over at me. “You knew it was coming and not only because of your Assessment Report. There is how-ever, one thing that I am disappointed about, Joe. Your treatment of Dallas Courtney. Having him tethered to his desk the other week. P & P seems to slip your mind! As the senior partner and mentor of the two, you do not have the authority to order such disciplinary action, Joe. Hear me? I understand your reasoning but none-the-less, you should have come to me to consult on the situation. I suspect you didn't because you assumed, incorrectly I might add, that I would immediately report the Breach to the Standards and Ethics Committee.....”

He looked gravely at me before returning to sit at his desk.

I remained standing.

“.....Yes, I would have given it some thought....but you disappoint me. I, as the Supervisory Officer of this Squad, has the mandate to 'go or no' in that regard. You seem to forget the number of times that I could have referred your....um.....indiscretions upstairs but chose not to....you do realise that, Joe? Don't you? Your Personnel File could look a darn sight more uglier than what it does now if I had opted for that action. My staff are important to me and I do not need to remind you I will protect my staff at all cost even to the detriment of my Position....so that there are always fair chances given. *I* make those decisions and selections on whether staff should be reprimanded to

such an extent. I have spoken to Dallas. He assures me that he was aware of the Breach of Conduct at the time and knew that it could reflect badly on his Personnel File. I chose to keep it here. In house. He was fined the full amount that he earned as overtime for that entire week-end...to be given to the Police Widows Association.....”

“I should have been made aware of that action, Boss....”

“No! Joe. You are his partner and mentor. Not his Judge or Executioner! I did not have to advise you of that action....perhaps if there was an easier communication channel between you and your partners, he may have talked about it with you, but as there does appear to be a....choke point, shall we say in that regard, it is something that you need to attend to. Don't get me wrong, Joe. I have been overwhelmed on the manner that you have been mentoring and mothering these two, with the results being very obvious....but there is still some shortfalls in your education process that you need to attend to before we can consider you as a fine father-figure, tutor and instructor. Understand?”

I nodded my head.

What else could I do?

I knew that my nil attempts at obtaining a personal approach with my two partners had been a worrying aspect that I had indeed recognised. What amazed me the most, was that I was being considered as a long-term tutor and mother hen. Hell! I had troubles with my own conduct. To realise that this procedure was meant to be the usual caper was a bit daunting to say the least!

I offered weak apologies. Scant and feeble excuses, and with tail dutifully between my legs, I struggled, cowering back to my desk.

25

An 0600 hour morning raid out at Macquarie Gardens meant that we were gathered at the Campbelltown Police Station at around 0300 hours.

I got out of bed at around 12 midnight after trying to get to sleep around 4 the previous afternoon.

That was bloody unsuccessful with my dog AU2 wanting me to play with him. Not to bed down at that hour. Even when he was evicted from the Grannie flat, his whimpering was not music to fall asleep to!

I may have achieved 4, maybe 5 hours sleep!

Several 'fly-bys' of the area had been made the previous day. Videoing the lay of the land. Neighbours dwellings. Lines of attack and escape thought out. My two partners and I would not be in the initial Raid party on the address which would be conducted by a small contingent of the Tactical Operations Unit and several similarly trained AFP personnel. We would enter the house once it had been secured.

The danger of some sort of retaliation or action by the house-hold was considered as a minimal risk factor, though full measures were still employed. You never know in these circumstances. Something can always be triggered in an unexpected response.

You never took chances!

The father and his four sons were transported individually to Campbelltown Police Station and made to sweat it out for a couple of hours while we had a light breakfast!!!???

“Why am I here?” Asked the senior Kesrit Sundrasanaram in a soft voice. “My family and I have done nothing wrong.....”

“You were seen in a white Van on the 16th of last month, between the hours of 0155 to 0235 doing several circuits of Darlinghurst Road, Burton and Oxford Streets.....”

“Impossible. You have a clear case of mistaken identity....” Confident to the point of belligerence, I thought.

“You were seen driving the subject Van to a dead-end street in the Minto Industrial Area at around 0342 that same morning. A Sunday morning....”

Again the total denial of the facts with a determined shake of his head.

“No, Detectives. You are mistaken....”

“Why are you so sure, Mister Sundrasanaram. You were seen driving away from the Maynard Close area back onto the Southwest Motorway some ninety seconds before the subject Van exploded into flames. Your vehicle is a light grey Toyota Camry Stationwagon, is it not?” Shelley looked down at her notes to read off the Registration Plates.

Dallas was trying hard to maintain eye contact with the man.

He was having difficulty.

I was sitting in the neighbouring Observation Enclosure, an excuse for a Broom Cupboard. I was on my third coffee of the morning. I felt that as my two Partners were soon to fly the coop, then they should have as much practise as possible in the art of Interview techniques. Shelley's style reminded me so much of the way that my former Number One Partner, Marjory Hendricks, operated. That same easy going manner. The same subtle inference of femininity and vulnerability, and that same killer instinct when the chips were down. I felt with practise, she would become a more astute Interviewer than what Marge had been. Shelley seemed to pick up the tiniest nuance in

speech pattern, tone and body reaction. Like a Lioness stalking her prey, she was attuned to things that I could only guess at. She remembered the details. The answers. The ins and outs of the Case so that every little fact could be questioned and answered. Her concentration at such times was incredible. Shells and Peta Daniels would make a formidable team in any Interview situation.

Unfortunately, Dallas had a long way to go. He had not as yet learnt that for a subject to become open and honest, the Interviewer too, had to project that same image. To gain trust. To be the subject of confidences.

“You are denying being in Maynard Close, Minto at that time on a Sunday morning?”

“No. of course not, Detective. We had only just knocked off, if I am not mistaken. If my memory serves correctly. From Hardy Brothers Engineering. The Staff Carpark entrance and exit gates lead onto that dead-end street. We have been working overtime for several weeks around that time in order to complete a large Contract of fabricated steel sections for the new roof of the old Olympic Stadium.....it is to be completely roofed over. A mammoth job.....”

“You say that you and the other three occupants of your vehicle were working that night....no where near Darlington at that time?”

“If I am not mistaken, Detective. That is so. I have no reason to go all the way into town....especially at that time of the early morning. All I want to do after spending an additional three hours overtime on the 4 to midnight shift on a Saturday night, is to go home, have a shower and go to bed.....”

He gave a giggle that was so reminiscent of millions of Indians before him.

Shelley glanced up at the two-way mirror and my position behind it. Rubbed her ear-lobe so that I could follow up on that point. We had two Uniforms at the Firm already going through the Staff Roster sequences for Sundrasanaram and his three mates.

I walked out of the Observation Room and down the corridor, ringing the Operations Centre asking to be patched through to Senior Sergeant Janice Bright of the Campbelltown LAC.

“Bright here.....”

“Detective Lind, Senior Sergeant. How are you going with those staff records?”

“Was just about to ring the Station to get onto you. Our subject had an extended shift on overtime that night. Along with three colleagues who always come to and leave with our subject.....the four were on-duty on that night during those times that the van was spotted at Darlington.....Sorry Detective.....we've bitten the wrong dog.”

“Pissed against the wrong tree.....thanks for your help. Can you get a signed copy of the Staff entries for that night? Signed by the appropriate person? Thanks.....”

I swore softly to myself. Things like this should not happen. Wouldn't happen if we had done

the homework before organising and carrying out the raid, which was the more appropriate course that should have been taken!

My arse will be in a sling for weeks to come!

I was going to get kicked up the arse from here to Hell and back I knew.

26

“Several coordinated raids were conducted this morning across various south-western suburbs of Sydney, in a joint AFP/NSW Police Force Tactical Operations Unit exercise. Various items were seized from these homes including Computers, with several caches of weapons seized. Five persons of the one family were relayed to Campbelltown Police Station for further questioning but released without charge several hours later. Police are continuing with their investigations as part of the defence against home-grown terrorist groups.”

That was the extent of the Media Release that was broadcast on the Radio and the late night News spots on TV. It was decided to make the information public at that time of night to ensure that minimal public knowledge of the raid would be obtained....and it was too late to make the early morning editions of the Newspapers. By the next day, there would be more important subjects and incidents to report upon, rather than a raid on the previous day where no suspects were arrested or charged.

There was no apologies or other reasons given for the raid. It would sink and merge with the other countless bits of information released under the banner-line of Anti-Terrorist actions.

The Public did not bat an eye-lid at the subterfuge!

Unfortunately, it had more immediate ramifications for me personally. I had never seen my Boss so incensed! So livid! And when we were joined by the Assistant Commissioner, Major Crimes, under which the Murder Squad operates, I felt that the very skin of my arse, had been flayed from my body.

I was ordered home on nil pay for the rest of the week!

My two young partners learned a valuable lesson because of the fracas. Always ensure that all bases are considered and never talk your Boss into a half-baked idea. It would take some time before the Boss would even listen to an impassioned speech from me, let alone act upon it!

27

“Dallas? Can you bring that Laptop of yours around to my joint one night that suits you? With the full set of video of that dead-end street in Minto. You know? The one where the guys change from the Van into another car for a quick get-away.....”

I may have been grounded for a week on nil pay, but that wasn't going to stop me from reviewing the recordings to learn where I had gone off half-baked and convinced myself of a course of action that again got me knee deep in it!

“What night suits you, Joe?”

“Any....it's you that has to fit it into your busy schedule....I ain't got one, remember?”

He chuckled at that.

My week consisted of waking just on Sun-up and doing several laps of the block with Tellie, Malisa, Samantha, who was Ben's long term, live-in partner and my son Bill. Ben was always going to be a worry just getting out of bed in time to catch the last possible train into town to start work on time! Then before, or maybe after the evening meal, depending on the weather, repeating the process by jogging around the nearby Athletic field.

I was surprised to learn that the three of them had been doing this regime for close on a year.

I had either left for work by that stage or was still dreaming the dreams of the innocents!

Dallas connected his Laptop up to my extra-large flat screen TV. Tellie was excited to be included in the forensic review of the recording, knowing that this protocol was breaking another P & P ruling which forbade such practise.

That is, to remove relevant material from an on-going, open case, from the confines of the Murder Squad Room!

Never mind, it was rather an innocent peak of a glimpse of the top of a Stationwagon with a later shot of it entering onto the Motorway.

“Replay it Dallas, will you?” I demanded over and over again. “What are we missing here?” I muttered more to myself after the twentieth showing.

“That it's a different vehicle.” Offered Tellie. Dallas looked at her. A startled look on his face.

“Well....it must be. If the vehicle identified entering onto the Motorway belongs to that Sundrasanaram guy, who has been found innocent of any wrong-doing except that of owning a light grey Toyota Camry Stationwagon.....then the Assailants of the Taylor Square attack must have

changed into a similar vehicle.....going on what you can see of the roof line of the vehicle and nothing else in those recordings.”

“....and driven off in a different direction!” My son added.

“There's no other way out of that area. Is there?” I replied forcefully.

“Dalls....can you bring up Google Earth of the area....right onto that....what's it called? Maynard Close?” My son Bill commanded.

Dallas nodded his head as his fingers flew across the keyboard.

“OK.....here we are. Maynard Close, Minto Industrial Park.....”

“Now can you pull it back so that we can see more of the area?” He added.

This was done and immediately it was noticed that the road from the Motorway into the Industrial Park Area continued on over the railway line on the southern end of the Minto Railway Station and kept on going.

“Where does that bloody road go to?” I asked. A lump in my throat.

“Back into Campbelltown.....”

“Fuck.....I should have checked that out before I went off half-cocked.....”

“Joe, it's just as much our fault. Shells and I. One of us should have thought about it.....and it sure does look like the same vehicle that was followed onto the Motorway that all Traffic cameras picked up.”

I shook my head. I didn't agree with that summation though I was not going to argue the point. In all but a few cases, there is always another point of view. Another scenario that fits the equation. That joins the dots. That was what made a good Detective. Considering then rejecting all other possible scenarios. That is not what I had done!

“No use fighting over spilt milk.....but you've got to ask yourself how did the guys in the van know about that cul-de-sac? How did they know about the alternate way out of there? How did they know about the narrow field of vision of that video camera position presumably off the wall of the Engineering Firm? How did they know about the Firm working overtime on that particular night.....extending the Shift time by around three hours wasn't it.....?”

“....and how did they know of a vehicle of a similar make, model and colour being used by employees of that Firm who would be driving out of that Staff Parking Area at that time of night? There are too many coincidences in that regard for it to be.....a bloody coincidence! A stroke of good luck! Don't you think Dad? You always have said to me that there is no such thing as coincidences in any crime....while I may not agree with that philosophy, I'll use your mantra on you at this point in time.” He let out a chuckle.

I turned and looked at Bill, my son.

“You are a bloody genius, my young man. A bloody genius!”

“Just a chip off the old block....” He shot back. A look of satisfaction and pride on his face.

He was trying to make me feel better.

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Abbey was a good Boss.

Situations such as the joint raid were never referred to again.

“You fuck up, you pay a price. Once that has been paid, then it is a part of history. Now get on with your job and get the mother-fuckers who are responsible....don't let me down again.”

And that was it.

Both Abbey and the Deputy Commissioner were aware that similar incidents would occur from time to time. Coppers were not infallible or perfect. Everyone makes boo-boos. Those that say they don't, ever, must sit at a desk and do bugger all throughout their careers except drink coffee and pick their nose!

Even then there would be days where that operation was done inefficiently, causing spilt coffee or bleeding noses.

It must be said though, that the Deputy Commissioner enjoyed the dressing down that he gave me. The entire office was privy to this as the door to the Boss's office was left ajar.

Another twist of the knife by the bastard, I thought to myself.

All those that could overhear the tirade were totally on my side though. Not one of the Detectives had escaped from such a similar situation. The hierarchy expected perfection, forgetting the number of times that they themselves had fucked up.....and several were the stuff of corridor legends, let me tell you!

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Forensics had completed a trawl through the Missing Persons Records for nil results on the identity of the two lads. We knew that was a long shot with a minimal chance of success. It had to be done though.

“Joe? Why don't we just stroll down the street one night looking as though we are going to the Hospital. Nab one of those male prossies....they may just talk if they know that we are only interested in the two lads. Wanting to ID them.....worth the effort?”

I thought about it.

It may be our last chance.

It made me sad that two young lads lay unidentified and unwanted in 'cold storage' at the City Morgue. They could remain there for the arbitrary two years before being given a Pauper's funeral in an unmarked and unnamed grave at Rookwood.

I didn't like the idea of that.

The effort in their identification may not progress the Case that far, if at all, but at least there would be a name on the simple headstone.

We organised three couples for the night nab.

All of us coming from different directions but heading through the Park towards the Hospital.

We hit almost at the same time.

Sheer luck.

Two couples were successful.

Shells and Dallas were unsuccessful.

