

MURDER SQUAD DETECTIVE GRADE 2 JOSEPH LIND

VENGEANCE

IS

SWEET

**A
Crime
Novella
by**

PETER C BYRNES

MURDER SQUAD DETECTIVE GRADE TWO JOSEPH LIND

VENGEANCE IS SWEET

Copyright © Peter C Byrnes 2013

This is an authorised free digital edition from www.obooko.com

Although you do not have to pay for this e-book, the author's intellectual property rights remain fully protected by international Copyright law. You are licensed to use this digital copy strictly for your personal enjoyment only. This edition must not be hosted or redistributed on other websites nor offered for sale in any form. If you paid for this free edition, or to gain access to it, we suggest you demand an immediate refund and report the transaction to the author and obooko.

CHAPTER ONE

I was knackered. Wasted. Dead tired. Fucked.

I'd just completed a double shift with a twelve hour surveillance operation tacked onto the back.

The two worst professions for doing this type of thing when they should have been the last to carry out this insane practise were the Cops and the Medical fraternity. Young, eager Medical Students straight after completion of last term exams thrust into enforced 72 hour continuous shifts in Hospital Emergency Wards with sleeping on the job permitted.

Catnaps between car accident victims being transported in.

An absurd situation when life and death decisions and a clearness of mind are of paramount import.

Immediate reaction times.

Clear and concise actions.

The right decisions made, not blurred by lack of sleep for over 72 hours!

Fortunately, my young partner for the elongated surveillance shift was an enthusiastic, young Probational Constable not that long out of the Academy wanting desperately to strip off the uniform and wear mufti as a plain-clothes Detective in the Murder Squad as first choice. Very few achieved this goal, but it was not for the want of trying by so many. My young partner agreed to let me sleep two four hour shifts on the back seat of the Unmarked, hoping that this larger than life, legendary figure of many a homicide, an undercover Vice Officer and Narcotics Officer of some repute, would somehow be able to manipulate his leap into plain-clothes duties.

How? I ask you.

I have no idea and neither did he when pressed on the point.

It's purely a cop thing....but I wasn't going to permit myself from doing the honourable thing by refusing his offer of me obtaining merciful sleep. We were somewhat better off than the other half of the surveillance team. They were tenting it in the backyard of the house lot directly behind the subject house of our operation. It was bloody cold, windy with squalling showers for the duration of the job. They took turns in 2 hour lots peering through some knot hole in the paling fence looking at the rear of the house.

Nothing happened!
Not one bloody thing!

I think even the ants were hunkered down for the duration.

A day after we decamped, worried relatives who lived across the street from said house became concerned at the non-appearance of their loved ones living so close. They opened the front door of the house that our covert attention had been organised on, to be assaulted by the very acute smells of human death and decay. Murder/suicide was the verdict handed down. Too much of a good thing in dabbling in their own product so it was believed. A huge bundle of money, a cache of weapons and enough Ecstasy tablets to make the worries of the world disappear for the entire 7 billion!

This murder/suicide act committed only hours before our surveillance shift began so the Forensic Pathologist-on-scene informed us.

How's that for bad timing!?

I only found this out after I returned to work after a 96 hour 'off in lieu of overtime' plus the normal week-end downtime.

I was ribbed about the incident for months after the event. My very surveillance techniques drawn into question. Just as well no-one ever learnt of my sleep patterns during that 12 hour shift. I could have been in real strife.

For all I knew, that enthusiastic young PC could have dozed off too...no, somehow I don't think so!

As far as I know that energetic and enthusiastic young Constable is still in uniform on street beat.

I occasionally think back to that event and think perhaps that there was a conspiracy of sorts to ensure that two surveillance teams did not need to face the Standards and Ethics Committee to explain why they had failed to hear the gunshots...but then, my imagination can play havoc on my anxiety levels at time.

Getting back to the night in question, I felt as though the sleeping in the rear of the Unmarked on a dark suburban street had never happened as I climbed laboriously from the vehicle at my place just after sunset. The young Constable volunteering to return the Unmarked to the Central Police Carpool that night which was the 'rule.'

Officious little bastard he was!

He knowing that I was having the following six day period off.

Another thoughtful gesture that remained unrewarded.

I silently opened the side gate and slipped through, making the back deck without a sound. The decade year stint as an undercover Drugs and Vice Officer had taught me to be very light and silent on my feet. That had helped me to remain alive for that entire period while several undercover Narc officers lost their lives due to their heavy-footedness.

That's my theory and I'm sticking to it.

The rear concertina doors out onto the rear deck were closed and locked but the Laundry door facing said deck was not locked. I again slipped through silently, careful not to make a sound as I closed the door behind me. I crept through the galley type Laundry and the adjoining Kitchen. The lights were off in the rear Family Room but dim lights were turned on in the front Lounge Room. As I headed in that direction I removed my jacket and Kevlar Vest. I began to undo my shirt wanting to ease off the harness that held my trusty stiletto knife in position in its sheath between my shoulder blades.

I lent against the door jamb as I took in the sight that affronted me.

There kneeling at the glass-topped coffee table was my nineteen year old son Billy and his mate Ben, cutting into a large pile of dry weed with a safety razor blade each. A set of Kitchen scales in the middle of the table surface. There were three or four nap-lock plastic bags already filled with the green stuff that looked to have a high proportion of heads blended into the mix.

They were giggling like school girls, having obviously already sucked on a toke.

They both seemed to sense that some-one was standing there simultaneously.

"Dad...arrh...Dad??!! What are you doing home? I thought your message said that you'd be on duty until to-morrow morning...didn't it?"

"Obviously you thought so. There's a difference between 12 hours and 24 hours you dingbats! That would have given you three whole days uninterrupted time to blow your minds, wouldn't it now? Good shit, son?" I added sarcastically.

My son looked down at the pile of dry plant and the pile of nap-lock plastic bags.

"Arrh Dad. It's not what you think, honestly. Fair dinkum."

"It never is, son. All the crims in the World seem to know that little statement."

“No, Mr. Lind. We don't smoke. Don't take drugs or smoke shit. This is not what it looks like, sir.”

“Oh? I'm obviously missing something here.” I really didn't need this.

All I wanted was a quick, warm shower and straight to bed!

Reinforced, Ben looking crazily at Billy, at the coffee table then up at me.

“No shit. Neither of us do drugs, sir.”

I walked into the room from the doorway taking the knife and harness from my shoulders. I unclipped my belt holster, removed the clip from my handgun and checked that the barrel was clear as I headed for my Office.

A built-in wardrobe that faced into the Lounge Room was all it was.

My own invention and workmanship that I was particularly proud of.

The concertina doors of the Office were fully open. The computer and all the associated wizardry all on. The desk top a mass of printed paper that centred around the various sizes of a 'deal' of 'J'. They had obviously researched their subject topic for some time.

I knelt down at the small safe bolted securely to the floor, spinning the combination as I unbuckled the ankle holster that held the small .22 handgun. My throw-away if it was ever needed. Totally illegal even for us Cops, but those several years in Undercover Narcs and Vice still had not left my system.

As I stood and closed the door on all those horrible tools of my profession, spinning the tumbler to secure the door, I turned to them both.

“You two have got to decide whether you want to tell me the truth or not. Either way, both of you are up to your balls in shit with your whole life's direction now mapped out for you depending on which way you want to go. I'm going to take a quick shower to wake me up a bit. While I'm doing that I suggest you make up a tumbler of coffee. I fear that it maybe a long night.”

CHAPTER TWO

“Right! C'mon, pour yourselves a mug of coffee. In this lecture hall you're permitted liquid refreshments.” I instructed as I wiped my wet hair with a towel.

Billy and Ben were seated on the tall bench stools at the Breakfast Bar in the Kitchen. I was feeling famished so as I took the toaster down to set it on the counter-top, I asked them both whether they wanted any toast.

There response was a shake of their heads in unison.

They'd lost their appetite and thirst so it would seem. As typical teenage boys, they usually didn't stop eating!

Me?

I was still peckish.

As I waited for the toast to jump, I turned to them to start off the conversation which I felt may go on for some time.

“Criminal Behaviour and The Selling of Drugs to Members of the Public. Class 101.”

So much for that early introduction to sleepsville, I thought vaguely to myself!

“By the way that you were packing up your 'baggies,” I continued. “I got the impression that you intended selling the weed. To your fellow students, one could surmise, mmm?”

“Yeah....” Billy replied as he looked glumly down at the counter top.

“Before you begin your first tentative steps into that free enterprise business, there are a few basic criteria that you should know of, off by heart. You will need to adhere rigidly to these rules if you want to pursue a successful career in crime.....”

Both boys winced at that point.

I had no intention of making it easy for them. As far as I was concerned the blunter the lecture, the better for them regardless of how uncomfortable it may make them feel at this moment.

I started counting the points off on my fingers.