Estelle 'Tellie' Sanchez, my live-in partner and Forensic Team Leader, obtained permission to be included, as long as there was no danger involved.

Really?

A group of young male Prostitutes being nabbed in a semi-dark inner-City Park had all the hallmarks of stab wounds being the result if we were not super careful!

I was surprised at how keen for the hunt and totally in the zone she was when we nabbed our quarry. She had flung him to the ground with a knee in his back, clicking the hand-cuffs on before I had even reacted to the scuffle.

Go figure!

Another young dude lunged for her but was thwarted in his attempt of plunging a flick-knife into her stomach but a swift kick of her left leg which sent the knife flying. I was so impressed, I almost forgot to nab the guy. Grabbing him by the hair, I kicked out at his leading foot which caused him to fall to the ground. I placed hand-cuffs on him as I bodily picked him up.

“Listen, sweet-heart.....” I whispered gruffly into his ear. “Under normal circumstances you'd be going down on a couple of charges that would ensure your holidays would be enjoyed from behind high stone walls.....for quite a few years.....and you'd be at the beck and call of the toughest crims inside without a voice in the matter. Understand?”

I frog-marched him over to a nearby Park bench. Physically having to push him down in a seated position.

I was amazed that the constant stream of vehicles gliding passed the Park had thinned.

Quickly.

The other young 'walkers' had also disappeared.

The word had got out extremely quickly that there were Undercover Cops in the vicinity who had nabbed a couple of the “Lads” already. How the telegraph worked I had no idea but Shelley stated that she heard a shrill two note whistle as Tellie was bodily throwing her quarry to the ground.

I completely missed that call.

Tellie picked up her quarry. With the help of Shelley, they pushed the captive down onto the timber slatted bench beside his mate who sat slouched. Sullen and bent over looking at the ground at his feet. Not willing to make eye contact with any of the six of us.

“OK.....” I took a couple of deep breaths. I looked at the three lads. Not more than 17, maybe 18 years of age. The smallest guy had to be no older than 15 just looking at him. Sad. I shook my head slowly. “If we were going to arrest you, the Paddywagons would be here already.....understand? I want some answers. OK? I'm Detective Joseph Lind from the Murder Squad. Tellie Sanchez, my partner.” I wasn't lying. “Detectives Shelley Shields and Dallas Courtney. Danielle Gervic and Harry Jarvis. We're all from the Murder Squad. A Taskforce under the code-name of Operation Blackett formed to investigate the brutal murders of two of your mates back about a month ago. Here in this Park....early on the Sunday morning.....and the brutal murder of one William 'Billie' Dean Worseley down Oxford Street on the same night.....”

This of course was all bullshit, but it helped to engender a feeling that us Cops were serious in wanting to solve the murders.

“We have identified the white van in question but that's as far as it goes. We think that the three murders are connected.....now....I couldn't give a damn how you get your drugs and who from,

who you please or how you get your jollies....what I do care about is solving your mates' murders. OK. I want the bastards, but we need your help. We cannot even identify the two lads who had their lives brutally ended here in this Park.....at around 2 on a chilly Sunday morning.”

I walked some distance away, turned to return to stand in front of the three slouched down. Their arms manacled behind their backs. Sullen looks. Stony stares now challenging me.

“We need your help.....we can't even bury them....give them a decent burial without knowing their names...man, that would suck being put into the ground without being able to note who they are....their names. To my way of thinking in any case.”

“Who gives a.....?” The lad looked up at me. Jutted out his chin. “Who gives a flippin' fig?”

“Me. I do, lad.....me. I give a friggin' fig. Me!” I spat out forcefully.

He looked away from me . He couldn't hold the stare.

“That's all? You'd just let us go.....no shit?”

“Don't trust a word they say....” Cut in the third lad. It sounded as though his balls hadn't dropped yet. Maybe he was younger then the 15 years of age that I had originally guessed at.

“Fuckin' coppers. They's all the same....”

“OK then. All we wanted was your help in identifying them. You don't want to help us catch the bastards who did this to your mates?....killed them, then stand up and we'll remove the hand-cuffs....”

“That's it?”

“Yeah.” I replied as I wheeled him around to undo the manacles. He moved away to stand a safe distance near one of the Gum trees as I undid the hand-cuffs off the other two. These two took off like scared rabbits. The other stood his ground leaning cockily against one of the trees that dotted the area. Another lad with make-up on and fancy rainbow coloured nail-polish dropped from a nearby tree. A multi-coloured mohawk. A woman's see-through blouse over a lacy silk undergarment. Cut-off tight jeans. Big boots. He came to stand beside the scowling youth. Encircled his arm around the waist of the most sullen of the three. I noticed that the other two had warily backtracked to stand off to one side, but still close to the other two. I knew that if I made a lunge towards them, they'd be off in four different directions.

“That' it? That's all you want from us?” The apparent leader of the four asked. “Then you'll leave us be?” The scowl had not disappeared.

“Yep.....you're all free to go and you may never see us again.....”

The effeminate one looked carefully around the grounds of the Park. Out onto the street. Back to us. Clicked his tongue against his lips. Did the circuit again with his eyes like a nervous Lioness sure that there were predators about closing in on her cubs.

“The dude with the black polish....and blonde hair? Snow White.....”

They all laughed at that. Or more correctly, giggled like school girls.

“ A snorter, eh?” I challenged them. The mention of Snow White I had taken the wrong way, thinking that one of them was a cocaine addict. That wasn't obvious at the Post Mortem, I scolded myself. Stop going off half-cocked I remonstrated.

Drug preferences were never discussed with outsiders, especially cops. There was silence. A car horn sounded from across the Park. A punter impatient for his boy.

“You got customers, lads. Thanks for nothing.....and your two friends thank you too....for nothing.” I made a point of placing the hand-cuffs into the leather pouch hanging off my belt. Nodded my head and gestured for all of us to head in the opposite direction away from the guys.

“Jacob Rutherford. Jack or Jake. Maybe Ruttiford....something like that. His family live down near Kiama. Gerringong, I think he once said. A really good couple of surf breaks....he was into shit like that before he got chucked out....yeah, we knew him as Snow White. He liked to dress up sometimes. In a Snow White costume like on TV. The other one? His lover. Girlfriend. Squeeze. Brian Talbot....or Talbert, not too sure. His Mum and Dad, two sisters. They live out Maroubra way. Bloody Catholics.....don't recognise gays or people like us. OK? You'll let us be?”

“Got no quarrel with youse....but next time, if there is a next time, I'll arrest you for carrying and attempting to knife my partner....that's a warning. OK?”

I tossed the knife in his direction.

It was his protection and I knew that there would be a couple of times a week where he would need its reassurance and feel in his back pocket. He bent down to pick it up, gave me that sullen look again. A jut of his chin to acknowledge my largesse, then turned to head for the street on the far side of the Park.

The traffic flow was his life-blood.

The night was still young.

There was money to be made.

I had no doubt that the four lads who we had just nabbed that night, would either be in prison or dead inside five years.

Who really gave a friggin' fig if that was the case?

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"It's Tarhbert, right? Missus Tarhbert? Yes? May we come in? I'm Detective Joe Lind. My two associates Detective Shields and Courtney." I flashed my ID wallet. "As I mentioned over the phone, we would like to take a DNA sample to confirm that the body that lays in the Morgue is in fact your late son.....may we come in?"

"You'll have to wait until my Priest gets here. Can you sit in your car? He shouldn't be long."

She rudely closed the door on us.

I turned to Shelley with raised eye-brows. Gestured to again knock on the door. Shelley stayed my arm.

"Let it be, Joe. I'd say the family Priest won't be long."

As we turned to retrace our steps out to the front gate, the door of the house cranked open.

"I'm sorry.....my....ummy mother can be....um....single minded. Please, come on in. Please accept my apologies for my mother's rudeness."

The woman was a taller but more rotund version of the old woman who had first opened the door. Perhaps late thirties, early forties. Dowdy dress. Very little make-up. Hair pulled back to a savagely tight bun. Her features tight. Sour. But her smile still displayed a trace of warmth, though I imagined that would slowly dissipate over time.

The metamorphosis had begun years ago I suspected. Weighed down by a household that took religion far too seriously, though the daughter may have questions about it when it came to her errant young brother.

We followed her down a dim, narrow corridor.

I'd been in similar semi-detached houses in other parts of Sydney. Usually all dark, double brick. Cold. Small rooms. Smaller windows. Erected by the thousands after the War as an example of a grateful Government showing all the signs of gratitude towards the Returned Servicemen and women.

She showed us into a small Lounge Room with oversized, thread-bare sofa chairs and a Lounge suite. As we sat there was a soft knock at the door.

"That's Father Dyson." The old lady informed us absent-mindedly. As though we cared.

There was a Cross and Jesus on one wall. A large picture of the supposed countenance of Jesus taken from the image of the 'Turin Shroud' on another. I was on the verge of advising the old girl

that studies conducted several years ago proved the falseness of the image of ever being that of Jesus Christ. The Shroud was carbon-dated to around the seventh to tenth centuries. The Vatican preventing any further scientific examination, stating the delicate nature of the thread due to its age as the reason for the ban. The Shroud removed from Public display. Delegated to some back room storage area of the Vatican, more than likely.

An elderly gentleman in black, a 'dog collar' clearly visible, hobbled into the room steadying himself on a three-pronged cane. He sat heavily in the last remaining sofa chair with an audible sigh without waiting for an invitation. He was a regular visitor so it would seem.

We were asked politely by the younger woman our preference of Tea or Coffee. Biscuits or cake.

This was becoming a Quo Vadis production sequence!

"Missus Tarhbert? Before we partake of your hospitality, do you mind if we take a DNA sample from you?"

She glanced at Father Dyson who had not been formally introduced to us.

"What ya want that for?" She croaked in a quavering voice.

"As I stated on the phone last evening to your daughter here, we have two young victims of a brutal homicide bashing laying in the Morgue with no formal identification. Our enquiries lead us to believe that one of the lads maybe your son....."

The daughter wheeled a Tea Trolley into the room. The wheels squeaked their annoyance at never been oiled in their life! It was years since I had seen one of these contraptions. Perhaps the last time was my mother/grandmother using one when the rare Visitor invaded our house when I was but a lad.

I raised a hand to the younger woman, trying desperately to remember her name.

"Please. If we could get that sample before we go too far."

I glanced at Shelley who placed a Crime Scene Case onto her lap and opened it. The snapping of latex broke the silence of the room as she placed gloves on.

"This going to tell whether I've got a son?" The old lady asked after Shelley had taken a swab sample and placed the vial into an Evidence Bag.

"Yes and no." I replied curtly. "It will indicate to us whether the lad lying on a slab in the City Morgue is your son or not....do you mind if we ask you a few questions?"

The woman was sitting ramrod straight on a kitchen chair that her daughter had brought into the room. I had the opinion that it wasn't meant for the mother! The old girl straightened her dress that fell to the floor, almost covering her feet. She reminded me of one of those old fashion fire and brimstone School Marms. The terse, pursed lips completing the image. She glanced at the Father

who was lounging comfortably in one of the single sofa chairs. Munching purposefully on an offered biscuit. He gave a slight nod of his head as though he was both the spiritual and legal representative present.

“I do not have a son.....” She stated in a strong voice. A jut of her chin to emphasise the point.

“In that case, this test will determine that point.”

She again fidgeted with her dress. Smoothing its length over her lap. Picking biscuits crumbs from the material as though it was her last meal on earth.

“He was ordered from the house never to return.....” She added defensively, looking down at her lap. Possibly hoping to find another crumb to place hungrily into her mouth..

“When was that?”

“Around four years ago.....maybe five.....”

“When he was around fourteen or fifteen?”

“He seemed to think that he could take care of himself.....even then....” Again somewhat defensively. She glanced over at the Priest.

“May I enquire as to the reason for his eviction from the family at such a young age?”

She fidgeted, squirmed in the chair. Looked down at her hands.

“He made certain allegations concerning the Father.” The daughter offered.

“Oh?” I glanced at the man. He had nervously placed his cup of tea onto a small side table. He wouldn't make eye contact.

“Dreadful things that a Man of the Cloth would never even contemplate.....Brian was always the schemer. The liar. All his life. He had the Devil in him from an early age.....”

The Father was believed over the words....and the agitation, the distress and the pain of the young son. I imagined that the abuse had started from an early age. Never believed. Never even suspected. Well outside the beliefs of the woman who would not, in her entire life, want to suspect that her son's allegation maybe the truth. Her rigidly held belief system in living would collapse. I'd seen this before.

“Your husband?” I asked, though I thought that I knew the answer.

“He walked out. Deserted me, the good for nothing so and so.....some three...three and a half years ago.....”

“If you don't mind me saying, there is a fair gap between your daughter and the age of your son....”

“Brian was the product of the Devil. My husband raped me. Briany was the result.....”

I was beginning to get a good picture of the life and times of the Tarhbert family. I did not like it, but what can you say. The dysfunctional and disruptive family was almost the norm these days. Who was I to talk with my family background.

Raised all my life by a woman whom I thought was my mother, only to learn on her death that she was in fact my Grandmother on the maternal side. My young mother having run out when I was but a baby. Then suddenly finding my father almost by accident only a couple of years ago. Living around ten kilometres as the crow flies from my address . Learning then of the enormous number of half siblings that I had when I had been raised as an only child! My son Bill, being raised by his maternal Great Grandmother after his mother, my wife, was shot to death in some remote town in South Australia. On her last undercover operation. Only conceding to the exercise as we were tight for money at the time!

Normal family life!

What is that?

Again this 'ugly' word *normal*, was used to categorise, to emphasise the broad examples of those that fell outside the meaning of the word.

To highlight their abnormality!

We should cease this desire to want to place things....people.....circumstances...things into boxes so that we can better deal with them. To live with!

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Jacob Ruttiford's family had moved from the address in Gerringong to the Hunter Valley, then to a Housing Commission flat in Naremburn.

They had been a little harder to track down because of the several relocations.

Several similar squat, smooth faced brick box structures of three storeys height sat in a tidy, tree lined block. A central sunny area of pathways, trees and quiet nooks. The area clean and looked after. Not a leaf or piece of paper blowing about. It was obvious that the residents of the Complex took pride in their surroundings. An exact opposite of other similar Complexes elsewhere in this sprawling City.

We were shown in to the small but spotlessly clean Flat of minimal but good quality furnishings. Broad spacings between each piece of furniture to allow the movement of an electric wheelchair. Open. Airy. The smell of the trees wafting through an open sliding door that lead out

onto a small Balcony.

Introduced to Frank Ruttiford who sat slumped in that chair. His head and face contorted. He knew of our presence but was unable to communicate.

"Mine accident a couple of years ago. He was a Shift Foreman. His Ute flipped and rolled down a lot of terraces to the bottom of the mine. A tyre blow-out according to the findings....please sit." Diane Ruttiford gestured to several Lounge Chairs. I noticed a similar "Jesus on the Cross" edifice hanging centrally on a wall. I feared a similar situation to the Tarhberts.

"You say that you have found our son? Where may I ask?"

"Um....as I indicated on the phone yesterday, we are not certain as to whether the young man is your son. We are hoping that a DNA swab and examination may confirm that fact...."

"The young man in question? He's dead? Isn't he? Murdered? You are from the Murder Squad? Please be truthful with me, Detective. I'm not a shrinking Violet. I have shed many a tear over the disappearance of my son....but I had to acknowledge the fact that he wanted to make the break from his family. It was his choice....."

"It's a little early to draw conclusion.....your son? Jacob? Do you have any photographs of recent origin of him?"

"Recent? No. Jake left home almost five years ago now...."

"He would have been young....."

"No.....seventeen when he scooted. Twenty-two I guess now.....we moved not long after he left. We moved to the Hunter Valley. My husband had a mining background. Got a job in the open-cut....he was sick of being underground. Then the accident and our move here...it's easier for transport. On the Ground Floor there's no problems. He's taken to a Rehab Section at the Hospital two days a week. Gives me a bit of time to myself. We have help come in.....it's.....not too bad.....Life? You never know what's around the corner, do you?"

I shook my head in agreement. Twenty-two? The lad didn't seem that old.

Shelley did the honours again, taking swabs of both parents.

"When Jacob left.....?"

"All we can think of is that he got in with the wrong crowd....surfers who would come down to Gerringong from the city suburbs looking for that wave. Doing drugs. It messed with his head.....he just up and left. He was always old for his age. Self sufficient if you know what I mean. He set up the garage as his "pad". Self-reliant....he just left....."

"You didn't inform the local Police? Register a Missing Persons Report?"

"His father....he was very upset about Jake going off.....he just kind of disowned him....I never

stopped hoping that he would walk through that door. That smile would melt your heart.....he must have had a girl with him as we found some gear when we cleaned out the Garage.....funny. We never suspected it. We thought that they were perhaps just going off....you know, to look for that perfect summer that the young always dream about. That perfect wave.....”

I glanced at Stan Ruttiford. Too young to be confined to a wheelchair for life. Neither of them looked more than late forties, early fifties. Maybe the 'youth' gene had been passed onto their son.

We stood to leave.

“You'll let us know? If its Jacob?”

“Yes, of course....”

“We will get his body...to bury him?”

“Yes. If it proves to be your son, then that is the protocol. Thank you....we'll see ourselves out. Thank you for your time.”

As I always believed, it was the luck of the draw. No matter how you brought up your kids, there was never any hard and fast rule that they would remain within your sphere for the rest of their lives. On the contrary, it mattered nought whether you were the most disastrous parents or the most perfect, their future paths were in the laps of the Gods. All you could try to do was prepare them as best you could, for their journey.

You will always hope, but in the end, it's a lottery!

32

We slumped back into our desk chairs. The trip to Maroubra and Naremburn not an enjoyable sojourn this day. It was my shout apparently to provide the coffees from the downstairs Coffee Joint in the Plaza.

It seemed to come around very quickly, I thought.

“It'll take about fifteen working days to get a Report on those swabs.....”

“Mmm...I didn't expect much less.....what's your take on it? This morning.....” I glanced at my two junior partners whom I was going to lose in the very near future. I wasn't looking forward to that date. Like a parent fretting over an errant child who had flown the coop one too many times, never to return.

I was being melodramatic, I scolded myself.

It wasn't that bad.

They'd be still sitting within ear shot so that I could be privy to their conversations on their Cases. I could always cut across their thoughts to offer my thoughts and logic.

No! That wasn't on.

They needed to run their own race. If they needed my input, they needed to ask me for it. Not the other way around.

"I think that we are close to the mark with both of them...."

"I agree...." Dallas offered.

I nodded my head. You get to have that sixth sense. That gut feeling where everything sits pat.

"Mmm...yeah. But it doesn't solve the crimes."

"I been thinking about that since I was at your place last week. I went through Motor Registry looking for a similar type, make and model Stationwagon.....there's just too many.....they were a popular choice with Fleet Owners, especially Travelling Salesmen type of Industry....but those comments of your son's. I reckon that that hit the spot....."

Shelley gave a blank look. We filled her in on what had occurred at my place the previous Wednesday evening. I was surprised that Dallas had not filled her in on what had transpired during the latter part of the week while I was still off.

"I went out to the Engineering Firm on Friday morning early. Spoke to the Security Guard at the Staff Entry gate. There is three shifts of them when the Firm is working overtime as they were that night of the homicides.....when they're not on continuous overtime operations, the Gate Guards are the night-time Security team for the entire complex....."

"You didn't tell me about that Dallas...." Shelley complained.

I gave the guy a scathing look. I was not impressed. We were a team where we needed to involve each other in every move and thought that we might have on an ongoing homicide case.

Dallas looked sheepishly at his desk.

"Sorry, Shells.....um...it won't happen again."

"Be sure of that, young man. When you are on your own as a team which will occur after this Case is put to bed, you need to act as a team. In unison. The right hand needs to know what the left hand is doing....at all times.....now....go on, what happened?"

"Um....The Firm.....Hardy Brothers Engineering and Fabrication Company. They purchased five of those vehicles as a Fleet Arrangement for their Sales Staff. Sold them all two years later with staff having first choice. As we know, Kesrit Sundrasanaram bought one of them. The chap that I spoke to, says he thinks that members of the staff brought two others while the remaining two were

placed on the second hand car market for sale. The records are held by the Human Resources Section of the Firm. Should we again contact that Mister Carl Reynolds whom we spoke to before?"

"Um....we know the approximate time of the Fleet Purchase. The name of the firm.....wouldn't that be sufficient for you to chase out the registration details and thus the sale history? If not, then yes. Ring him. Fill him in on what it is that we want....don't be specific about why we need these records. Tell him that we will be there at his door at around 10 to-morrow morning....but do the trawl first. It may save us a trip. OK?"

"Did you see the TV News last night, Joe? They launched that product, calling it the William Worseley Electro-solar power matting. A big hoo-har. Every bod and his dog there. Politicians beaming....that Professor guy standing front and central. Offering platitudes but not much detail on why the Inventor and the guy whose name would always be associated with the product, was not present. I didn't like him much when we interviewed him that time at his Office. A bit of a snob. Mightier than thou type.....and it was reinforced last night.....and he loved being in the lime-light. You could tell....his hour to shine. I got the impression that he thought more of himself then the actual product that will supposedly change the course of History, so it was broadcast."

"Nah, I missed the News. We were out doing our nightly run....the whole dysfunctional family and all....." I smiled.

"What? Haven't you had enough when you leave here after a swim in the Sub-Base Gym?" Dallas chuckled.

I ignored the jab.

"What do you reckon?.....he may not have liked Billie Worseley being associated physically with the product...."

"What if the Professor had only recently been informed of Billie's.....um.....need to dress up.....?"

"What if Billie told him or inferred that he would be dressed in feminine gear for the Launch?"

"I got the impression that the Professor may not have liked that kind of....as he would put it....depravity. He appeared to me to be a real straight shooter.....conservative in the extreme."

"C'mon you two.....Billie worked at the Firm for years. There must have been suspicion right around the laboratory....."

"Did you get that impression when we interviewed the staff?"

"No....I guess not....on the contrary.....Billie may have been described as slightly effeminate by one or two, but that was all. There was only one colleague who seemed to know the truth and the relationship between Billie and Bennie....."

"I wonder what type of vehicle the Professor drives?"

“Why?”

“All the evidence points to Billie very rarely ever going out into that back alleyway. It wasn't his style.....he wasn't a smoker or into that type of sexual thing.....'

“....and if you look at his image while he was in view of the camera, you could assume that he was waiting for some-one.....”

“Has his mobile been checked for calls received or sent?”

“Yeah. Nothing...but it may have been pre-arranged.....”

“He definitely knew the person who drew him out of range of the camera that night....by his facial expressions. His manner. He even gave a slight wave as he walked out of range.....rough in those high heels on that surface of the Alleyway.” Shelley giggled at that statement.

“OK.....the Professor's Motor Vehicle rego plates. Make and model of vehicle.....and those details of the Fleet purchase, Dallas. That's your job for now. Shells, let us look back through the video of the night concerned. Especially of feeds inside the Pub and the one from outside in the Alleyway. Perhaps some-one whispered something to him inside the Pub about going outside for some reason.....We may have a slightly different take on the images with what we have just discussed. Once Dallas has the Professor's vehicle details, we will again view all those images of lower Oxford Street and where-ever we can get an image of Burton Street as it intersects with Oxford. The Alleyway mouth fronts onto Burton from memory. We may spot a vehicle that should not have been there.....I want the address of the Professor too.....I think that we should pay him another visit.”

My body was humming. We had turned a corner.

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We spent the remainder of the afternoon perusing the streams of video feed that had been previously probed by Forensics and Dallas before that, of the traffic flow heading towards Taylors Square up Oxford Street.

The Professor's late model small Beamer was not spotted in the stream of cars using Oxford or Burton Streets during the period of a four hour window around the time of the estimated death of William Worseley.

A dead end!

Dallas was unable to get a successful lead on the Fleet vehicles formerly owned by the

Engineering Firm through our links with the Motor Registry records. We contacted the firm late in the afternoon with the request, informing the HR Manager that we would be on his doorstep around 10 the following morning.

I lost that feeling of having turned that proverbial corner!

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I picked Dallas up early in the Unmarked, then via Shelley's place up the Leppington Road to her little "hobby" farm property before doubling back onto the Motorway to exit onto the Minto off-ramp.

Mister Carl Reynolds agreed to come in early to go through the Records of Sale for the five Fleet vehicles that had been sold only months previously.

We sat in his Office as he whistled his way through the files. A bloody annoying habit that particularly grated on me. Especially when the tune that he tried to whistle was so flat and tuneless!

"Here we are." He uttered triumphantly as though he had resolved the problems of the World. "The five vehicles in question. Three were sold to Employees of the firm. The other two were placed on the second-hand market. You know that Car Sales firm that specialises in fleet car sales?"

He twisted in his seat to retrieve several sheets from a Printer behind him.

"Will that do?"

I handed them to Dallas who immediately entered the vehicle details and new Owners' names into the Police Records File on his Laptop.

"Yep...." He replied after several minutes. "Um....one thing.....one of the vehicles was sold to a Yasma Mahamoud. An employee of this Firm. Is that correct? Apart from another of the vehicles being sold to Sundrasanaram?"

"One moment. I'll check the Employees List...." His fingers flew over the keyboard. "Yes. That is correct. Joined the Firm straight from School as a Trainee Engineer doing his Engineering Degree through the Western Sydney University part-time at the expense of the Firm.....under a Federal Government School Leavers Special Grant for selected young adults. His grades, his attendance is exemplary. Has a real future....."

Dallas had been playing with his Laptop as this information was enthusiastically imparted to us.

“.....and the other vehicle?” Dallas read off the Vin Number and Rego Plates. “That was sold to another member of your firm. A Mister Tetra Mahamoud....is he related to the the young Yasma?”

“.....um.....yes.” He again looked at his computer screen as he toggled the mouse. “An Uncle. So it seems. He is a Cleaner here.....”

We thanked the man profusely and departed.

As I drove away from the small Visitor Parking Area I half turned to Dallas.

“OK....what was that all about?”

“Turn right towards the railway line and pull over and stop. I'll explain then.”

I did as I was told, turning the engine off. Shells and I turned to face Dallas who, as always, was seated in the rear seat with his little Office on his lap. A small Printer/Scanner beside him which he had connected to the car power and the Laptop.

He printed off several sheets and gave them to me.

“Remember when we looked up the Sundrasanaram name there was a 'Red flag' attached.....as we now know, for two of the sons. The two youngest sons as it turns out. The four sons were taken into Campbelltown Police Station for questioning. We kept them waiting for some time and after realising the.....um.....innocence of the father, we still interviewed the four sons. Mitra was the eldest. At 25. Then Lissen, Pilet with Marmot the youngest at 18. He was the most sullen. The one who seemed to have that chip about Cops.....Pilet was perhaps just the same though he seemed to hide it a bit better.....those two have the 'Red Flag' alert because of their association with several fellows who are known to frequent a certain Book Store and Prayer Room above where certain fundamentalist ideology is discussed. In the centre of Campbelltown. Guilt by association only so it would seem.....The associates? One in question is the young Yasma Mahamoud who has a vehicle registered to him that is exactly the same as the Sundrasanaram vehicle.....one of the fleet vehicles.”

“...and would be aware, one could assume, of the overtime practises and working schedules of the Firm....”

“.....who also lives in Macquarie Gardens...the address only one block from where the white van was stolen.”

“How do you know that, Dallas?”

“Google Earth, Joe. It's marvellous.”

“Was there any indication when you interviewed the two brothers of any nervousness, any concern as to why they had been taken to the Police Station for questioning? You know, an obvious nervous disposition as they may have thought that their little trip into town had been discovered?”

“No. None that I could see. In fact they seemed to know in advance that it was their father that we were most concerned with.....”

“....well, they could have overheard our initial questions to their father after we had stormed the house.....we more or less informed the old bloke that we were wanting to ask him about his movements on a certain night a month previously.....the boys would have thought then, that they were not in the picture....even during the time that we interviewed them. Our manner and content of questioning them would also have indicated that to them, that they were not in the frame.”

Dallas agreed.

While I would not take much stock on Dallas's summation of the situation, I would bet money on Shelley's opinion. I had been in the Observation Room while each brother had been questioned. By that stage we knew we were pissing up against the wall in regards to why we had the father there. His alibi was air-tight. We had merely continued to interview the boys just in case something may have been dropped. There was no such luck! And their attitude was definitely not that of guilty boys!

We couldn't hold them on anything. Not even on a suspicion.

“What do you think we should do, Joe?”

“Interview the young Cadet Engineer....but before we do, we should chase out the two other Owners of the remaining vehicles to be on the safe side. Let's learn by our own mistakes, eh?”

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We had an Interview organised with Professor Stephenson for two hours hence. We could not tarry around these parts of south-west Sydney, having to make Lane Cove and the CSIRO Conclave within the time frame.

We parked in the small Visitor Parking area which was a small cut-out off one side of the Management Car Parking area. Considerably closer to the main entry area of the building than that of the Rank and File!

“How many more times will you need to see me in this regard. It is getting a little tedious, to say the least!” The Professor moaned as we accompanied him in the Lift to the 2nd Floor offices of the newly exalted Firm.

“You moving into new premises, so I hear.” I asked pleasantly, completely ignoring his annoyance.

“Yes....amazing what the promise of big dollars will do....it's good for some. Not good for others....especially me!” He jiggled his hand to show his displeasure. “It will mean an extra 30

minutes travel time for me. Each way. At least!”