“One: Have a plan before stepping outside loaded up with all that contraband. Two: Have a Plan B that has been carefully constructed, has no holes and can be easily undertaken as an emergency alternative. Three: Have a Plan C that involves a curtailment of any enterprise if the situation doesn't feel right or threatening, or suspicious persons are in close proximity to your place of business. Four: Know the area of your enterprise intimately with alternate means of escape etched in your mind. Five: Assess the likely routes that a threat situation will advance from. Six: If the option of immediate flight becomes necessary, do not take the same egress route as one another. Split up. Seven: Have a plan carefully thought out of where you want to meet up after the flight regime. Eight: Do not meet up again straight away. Wait for several hours at least. Preferably twenty-four hours to give you plenty of time to assess the situation and to see if your pursuers have found either of you. Nine: Do not contact each other by phone, especially mobile. If it is the Cops chasing you, than they will be able to trace both of you by your mobile transmissions. In fact, turn the bloody things off to be on the safe side. Ten: Always have a secret place where you can hide your stash before you take flight. If you are trying to escape from the cops, the last thing you want, is to be collared with a commercial quantity of the contraband on your person. Eleven: Have a fall-back guy or a back-up guy who can alert you to any imminent dangers. A cockatoo. Possibly an attention divergent can be planned for him to instigate if the situation deteriorates. This will mean that a fee for services will be required, or even a one third proportion of any profits gained allotted to him...or her. Twelve: Never trust your back-up or fall-back guy. Thirteen: Never trust your partner in business....at some point in the future he'll stab you in the back, wanting to take over the enterprise single-handedly. That point is thoroughly backed up by crime statistics. Fourteen: Possibly it should have been the first most important point of all. Your Supplier. He's an absolute turd. Don't trust him as he'll cut your throat and hand you to the Cops if he can get a higher price for his product from some other twit! And just remember, most of this stuff comes from either the South Coast or the North Coast and is either produced and/or transported by heavy guys...usually Biekie affiliates or guys with full blown colour....if you know what I mean! Ya mixing with the mean mothers now. OK?”

The sound of toast 'lift-off' caused me to turn quickly, catching the errant slices of hot toast as they began their inevitable descent.

They should be able to make an adjustable type 'lift-off' mechanism in this day and age so that slices of toast are not left lingering in the carriage trays or alternatively, being exploded towards the ceiling at a great rate of knots, I thought wearily to myself.

This happens when I'm beyond tired. My mind wanders!

I placed another two pieces of bread in the toaster and primed the thing to begin its electrical tanning operation. I like my toast on the slightly burnt side. I knew that Billy preferred his toast honey tinged. I didn't have a clue about Ben's preferences.

“OK. What do you want on your toast?” I lamely enquired.

“Arh.....Blackberry Jam, thanks Dad. And Vegemite on the other.”

“Vegemite on both mine Mr. Lind.” Added Ben sheepishly.

They both took sips of their coffees in unison.

“Ben.....if we're going to be brothers in arms and master criminals of the underworld, I think that you can start calling me Joe.” Reading Billy's mind I quickly turned on him. “Dad is still the nomenclature for you, my son.”

I had to concentrate not to break out in a bloody big grin.

I prepared the toast as requested, placing the cut slices on a plate in the middle of the counter top. They were obviously into some type of magic as they disappeared before my very eyes. I needed to get one of those multi-toasters, I thought to myself, for just such occasions.....but then, these gatherings were rather rare!

I continued as I prepared another lot.

“Right. What were we up to? Arh.....Thirteen? Fifteen: Never believe that this life of crime will lead to your first million...it doesn't. The only guys who make the big dough are about ten removed from the coal face. You're just two-bit expendable sellers. Sixteen: Never trust any member of the Public or members of your fraternity at Uni. Snitching is a chronic universal past-time. The person that you think you trust the most could turn out to be the worst serial snitch of them all. Around 75-80% of all successful drug raids are a consequence of snitching, usually some-one ringing Crime Stoppers to give information. Around 60% of all other crimes brought to justice are the result of snitching. The reasons for this snitching phenomenon is not usually what you would think, that is, financial gain or even a member of the public wanting to do what seems right, legitimate and wanting to put the bad guys in prison. No. Definitely not! Over 70% of the time, it is for personal revenge for usually an imaginary slight or one of such banality that may have been inflicted on the bruised ego of the person or some such silly personal insult. They not being capable or willing to retaliate in a verbal or physical manner for fear of dire retribution, so this anonymity suits them just fine. Rather cowardly in a way, don't you think? Arh.....Seventeen: Know your client base and their requirements. Eighteen: Know your clientele's ability to pay and his financial limitations. Nineteen: Know your clients' drug of choice against his drug of financial capabilities. In other words know what he can afford and not what his wish list is. Twenty: Never, and I mean never provide credit. This is a money-making business not a charity. Twenty-One: Always carry. Twenty-two: If you carry, be prepared to use it or at the minimum, be prepared to threaten with it. Twenty-three: If you carry be prepared to die. For every Crim who attains the age of sixty, they're standing atop a huge heap of crim carcasses. All of whom died young. And the trend shows that the heap is being enlarged by younger and younger hoods. So be prepared to die young. Your life expectancy will immediately halve once you leave through that front door with

said contraband that you intend to sell to itchy clients. Looking at the baggies that you have prepared so far, you have failed to recognise and understand the financial limitations of your expected client base. I'd say that you planned to sell the lot on the Uni campus, hmm?"

A nod of acknowledgement from the two boys.

"In that case, you've fucked up bad. The going price of a baggie is what? \$50-\$60?"

"\$75 Dad, a deal. Supply is apparently tight which pushes the price up."

"My...how out of touch is this ex-Narcs Officer?...it's been a number of years is my excuse. OK...so it looks like you have put three times the normal amount into each bag. What? So that you can get it off your hands as quickly as possible. Yes? The price you are going to ask? \$225?"

"Yeah Dad. A quick sale. Replete as quickly as possible. Less likely to get caught the quicker that we're out of there. \$150 a bag seemed like a good deal and should generate that quickness that we want."

"Mmm....Noble words son, but they're full of shit! Could you afford to spend \$150 for a baggie when you would be really stretching the budget for a \$75 deal? I think not and to be truthful, I doubt that there would be many students in your sphere of influence who could afford that kind of money just to suck funny smoke deep into their lungs. Would I be right?"

Both of them appeared to be deep in thought. I knew my son pretty well and I reckon that it wasn't an expression of deep thought but one of a stunned mullet knowing that it was well and truly out of the water.

I had no intention of letting it go at that point, so I picked up where I had left off.

"Twenty-four: Never tarry for too long in the one spot. Always be moving even when making a transaction. The transfer of a baggie to your client and receipt of his money needs to be an absolute minimalist action. You have got to practise it before you go out that front door...and just a thought. You intend to sell each Baggie for one fifty when the going price would be or should be around two-twenty-five. What do you think the normal 'Sellers' are going to think and do...once they find out that you are selling good shit at bargain basement prices?"

I looked at both boys. Let the words sink in.

"They are not going to like it much...and when those guys get ruffled feathers, they play for keeps, let me tell you...arrh...Twenty-five: Never immediately look at the amount of money that has been slid into your hand. If it turns out to be lean, you can get heavy later...or better

still, have a series of signals that your fall-guy knows and understands so that he can do the heavy 'lifting' so to speak well away from you and other prospective clients. You need to convey an air of nice guy not a hood. The important point of this fact is that your manner either nice or bad, will always depend on the standard of your client base...the socio-economic class of the buyers around you. Understand? In other words, stick to the Uni Campus where you know the client base to some extent.”

I prepared two more slices of toast.

I was yet to get a look in!

One bloody bite of toast!

That's all I wanted.

CHAPTER THREE

I laid off for a bit so that I could put a piece of toast in my mouth.

At last!

I emptied the coffee jug and re-charged it with grounds, letting it gurgle and drip away to its heart's content.

I waited a while and poured the three of us fresh mugs.

“While you two may not be that street smart, you are both intelligent, responsible and healthy young males attractive to a lot of females to boot.....I would imagine.”

I noticed both boys blushing, lowering their heads hoping that I would not notice.

'Good God,' I thought to myself, 'they're bloody nineteen yet still acting like two thirteen year old boys who are all thumbs.'

For the first time, I realised that my son and for that matter probably Ben, were still virgins! Bloody hell, at that age I had mastered the art of love making and had bed almost all of the High School females who shared the same classes as I. Including one of the teachers! In fact, I reckon that I had done that by the age of fifteen.....'let's not elaborate on the subject shall we,' a voice from somewhere inside my head seemed to boom! 'Its not something that we should remember or be that proud of!'

Perhaps both of them are gay?

No! I'd have picked up the signs by now. Surely! Wouldn't I have? So what if he was, he's still my son.....Good Godnineteen and still a virgin. Perhaps I need to have that father and son talk with him or have I left it far too late? Is this reaction classified as self-denial? Nah! I knew my son just as well as any father, theirs. He was definitely not gay.....I was sure of it!

A gulp of coffee seemed to go down the wrong way and I doubled up in a fit of coughing and spluttering. Billy came around the Kitchen bench to thump me on the back a couple of times.

I straightened up.

Tears were streaming down my cheeks.

“Fuck....” I exclaimed. “The old heart won't take too much of that type of shit.”

I ventured tentatively to have another couple of gulps of coffee before I continued.

“If you make the decision to walk out of here with the intention of selling that heap of weed to your fellow students, than the chance of detection will have sky-rocketed. The possibility of you being nabbed by the Campus Cops, a teacher, put in by one of your fraternity or nabbed by an undercover Narcs Officer, for there are a few of them on every campus in various disguises, will be bloody high. Than you will face personal doom. You're both in just your second year of Law. That'll go and you will never get the opportunity to face the Bar once a conviction is recorded against your name. Forget the do-gooders claim that every Con deserves a break once he has done the time for the crime that he committed that put him in prison in the first place. Once that Crim is released according to these people, he is an innocent man. Bullshit!”

I took a bite of toast washed down by some coffee.

I continued.

“Unfortunately he does not have that luxury according to most cops. If a similar crime is committed within cooe of the last known address of that former inmate, say you guys, than you're one of the first persons that the investigating cops go to frisk. No ifs. No buts. You're marked for life and the Cops never let you forget it. They'll either keep a distant but careful look-out on you if you happen to appear to be rehabilitated, which as I have already said is bullshit in their eyes, or they'll drive you nuts by close contact and frequent vehicle stops if they think that you're falling back to the old ways. Harassment? Not on your bloody life. No sirree! What happens of course, is that pretty quickly you, who are articulate, intelligent and at one stage in your young lives so full of promise, realise that you will never attain that

level of success and standing that had been yours for the taking not that long ago. The burden will seem to weigh you down year after year and to escape, you turn to drugs, alcohol, homelessness or a bullet to the brain. That is the fate of around 60-70% of men in the same original class as yourselves who have trodden that track. Tragic actually.”

I peered sideways at the two boys opposite me.

Now the expressions on their faces had changed from stunned mullets to close to one of shock.

I fell silent for some moments, using the time to drain the dregs of my coffee and to re-fill my mug.

They were not interested in either finishing up the last pieces of toast or the coffee that remained untouched going cold in their mugs.

I at last, got to taste a couple of slices of toast.

It was a pity that they had cooled somewhat.

CHAPTER FOUR

“So guys.....what's it to be? Your future, the direction you take for the rest of your life may very well be decided in the next couple of minutes. So.....what are your thoughts?”

Billy coughed to clear his throat. Drew an imaginary circle on the bench top. Rubbed his hair. Scratched his scalp. Pulled his right ear lobe.

That was something that I did when the thought processes were firing on all cylinders.

A warm feeling surged through me. He was my son. Mannerism will continue onwards. Generation after generation!

“Dad.....if I had heard all those words being sprouted by some-one else, I would have accused them of scaremongering. Utter bullshit. But from you I know none of it is BS. If nothing else Dad, you are not a bullshitter. I've heard certain other cops call you the straightest of guys, as good as a cop can get and I know that you have mine and yeah, Ben's futures at heart. You have said all these things not to scare us so much, but to try and show us the reality of the situation. I don't know.....what do you think Ben?” He turned to his friend. “What do you think we should do with the weed? Flush it? Just toss it? Quite frankly, I reckon that you've scared the bejesus out of us!”

I waited until Ben had had his say which was much the same as what Billy had said.

“Why were you trying to sell the shit. Do you need money that badly?”

“No. But remember we have that deal? How-ever much I can save towards our backpacker holiday at the end of this year, you will match it. Ben has a similar deal with his Mum. We were just trying to get a little more, that's all. And we've both tried our heart out to get a reasonable part-time job...that suits our intellect...” A smile at his own joke that fell rather flat considering the circumstances. “...but there's not that much around close to here...we're getting a bit panicky about having enough cash by the end of the year is all...you know...to even pay for the airfare, let alone enough to enable us to do what we've wanted to do while we're over there.....”

I'd guessed as much early in the evening, but it was comforting to hear Billy admit to it, not afraid to own up to the silliest of ideas.

“Yep. I thought as much.” I admitted. “But it was good to hear you say it. One more thing. Where did you get the weed from?”

That resulted in a clouding of the eyes.

A furtive look by both boys.

They had hoped that after all this time, I may have forgotten that important question.

I'm a cop for God's sake, and a bloody good one to boot, if I must say so myself. There were a lot of half-starts and full stops before Ben found his voice first.

“Arhh...you know that Bikie's house two, maybe three blocks down on Gilbert Street? On the corner with Bathurst Avenue? You know....there's a row of....I think 4 or 5 semi-detached joints in a row. Their's is the corner joint. You know it?”

“Mmmm.....” I was afraid as much.

“They.....um.....they have a hydroponic set-up in their back garage.....”

I shook my head. A little worried that the boys would even be aware what was in some-one else's back garage.

“Look...they're...um...bloody heavy boys that lot. The top dog, Denny Templeton aka 'Big D' of the little known gang called the 'Bow-legged Hog Riders'. His brother lives with him. Craig Templeton, better known as 'Baby Brudda'. A real mean bugger. A psychopath and a sociopath. Would squash a baby's head in just for the thrill of it. Stay well clear of those

buggers. Well.....a little too late for that warning now, isn't it? I think I've heard it mention that their mother lives there too. Now she's a piece of bad shit if ever there was one. From a long time ago. She at one stage, was old Macready's mistress. A long time ago.....Old man Macready was once the big pin in the Sydney underworld. Died a couple of years back. Natural causes. Who'd have thought! But at one stage....for most of his life, he was the Number One man in Sydney's underworld.....which he inherited from his father, Big Jack Macready who was the kingpin before and during both Wars. Got himself into State politics to help protect his empire and to successfully meld the two together...”

“Never heard of them. Commancherones, Bandidoes, The Rebels, The Devils Wings and the Hells Angels are all well known gangs but not who? The Hog Riders?” Ben mused.

“The Bow-legged Hog Riders. Rather silly. A stupid name....something that Big Brudda would have thought up as it's about the level that he's capable of. They're a break-away group from the Angels, I think. There's always these small groups birthing and evolving then usually disappearing just as fast. The Hog Riders came out of a Chapter of the Angels in South Australia, from memory. A falling out of some of the top dogs, so to speak, and they formed up a completely new club. Usually that's not a problem but the number 1 and 2 guys are over the top bad. Sometimes these smaller units carry out brazen attacks or use extra muscle with members of the other gangs being dutifully impressed. Enough for them to change their allegiance. Loyalty in these gangs is not as hard and fast as they would want us to be believed. 'The Hogs' have come a long way in a very short time. Their territory here has been won from all the big clubs with some saying the lines of the area of influence of the Hogs is actually etched in blood. From what little I know of them, I can honestly believe that. I'm staying well clear of the questions of how you came to know of the hydroponic set-up and the contents of the garage on their land. It would be wise for you to wipe such information from your memory banks. We maybe able to garner some profit from the pile of weed in the Lounge Room but it will mean a little manipulation and the help of a couple of old hands that I knew when I used to work Vice and Narcotics. That's if they are still around. From this day forward, mums the word from you guys. Those imbeciles have the street smarts and the long memories of rogue elephants, so stay low for a bit. OK?”

CHAPTER FIVE

I sat there for some moments, amazed at the serendipity of the situation.

My mind spinning, slotting various facts into the algorithm of past experiences, knowledge and stories I heard while fronting a Bar in some forgettable little town. My mind rotating like a Slot Machine and the rhythmic click as pieces of information fall into relevant allotments.

The Templeton Brothers had been up front as the most likely to have had a hand in the homicide of my wife when Billy was ten years of age.

About nine years ago.

Proof of the deed was the problem!

There was nothing substantial to link them to the crime, except whispers and allegations.

Undercover Operations taught you to think on the move. To make decisions as you went which could have a profound effect on you staying alive or dying. Lying wasted in some gutter in a dingy back lane watching your life blood spill slowly towards the drain.

The fact that I was a Cop, and my wife at the time, had been working undercover as a 'Catcher' for the Australian Federal Police, meant that I had been privy to pertinent information that was not disclosed at the Enquiry, due to the Operational need of secrecy. And supposedly, ongoing undercover operations that involved the insertion of an undercover cop into the midst of the gang. Again, all suspicions fell squarely on the Master-of-Arms and the Chief Head Basher of the Bow-legged Hog Riders Bikie Gang for my wife's early demise.

The Templeton Brothers were front and centre with no-one filling second or third spot.

I stewed with hate for some time after my wife's death trying to figure out a scheme whereby retribution would be afforded with me still able to remain innocent and free.

These thoughts of vengeance were eventually tempered by my career, but more importantly, by my continuing role as Billy's father.

This, I always felt, was a failing on my part. The one thing that kept my Universe from attaining an equilibrium.

Billy's success as an upstanding young bloke had more to do with the efforts of my late wife's mother, who volunteered to move in to my home to take care of the youngster while I continued with the crazy times and work patterns of firstly, an undercover Narcs and Vice Officer, then only recently, a promotion to a Murder Dick.

To accommodate this arrangement, the old girl sold her house so that finances were available to build a roomy, sunny Granny Flat onto the side of my house. This all decided with very little input from me!

I finished off the dregs of my lukewarm coffee and my cold toast.

Thoughts flew around in my head.

A thousand and one schemes were probed, viewed and rejected. This opportunity had been fated as far as I was concerned. I could take this chance to devise a scheme that would place the two brothers in prison for murder, even if it wasn't for the murder of my wife!

I would achieve some sort of satisfaction in knowing that.

CHAPTER SIX

I walked out of the kitchen and up the stairs to my bedroom to gather some stuff knowing that this night would be the first time in my 20-odd year career with the cops, where I maybe swinging ever so slightly across to the dark side. OK.....I was going to possibly straddle that line as was once the norm in the Undercover Narcs and Vice days.

My boy needed my protection....and I, revenge!

When I came back down dressed in my black boiler suit, a black T-shirt, carrying my blacked out helmet and my old flying boots that I wore when I rode my bike, which now-a-days was extremely rare, the boys were tidying up the Kitchen and packing the Dishwasher.

“Can you pick out one of the larger nap-lock plastic bags and pour all the weed into it. Jam it in. Get those pink Kitchen washing-up gloves on before you touch the bag. Don't touch any of the surfaces of it with your hands and to be on the safe side, wipe the bag down with one of those anti-germ wipes. Do the same with the entire coffee table then vacuum all around it including the glass top and put the residue dust out of the Cleaner into the garbage bin outside. I've been thinking...I'm going to ask the question knowing that I may very well regret doing so...how did you know about the situation with the Hog Riders? The hydroponic set-up?”