“Oh? Don't you live in the next suburb? 10 minutes away by car?”

He glanced at me. A frown on his face

“From here, Detective. From here.” He commented over his shoulder as he walked from the Lift.

We settled into chairs around a small coffee table at one end of his Office. A large bay window gave views out onto an expanse of lawn liberally dotted with tall, slender, white trunk Gum Trees with delicate, small crowns of leaves.

“Detectives? Settled? Now how can I help you? Again!”

“The launch the other night. Successful?”

“Yes. Very. The group celebrated well into the night. Several Politicians stayed to enjoy the occasion and bask in the reflected glow of success.....”

“Yes.....I presume that the small band of Lab Technicians will obtain some reward for their diligence and hard work?”

“Yes.....each person who has been involved in the Research and Development of the Product will receive a royalty.....an ongoing payment for the rest of their lives which hopefully will accrue into a sizable amount if all goes as well as expected.”

“It maybe small but by all accounts, the way that the product is being sprouted as the Saviour of the World against Climate Change, that will mean a considerable amount of money in anyone's language. I would imagine.....will it be as a percentage or a dollar value per unit sold?”

He looked down at his hands clasped together in his lap.

“Um.....coffee....tea perhaps. I could do with a cup. Detectives?”

The beverage was organised. He sat silently.

“Um...I was asking about royalties and who would benefit....”

“Yes....I.....um.....I would suggest that the unit value or percentage of unit value per person is of no concern of yours....or is relevant to your investigation.....I guess everyone who worked on the project is entitled to some form of royalty. The main Lab personnel....in round figures, some fifteen people”

“Let us be the judge of what is or isn't relevant Professor.....Anyone else?”

“Like who?” He looked across at me. A scornful expression on his face.

“I have no idea....who else would be involved....say....the long time partner of William Worseley would have a claim under to-day's laws of de facto relationships.....his widowed partner.”

“Yes. Because of his early demise, she will be entitled to a 2/3 share of what William would have received....until her death....as the Principal Researcher and the man behind the original idea and product development, he was entitled to twice that royalty percentage than other persons involved.....except perhaps his Lab Associate.” There was a certain disparaging tone to his voice as he mentioned Julia Anderson.

We all thought that the reference made to Worseley's Lab Associate was some-one that we had already interviewed. It was a terrible oversight.

“Then what?”

“Those royalties will be split 50/50, equal shares to the Government Coffers and to the Head Firm.”

I nodded my head.

A quaintly garbed Coffee Lady wheeled in the refreshments. The smell of coffee denoted proper ground beans, not Instant out of the jar stuff. I was impressed. Things were looking up already for the Firm. They looked as though they were confident of a very large windfall into the foreseeable future.

After the woman left and we had attended to our needs with a biscuit or two and a try of the coffee, I continued.

“Professor, were you aware of Worseley's.....um....shall we say....inclination?”

“His slightly effeminate nature? His sometimes girlie movements and outlook, you mean?”

“Yes.....”

The man looked slightly bemused.

“Um....I was not that keen on him being front and centre of attention, if you know what I mean?”

“No, I don't know what you mean.....”

“This is an important break-through in the Scientific world that has huge ramifications world-wide.....”

“It was his product. His baby.....”

“Well...not entirely....no....a whole group of people were involved in the final solution....”

He shifted in his seat. Beads of sweat broke out on his forehead. He wiped them away with a folded handkerchief. It was at odds to what he had stated previously at the earlier interview.

“Did you know that he preferred woman's clothing? It was even mentioned that he was going to attend the launch dressed.....um.....in Fem gear....coming out, I think it is called. Were you aware

of that?”

The man stood and walked to his desk. Picked up some papers. Scanned them briefly before looking up at us as though he had only just realised our presence in his Office.

“I...arrh....I heard rumours....”

He came to sit awkwardly back with us.

“Were you concerned that this may have been rather confronting...may have had a rather adverse effect on the Launch?”

“I was concerned...yes. Detective, where is this leading? If you have any suspicion that I may have killed William.....for that reason....to stop the Firm being embarrassed.....that is an absurd suggestion. I think that the three of you should leave.”

“Professor? You have a BMW sedan registered in your name.” Dallas commented. We all remained seated. “Doesn't the firm provide a staff vehicle to the Heads of each Research and Development Firm....under the umbrella of the CSIRO name?”

“Yes. That is so. That is not an unusual arrangement. It comes as part of the Salary package that is negotiated at the commencement of each person's tenure.”

“Isn't that a little unusual? The CSIRO operates under Federal Public Service guidelines, doesn't it?”

“Only as a framework....a basis from which such negotiations can be entered into by each person....above and beyond that if they see fit.”

“Your car? Provided by the CSIRO. What type of vehicle is it? Make and model? Number plates? Colour?”

“I really do not know, to tell you the truth. I will get my Secretary to provide that information on your way out. Now, if you will excuse me? We have a large relocation move to take care of. Detectives?” He gestured towards the door as he walked that way.

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“I don't like the man.” Dallas offered as we opened the doors of the Unmarked.

“Unfortunately, that is not a chargeable offence.” Shelley replied deadpan. “We cannot arrest him for a murder based on that fact.” She added.

“Pity.”

“So! Where we at?” I asked as I started the vehicle.

“No where closer. We need to prove his presence around that part of town on that night....”

“That means that you will need to go over all those video streams again looking for that car of his.....”

There were groans from the back seat.

“So, Joe. You think that the homicide slaying of Worseley is now not connected to the two lads in the Park deaths?”

“Mmm....don't know. Maybe. Maybe not.”

“We can get back to Minto....after having some Lunch.....”

“Check with the HR Manager again. The lad may be at University. Remember? He was doing the Cadetship part-time.”

We dropped down to the Lane Cove River and stopped at a Restaurant and Take-away on the river for Lunch. We then drove across town and linked up with the South-western Motorway.

Because of the 'Red Flag' positioned on the two younger Sundrasanaram brothers, we did not want to get burnt twice in a row for the same infraction. Those two younger brothers were known friends and associates of the young Yasma. We settled on interviewing the young Yasma Mahamoud in an Office that was made available to us. It was located on the second floor of the General Office Tower of the Engineering Firm. A sweeping view of the large office area often took my attention away from the young lad. People sat at desks in small cell-like arrangements surrounded by 150 centimetre high partitioning. The arrangements on plan looking for all the world like enlarged swastikas on the open office area.

People trapped, chained to their desks, jabbing at keyboards. Or talking silently on phones. Others walked about like robots. A boredom etched on their faces.....and people caricatured the Public Service, I thought wistfully.

“Do you mind if we record these proceedings on an iPad, Yasma? Is that OK? It saves us having to learn shorthand.” The humour not lost on the lad.

“Yeah. No. Fine. Go ahead. Cool.” The guy was nervous though.

“You drove a white van into the city on the Saturday night of the 16th of last month?”

“No. I didn't.....I just sat in the passenger seat.....”

It's amazing what an unguarded moment will provide.

“OK.....why did you go all the way into town? Stay for about half an hour and come all the

way back out?”

“Mmm....yeah....I was wondering when youse Cops was going to interview me about that.....we didn't steal the van. We borrowed it....if that's what this is all about.....”

“We are from the Murder Squad, young man.”

“Oh....shit! Who died? I don't know anyone that died recently that I could help you with....I'm sure that we didn't run over anyone while we had the van....did we?” This stated with a surprised look on his face which appeared to be genuine!

It was a funny question to ask I thought. Not funny ha-ha.

“Your trip into town....then all the way back out here before you torched it?”

“Yeah....when we figured that we should torch it was because it was covered in our fingerprints. We told our mate, the guy that lent it to us that he should report that it was stolen....for insurance. You know? But no-one was hurt.....insurance fraud. Is this what this is all about?”

The guy may have been nervous, but that didn't stop him thinking about why he was being interviewed by us Murder Cops.

“Why were you concerned that your fingerprints were all over it? Had you committed an offence while in possession of the van?”

“No...well no. No.....you can't be nabbed for thinking something wrong can you?”

“Yes, you can....like planning a terrorist act against the citizens of Australia.....”

He squirmed in his chair. Looked down at his hands.

“We weren't planning nuttin'....nuttin' like that. No way!”

“Then why torch the van.....and what were you doing with those short lengths of gal. piping?”

“Those pipes? They's were off-cuts. That's all.”

“Pipe bombs.....”

He again squirmed in his chair. A surprised look on his face turned to a worried expression.

“Pipe bombs?....what you think we are. Terrorists or something? No way, man. Dudes, no way!”

“You chose that quiet cul-de-sac because you knew that it was like a bloody cemetery at that time of night....unless it was a shift change-over when you could lose yourselves in the number of vehicles leaving the Engineering Firm....you knew of the extended overtime on that Saturday night, didn't you?.....” Dallas offered.

“You drove into Darlinghurst in the City to bash to death two young lads in a Park. Sure, they

were male prostitutes which your Religion has no time for. You and your mates bashed two random gay guys to death as a statement for radical Islamic views.....” Shelley continued.

“What???!!! You guys....hang on. Hang on.....we knew Maynard Close because I drive up it every day....to get to work here. To park in the Staff Car Park.....nothing else. The overtime on that night? Didn't know about it. The camera position.....absolutely sheer luck that we left my car out of the range of it and parked the van the same way.....guys, I'll take the kudos for being extra clever that way, but really, it didn't happen that way, let me tell you. It was somewhere to leave the van, man....then we thought about the fingerprints and decided to torch it at that spot. A spur of the moment thing? Shit, we gave the whole thing very little thought. We couldn't think straight because of the thought of bashing some-one for no real reason was occupying all our thoughts....and the bloody conversation. All the way there and while we were there. None of us had the balls to do such an idiotic thing. We was as nervous as buggery....we wanted to please the Oman but realised what he wanted us to do to test our.....our courage....or strength of believe for the Cause against the Infidels as he put it....was absolutely absurd!! Idiotic!! Shit, we were making each of us more nervous.....the longer we drove around.....”

“So you're saying that you didn't bash those two lads in the Park on that Saturday night around 2 AM?”

“We couldn't. We's were told to bash up a couple of gay guys....as part of our initiation, you know....but we chickened out. We's went around the block a thousand times almost...but we couldn't do it....we won't be going back there again....”

“To Darlington? Taylors Square?”

“What? No....noto the Prayer Rooms.....it's not right what they's wanted us to do....and worse things later on if'n we was good at it. Not right. Not right at all....all in the name of Allah...bullshit! What on earth do bashing two gays have to do with the final battle? I ask you. There's a couple of them at Uni....man....they's cool dudes. Not much different to us. Like the same music. The same dudes 'cept they squeal a bit like chicks, man. That's all!”

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“We're out in the cold, guys. On this one.”

“Mmm.....our white van definitely out of the picture?”

“Seems to me it is.....”

“Then what else have we got?” I countered.

“For the homicide deaths of the two lads.....nothing else. For the death of William Worseley...nothing much except a dislike by the three of us for the Professor....which is not that great a basis to suspect that person of a homicide killing.” Shelley muttered as she grinned.

“We have Traffic cameras interspersed around the entire area and we have not been able to spot suitable candidates.....” I mused.

“....because they were on foot.....”

“Yes. Could be. Is there any indication of pedestrians entering into Darlington Road from Oxford in the time scale that has been adopted.....and look, we have camera positions at the intersection of Darlington and Oxford and at the next intersection heading north at Darlington and Burton. Both these positions would give sufficient view of the intersections to ascertain at what time a vehicle entered that length of the street and how long it took to cruise down the length of the block to the next intersection? What if the vehicle stops and one or two occupants hop out to wield those deadly blows to the two lads before getting back into the vehicle and heading off towards Burton....presumably a Van, a 4WD or a People Mover....have we ever timed each vehicle that way? All vehicles that physically takes the journey down that stretch of Darlington Road?”

“That is going to take for-ever, Joe. Timing the passage of each vehicle as it cruises the length of that part of Darlington Road....” Dallas complained.

“So narrow it down in the first instance to say.....just People Movers, 4WD's and Vans. Get Forensics onto the problem. They'd be better equipped.”

Dallas picked up his phone to ring the request through to Forensics. Grumbling all the time under his breath.

“Pedestrians, Dallas. Get them to also concentrate on pedestrians coming or going from the area....maybe running from the area in the initial search....”

I heard my young Partner groan into the phone. Apologising profusely for this added workload late on a Friday afternoon.

”.....I wonder why the powers to be never positioned those cameras to give full view of that length of Darlington and more of the Park.....”

“You insinuating some sort of conspiracy, Joe?”

“Weeeelll....you gotta wonder, now, eh?”

“Thank God we'll be free of the man when we close this case up....”

“If we ever do....Shells?” Dallas added as he swung back to face us. “I'll miss his bright and sparkling conversation. His cynical asides and his bent outlook of life and the world's millions.....”

“Yeah, well....he'll still be sitting within earshot for us to hear him moaning every day.”

“Nice to be loved....and appreciated. C'mon. Let's leave this problem until Monday and head for the Pool. How about it?”

“Yeah. About time to call it quits. I had a big lunch to-day so's I need to do a couple of more laps of the pool.”

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It was the following week.

Wednesday.

My mobile buzzed in its dock. I picked it up quickly. Meatloaf's 'Bat out of Hell' was not appreciated in the Office....or anywhere for that matter as a decibel sounding ring tone!

“Detective Lind? Senior Forensic Officer-in-charge Gordon Varotich of the Audio and Visual Forensic Investigation Team. We met a couple of weeks ago on that case of the “Two Lads in the Park” Case. Number HM 2015-04-056 MS/JL/SS/DC.....”

“Yes, Officer. What can I do for you?”

“You requested a re-do of all the video feed information just concentrating on those images as they entered Darlington Road from Oxford Street and as they exited across the Burton/Darlington Road intersection. That one block length of the street. And timing the passage of all vehicles using that route. I think we could have something. Can you come up in say thirty minutes....it will take me that long to set up the relevant images.”

We arrived on the tenth around 11 AM.

“Yes. Come through.” Handshakes all round. “Um.....you asked us to concentrate on 4WD's, Vans, People Movers and other vehicles that would have a high window sill line compared to that of the standard sedan level of to-day's vehicles.....we took a random base of over fifty vehicles between 12 midnight to 4 AM entering Darlington Road from Oxford Street. The average time to negotiate the length of that block was 35 seconds. We then ran a time-line on every vehicle that used that stretch of roadway between the hours of 0100 hours on that Sunday morning through to 0230 hours when we know that the first Police Unit was on-site.....understand, your overtime billing rates will be effected as my team and I worked the entire week-end on the task....and for the last two days actually.”

He smiled at this, knowing that we had not approved such an action. He was daring us to challenge the Amount that would be deducted from our annual operating budget.

It didn't matter much.