As Billy carried on doing as instructed. Ben, leaning against the Frig well out of the way as though he thought his fingerprints may somehow transfer onto the plastic by some magical process, looked about him before starting up. Shifting from one foot to the other, never being able to remain calm or still.

“Arrm.....we were in the Uni Cafeteria between classes I think.....last Wednesday week ago?”

Looking to Billy for confirmation.

“No.....I don't think so, Ben.” Billy replied. “It was on the Thursday because we were going to spend a couple of hours in the Law Library after we had something to eat.”

“You sure...?”

“The actual day and time is not that important Ben. Just tell me what happened.” I said rather impatiently.

“Oh....OK....Arrm.....OK Mr Lind.....Arh Joe. We were talking about our financial situation and moaning about the fact that if we didn't find a part-time job soon, we'd have to think about delaying our trip through Europe until the following year. A chick at the next table asked whether she had heard right and were we planning to go to Europe at the end of the last semester. Anyhow...she was a bloody good looking Bill, wasn't she?...she too was planning a similar trip at the same time. She moved across to our table and we talked for a bloody long time. In fact that was the night that we got home late...well after the Library had closed....my mother near had a heart attack...Bill said that you were on some type of rolling shift and wasn't home...but we needed to do some research in the Library...”

“Yes.....?” I butted in, revolving my hand for him to get on with it.

“She said she knew how to make a motza.....that's an old person's word, isn't it?”

I again rotated my hand. I saw Billy out of the corner of my eye give a slight smile and roll his eyes.

“She told us about the Bikies' joint, the garages full of electrical gear, lights, fans, hydroponic set-up and the huge number of marijuana plants under cultivation. No guard dogs, no alarm system, no video cameras or movement alarms. And the fact that the two Bikies living there usually were so drunk and bombed by around 9 at night that they wouldn't have noticed if a herd of elephants trampled through there putrid Lounge Room. She reckoned that we could flinch a couple of plants, move the others about a bit to cover the loss and they wouldn't even know that two full grown plants were missing, they were that dumb...so she said! We checked it out on two nights last week. She was right, so we did it last night.”

“How'd she know about it?”

“She didn't say.....”

“Didn't you ask?” I countered in amazement.

A blank expression on Ben's face was his reply. And he wanted to be a Solicitor!?

He should make a good one.

“Who was she.”

A shrug of the shoulders by both boys.

“I think her name was Matilda...Malisa....Muriella.....something like that.”

“Malisa I think. She was one cool chick.” Billy confirmed.

"She had the hots for you, Bill."

"Nah....I don't think so."

“What course was she doing?” I asked to bring the conversation back on track.

Another shrug in unison.

“Have you seen her before?”

This time a shake of their heads.

“Have you seen her since?”

“No...though we looked for her a bit...she was a bit of a hot bitch.”

“Didn't it seem rather strange...why wasn't she interested in the spoils? You know, want her cut, for the information that she imparted.....after all, didn't you say that she also was planning a back-packing tour through Europe at the end of the year? A bit of extra dosh wouldn't go astray, I would have thought. No?”

Again another shrug in unison.

“Perhaps because she was a chick, she might have been a bit scared about doing something like that...something I guess that is illegal too...”

“That wouldn't have worried your mother...never mind....” I waved away the comment as I saw Billy about to react. “...though it does seem rather strange...and convenient too.” I added, a frown across my face.

I gave the outer appearance of not being too impressed with the situation. The trouble was that if the two clowns got a sniff that the boys just might....just might have been involved, they would be as good as dead knowing the cretins as I did.

Billy had finished his given chores.

“Before you take those gloves off, there is a supply of large Manila envelopes in one of those Binder Drawers beside the Computer table. Take one from the middle of the file and put that plastic bag into it. Again don't touch it with your hands.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

I dressed quickly.

The most bothersome aspect of it was in wearing the kevlar vest, black boiler suit and a flying jacket over that, it felt bulky. Too tight. The ease and speed with which I could reach and throw my knife in one fluid movement would be severely hampered, I thought. This proved not to be the case. In putting on the cumbersome flying boots and tucking the boiler suit pants legs into the upper boot section, I had no-where to strap my ankle holster out of sight. This meant that I would need to carry an extra hand gun in the pocket of the Flying Jacket; something that I was not that comfortable with. But once I was all done up and ready to go, I eased the bike helmet over my head. I'd forgotten the crush feeling of my face in the helmet as it had been that long since I had mounted my Ducati.

Satisfied that the blacked out visor would hide all my features even from the most curious of onlookers, I took the helmet off.

“Once again. When I leave through the side gate prime the alarms, turn off all the downstairs lights and go up to your bedroom. Oh...lock the Laundry door from the inside. Lock yourselves in and don't come out until I tell you to. Don't answer the phone, open the front door to any-one or walk around outside. If you think that there maybe some-one out there, ring the cops. If I'm not back on the hour at 10:00 PM, ring Glen on this number and just say that I have not returned then ring the cops. OK?”

I walked across to the Office and opened the safe to extract a clear plastic folder with about a dozen Sim-cards inside. I picked one out and replaced the one from an old mobile that I'd taken from the safe. I slid a battery in and dialled a number and waited.

I had rung the number previously while I was upstairs so that the boys could not hear the initial conversation with an old Undercover Cop who I had known in the old days. Glen Bishop had been my and my long term partner's Bazza Holtz's 'Catcher' in the old days of fun and sun! The 'Catcher' an important team member whenever we worked undercover. He was there primarily to take possession of any Intel or information that we may have which needed to be passed onto HQ. He was also there to watch our backs. His position one removed from the 'coal face' so to speak and only under dire circumstances was he ever to risk his 'role' or expose himself.

He was our get out of jail quick card if the situation occurred.

“Glen. Have just gone through the procedure with the boys. If I'm not back by ten come a-huntin'. An untraceable would be mighty helpful. The boy will ring you. If you don't hear from either him or I, then everything has gone to hell on a pack-horse, so come a-runnin'...the old pick-up place...yeah...old habits die hard...what were you doing to-night if I hadn't called...I thought so, so I'll not pay you for your waiting time just the action time...\$300 plus depending on the degree of skill and expertise that you may have to use to get me out of trouble...you're still a bloody rogue.....OK.....you'll settle for a bottle of Johnny Walker, Black?.....some things never change.....hope that I don't see you.....cheers.”

I hung up, placed another sim-card in the phone and scrolled through my contacts on my smart phone. I put the call through on the old throw-away model. I placed the phone on speaker mode and indicated that the boys should be quiet. The phone was picked up with a cough the greeting.

"Cancer of the lungs JL?"

"No-one has called me that in years. A voice from the past. Must be some 5, maybe 6 years Bongo? Where's the boy been? Whispers on the street said that you were in prison over in WA. Any credence to the rumour?"

A coughing fit to finish off the question. The voice though, still the same. Cold and cruel. Rough. An edge to it that showed a degree of sadism still existed.

“Those street rumours can still get it wrong. You should know by now that they're never reliable.”

He didn't seem to get my sarcasm.

I continued.

“No jail time. You can check now with a Google search. Been up on the North-west shelf helping to build one of those giant LPG terminals. Bloody good money to be had. Almost makes the proceeds of crime obsolete. Perhaps you should give it a go, JL? Fly in and fly out. Decided early in the piece that flying all the way to Sydney then a couple of weeks later doing the return leg was a fucking waste of good time. Bought a house in Carnarvon. Set up my squeeze and flew in and out in 45 minutes both ways instead of something like 12 hours one way from the site, to Perth, then to Sydney then a 45 minute drive to my joint from the bloody airport. No dollars in that. Lung Cancer?”

“You can't get rid of me that easy, you know. What does the man want after all these years?”

“A kilo of weed from the Kimberley. High quality. Nearly all heads. \$1,200. A bloody rip-off price but I want it out of my pad. Because of the time lag being away from the area, I've lost contact with probable clients who are interested in good shit. Should be able to cut it one on one with the shit you used to deal in. Give you 2 kilos of still above average shit....a street value of close on five grand. Still got the same supplier?”

“In yer dreams, Bongo....Yeah.....Quality's improved a lot.....”

“There ya go. Still prime shit. It would have wanted to improve. Your client base would be diminishing something fierce if you'd not improved your product. Your old shit was bloody stalk and nothing else.....”

"Come on. Come on. No need to be nasty after all this time. Word has it that a certain cretin Bikie Gang with a laughable name was flinched of 2 dried out mature plants just ready to be cut.....not that long ago....a day or two in fact! Know anything about that.....you pushing the dregs and risking your life, if it had of been you.....what's the chances?”

“Street rumours....they still get it wrong. I just told you that the K I've got is top quality Kimberley weed. You can bank on it. Cut the crap as I know what you're trying to do and it won't work on this fellow. 1 point 2 green. Nothing lower. No bidding. No second prizes. I've got two others I can ring. I thought that for old times sake I'd give you first option.”

“9 spot. Take it or leave it....”

“The offer is not open to negotiation, you old fart. \$1,200 or nothing. Going, going, good bye JL hope your lungs improve.....nice talking to you for old times sake.....”

"OK. OK." More coughs making me lean away from the phone. Crazy eh? “One point two sight unseen. I gotta be crazy....”

“JL.....who was the gringo that you could rely on in the old days huh? Cash. The old drop-off point. 60 minutes from now....”