Our annual budget was always in the red!

“Four vehicles. A 4WD. One van and two mini-buses. The mini-buses were both hired vehicles. Here are the License Plate numbers. To ensure that we covered all bases, there was also twelve sedans. Make, model and License Plates are noted as a separate list on that print-out. All these vehicles spent time stationary somewhere between Oxford and Burton Streets on that length of Darlington Road. It must be assumed that all those vehicles clocked as being stationary for some time in that length of street were conducting some business negotiations with the natives.....to either drive off with their Client to a more secluded spot for....um....services paid forperhaps having a quick service there at the kerb line.....or opting out of the arrangements for some reason. I would imagine that there would be those who would be regular like, not requiring to negotiate the terms but knowing what was on offer at a certain price, so dilly-dallying was not for them.....and no reason to negotiate a price. That is partly an assumption as no cameras show any part of that street or the neighbouring Park.....makes you wonder doesn't it?”

I glanced at Shelley. It was she who had labelled me as a cynic and a Conspiracy Theorist when I had stated the same thing previously. We both grinned at one another. She raised her eyebrows as a way of silently saying, so sue me!

We watched the 16 vehicles all turn slowly from Oxford Street to pick them up again as they entered the intersection of Darlington Road and Burton Street. 12 of the 16 continued north up Darlington Road towards Kings Cross. I found that interesting, including the fact that the remainder swung right at the intersection to head east along Burton Street. Not one turned left to travel the length of Burton Street to its junction with Oxford Street to pass the Pub where William Worsey was killed in the back alleyway.

Actually that wasn't correct. Again and again, the white van of Yasma Mahamoud was videoed doing laps. The only vehicle during that time-line that turned left off Darlington into Burton Street.

To me that collaborated what I was suspecting. That the two crime scenes were not connected.

A Time Clock ticked away in the top right hand corner of each “feed” giving you the approximate time line of the passage of each vehicle.

“How long would it take to park a vehicle at the kerb-line, start a conversation, allow the guys to get confident of no funny business originating from the vehicle, come and stand close to the vehicle, violently push Jacob Ruttiford's face into the door sill, open a rear door....presumably one of those sliding doors...jump out and firstly attack Ruttiford and chase down and bash Brian Tarhbert to death as he tried to run away?”

“Depends on how good a talker the passenger is of the vehicle....”

“...and how fast they ran.”

“Obviously a lot faster than the two boys. Sure Ruttiford could have been stunned, but you would think that Tarhbert would have had a head start. A decent one.....and the talker would have been Yasma in that van....do you reckon he could have set anyone at ease with small chatter? I don't think so!”

Shelley nodded her head. “Then again, he may have tarried a tad thinking that he could help his mate....it would have been obvious that his mate was in trouble.”

I nodded my head. Good point. He could have propped when he saw what was happening, but turned and started to run when he saw a tribe of guys leap from the vehicle.

“....then don't forget that they have to get back into the vehicle.” Dallas continued. “We know that there were two Assailants on each Vic by the autopsy results of the bruising.....the marks that the weapons used caused.....that makes four persons who would have had to alight quickly from the vehicle.....”

“.....plus a bit of time to stand over each of them and take a swing like a golf swing at the heads of the two victims.....”

“Yeah. So you'd be looking at something like 15 minutes minimum over the average time that it took a vehicle to passage the length of the block of Darlinghurst Road. Are there any examples in that time frame? Say 15 to 20 minutes to be on the safe side?”

The two of them were feeding off one another as Marge and I had done once. They'd be all right I concluded, as long as they continued with this banter between each other.

The video feeds were fast forwarded.

“Yes. Two. One of the mini-buses and a 4WD.”

“Let's concentrate on those two first. Can you give us video copies of just those two vehicles first?” I looked down at the list that the SFO had provided for us. “Thanks for all your work. We'll keep you in the loop, OK?”

“If you turn right into Burton Street, where will that take you?” Dallas asked out of the blue.

“The back of Paddington I think, in a maze of narrow streets that seem to go around and around....or towards Bondi Junction. Rushcutters Bay way. Why?”

Dallas shrugged his shoulders. “To hire a mini-bus.....from one of the larger Vehicle Hire places....they're around the Potts Point and Rushcutters Bay area, aren't they?”

I didn't have a clue, but it was a point worth noting.

“Do you have the Rego numbers for us?”

“Yeah. There on that sheet that you've now got, but I'll do better than that. The Mini-bus is registered to McCafferty's Bus Hire and Logistics. An address in Melbourne but their Sydney

Headquarters is in Closters Lane Rushcutters Bay. I've got a telephone number for you....and a full Report with video attached will be e-mailed by COB tomorrow.” Gordon Varotich offered.

“Good work, Sir. That was good work.....” Dallas slapped the man on the back. He was pleased with the results of his hard labour. Overtime or not, it would have been an exhaustive procedure.

“Let's not speak too prematurely. This case has thrown up nothing but dead-ends, Dallas.” I warned him sternly. But the fire was in his eyes. I too, felt that we had at last turned that proverbial corner.

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“I can understand Sir. If you like, there are several alternatives. You can hang up and ring Sensis 1234 and asked to be put through to the Switchboard of the Police Building in Parramatta. Ask to speak to Detective Grade Three Joseph Lind. L-I-N-D. Murder Squad. That's me, Sir. Or you can wait until to-morrow afternoon or early the following morning and we will visit your Office with a Court Order. I'll have a band of Uniforms go through every cupboard, drawer and filing cabinet in your Office. I'll remove at least two computer towers and a couple of Laptops which you may get back within a month....or we can settle this like gentlemen, and you can supply me with the name of the person who hired one of your mini-buses, License Plate HB-00-43 on or around Saturday 16 of last Month. Presumably returned to your premises on the following day. Sunday the 17th. Now, I'll hang up and expect your return call within 15 minutes or I'll see you late to-morrow or first thing the following morning....it's up to you, Sir.”

I slumped back into my chair, placed my feet up onto the edge of my desk and rocked back and forward in time with the Second Hand of the large wall clock on the far opposite wall of the Office.

I was on the dregs of my coffee before my mobile began to chirp in its dock. I let the first bars of Requiem echo across the room before I picked up my phone.

The change of tune and style just to confuse my colleagues.

It is not a good idea to be classified into one small box I have decided!

Keep them guessing has become my new mantra.

I may even give myself a Mohawk and dye it pink just to further confuse the bejeezus out of my colleagues.

“Let me check that I have this correctly.....Charles James Liston. Date of Birth 03 November 1990. NSW Licence Number 01014386MP. Address, Unit 18/63 New South Head Road Bondi

Junction. The Mini-bus Hire was for the C Grade Eastern Suburbs Rugby Union Team. A regular customer. Is that all? Good. Do you have a contact phone number? Yes....I would not have asked if I didn't require it.....OK. Thank you for your cooperation. It is greatly appreciated. Thank you.....yes....you too.” I put down my phone.

“Have a nice day too, my arse!” I mumbled to myself. “OK....how are we going to handle this?”

“Ring the number and see if anyone is at home....doh!”

“You'll make a fine Investigative Officer one of these days, my lad.”

I rang the number. It was picked up on the third ring. I explained who I was.

“Murder Squad? This sounds serious....look, I have to go to my Physio at Bondi Junction in thirty. Should be back around 3 this afternoon. Pop around then, OK?”

As though we worked all hours and the Public could make the call as to the arrangements in place! I let it go though my first impression of the guy was not favourable.

They always say that first impressions are the most important.

This guy was starting off on the wrong foot!

Definitely!

40

“When? What day are you asking about?” Charles James Liston startled expression said it all.

“Early on the Sunday morning. Saturday the 16th, Sunday the 17th of last month. Between one and two. In the morning.”

“Jeez, could be. But I don't remember. That was the week-end that we won our first game of the season. We partied pretty hard that night. I couldn't tell you where we went after about 10 on the Saturday night.....”

“You have an designated driver?”

“Sure. We take it in turns.....”

“You don't remember turning down Darlinghurst Road off Oxford?”

“Where all the gays are....the male prossies...we sometimes go past there to give them a rev up.

Same as the street girls down William Street up at The Cross....give them a hard time.”

“Who would have been the designated driver that night?”

“Jeez.....um.....we take it in turns....”

“Aren't you suppose to inform the Hire Firm who will be driving their bus for the night?”

“I'm the Captain of the team...that's why my name is always on the Rental Agreement....they've never complained about it.....”

“Have they known?”

“Well....I don't know, to tell you the truth.....look, let me ring my Coach to find out who may have been the designated Driver that night.”

After a lot of four way conversation, it was agreed that we meet Jackson “Jacko” Pilich, the Coach of the 'C' Grade Team at the Coogee Oval in thirty minutes time.

“Why you asking about that night? Did something happen? What?” The guy asked as he hobbled to the front door to show us out.

“Football?” I asked as I gestured to his Moon Boot and leg and knee brace.

“Yeah. Kinda. During Practise the other night. Torn hamstring. Yer lucky actually. I was due to fly out to China yesterday. On a Trade Agreement Conference. Woulda been away for a couple of weeks. Now? Shit....I may even lose my job. The life of a wannabe second string Rugby Player, eh?”

I smiled at his response. Here was a young guy with a responsible job that had ramifications to the International Trade Agreement of our country.....and for pleasure he likes to, in a drunken stupor, rev up the male and female streetwalkers around the place. At some unGodly hour of the early morning when they are celebrating a Rugby win!

I lost all faith in Australia' ability to stand equally amongst the World's leading Trade Nations at that moment.

41

“Yeah. That night? I guess I was the Designated Driver. Our first win and I drew the short straw. Just my luck.”

The Coach was a large man. A neck that a Bull Elephant would be proud of. His voice didn't

match his frame. It was almost effeminate. A nose that only its owner could wear and appreciate. A crop of unruly hair that did not seem to diminish as it met a beard and chest hair. The guy would be matted over his entire body by the looks, I thought to myself. I wondered if these guys at this level of the game, shaved down for each match. This guy didn't look as though he did! It would have been an impossible task in any case!

"You drove down Darlington Road off Oxford Street." Dallas made it a statement.

"Yeah. Coulda. I suppose....."

"Did you or didn't you?"

"That's where the Bucks hang out, yeah?"

Dallas nodded his head.

"Yeah.....we decided....well, a couple of the guys decided they wanted to go there to give the Bucks a rev up....you know, stir them up a bit.....pissed guys do some crazy things.....which they wouldn't do if they were sober. One of these times I'm gonna video the entire night just to embarrass the bejeezus out of them....."

"You big guys were going to get out of the bus and tumble a couple of them just for laughs...."

"Nah. No way. We tried that once....then some-one mentioned that we could get some of their blood on us.....you know, contaminated? A lousy way to die just for a bit of a rumble.....nah, just to rev them up a bit.....you know, hang out of the windows and yell things at them....."

"Big blokes like you.....how brave of you.....Clever things like?"

"Stupid things that when the guys are drunk, they think are clever. Hilarious.....you know?"

"No I don't....." I responded sarcastically. "So what happened? You stopped the Bus halfway down the block and started talking to a couple of the guys.....the Bucks....just for laughs....or were you looking for something a bit more friskier? A bit of action perhaps? In the back of the mini-bus?"

"No. Not on. We're not like that.....jeez! You know, just stirring them up, asking the prices and what did we get for the money.....laughing about some of the things like....what Bucks can give.....you know? The services provided.....you wouldn't believe....."

Dallas held up his hand. We really didn't want the details.

"Yeah. Bucks prices is what you wanted....for fun....and what happened?"

"A couple of their mates came running towards us. They had lengths of pipe....it looked as though they were going to try and rumble us....it could go one of two ways I figured. With all the guys as pissed as farts, we could get rumbled pretty easy....or.....the guys could sober up pretty fast and belt the living daylights out of the buggers....."

“So? What happened?”

“I also was worried about the blood cross-contamination....and the Bus getting damaged. That would have been hard to explain to the Hire company...you know....so I took off. Quick. You know?”

“How long were you stopped. Talking to a couple of them?”

“Jeez...it's been a while. I don't know, maybe 10 minutes. Fifteen.....I'm not too sure now.....”

“The guys that you were talking to? Can you describe them?”

“Jeez...um....one of them had black fingernail polish on.....Snow White....I don't know why I suddenly remembered that.....”

“The guys that were walking towards you? Can you remember them?”

“Hell....it was kinda dim around that part.....”

“But you saw the pipe lengths.....in their hands....”

“Oh, yeah....remember seeing them.....not rubber hose. No. Water pipe!”

“How many guys were walking towards you?”

“Three....no....four. Maybe five.....”

“Can you describe any one of them?”

“Phew....jeez....um.....multi-coloured mohawk.....wore a girl's top. Short shorts. Its a wonder his balls didn't show. Good legs. Big boots.....one of the others almost as tall. A lot of make-up, especially around the eyes. Really frizzy long blond hair. One of the others wore those tights that women wear. All the colours of the rainbow. He had boots on too. The other guy wore sneakers. A goatee...or a poor excuse for one, that's about it....that's about it....sorry.”

I nodded my head.

“Any use having some-one draw a picture as you describe each of them?”

“Nah, I don't think so.....I can't remember much detail about their faces if you know what I mean.....”

“How about a couple of photos.....do you think that you may be able to pick them out of a photo line-up?”

“What have they done? What do you want them for?”

“Homicide murder. They bashed the two guys that you were talking to, to death....”

“That night?”

“We suspect so.”

“After we left? Fair dinkum? Nah...bullshit, man. No way.....shit!”

“As you left....you said that you got out of there in a hurry? Was one of the boys hurt. Bash his head on the side of the Bus?”

“No....one of them over-balanced as we pulled away. Hit his mouth on one of the window sills....I know that as there was some blood. The guy at the Hire Joint picked it out when I took the Bus back later that morning after I dropped all the guys off at their pads. Wanted to know what happened.....I just said that one of the guys tripped as he was getting in....you know, pissed and all.”

42

It was the next day.

Shelley and Dallas had spent the morning with the Photographic Experts trying to get a series of ID photographs together that we could use for The Coach to look through.

Shells had videoed the entire episode with the lads the night that we had nabbed three of them to try and get the names of the two deceased Victims. Several good photographs were taken from that video and enhanced.

They spread out the samples in front of me.

“What do you reckon?”

I scanned through the assortment of mug shots and enhanced photographs.

“They'd all stand out in a crowd, don't you think?”

“Depends what crowd, I reckon.” Shelley shot back. “Really cool dudes. Didn't give any indication of them being the Assailants on that night.....that night that we nabbed them.....nerves of steel.”

“Yeah, well. They'd be used to spinning yarns to the Punters and not showing any fear any time that they were pulled up or tried to be rolled.....they'd get that practically every night of the week I'd suspect. In their line of work. Still, as you said, real cool dudes.....I sure as hell didn't get any vibes off them that would make me suspect that they may have done the dirty deeds.”