“Wait a fuckin' bit. One point two in 60 minutes??!! Ya got to be raving mad, Bongo. I don't carry that type of cash around on me like in the old days. I'm a little frailer than 6 years back and if I got caught carrying, I'd be back in the clink quicker than I could say JL.”

“My heart bleeds.....Last chance JL. Can you do it or not. George Tyler wouldn't have any troubles with that amount of cash and he's my next call....”

“You fucking snake in the grass going to that bastard.....OK.....OK, Bongo. Old drop in 90....in 90, OK? One point two for the kilo. You drive a hard bargain.”

“Come on JL. You will made a 300% profit on the deal and you know it. The shit is untraceable but just to be sure, you can mix some powder coke in with it to kill the perfume and feel. You know the old trick. And with a little bit of powder in the mix you could ask for a higher fee than what's going for a clean baggie.....”

“Stop talking so I can arrange some things and I'll see you in 90 at the old drop.”

I signed off and threw the mobile across the room in elation. I quickly retrieved it, snapped the battery and sim-card out and placed all the bits and pieces into the safe. I palmed the small untraceable hand gun so that the boys didn't notice the action and as I stood, I slipped it into one of the large back pockets of the Boiler suit. I closed the safe door with my leg and spun the tumbler to lock it off.

I sat down on one of the bench stools after taking out my gun cleaning kit. I snapped on a pair of latex, disassembled the small hand gun, emptied the 5 magazine and rubbed and oiled down every surface including each bullet in turn before placing only three back into the magazine. One in the chamber with the safety on.

I placed it carefully back into the back pocket of the boiler suit, pulled off the latex, packed my cleaning kit away and stood.

Time to go. It was a good 60 minute ride to the pick-up point.

I gathered up the motorcycle helmet and gloves, checked that the other gun was still snug in the pocket of the Flying Jacket and turned to both of the boys.

“That guy is a killer. Been guessed that he has killed by bludgeoning to death 3 opposition Dealers who strayed inside his territory. I'd say that he has found his match with the Hog Riders though. Remember, prime the alarms after I have ridden through the side gate. No show at ten ring Ken. I'll de-activate the alarm system with my mobile on my way back so that I can ride straight through the gate. Take it easy and don't panic OK?”

Both boys were showing signs of quite elation. They would get a windfall, hopefully of six hundred each if every thing went according to Hoyle. Not knowing that Hoyle was one bad arse destructive dude at his best.

I felt that I did not have the same plan as the boys, but they would never know, cocooned in their ignorance. I was looking for results way outside the realms of their imaginations.

I yanked on the leather gloves and tucked the Manila Folder size envelope against my stomach before zipping up the flying jacket.

I picked up a small glass pill phial from what I classified as my Medicine cupboard as I walked through the Kitchen.

If the truth be known I was excited about the foray into the wrong side of the law and the chance to once again start up the Duke to ride it through the chilly winter's night.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The only vehicle in the parking area was a midnight blue Subaru WRX with its motor ticking over. Steam curled from its twin exhaust pipes indicating the short distance that JL had driven the car to the drop-off point.

Even at the age that he was, JL still used speed wheels as his vehicles. Some habits die hard!

By the look of the curl of the condensation from the exhaust, he still lived around the bloody block!

The more things change the more the same they remained!

All the windows were blacked out so much I could not see anything through the glass.

That made me nervous.

Twitchy!

I rode around the perimeter twice before leaving the street to ride up onto the darkened Vehicle Spare Parts Store parking area.

It had once been a thriving fast food outlet where all the local hoods and wannabes hung out. The joint had competed magnificently with that Scottish-American fat purveyor until regular raids on the vehicles parked in the lot were conducted by the local cops and narc/vice boys. It took some time and quite a few 'unroadworthy' stickers and drug charges to be laid before the slow witted twits took the hint and moved on to other places to congregate at. But before that happened, a lot of Intel was gathered on the Dealers and Suppliers of the rapidly expanding drug trade in this part of town.

Way back when.

I pulled up close to the driver's window as it slid down.

I carefully looked around the interior of the vehicle. Back and front. I stood upright and glanced about the perimeter of the parking lot. Traffic was light on the main arterial road that this area fronted onto.

A bespectacled, gaunt, frail looking man shoved his head closer to me.

I had trouble recognising the old bloke. One of my longest handled snitches.

The change in JL was frightening over only a short number of years. He had become an old man with grey, paper thin skin stretched tightly over bone. Not a hair on his head where once a luxuriant growth of long hair in a pony tail was his trade mark. Before that, an outrageous Mullet! There appeared to be no 'filling out' flesh on his upper torso and his face, hands and what I could see of his arms. Kidney spots that a red-headed freckled kid would be proud of. Bone seemed to stick out like a starving, mangy dog's rib cage.

My hesitancy must have said volumes as he shook his head and by way of explanation informed me, "Everyone grows old, but it's helped along in leaps and bounds when you've got stomach cancer. That takes the shit outa ya. Bongo? How are you?"

I nodded my head, asked him to lower the rear two windows. I rolled the bike to be able to look inside the vehicle. Down at the rear floor wells. I circled the vehicle twice and then did two large laps of the parking area, playing particular attention to the thicket of bush on the far side of the building. I idled back to the dark car and braked to be directly opposite the driver's window.

"You're a careful man, ma man."

I again nodded my head.

"Always have, always will be. That's why I'm still alive."

He harrumphed at those comments. Clicked his fingers. He was getting impatient. He wanted to see the merchandise.

I actually felt sorry for him and said so as I gently slid the large plastic bag out of the paper envelope and handed it over to him. Awkwardly with my thick gloves on. That made me start as I realised that I may have a problem handling the small handgun.

"You've not changed much in the last 6 years or so. Of what I can see of ya."

Which was bloody nought. It was his sense of humour working overtime. A coughing fit that followed every attempt at laughter made me want to lean away as though I may catch something lethal from the dying man.

I made a feign to snatch back the large baggie.

"Leave it be, son." Was all that he said but there was a hint of menace in the words. "Don't worry, I got all ya cash to the last note. Yer can trust me you know, I ain't changed into a

back-stabber since yer useta deal with me before. Not like some people. And besides, it seems all a bloody waste of time, looking back on it now.”

All I had done it for was to try and get as many sets of good quality fingerprints on the outer plastic bag as I possibly could. Of his fingertips and hands!

“What. You become a Philosopher in your old age?” I countered.

“Ta, that's the nicest thing that yer've ever said to me. A philosopher needs to have brains.....”

A forced laugh triggered off another coughing episode that looked painful in itself. He slid out a thick envelope with what looked to me about one point two K in fresh new bills inside. He looked back at me. I got the impression that he knew what I was doing and how I was manipulating him and the Hog Riders into positions of weakness. Of culpability.

Than again, it was more than likely my guilty conscious in over-drive.

I leaned toward him giving the impression that I was having trouble placing the cash envelope into an inside pocket of the jacket. With my right hand I took the little .22 from my back pocket, placing it against the side of his sunken head. Pulled the trigger just like that. There wasn't enough power in the shot to push him sideways or cause the bullet to exit on the other side of his head as a through and through. Instead it would ricochet off the inside of his skull turning his brains to mash. As I slipped the gun back into the side pocket of my jacket, he still had enough life in him to turn slightly to me. I'd like to think that he tried to say 'thank you' for me having saved him from a lingering, painful death; but truly I don't know.

He may have been on the verge of yelling out 'fuck you' for all I knew!

I pushed him gently back into the seat letting his head loll onto the rear head-rest. He looked as though he was asleep.

I turned the motor off of his hot wheels and leaned further across his body to pick up the plastic baggie, again slipping it back into the paper envelope and then into my jacket. I took the small glass phial and placed it carefully under the entry wound. I was able to collect several drops of his blood without causing any smudges or wipe smears. I slipped the top back on, shoved it in a pocket, kicked the bike into gear and roared off across the dark parking area.

That roar of a Ducati with an open hard throttle still got my heart a-pumping.

'I hope it's all worth the trouble' I said to myself as I opened it up along the empty avenue.

CHAPTER NINE

Some six blocks from the Bikie's cottage was a vast Service Station sprawling across the corner of the main thoroughfare intersection in the suburb.

I coasted the bike to a stop at the front of the glass fronted building directly in front of the Pakistani Attendant's position behind the counter. An after-hours cashiers' window separated me from the dark skinned man.

He knew me.

I would often stop here at night around this time to buy a Sports Drink after I had pounded the pavement for an hour.

Three times a week.

He opened the sliding window to the outside.

“You are not jogging to-night Joseph? Common sense has at last found you!” Said in a lilting, almost musical tone.

The giggle that followed it high pitched, sounding slightly feminine.

“No Rashid. No Jogging. I've just knocked off work.” He knew that I was a cop. “I've got the runs so's need your toilet. Urgently! Can you look after my jacket, helmet and bike for me? I don't know how long I'll be.”

This caused a stream of continuous giggles from the thin Pakistani.

The toilets were around the back of the building not covered by the cameras or a large convex mirror that hung from the edge of the awning protecting the bowser positions.

I'd already noticed that on previous visits. I had always been on the verge of telling the Night Clerk that that was a security breach and should be attended to. I was thankful for my tardiness!

“Ooowah Joseph. Eating Thai again? Pakistani food you should be enjoying. That Thai rubbish will do it to you every time.” Again giggles as he turned to take down a key tied by a length of plastic coated wire to a large, long handled cleaning brush.

You would never forget that or inadvertently put it in your pocket....would you?