“I've got a dozen shots....and one of the boys that we hand-cuffed that night has form. Assault. Prostitution and Drug Possession. Andrew Fowler.....we picked him up from Photo Recognition Techniques that Forensics ran through the system. The other three didn't even have Photo ID

Drivers Licenses.....”

“Which one was Fowler?”

“The scowler. Didn't say much, but to me it looked as though he was a sort of alpha male there in the Park.....he was the one who didn't scamper. Remember. That other dude dropped down out of the trees to put his arm around Fowler's waist....as though telling everyone that he was taken, more or less....”

“Yeah. I remember. He was the guy who did most of the talking for the group.”

I looked down at his mug shot that had been enhanced to include eye make-up and foundation. He was also given a haircut similar to that of the night.

“Bet that took some doing....Good job. Especially getting reasonable photographs of guys who would fit in....be a facsimile.....there's not that many mug shots of guys in filmy blouses and multi-coloured mohawks and thick brightly coloured, sparkling eye-make-up let me tell you.”.

“We had to photo-shop most of them.....”

“Are they passable?”

“Yeah. I think so. What do you reckon?”

I nodded my head. I couldn't tell whether the shots were real or not.

“To think that we may have had them in our hot little hands....and too dumb to realise it.....shit! I'll lay odds and say that they're interstate by now....flown the coop.....with a different look, too.”

Shelley agreed.

“If they are the Perps....why though?” Dallas asked. “Why do that to a couple of their mates...well...you'd assume the whole crowd in the park were more than just passing acquaintances.”

“A myriad reasons. A dispute over drug supply. Money owing. Territory. Turf. Clients...or just plain envy perhaps. Who's to know with these guys.....but more than likely drugs. I'd pin my reputation on it.....”

“That doesn't say much!” Dallas jibbed. A gave him my best smile.

“.....Forensics did a pretty good show....” Shelley cut across the banter.

I had to agree.

“OK. Do you and Dallas want to take them out to the Coogee Police Station so that the Coach can have a look at them. Let's see if he can pick out the culprits.....”

“And if he can't?”

“We ain't got much else to go on, I'm afraid....and Billy Worseley's homicide isn't looking at all promising.....”

“We haven't got DNA trace back on that Case yet, Joe....”

“That's something that I can chase out while you're at Coogee. That and the DNA of the two lads as a comparison to the suspected family samples.”

43

“Um....Detective? We sent that Forensic Report to your Internal Inbox two days ago. I suggest you open it occasionally. If there is nothing else? Good afternoon.” This said frostily!

Whoops. I've done it again.

The Reports confirmed that the “Two Lads in the Park” Case were indeed the sons of the families that we had interviewed and obtained DNA samples from for comparison purposes. I phoned the Morgue, asking that they make arrangements with the families for body transfer. The Morgue was pleased. Their refrigerated units were becoming a little cluttered.

I sent off an e-mail immediately giving permission for the bodies to be released with the particulars of each family. The Morgue Bureaucracy would do the rest.

I doubted that the Tarhbert family would claim the body of their son.

Once in Purgatory, for-ever lost!

I had just completed reading the other Report on the DNA trace found on Worseley's dress. Snot and sweat globules from the same person. The trace however, did not match any taken from customers of the Pub that was obtained at various times and dates over a four week period. There was no match against any of the persons involved in the Case. Either witnesses, close friends, relatives or work colleagues. There was no match to any person on the National Data Base so the owner of the trace did not have a Record and was not employed by a myriad of Government Departments, the Military or any Security Firm. Or a former employee of those establishments.

We'd hit that brick wall.

Again!

I'd just placed a hard copy of the Reports into the Murder Book, sent a copy each to Dallas, Shelley, Abbey and the DPP Rep on the case and was lounging back in my chair with my eyes half closed.

Abbey came to settle in Dallas's desk chair, swivelling it around to face me.

“How's the two cases going?” He asked in a quiet voice.

I shook my head. Filled him in on the whereabouts of my two young partners, the state of that Case and the DNA Reports that I had just received.

“Yes....I saw them. I noticed the date, Joe. You still have a problem scanning through your Inbox. Not good enough. OK? You think that the four young guys maybe your best POIs in that case?”

I nodded my head in reply.

“They'd've flown the coop if I'm not mistaken.....straight after we nabbed them that night....”

“Mmmm.....”

“I'll wait until we get confirmation from the Coach before I send out a “Wanted for Questioning over a Homicide Matter” to all Police Stations. Australia wide....because one has 'Form', we may get lucky....”

“Do you know their names?”

“Dick Smith. Squizzy Forrest. Sandra Dee and D'Pantomine. I thought that one was good. Original. I'd never heard that one before. All we have is the name of Andrew Fowler...it maybe enough. These guys for safety and security sake, tend to stay with the group. They'd never branch out on their own, especially in a new town or city.....and you can bet that they'd stay in the Trade so to speak, which means that they'd be muscling in on some-one else's turf....that may cause some problems.”

“Looking for a bit of Interstate travel, are we Joe?”

“Never occurred to me, Boss.....”

“If pigs could fly.....what about the CD case? William Worseley?”

“Nothing. Nil. Zilch. We've reached that proverbial brick wall on that Case.....”

“Who would be your main POI?”

“Worseley's colleague and head of the Research Team. Well, the Administration Manager actually. The spokesperson for the Laboratory boffins. Professor Stephenson, though that is based purely on none of us three liking the man....very thin.”

“Mmm...there's been less.....have you delved into the man's background? Family? Life?”

“No. Not really....and I doubt that we really have “Just Cause” to do so. Just because he rubbed us all the wrong way is not really a good reason to spend the time.....effort or money for that matter.....”

“I know what you mean.....but....if there is no other lead and nothing on the horizon, then a background check maybe a prudent move. On your Number One suspect, no matter how flimsy. Joe, I think that when the next Case emerges from the mire, I'll put you on it and allow Shelley and Dallas to continue as a two man team. The three of you can retain control of these two cases. OK? The next suitable Candidate wanting to become a Murder Dee and who I think may be able to put up with your style, we'll team with you.”

I knew that this day was coming though it didn't help.

A kind of sadness overwhelmed me.

An emptiness....perhaps even a tad bit of insecurity surged through me.

I don't know. It was a queer feeling.

I had not felt this way with Marge's parting, but then her leaving the Murder Squad had been telegraphed from the time that we learnt of her pregnancy early in the piece.

Abbey looked over at me.

“You OK with that?”

“Yeah. No. It's fine Boss. I'm looking forward to being able to steer another candidate through the shoals to becoming a reasonable Dee.....”

“Or not, Joe. Remember that. Not everyone is suitable. You will be my eyes and ears in that regard.”

He stood, swivelled and headed for his Office.

I felt terribly alone in that moment.

I headed downstairs to the Coffee Joint to sit in a far corner by myself.

I vaguely remembered leaving my Laptop up and running. That was a no-no in the Office. I rang Hendo, the Head Clerk and the real Boss of the Murder Squad. Asking him as a favour to go and shut down my Computer.

“You OK, Joe? You walked out of here without telling me where you were going....you OK. You looked lost.”

“No...yeah, mate. I'm fine. Just having a coffee downstairs. I'm good.”

“You don't sound it, Joe.”

“Mmm.....”

“You being set free. Losing your menagerie?”

This had been a sore point from the time that the three of us had been teamed up. From the

Hierarchy to the Rank and File. A three man team created all sorts of responses. To his credit, Abbey resisted all pressure to disband us until Shells and Dallas were capable of flying on their own.

That day had come.

Too soon for me.

About time, so said others!

44

I walked back into the Murder Squad Room to be told that Abbey wanted me in his Office.

Dallas and Shelley had returned to the Office in my absence and were sitting quietly opposite Abbey as he was speaking. The Office door closed. Nodding their heads. Smiles on their faces.

Abbey looked up as I tapped on the door.

He gestured for me to enter.

“I...um....was just congratulating these two on their progress as a Murder Squad Team of some promise. As your Progress Reports have indicated, Joe, I believe that they ready to fly alone. The three of you have done a bloody good job. How-ever.....we have a bit of a problem. There is no easy way for them to make a clean break. So.....what I am suggesting is that any new cases that may come in from this day on, will be designated to either Shells and Dallas here...or to you, Joe. The two cases that are still open will remain the responsibility of the three of you. I don't believe that there is any fair way to sever the present arrangement cleanly. There would always be some...um...difficulty. What do you say?”

He glanced from one to the other of us.

“Boss, I think you are right in your assessment of the two of them more than capable of being a team on their own. They've done good work and shown that they can operate successfully by themselves without any oversighting from a more mature person....and without the restricting ties of this old bloke.”

Smiles all round.

Shelley stood to hug me warmly. Dallas too, shook my hand but refrained from any close body contact.

I expected as much.

“Um.....I know that Joe has...um.....a reputation that some do not appreciate.....” Shelley commenced.

“.....or understand.....” Dallas butted in. “But as a Teacher, mentor and shadow, I couldn't think of a more qualified person to continue in that role. He sure does demonstrate that both sides of the street can be walked safely.....”

“Um....what Dallas is trying to say is that Joe is not afraid to use at times, some unusual methods to progress a Case.....and...um.....I will.....and I know Dallas will concur with my thoughts, be forever in debt to him for showing us the way.....”

We all laughed.

I felt embarrassed, proud, thrilled that they were making a go of it....but sad too. Like that proud parent who watches the grown child walk out into the world. Confident. Self-assured and enthusiastic. Keen for what-ever maybe thrown their way.

Funny, but my throat was so constricted, I couldn't talk. I gestured several times trying to display my feelings.

There was no need as Shelley hugged me again as Dallas took my hand and pumped it energetically. There were tears in his eyes I thought. Either that or I was looking through tears of my own.

45

After we had done the tour of the Office to applause, hugs and cheers and general good humour and congratulations, not the least because the 'graduation' of the two meant that they would be promoted to D2 Grade Detectives, we settled back at our desks in the present time.

The pleasure and bonhomie slowly dissipating.

I had thought of going a few rounds with 'Big Red', the large leather Punching Bag that took pride of place in the middle of the Office Floor. It was always in use at least once a day, either to belt out the building frustration of a case, inner turmoil or to celebrate a win!

I thought better of it, not wanting to show too much pleasure on such an occasion.

That would never do!!!!

I leaned back in my chair with my hands clasped behind my head. Looking at my two junior

partners with a satisfied smile.

“So? The Coach? How did you go?”

“He had no problems identifying Fowler the Scowler, D’Pantomime and Squizzly Forrest. Was not certain about Dick Smith. With a very positive ID of the three, I reckon that we can go after the four as our PIO’s of the homicide bashing murder of Tarhbert and Ruttiford....if we ever locate the four....” Shelley began.

“I been thinking about that....the only guy we have any information on is Fowler. He was born in a northern suburb of Brisbane. Chances are that is where he has returned to....” Dallas cut in.

“Not if he was chunked out of the house which his File seems to indicate....”

“A wounded cub will often return to family and den....maybe not Mum and Dad, but perhaps one of the siblings. They know that they’ve fucked up good. They’re on the run. It makes sense of Fowler at least returning to somewhere where security can be felt....how-ever minimal.....and I reckon the other three will follow Fowler. He was the obvious leader of the pack....and I reckon that Fowler would need them around in any case, as a sort of security blanket.....” The lad smiled at his assessment.

I liked the logic. The psychology of the reasoning. He was coming along in leaps and bounds. It was if a switch had been clicked on over the past couple of weeks. I said as much. Dallas seemed to puff his chest out. I wanted to advise him not to get too smug. Too confident....it often ended in a bloody hard fall.

I held my counsel.

“I’ll go along with that Dallas. Suss out the history of the family. Where they now live, especially any sisters.....and get the local lads up there to pay them a visit. The sisters at least. We may get lucky....about the Billie Worseley Homicide? It’s just about cold....? Past tepid in any case.”

“I been thinking about that one too....” Dallas again began. “The only vibe we have is the Professor. I’d like to do a complete background check on him.....I still do not think it is a random attack as the she-boy was out in the back alley for a purpose. As he doesn’t smoke, take drugs or partake in sexual favours with other like-minded CD’s, then really, we can only conclude that he was meeting some-one. A meeting that was organised beforehand not by phone but by person.....which insinuates a work related matter.....”

I nodded my head in agreement, though his descriptive word worried me.

“She-boy? Dallas, be careful in whose company you utter something like that....some people could be a little...um....sensitive to that label. From what I’ve been able to discern, Crossdresser would be the more apt title.....”

“Political correctness gone mad, Joe. Having to consider the correct “Tag” of a particular minority group in case some-one’s sensibilities are provoked or rubbed the wrong way annoys the

crap out of me. Especially when we have to put up with all the names slung at us by certain persons in society.....when-ever they feel like it.”

“That maybe so Dallas. I know it doesn't seem fair....but.....” I shrugged my shoulders, as though this was the explanation that we had to put up with. Then was the breaks. If you didn't care for the heat, then get out of the kitchen, I wanted to say to him....but that was a politically incorrect statement to make, so it has been deemed!

Go figure.

“OK....and because all three of us had negative vibes about the Professor, then that is our last avenue of investigation....but we have DNA trace that doesn't match any of his friends in the Pub or any work colleagues.....the Professor is in the clear as far as that goes.....”

“An Associate of the man, perhaps?”

“We're drawing long bows now.”

“Your right, but what else have we got?”

“Julia Anderson....any secret love angles in that direction? Maybe worthwhile to place her life under the microscope as well. A former lover who has jealousy issues.....”

“They've taken a long time to surface, Joe.....I mean, she and Billie had been an item more or less from the beginning of both of them commencing their first year at Uni...way back when.”

“I know, I know....but.....”

They both shook their heads in unison, pleased that there was a positive direction to take. However tenuous.

Me?

A job had just come in.

Hendo, our Chief Clerk, handed me the Initial Case Information with the Murder File Number and Note Book.

“I've organised the flight tickets and accommodation. From the Local Boys, you'll be best placed in Dubbo. The Crime scene is some fifty kilometres south out of town. A Forensic Anthropologist from the Sydney Museum will be accompanying the Forensic team from the City Morgue. It looks as though the bodies have been there for a bit.....”

“An Aboriginal Burial ground. Perhaps?”

Hendo shrugged his shoulders.

“How long have you booked me in for?”

“Three days...on the advice of the local boys....”

That took me into the week-end.

“The Forensic guys driving up or flying?”

“Driving. Plus a refrigerated Morgue Truck is going with them. They're booked into the same Motel on the southern edge of town. Got you a car too. Pick it up from the Airport when you land. Good hunting.”

I needed to fly out first thing to-morrow morning. The early flight again. Shit! Another 3 AM rise to be at the Domestic Terminal by 5.