As he did so, I transferred the gun and the phial into the front upper pocket of the boiler suit. Zipped it shut. The action not caught by the camera above the counter position due to the added height of it with all these lolly packet hanging frames and other paraphernalia. I shuffled off yelling out to him, “Rashid, if I’m not back in an hour, ring an ambulance for me, will you.”

I heard the high pitched giggle follow me around to the back of the building.

I sat on the toilet taking off my flying boots and slipping on a pair of dark deck shoes. I peered out of the door. Satisfied that there was no-one there, I closed and locked the door behind me as I stepped out into the passageway, placing the key on top of the Hot Water Tank beside the door.

I set off quickly, heading towards the Bikies' corner joint on the same street but some three blocks closer than my salubrious palace that I had lived in since I had been married.

CHAPTER TEN

The back door of the drug den was wide open.

Lights ablaze inside and out.

Big D was asleep on a filthy lounge. The cover of which was torn and tattered. Four or five large ash trays sat on the floor in a line in front of the Lounge full to overflowing with ash and butts. Two open baggies and several half smoked rollies were in one of the ash trays. Empty and half empty beer bottles stood sentinel-like on the floor in their hundreds, so it seemed. Making it difficult to move around without knocking one over causing a domino event that I was sure would happen.

The place stunk of unnatural odours.

Baby Brudda was fast asleep on the floor, his head resting against the Lounge close to Big D's face. It almost looked as though Big D had been stroking the younger brother's hairless scalp as one of his hands was positioned to give me that impression.....Nah!

That was just my rabid imagination!

Baby Brudda had a pair of shorts on and nothing else. Both his hands were thrust inside the shorts as though he had been fondling himself. Another half smoked rollie was resting on top of his over-sized belly.

A Lounge Chair of similar quality to the neighbouring lounge was placed at its end. A ghastly, utterly obese, elderly woman with flat breasts that hung to her navel was half laying in the sofa. She had a filthy bath robe on that had fallen open to expose her body. She too had her mouth open, the ubiquitous rollie on top of her stomach between her stretched breasts. Another rollie behind her ear.

The sound of their combined snoring would compete with a chain saw for volume though there was something almost musical in the combination of the three noises.

OK....I could be accused of being tone deaf!

I slipped the plastic baggie from the paper envelope and placed it on the table which did not have a spare flat section available.

It didn't matter.

A large LCD TV was on, its sound muted. Heavy, glistening bodies riding on unnaturally huge penises of black blokes in close-up. In slow motion. I shook my head and wondered at the cheap thrills some of us must need! I looked back at the scene in amazement. The size had me spell-bound. It had to be false. Man made. It couldn't be natural and the size of the girl who was being penetrated belied the ability of the human body to be able to accommodate such a member!

I'd never seen anything like it before in my life.

Shaking my head in disbelief, I silently went through into the hallway checking out each room as I went.

The main bedroom, that was ascertained by the fact that the lump in the middle of the room resembled the rough size of a large bed and looked to be rectangular, was in no better shape than the other two bedrooms that I shone my Maglite into.

A scarred wardrobe sat against one wall. A chair beside the bed held a year's supply of ash in a cracked old soup bowl, if one wanted it. I couldn't tell you the floor covering or even if there was a floor covering due to the shit, papers, pizza and food wrappers and dirty clothes, giving it a general protection layer of some impressive thickness.

I carefully stepped over to the wardrobe having a problem opening one of its doors. Once I did so, I slid the top drawer of six others open. There were full baggies, bullets, a bit of cash and three hand guns that I could see. I placed the .22 throw-away hand gun that I had used on old JL in with the other shit. The other guns. Quite an assortment as a matter of fact!

I left as quickly as I could once everything was as I had found it.

At the bottom of the outside set of steps three hogs made it difficult to get off the bottom step.

I knew who owned which two.

The third was a mystery to me.

I peered around nervously. Three hogs meant that there was a bod unaccounted for. That made me nervous. I had to get out of there as quickly as I could without any confrontation with some-one I hadn't known was there. It could blow the whole exercise out of the water as my presence alone could taint the evidence seized later.

I took the phial from my pocket, removed the cap and let several drips of blood slowly splash onto the inside of the right brightly chromed exhaust pipe.

I straightened up, looked around and was very tempted to inspect the inside of the triple length, double garage that went the full width of this backyard and that of the neighbouring lot. I decided against it, not wanting to push my luck any further.

I had just walked through the open side gate onto the Council verge and footpath when I heard a door creak open.

I went back and peered through the open gate.

A bloody big man, tall and wide was standing at the open door to the garage. A little pot belly, a dirty beard and a bandanna wrapped around his head, chest hair that didn't finish but seemed to coat his upper torso, a pair of shorts that were too small, the belt at almost crutch level. An open black leather vest again about three sizes too small for his frame. He didn't seem to feel the cold of the night. Than again, he had just come from the interior of the garage which must have been tropical warmth to ensure the quick growth of the hydroponic plants inside. His huge stature was brilliantly backlit by the hydroponic lamps. A cloud of smoke enveloped his head. There was a vague feeling of recognition about the dude, though I quickly forgot about it. I heard a mumbled 'good fuckin' shit' as I turned and started up to a fast jog heading back to the Servo. And my bike.

I realised that I had had a lucky escape from the dude who had exited the Garage.

I stopped around the next corner and bent over, gasping for breath. I dialled in Glen's number to tell him that all was okay. I owed him a bottle of black for his patience.

"Things went according to Hoyle?" He asked slowly. The guy was pissed to the eye-balls. That was the last time that I asked him to watch my back. "It's okay, mate. I can still drive a car, it's just standing up that gives me a head-ache." He giggled like a school girl at his attempted humour.

This was meant to be funny, but it was my arse sticking out. My life hung by the short and curlies for about an hour. I never spoke to him again after providing him with a large bottle of Black Label.

It just wasn't worth my life.

It was close on 11 by the time that I killed the Duke's burbling engine in my Garage.

I exhaled loudly, thinking perhaps that I had been holding my breath for some time.

I stiffly dismounted from my Duke glad to be here in one piece. None-the-less, I was shaking. The adrenalin levels had cooled. I walked in through the Laundry, divesting myself of all the clothing and protection paraphernalia. Placing the tools of my trade back into my little safe. The service gun, the knife, the wad of cash and the mobile that I had computed Glen's number on 'fastcall' into.

There was no other information on the old mobile unit. But it was still traceable. Still able to be tracked. I took out the Sim card to destroy it later. Removed the battery.

I retrieved my long lost pal, my smart phone which I had sorely missed. It could bloody well do everything including the entire works description and daily routines while standing on its head almost of a Secretary....sorry.....Personal Assistant and an Interpreter to the Prime Minister herself making her obsolete, old hat and quaint!

That's what I thought about these marvellous things in any case.

I went out to the Laundry tubs and burnt the large envelope and the small one that JL had had the cash stored in. I watched as the paper curled to a charred veneer, the thickness of gold leaf.

I then washed it down the waste hole and cleaned down the stainless steel bowl.

I placed all the clothes that I had worn that night into the Washing Machine and pressed in a hot cycle hoping that would rid any of the material of Gunshot Residue.

I had changed into some warm tracky-daks and jacket and was making another coffee for myself when Billy came into the Kitchen rubbing his eyes.

"None for me thanks Dad, otherwise I'll be awake and pissing all night."

I nodded my head. I could vaguely remember wanting to crash onto my bed and not be aroused for at least two days, just on sunset, so my memory told me. I would crash very

shortly, now that the adrenalin had stopped coursing through my body. I promised myself that I would sleep for a bloody week!

"How'd it go?" He asked looking up at me.

"I think I may have said earlier in the night that we neither refer to or talk about this night's events ever again...is that right?"

"Yep, Dad. Yeah. I'm...um....I'm going back to bed. Goodnight."

"Yep."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

I put the idea of travelling to Bateman's Bay for a bit of deep sea fishing with an old colleague and good mate to Billy and Ben. They both jumped at the idea. They had lectures all day to-morrow, Thursday and Friday morning. Then they were free. We could be in Bateman's Bay well before sunset on Friday afternoon.

That satisfied Bazza's wife Cynthia when I rang.

Bazza was on a dog shift.

Syn was an appropriate nickname for her from back when I knew her well. Knowing her.....and long before Bazza had met her, she would cook up a bloody feast for me.....the boys would be able to share in it too, I guess. If she still partook!

I'd only just hung up on Syn when my mobile chirped again.

The look on the boys' faces told a story in itself.

"Joe? This is Maureen. Is Ben there with you?"

"Morrie.....arrh yes!"

I turned to look at Ben cupping my hand over the mouth-piece as I did.

"You didn't ring your mother like I told you to last night, did you?"

Ben looked sheepish. He seemed to find something interesting on the far wall behind my head. Just to the left of it.

“Sorry Mr Lind.”

“Not good enough, Ben.”

I turned away from the boy and uncovered the mouth-piece.

“Sorry Morrie. It seems he didn't ring you as I asked him too. Sorry.....that would be my fault. I took him for a spin on the back of my bike earlier in the night and it scared the living daylights out of him.....which maybe the best outcome that you could wish for. I offered to drive them to Uni this morning as I've got to go into the office early. Arrh.....is it OK if he dropped here last night. He was suppose to ask you but I guess in shock, it slipped his mind.” I let a smile colour my words.

“God, they're worse than girls....”

That remark took me back to my thoughts of earlier last evening.

I turned to look at the two boys.....Nah!

“Joe? Are you still there?”