A couple of hours before the early flight out.

Two bodies had been found buried in shallow graves on the bed of a Creek south of Dubbo. Under a bridge where the Mitchell Highway spanned a small creek bed that until recently, had been dry for close to three years. A recent rainstorm had caused the creek to flow, partly uncovering one of the bodies and exposing the foot of another.

Shells and Dallas would have to handle their avenues of investigation without my input for a couple of days.

46

Because of my “Call-out” to Dubbo, I was unable to attend William Worseley's funeral.

Both Dallas and Shelley attended in my absence.

I rang Shelley the following day.

“How was it?” I asked her, by way of greeting.

“I'm good. Thanks for asking....and the sun is out. It's a warm, cosy day, if you must know. Dallas is busy as always tapping away on his Computer and I have just had my first coffee for the day....if you are enquiring about Worseley's funeral, it went off without a hitch....even Worseley took the time to attend....and surprise, surprise, his father sat sheepishly in the last row of seats near the Entry Doors into the Hall. Left unnoticed by the throng before the Service ended. I didn't go to the Wake, but Dallas did. Seemed to end well as he appears to have that worn-out look about him....and if I'm half the Detective I think I am, then he didn't make it home. His clothes are crumpled as though he may have slept in his car.....or in a Lounge Chair somewhere.”

That statement worried me. I had the feeling that Dallas may have been further cementing his relationship with Julia Anderson. A great big no-no, especially after having a talk with him about

that very thing.

I filed the information for later action.

“No-one else of interest?” Ignoring her patronising air.

“Um.....the Professor was noticeable by his absence. Julia Anderson was an absolute Angel. She sang a couple of songs that were William's favourites. Very well I might add. With Dolly who looked radiant. A lot of tears. Laughter. Applause. It was one of the better funerals that I've ever attended. That's if Funerals are high on your entertainment list! Dallas just nodded his head in agreement....not like those maudlin affairs that he is used to going to.....and....um.....one of the women who got up to say a few words.....a Pommy by the name of Cassandra. Worked with William, apparently. His partner in the development of the Power matting.....I think we should interview her.....”

“Why did we miss her on the two occasions that we've interviewed all the staff and colleagues?”

“Yes.....Her mother died. In England. She went back over there for her funeral and to organise a Nursing Home for her father.....she left about two weeks before William was killed.....”

“Her name? It wasn't on any list provided by Stephenson, was it?”

“Yes it was....but when we questioned Stephenson, he explained that she was abroad and had been for some time. We just dismissed it as she wasn't around at the time of the murder I think.....that's all. Do you remember that? The first time that we requested the full Personnel Register from him....her name was left off because of that fact. Then it just seemed to slip. Dallas is doing a background check on her as we speak. When will you be back in the Office?”

“To-morrow. The following day at the latest....I'm not enjoying sleeping in a strange bed.”

“You're getting old, Joe. That's the first sign of aging.....that and grey in your pubic hair.”

“You been peeking, young lady?”

“I couldn't think of anything worse....but those Budgie-smugglers you insist on wearing when we do our training laps....you need to trim the hairs down there, is all I'll say on the matter....see you in a couple of days, perhaps.”

47

I was back in the Office by the middle of the following week.

Shells and Dallas had rolled up “The Lads in the Park” Bashing Homicides.

“The four of them were caught in an Unregistered and uninsured vehicle. Fowler was driving. Unlicensed. We questioned them last Friday evening and arranged the extradition papers. We did a fast one day trip up there last Friday.....we weren't permitted to extend the visit for the week-end. Apparently some-one spoiled that for the rest of us some years back....Oh, a delightful young Detective who is the niece of our illustrious Boss sends her love. She says that she has fond memories of a team of Detectives from Sydney visiting up that way a couple of years ago.....and um....giving her a rousing week-end of debauchery.....Um.....Fowler and Company are being brought down by road.....should land downstairs in our Holding Cells by to-morrow afternoon.....”

“Good work, both of you. You should be proud of yourselves....”

“Yeah, well.....the William Worseley Homicide has not progressed, I'm afraid.....a full personal disclosure of both the Professor and Julia Anderson's lives had pulled up a great big fat nought.....we're at a stand-still with that investigation.”

“Don't get too disheartened. Every team here has at least one of that type of Case sitting on their desk. Something will worm its way out of the woodwork when you least expect it....mark my words.”

“How did you go with those two bodies out Dubbo way?”

“Like you, very little to go on. No DNA trace at all due to the recent rain showers out around there. No ID. No leads. A big fat zero.....a case of building a proximity of the way they may have looked and comparing that with Missing Persons Records.....something more concrete may come out of the Post Mortems, which are to occur to-morrow, AM.”

“Why was the Forensic Anthropologist called for?”

“Nothing much left of the bodies....though they are female so it seems. Date of death around one to two years ago. What with animal activity and the force of the water only in the last couple of weeks, there was little left. We scoured the creek bed for close to two kilometres downstream picking up bits and pieces...and another part skeleton....which may make it three of the same vintage. This is going to be a hard one to solve, if it ever is. Sad, eh?”

“Could you determine cause of death?”

“Gunshot to the back of the head we think.....”

“A gang hit?”

“Could be. That is the consensus, but we'll wait to see if we get an ID on them first before we go down that road.”

I was hoping that it wasn't gang related.

I didn't feel comfortable about zeroing in on local gangs out that way. It would mean a lot of

time away from the Office. And Sydney....and my comfortable, warm bed. I must be getting old as sleeping in a strange bed was starting to be a real chore for me.

Go figure.

48

I came quickly back into the Office from the City Morgue, knowing that Shells and Dallas would be chaffing at the bit to interview our four Homicide suspects.

“Deter Heinbeck, isn't it?” Shelley asked the lad that we knew as Sandra Dee. He glared through Shelley.

“Do you understand that you have been arrested on suspicion of murdering one Brian Tarhbert on or about Saturday the 16th March this year. At between 0130 to 0200 hours in Green Park Darlington you did wilfully bash Brian Tarhbert about the back and neck causing him to fall to the ground where you then took a golf swing to the back of his head completely collapsing the back of the man's skull. Also on or about the same date and time, and at the same location, you also did wilfully bash Jacob Ruttiford in the same manner causing his death.....is there anything you would like to say in your defence?”

His stare remained unwavering.

“Let it be noted for the record that Mister Deter Heinbeck refuses to answer.”

Deter was Fowler's 'squeeze'.

Peter Calhoun aka Squizzy Forrest was also tight lipped.

Samuel Davidson Tierney aka D'Patomime also refused to answer.

Andrew “Andy’ Fowler aka Fowler the Scowler or Dick Smith, knew the score having previous form. Instead of being non-committal, he offered to supply certain information incriminating the other three for a lesser sentence for himself.

Honour amongst thieves?

Not bloody likely!

“I knows how the system works,” he stated as he leaned towards Dallas who was leaning back in his chair as far as possible. I smiled at the image before me as I viewed proceedings from the Observation and Communications Room.

“Dallas is going to tip his chair over backwards if he's not careful.” I muttered to no-one in particular.

Abbey nodded his head. Chuckled.

“We have sufficient information and trace evidence to put the four of you away for a very long time. The lot of youse. For both bashing murders. We don't need your collaboration.”

I winced at this. Shelley was going out on a limb. What she should have agreed to was some type of consideration to the offer. Just to destabilise the other non-cooperative persons.

“There is one thing that is troubling us, though.” She continued. “Why? You knew them. They were mates, weren't they? Brian and Jacob?”

He sat there nodding his head.

“Yeah.....” He eventually conceded. “Jake used to be mine. My squeeze. That arse-hole pretty boy Brian stole him from me. A while ago. The bitch! I had to get me own back otherwise I'd look weak to the rest of the boys.....”

“The other three?”

“No! The whole tribe.....I was Number One. Their protector. They's get into strife with a Punter, I did the pay-back or rescued the brother.....so I had to show them who was Boss. That I could still be trusted to protect them.....that I was up to the tag.....”

“Not drugs? Money owed? Territory? Turf?”

“Nah....just me name.....”

“Who will inherit the spot now? Now that you're going down....with your record, you won't see the outside until around your 40th Birthday.....”

He shrugged his shoulders. Looked disinterested. Faithfulness and protectiveness seemed to be fleeting conditions on the street.

“Man....who cares.....” He mumbled. Then the realisation of his predicament seemed to hit him. “Jeez....Forty!!! Shit, I'll be an old man. Not worth living, man. Not at all.”

49

We obtained full written and recorded confessions from the four of them.

Bail was rejected at the Preliminary Hearing due to the flight risk of all four.

Two weeks later, Brian Fowler was found hanging in his cell.

Deter Heinbeck hacked his wrists into shreds of skin and bled out in his holding cell two days later, even though a “Suicide Watch” request had been issued to the Prison.

I remember thinking to myself as I watch the four of them in the Park that night that we had nabbed three of them with Heinbeck dropping down out of a tree, that they would all be either dead from a drug overdose, AIDS, suicide or in prison within five years of that night.

That was about six weeks ago!

Dare to be different, you more than likely will end up dead!

My recall of that thought was not comforting.

Only sad.

50

I dropped my feet off my desk and rocked forward, placing the Murder Book onto my desk as I did so.

This was the umpteenth time that I had read through the Book.

We were missing something.

I stood and walked across to the window not far from my desk to gaze down at the passing parade in the large plaza area that surrounded the Police Building. Lost in thought.....really thinking of nothing. Letting my mind run free, to land then skitter away again, like a bee searching for pollen....my mind searching for that globule of nectar.

A little blob of truth.

I turned to pace slowly back to my desk, instead detouring to take a few swings at “Big Red”, the red leather Punching Bag that took pride of place at the centre of the Murder Squad Office area. Getting into the rhythm, I did not stop until I was a lather of sweat. Other persons in the Murder Room at the time could tell it wasn't a bout of anger, celebration or finality of a successful “complete”.

It was a bout of frustration that I needed to sweat from my body.

I slumped back into my Desk chair after I had extracted a towel from my Exercise Bag. Wiping myself down, I caught Dallas's eye. He and Shells had two Murder cases of their own now.

Worseley's homicide murder was beginning to take a back seat.

I needed to jiggle it a bit.

“We ever confiscate The Professor's personal Laptop?”

He shook his head.

“No just cause.” Shelley uttered.

“Mmmm.....we do a complete background check on him and found nothing....yet in my eyes he remains our Number One POI in the Billie Worseley homicide.....”

Dallas nodded his head in agreement.

“We do a complete trace check on his mobile, his Office and home phone?”

“Only his mobile.....”

“Why?”

Dallas shrugged his shoulders.

“As our No.1 POI, we have just cause to investigate him further, don't we?”

“Not without more concrete evidence. All we have on him is that we three do not think that much of him.....not good enough grounds, Joe.....”

“We've checked his car and later the Firm's supplied vehicle....does he have access to any other vehicle?”

Both Dallas and Shelley looked blankly at me.

“Like his wife's? A son's? Daughter's? Associate's. What-ever?”

“Why would he want to kill his Head Researcher? The guy that basically brought the product to its present very successful completion?and will make the Professor and all the Research Team, very rich people in the long run.....”

“Because he was jealous? Perhaps he didn't want to share the lime-light with anyone else? Especially if Worseley turned up at the Launch dressed in drag....he certainly would have been the centre of attention then.....which the Professor could not tolerate. Such obscene action would make the Launch a laughing stock in his conservative mind's eye. Notice that Julia Anderson was not present at the Launch....was she asked? Even in those sad circumstances? That's a bit strange, isn't it? That the widow of the glorious Scientist whose product will save the world not being present to represent her late partner? Not invited to such an important, momentous occasion!”

I looked askance at my two colleagues.

This was the first time that this point had been raised....it had been swimming around just out

of reach for the entire time that we had been investigating this homicide.

Out of reach.

Not in focus.

51

“Anything?”

“He has two mobiles. One a pre-paid. There's nothing untoward on either one of those Accounts.....or his Office or home landlines. Nothing. Sorry.”

“I think we need to obtain a Court Order to take possession of his Laptop.....um...why has he two mobiles with one of them a pre-paid? That is not the habit of an innocent man....or one who is loyal and honest to his wife and family.....perhaps he has a lover.....”

“As I just stated Joe, there is nothing untoward about that one....”

“What phone numbers were on it? The frequency? While at work or on the way home? Or at home? Are they reputable persons as listed with those phone numbers? Was is their connection to the Professor? Was the mobile just used as a one-way implement? What is the general length of each of those calls? Anything that I have forgotten?”

“Um.....I'll look into Joe. Leave it with me. OK?”

Dallas gave Shelley a look that I could only interpret as *when are we going to be rid of this guy?* I had to smile to myself. I was making a nuisance of myself!

Good!

“Joe? We have interviewed all the staff of the Research Lab twice. The Professor three times. For bugger all. I've just been going through the Staff Records. There's four Security guys that we have not questioned....and a....Mz. Cassandra Kylie Yeung-Hackett....”

“Who's she?”

“The Assistant Research Fellow Materials Investigation team. She was absent from the Laboratory for some three weeks, which included the week-end of the homicide....I mentioned her when you rang from Dubbo. Remember?”

“Yes.....she was Worseley's Lab partner, wasn't she? She worked closely with Worseley. She was home in England at the time of his death, wasn't she? Then why should we worry about her?”

Dallas looked at me. Completely devoid of a reasonable answer.

'The Professor? He lives at the back of Lane Cove, doesn't he?'

"Yes.....um.....Jacaranda Close. Views over the valley of the Lane Cove River. Five minutes from work....or was until the entire research team was relocated to that massive factory complex out near Smithfield.....land that was once owned by Australia Post.....at least he'll be going against the traffic flow for most of his morning travel....."

"He's a member of that Church....you know, the one where they wave their hands in the air and sing all the time...."

"No....no, I don't think so. A devout Catholic. I'm sure. Why is his religion important?"

I shrugged my shoulders. I had no idea why I even brought up the subject.

"OK...look. Let's make arrangements to interview the Security fellows....and the Cleaners...."

A suggestion merely to keep the investigation going...or giving the impression of moving forward in any case.

"...and that person whom we haven't interviewed previously. Worseley's partner in the Lab....she may drop something that will help us progress this Case.....hopefully."

"OK. Yes. All right."

52

The day that we organised the visit to the new complex happened to coincide with the Professor and his new 2IC being summoned to the CSIRO HQ in Canberra for urgent talks.

Perhaps it was a good thing as the staff, including the Security, Cleaning and Laboratory personnel all seemed more relaxed.

The Complex was huge. Very impressive and involved a Production Line and a large R&D Tower.

"Cassandra Kylie Yeung-Hackett, is it? You worked closely with William Worseley, I understand....and you came here from England at the suggestion of the man. Is that correct?"