“Sorry Morrie, I was distracted. Speaking of girls.....how is little Madeline?”

“She's fine. Little no more as you well know, but a pain this time of year with the Trial's coming up. By the way, would you like to come over for dinner on the week-end.”

“I'd love to but will have to take a rain check.....which reminds me.....I'm as bad as your son. I've arranged with an old mate Bazza Holtz, we were partners in Undercover Vice way back, to go fishing with him all week-end. He's got a bloody big boat that will take us off-shore. Deep sea. I'll bring you home a monster Snapper. Ben would like to go. Is that alright?”

“You men are all the same. If I hadn't jogged your memory you would have remembered to ask me as you picked up Ben at my front door on Saturday morning. Where a-bouts?”

“Bateman's Bay”

“Oh! A bit far isn't it, just to go fishing?”

“You women are all alike.....” We both burst into laughter.

Morrie had this little girl, infectious laugh that I loved to hear. She had been a bit short of it since Jason, her husband, had walked out on her for his secretary who was quite a bit younger and several grades less good-looking than Morrie, so I had always thought.

“Tell him it's OK by me as long it's OK by you and your friends.....would you like to come to Dinner to-morrow night then?”

“How about we make a date of it one night next week? I don't think I'm rostered on a rolling 8/10 shift. I'll provide that big Snapper or two. You provide the rest, OK?”

“OK by me. Just ring me. Tell Ben that he's to be home for Dinner to-morrow night. Good luck with the fishing. I hope that the weather's good for you. Til then.”

“OK, Morrie. Thanks. Oh.....we will be leaving after I pick them straight up from Uni around Friday lunch.....is that OK by you?”

“Not a problem.....I'll make sure he has clean underwear on.....I wait for two large Snapper.”

She hung up.

Ben came over to me and shook my hand.

“Thanks Mr Lind. I owe you big time”

I figured that we were no longer partners-in-crime and calling me Joe must have been disrespectful, to his way of thinking.

“Well.....so we don't complicate things, I'll hold that money until you are ready to depart for that backpacker trip. It maybe a little hard to explain a \$600 amount that is unexplainable. Same goes for you Bill, you don't include that into our dollar for dollar agreement. Fair enough?”

CHAPTER TWELVE

The next morning I went for my jog earlier than usual.

It was still dark.

Fog was hugging the ground.

Frost made the grass crackly and crisp as you jogged over it.

I jogged up past the Bikies' corner block mansion.

Nothing stirred.

Around past the vast Servo waving at Rashid as I jogged close by his window. He waved back. A white toothy smile to greet the morning jogger as the first glint of grey paled the eastern sky.

He worked dog hours, I thought to myself.

Heaps more a week than I.

For a lot lower pay that didn't include overtime too, I bet

.
You got to hand it to those people; they don't shirk it.

He had been one of the boat refugees that every-one was whinging about.

I hadn't met a bad one yet in all my years in the force. In Vice doing undercover work; in Narcotics and now in the Murder Squad under DS John Clifford Church aka Abbey.

I'd had a shower, finished my breakfast, cleaned up and stacked the Dishwasher and gathered the things that I needed to return to Narcotics from my 12 hour surveillance stint the day before. I was on my second mug of coffee as both boys stumbled bleary eyed down the stairs. Dressed I'd say for a typical Uni day. Their mufti look gratifying to only some because it would be obvious to them that St. Vinnies wouldn't go out of business any day soon.

They grumbled and complained as they ate the toast, fried eggs and mushrooms and orange juice that I put out in front of them but they drank the coffee as though their day could not be without it.

I'll have to watch my habit of just assuming that Bill at his age could absorb the same amount of coffee as I. One would suppose that they would also have a couple of those 'super caffeine' pick-me-up drinks during the day so it would be a safe bet indeed that he is in fact ingesting far more caffeine than I during the day.

I'll have to have a talk to that boy.

I know that I'm to blame as my job with all its irregular and long hours means that Dad ain't around that much.

When he was young with both Helene and I doing undercover Vice or Narcs work, we relied heavily on both our mums. And Helene's two sisters and brothers-in-law. But then Helene was killed when Billy was ten years of age, my mum developed breast cancer and

after a painful 18 months she succumb to the disease. Helene's mum during all that was a bloody Trooper, battling through her daughter's death only five years after her husband of 30 years died unexpectedly. She passed away without a clue that she was or had been sick. From Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma when Billy was 16. There had been no warning signs! Nothing!

He took that bad.

But to his credit he never fell off the rails and even now, with me still working those idiotic hours, he is responsible, respectful and doesn't in any way show any rebellious streak or lack of common sense and has his priorities in order.....well until this little episode at least!

But it's sorted.

They were just about to hop from the car when Ben said, "That's her. That's Malisa. See? Waiting at the bus stop. The hot chick with that 60's fluffy white coat on and the blue Lennon glasses. With a beret that looks like old Gran's tea pot cosy pulled down over her head almost to her eyes. Regular Abbey Road shit. Cool. A real heavy chick."

I looked.

Billy looked.

She waved.

I waved.

"Dad.....you're old enough to be her father, I reckon. C'mon, we have to be here every day. That's embarrassing Dad. She was waving to us!"

"Sorry..." I said sheepishly. "It was just a reaction thing, is all. I was just trying to be a friendly old fart, is all."

The bus that she had boarded pulled out and swung around past us. The boys waved at her. She looked at them, then to me and then turned her head away.

"Dad, you can be such a pain at times. Why don't you get a woman more closer to your age instead of always trying to win over girls my age? Ben's Mum likes you a lot. She's old just like you. Your age!"

I truly had no idea what he was talking about so I shut my mouth.

My quiet 'sorry' was shunted out of existence by the slamming of the car door.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

I signed in the Kevlar vest, the 2-way communication set and the extra hand gun which was not my choice of weapon.

Rules were rules: 'When on close-up surveillance operations one had to be issued with the 9.2 mm 15 round Glock with an extra 15 clip.....even if you also packed your own gun of choice which for me was the Browning with a rapid change 12 round clip. So you could have the absurd situation as with some Officers, of having a belt holster for the Glock, a shoulder holster for their weapon of choice and a throw-away in an ankle holster. We were getting as bad as the Yanks. Bloody worse in fact when you saw the amount of gear that a Uniform guy had to carry off his belt, especially while on beat duty.

I was strolling back through Narcotics after coming from the Equipment Store when I bumped into my old Section Boss, Harry 'The Swine' Swinton. Still Number 2 in charge of a small section of Narc Officers. Never to climb further up the totem pole which was understandable. He was a victim of the Peter Principle having attained a position one step higher than his abilities should have allowed.

All Public Service bureaucracies have at least one example of the phenomenon!

“Lo Joe.”

His standard form of greeting me since before Jesus was taken off the breast.

For some reason he felt that greeting was rather clever.

He could be a bit of an arse and a pain in the neck at times, but to his credit he backed me all the way back when. Even when his arse was on the line for backing me up. You had to love him for that, now didn't you? Just because the bind that I had found myself in was partly his fault. It caused Bazza Holtz to expose his tenuous position, got two innocent bystanders shot, superficial wounds at worst and caused me and Barry Holtz to ask for a transfer immediately out of Vice Undercover.

I just couldn't handle the pressure. Or the fact that our superior jeopardised our positions and he was a genuine fruit loop who had no idea about undercover work.....he'd never been out there!

The cop Shrink connected my inability to act in the face of an imminent threat of death to Helene's recent demise which in effect, saved me from actually being booted out of the Cop Force for good.

“Come along to the Briefing Room.” Harry pressed. “Something big is about to break and we've got a couple of AFP guys giving us a run-down on a planned raid for to-night. Early to-morrow morning. I hear that your old 'pillow talker' (which was another name for a snitch to supposedly throw off any eaves-dropper) met his maker last night. C'mon, follow me.”

“Who? You mean LJ? It was way past his use-by date in any case.”

“Yeah. Just got it on the rumour-waves as I left my Office. His body found in his car. Shot with a low calibre handgun through the side of the skull. No exit wound. I hear it was a blessing in disguise. He had stomach cancer and his days were numbered. Below 10 they reckon. He supposedly thought that chain-smoking weed could either prolong his life or at least cut down the pain. Don't know if either is the case but he was bloody high enough not to have felt the bullet go through the side of his skull. Gotta feel sorry for him in a way, I guess.”

He opened a set of double doors and walked through into one of the medium sized Conference Rooms that were available in the building.

I followed.

I stopped dead.

The room was full of Narc Officers, plain-clothes and uniform. A fair proportion I still knew at least by sight. A few still by name. Still friendly with. A couple I even shared a schooner or two with at the pub down the road from the HQ building. Its funny how cops especially, find their niche and stick with it. Narcs ain't the prettiest of Cop Branches as far as I was concerned, but there were those who loved it and would never think about leaving its environ.

Several waved.

A couple said 'Hi Joe, how's it hanging up there with the clever dicks?'

Up the front on the raised podium were four AFP guys.

They were obvious.

They were wearing wind jackets like the American FBI jackets that you see on Yank Cop TV shows only they had AFP emblazoned on the back and above their emblem on the front.

On the left hand side.

Near their hearts if they had one. I doubted even that!

Who's got a bloody attitude?

Classy?

To me crass and showy.

Like Yanks.