"Yes. My father was English. A Research fellow at Hong Kong University. My mother was a Chinese National. A Laboratory Assistant. They returned to London before Hong Kong reverted back to Chinese territory. I did my thesis at Eton and was a Research Fellow at Manchester

University. My speciality was glass....specifically window glass.....”

“Window glass?”

“Yes.....most of the buildings built in Europe and North America now-a-days have double or triple paned window glazing. As you could imagine, a triple glazed window pane is quite expensive. Add onto that the additional costs in fabricating stronger and more solid frames to take the additional panes of glass and the inherent extra weight and any solar film, inbuilt solar reflection or glass shading and you have quite an investment in the external coverage of building facades. Especially true of multi-storey construction. The inherent extra weight on foundations and curtain wall mounts adds significantly to the over-all cost of the complex.....I was experimenting with various chemical elements within the glass make-up trying to create a single glazing panel that could provide the same thermal and sound insulation properties as triple glazing panels.....I was head-hunted by William Worseley.....”

“Oh? You were asked to join his Research Team? Not by the Professor...but by Worseley?”

“That is correct....the Professor is purely the figurehead....he had no knowledge of the work being done under his steerage. No expertise. No education. I had a....shall we say....a long haul relationship with William for quite some time before I agreed to his request....to come out here and work with him.....and that was only after his Power Generating Matting System was written up in a Scientific Journal. I could see that the product could be the answer to my research direction if it was applied directly to the window pane...two birds with the one stone so to speak. It was an exciting moment, let me tell you.....but there was one major flaw in the material. It was extremely susceptible to moisture penetration causing the shorting out of the tiny electrical impulses....I felt that there were several products that I was trialling as part of my Research that could be of benefit....there could be two-way benefit for both of us, so I agreed to come to Australia to further that investigation.”

“Um....how was that going to help with Worseley's product?”

“My work was with various elements combined within the glass as it was molten....but I was also experimenting with several external filament solutions that added both thermal and sound insulation properties to the parent glass panel. One product in particular provided a complete moisture barrier....this was further refined to provide a barrier either side of the Power Matting for complete moisture protection. We needed to modify the product so that it would bind directly to glass, bricks, concrete, metal roof sheeting or any other building material. The matting was so malleable it could be moulded to any shape or cross-sectional attitude without effecting the electrical output. We achieved that with spectacular results which actually helped with the generation side of the matting.....we were so thrilled.....”

“Will you be staying here now that your work is completed, or will you be returning to Great Britain?”

“No.....I've been approached by the CSIRO R&D Panel. They are thrilled with my work and

have asked me to stay to further the Research into that field here.....um.....the Climate. The facilities....and of course at one stage I was only too thrilled to work with William to further my experiments....I.....um.....I would like to remain here, but not under the steerage of Professor Stephenson. I have already had talks with the R&D Panel....I'm just waiting for their judgement before I make up my mind conclusively.....my Dad? He doesn't even know me any more, so.....”

“Do you own a white AWD Audi. Registration plates CYH 3585?”

“Yes....”

“Where is it usually parked?”

“At my address in Crows Nest.....”

“Have you ever lent the vehicle to anyone else?”

“No.....well, no. Not really?”

“You seem unsure.....”

“Um....when my mother died...oh, a week....no, two weeks before poor William's murder. I flew home.....I didn't know how long I'd be back home....my Dad is getting a bit forgetful...old.....I normally park the car out on the street in front of my place. I didn't want to leave it there in the same spot for however long....the Professor offered to look after it at his place....he had a carport that could take 4 cars, I think he said. So I drove it over there and he drove me to the Airport.....”

“In your car?”

“No...he was a bit nervous about driving it....he drove me in his car....I don't know what kind of car it was. I'm not that good with makes and stuff on cars.....sorry.”

“But you gave him a key to your car?”

“Yes....just in case he needed to move it.....you never know.....and my Unit, too.”

“Did you know about Worseley's activities...um...outside the Research Centre?”

“You mean his dressing up? Yes.....I kind of guessed, I think. A while ago. Perhaps not that long after joining the Team....Eton and places like that are full of alternate people in all their brilliant varieties. Kristan Dhari confided in me about it after William's funeral. I flew back here for it....I wanted to pass on my last respects to a brilliant young man.....a genius in his field. He will be missed. His dressing up? You Australians are so bloody butch, yet you applaud when all your sporting heroes touch each other, give hugs and kisses and jump all over each other in celebration of a win....watch any group of men, mates, when they get pissed together and tell me that you Aussies don't have nothing but cupboard or latent homosexual tendencies.....but put a man in a dress and a wig? As long as its a Comedian, it's OK.....that is so silly!”

Even though she made sense and I agreed with her to an extent, I wasn't interested in getting

into a conversation on the subject right there and then.

“You weren't here for the Launch?”

“No....um....I'm not into that type of thing in any case. If I'd've been in the country at the time, I doubt that I would have attended....it's not my cup of tea. The Professor? He was in his element, wasn't he?”

“I noted that Worseley's widow also wasn't present?”

“No....a rude oversight...or a deliberate omission. I'm not too sure.”

“Do you know if your vehicle was used at all while you were overseas?”

She looked blankly at me. Raised her eye-brows. Shook her head.

“I don't think so....really, I don't know....why? Was it involved in an accident or something?”

“Why would you state that?”

She shrugged her shoulders. Gave a slight giggle.

“I don't know....No. I'm being melodramatic....there was nothing wrong with my car. Not even a scratch. I checked it out thoroughly when I returned.” She covered her mouth with her hand as she gave out a giggle at her own joke.

53

“You three have a spring in your step....a fruitful morning eh?”

“That noticeable, eh Boss?”

“To a trained professional such as I.” Abbey quipped. A broad smile on his face.

I filled him in on the morning's proceedings.

“Circumstantial, Joe. You need him at or around the site of the crime.”

“We're already made arrangements to impound the car...and Roads and Traffic have been contacted to provide the video streams for the Epping Road, Harbour Bridge and Harbour Tunnel for that period of time....”

“It's getting a bit long in the tooth for that, isn't it?”

“Not since the Anti-terrorist legislation. All traffic video feeds are now being held for two

years...”

“What do you think happened?”

“Worseley may have indicated his intention of “coming out” at the Product Launch to Professor Stephenson some time prior to that date. The Professor may have hinted at his opposition to the act. Finding it embarrassing and taking away from the product perhaps.....his night to shine overshadowed.....”

“What does Stephenson actually do at the laboratory?”

“He's basically the Operations Manager. The Admin. Manager. He looks after all the financial business, oversights the HR requirements, liaison with the parent company on equipment, grants, progress and such.....leaving the eggheads to do their stuff without the day to day matters clogging their minds....”

“OK...so what do you think happened that night?”

“I'd say that Worseley invites Stephenson to the Pub.....remember, Worseley lingers around the lane-way for some time waiting.....for some-one or something. That is obvious when you look at the only video available that partially captures that back area. Stephenson is running late. Turns up. Parks at the alleyway mouth. By accident out of the range of the one camera in the area. Worseley doesn't recognise the vehicle....you can see by the way that he is looking in that direction that he is puzzled. Then Stephenson hops out of the car. Immediate recognition. A smile. A wave of the hand. Worseley walks out of shot. A discussion occurs. Stephenson is still cold about the idea. Is not impressed with the way Worseley presents himself even on that night when everyone thought he looked a million bucks....us included. It becomes heated. Worseley turns to walk away....is hit by a single blow to the base of the neck. The force of the blow causes him to fall across the bonnet of the car. Stephenson throws the tyre lever or the wheel brace or what-ever, into the car. Grabs Worseley's lifeless body and carries him further up into the lane-way. By sheer luck still out of video camera range. Lays him down and figures he should hide the body. Sees the garbage bins and rolls them across the alley from their covered receptacle. He wipes down the Bin handles with a polishing rag from the car....leaving traces of automotive polish on the handles, but forgets about the couple of smudged fingerprints that he leaves on the side of one of the bins. Hops back into the car and skedaddles.....”

“You can't use the fingerprints...not allowable.”

“Stephenson doesn't know that.”

“Careful Joe.”

“Hopefully there maybe trace of Stephenson inside the vehicle....”

“Which doesn't prove much....”

“Maybe trace of the Vic on the bonnet of the car....”

“Highly unlikely after so much time....”

“Maybe fingerprints on the wheel brace....”

“Which again doesn't prove much....”

“With skin trace from the Vic.....”

“Which would help.....”

“How about that trace taken from the dress.....wasn't it snot and sweat globules?”

“Yes....and it didn't match the Professor's samples....”

“Um.....but that could be explained as belonging to the unknown person who found the body that morning and called it in.....a Sheryl Talbot reported that her mobile was stolen sometime during the night....from inside the Pub. It was reported to Telstra as stolen around mid-day. The signal went off air that night....that mobile was traced out as the instrument that was used to advise Crime Stoppers of the body find.....we have DNA trace of a person that we think may have found the body....but no identification. Perhaps we'll never obtain confirmation. It doesn't really matter in the scheme of things, if we find the physical evidence that places Stephenson at the crime scene.”

“It all sounds plausible....your theory? You will need more than you have got so far to move it from a plausible theory into even circumstantial.....good luck. A confession would be nice to go along with any traffic video that can clearly show your man driving that vehicle at that time of the night towards the City and around the vicinity of the Crime Scene. The fact that there is untraceable DNA evidence *on the Victim* will be jumped on by the Defence. He'll make a show of that other unidentifiable person being involved....being the real killer, for what-ever reason....maybe because Worseley knocked him back on sex....who's to know. The Defence will make Worseley's propensity to dress in drag, no matter how chic, seem so disgusting. Dirty. Unhealthy. Unnatural. Completely unacceptable to Society as a whole. Even though he is the Victim here. You'll need to get a confession from your Number One POI to limit that possibility.”

“We'll get that Boss. I'm sure of it.”

54

We returned to the new Laboratory and factory complex three days later, walking into the Professor's office unannounced.

“Detectives? Please! This is approaching harassment. I have a busy day ahead. I cannot waste my time going over the same old questions again. There is nothing more that I can tell you, so....can

I suggest you leave via the Staff Canteen. They serve excellent coffee. I'll ring down to ensure that you obtain the Java on the firm's account. OK?" A weak smile accompanied the suggestion.

"Are you trying to bribe Officers of the Law, Professor?"

He looked at me. Blinked several times. He could assess the difference in our approach. A worried look appeared then disappeared just as quickly.

"OK, then. Ask away....but make it quick. As I said, I have a busy day ahead of me."

He stood from behind his desk to close his Office door. His annoyance telegraphed strongly at our unannounced appearance. There was no suggestion of coffee or tit-bits.

We sat in comfortable chairs opposite him. Ganging up on him, one could surmise. Three against one!

Dallas flipped a photograph across the desk to him.

He glanced at it. Looked up at me. Shrugged his shoulders.

"Recognise the vehicle, sir?"

"Should I?"

Another A4 photo was slipped towards him.

"Is that you at the steering wheel, sir?"

He looked down at the photo. Studied it intently.

"Looks as though it is a reasonable resemblance of me....but I can't be certain...."

"It's Cassandra Kylie Yeung-Hackett vehicle. The number plates? You were looking after the vehicle while the young lady returned to her homeland for her mother's funeral....."

He glanced up at me.

"That photo was taken on the night of William Worseley's homicide. At 0115 as the vehicle emerged from the Lane Cove tunnel....where were you going, sir? At that time of night? In someone else's vehicle?"

He stared straight through me.

Dallas slipped another photo across towards him.

"The Harbour Tunnel less than 5 minutes later....you are clearly identifiable....." Dallas stated as he provided another photo that had been pulled in tight onto the windscreen of the vehicle. There was no mistaking who was driving.

Another photo.

“Bourke Street turning right into Burton Street Darlinghurst less than three minutes later....Burton Street takes you pass the Oxford Hotel. The alleyway where your Chief Research Scientist was killed.....during the time-line of 0100 to 0230. That's as close as the estimated time of death of your colleague can be ascertained due mainly to the fact that his body was not found until 0545 later that morning after an anonymous call was taken on the Crime-Stoppers Number.”

His gaze did not falter from my countenance.

“What were you doing at that time of morning in that part of Sydney, Professor?”

‘It wasn't me. You're mistaken....’

“Then how do you explain your thumb print on the side of one of the Garbage Bins.....the three bins were wheeled out of their roofed enclosure across the width of the alleyway to hide Worseley's battered body?”

This was a little fib. The print in question was smudged. With some degree of enhancement, it could be matched tenuously to the samples previously taken from the Professor. How-ever, the fact that it had to be enhanced to get a reasonable facsimile print would not be permitted in Court. But we could use it now as a further nail into the coffin and to rattle the man.

Again he stared at me, not flinching.

“At 0155, the vehicle in question is photographed turning left from Oxford Street into Crown Street. We can then follow the vehicle all the way back over the Harbour to Lane Cove.....have you anything to say about that?”

He looked sullenly at the desk top. He couldn't hold our gaze.

“Can you tell us what were you doing at that time of early hour on a Sunday morning in that part of town? You didn't seem to tarry that long before you retraced your route back to your address.....”

He squirmed in his seat. Shuffled his feet. Leant back in his Executive leather chair. Sat forward. Fidgeted.

“We have your fingerprints on a wheel brace taken from the vehicle.....DNA skin trace of Worseley removed from that wheel brace.....we have minute trace removed from the contusion at the base of Worseley's neck that matches similar trace elements found in a leather tool bag in which the wheel brace is stored.....have you anything to say in your defence before we arrest you on the bashing homicide murder of William Dean Worseley? On or about the early hours of Sunday morning 17th of last month, at or near the rear service alleyway called Burton Lane adjacent to and at the rear of the Oxford Hotel which fronts onto Oxford Street Darlinghurst.....we have sufficient evidence to arrest you for the homicide. Do you have anything to say in your defence? ”

The man had turned from a pale complexion to livid red. His face covered in a light sheen of sweat. He rubbed a thumb and finger together. His eye-lids fluttered uncontrollably. A tic

developed at the side of his mouth.

He tried several times to begin to speak. Nothing came out. Eventually he croaked out what we wanted to hear.

“He was going to embarrass me.....belittle his work colleagues....turn the Launch of the most momentous breakthrough in scientific research into a farce.....make a comedy out of the situation. In front of important Scientific people, Politicians and the General Public. The Television audience.....for his own selfish reasons.” His face turned scarlet. Veins on his forehead and neck pulsed out. Spittle flew from his mouth. “He....and people like him are abhorrent. A scourge on Society. Scum. Not of God's creation....”

“And you are, eh?” I sniggered. The sarcasm dripping from every word.

pcb

26 May 2015

In loving memory of my first dog when I was about 10 years of age. Trixie, A cross Kelpie.

Black with a light brown chest and one blight brown ear and eye patch

She died only about eighteen months later from a tick bite.

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