The tallest of the four I'm sure was the guy that I had seen the night before standing in the back light of the garage hydroponic farm. I was bloody sure. It appeared that the briefing and its details had been run through and the subject exhausted. Just like Harry The Swine! Several of my former undercover guys stopped for a while to have a chat. None of them were aware of LJ's murder until I told them. As the room emptied I wander toward the Lift Lobby intending to go up to Eight and the Murder Squad to sound out who-ever was there about LJ's shooting. I veered instead to the Toilet block and had just began the process of splashing my runners when I heard the door open then close and a figure stood at the neighbouring urinal.

“You did as per the script you know. Every thing's been covered. Don't forget, she was one of us. Stay cool and it will be all right.”

I finished emptying my bladder and as I adjusted myself and was doing up the zip of my fly, I half turned to the guy. It was the tall dude from AFP.

“I beg your pardon?”

He looked at me, finished off his business and stuck out his hand.

I looked down at the hand that had not a moment before held onto the banana that his mother would never bite and sneeringly said, “I don't think so.”

“Yeah, you're right. Sorry”

He crossed to the hand basins following my lead and washed and dried his hands.

“What? Your mother never taught you the value of personal hygiene?”

He ignored the stir, instead tossing the squashed up paper towel into the can and again putting out his hand.

“I know who you are but you don't know who I am.....”

“Fair enough.” I said as I shook his hand. The animosity levels still high and readable.

“Brendan Waszackinack. AFP Anti-Drug and Criminal Gangs Section. D3 Undercover Officer. Every-one calls me Knackers.”

I stopped pumping his hand. “Knackers? Knackers? I bloody well know that name....where from?”

He stood there in front of me looking at me. A smirk on his face.

Looking straight through me.

Past me.

A couple of guys came in to test whether they could still see their little Johnny over their increased paunches. We drifted out into the corridor.

“Knackers.....now why does that name sound familiar to me?”

“Knackers? C'mon mate, we gotta organise the Crime Scene boys for to-morrow.” A voice echoed down the corridor from the Lift Lobby.

Knackers took my hand again.

“Nice to formally meet you, Joe. I think we should share a beer of two together when all the dust settles and the Forensics has been sorted.”

That didn't make sense to me.

What? I thought to myself, is this the way that AFP Cops talk.....in fuckin' smart arse riddles?

With that he turned and walked quickly up the hallway towards his three AFP colleagues who had trapped the lift waiting for him.

Typical AFP.

Always talked down to us State coppers.

Not that I had an inferiority complex!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

We made good time to Bateman's Bay.

As I predicted, Cynthia had a meal fit for Kings prepared.

Age had been extremely kind to her and like a valuable wine, she just got better.

The taste would still be magical, I thought to myself as I peered across the table at her. My loins began to tingle. An experience all too infrequent since Helene had died. I swear if I asked her to accompany me to the Guest Quarters there and then she would have dropped her knife and fork and began to disrobe before she was even out of her chair. In front of her set of 17 year old triplet girls and the 14 year old twin boys. And Bazza!

I swear!

Bazza though, was still my staunchest friend, ally and supporter and there was no way that I could do such a thing to him even if the electricity that arced across the table between Syn and I could be readily seen if the lights where turned out!

Syn and I had been lovers from an early age.

An off again, on again boiling affair that reached both the bottom and the top of the emotional spectrum. We just couldn't leave each other alone. She had been a Uni Student working as a Barmaid part-time to survive. Studying the Natural Sciences. Majoring in Mathematics. She was a brain. That's how we had met. Me a young brash Probationary Constable still very wet behind the ears unsure as to my future direction but most definitely within the Force. Doing a Law Degree part-time at the same Uni.

Western Sydney.

We stayed mainly together for over three years which surprised both of us. I think that I had just managed a spot in Vice and had teamed up with Bazza my first partner when the unheard of happened.

I met Helene.

A Barmaid at the same pub as Syn.

A blow-in. A sudden appearance that defied logic.

Two years older than I.

Little did I know at the time that she was working undercover Narcotics for the AFP. But within about two weeks Cynthia was old hat, dislodged and abandoned like a loaf of stale old bread. Amazingly, there was no hurt feelings or ego outbursts. I'd introduced her to Bazza at about the same time that I met Helene and there seemed to be a quiet sensual attraction there between the two of them. Go figure, as it's unfathomable! Helene and I knew within four weeks that we would marry. We did so inside 6 months and never regretted it. Surprised the bejesus out of my family and hers. Bazza and Sin took a little longer but finally managed it around the time that Cynthia took a job with some Mining giant and was in charge of their environmental refurbishment programs around open-cut coal mines in the Hunter Valley.

Helene and I were married for eleven short years, giving me Billy and two stillborns.

She had finished with 'undercover' and maybe that was her downfall.

Out of practise.

Unable to see the signs any more.

She had been hassled about doing some job in a small rural town not that far out of Adelaide in South Australia. She dug her heels in until they offered three times the going penalty rates for that type of work.

A short three month stint.

No more, they promised.

Then back to her speciality since she had married me. Computer Intelligence and Cyber Crime. She was bloody good at it and had taught Billy from an early age the intricacies of the computer mind.

The undercover stint involved her being a barmaid again. Monitoring a chapter of the Angels that used the Pub as their home away from home. She was just to keep her ears and eyes open. Listen to the drunken boasts of Angel members. And be back-up and point guard to another undercover cop who had wormed his way into the ranks of the gang.

The pub in a small country town just outside Adelaide.

Older women were thin on the ground doing this line of work especially ones with Barmaid experience. We talked it over no end until she finally accepted the spot.

What could go wrong?

I was at that time, well into the undercover stuff in Vice. My old undercover partner in Narcs, Baz Holtz had left the crazy world of undercover operations to steadily climb the advancement ladder. During that time, I had gone through several partners and was beginning to think that my stay on this Earth was rather tenuous based on the regular demise or 'burn-out' of my partners. I had put in for a desk job in Vice not wanting to push my luck.

Bongo Drums was Baz and my old call sign....corny eh?

So Helene and my home-time was extremely rare if not non-existent at that time.

She disappeared some 2 ½ months into the contract.

Her body found some weeks later beside a partially dry farm dam some 50 kilometres outside the small town. A single shot to the side of the skull. No suspects. No takers but the consensus was that it had been a Biekie hit. The same MO as several other recent murders. They would have taken Helene out for the sheer joy of killing a cop, an undercover one at that!

Sadistic.

Cold-blooded.

If it hadn't been for Bazza and Syn I definitely wouldn't have survived.

Or still been in the Force.

Bazza was offered the job as the Officer-in-Charge Intelligence Analysis and Narcotics for the southern NSW coastal strip from Nowra to the Victorian border. He snapped it up. Moved the entire family down some five years ago.

All as happy as pigs in prime shit.

As Bazza said often, he would never go back to the asylum and slaughterhouse of Sydney and environs.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Billy had last seen the triplet girls when they were around the goofy and awkward twelve or thirteen years of age group. The twins were about 10-11 the last time that the two of us had come down for a week-end stay. He not impressed, especially as he was outnumbered three

to one and it was obvious that the three had the hots for him. An athletic, cool, good looking, smooth skinned, tall for his age, fifteen year old.

He took after me!

Both Billy and I had stayed down here for some months helping Bazza extend the house that they had just purchased. On a hectare of land. Views of mountains and the escarpment one way. River, rocky sharp headlands and the Pacific Ocean the other. A huge house even before he commenced the extensions. Twice as big once he completed the task inside record time but without either Billy or I being present.

It seems that he did more work when I wasn't there to help him.

Go figure.

We'd only stop occasionally for a beer, a smoke or a spot of fishing!

Fair Dinkum.

From the moment of introductions between Bill and Ben and the girls, we knew that we would not see them all that week-end.

The two boys just pools of spittle on the floor.

Tongues sticking out in the middle of the morass like the T-shirt slogan of Mick and the Stones. Looking like love sick puppies at the dinner table unable to take their eyes from the girls. There was no doubt that the girls took after their mother in the looks department while the twin boys had their father's build and outward personality.....though their looks were a bit of a mystery. The spitting image of Synthia's father was the consensus.

Davey and Daniel

Danni, Daphne and Deborah.

The girls had grown some, filled out in all the right places, were self-assured and funny.....what am I saying, they were without a doubt, young honeys. If any-one of the three had a similar sex drive as their mother did at that age, old Syn and Bazza were in for a hell of a time.

Bazza joked that he could just yell out 'Dee' and the five of them would come running like faithful puppies.

But the howls of laughter and derisive chatter indicated that that scenario was not a reality!

The entire teenage tribe had the week-end mapped out before we even had finished the main course. A Rock Concert in Wollongong on Saturday night. Billy or Ben could drive the big 4WD that would take the seven of them. None of the Holtz clan had driving licenses as yet although the girls could have gotten theirs when they turned 17 some months ago. Bazza and I alone on the ocean's waves until well after dark on the same night. Chances are we would be getting home around the same time! The Sunday Markets that offered cool gear, forgotten vinyl records in good nick and every sea-food from local merchants. Cheap as chips. Why would any-one want to spend an entire night freezing their balls off miles out to sea with a chance of very little return to show for it?

Oh.....the romance of adventure and the battle between man and his nemesis, the broiling sea lost on these young fools!

A decent kip and sleep-in before we began the trip back up to Sydney on the Sunday afternoon while the kids were doing the Markets thing.

I didn't want to be sleepy after a 6 day lay-off.

We spent an enjoyable night after the feast sitting around talking. Drinking. Lots of laughter. Spirited debate on everything from 'life after death, capital punishment to Julia's chances of surviving the coming election. Uni kids think that they are the 'intelligentsia' and that old people are dumb.

Bazza and I deliberately played the Devil's Advocates.

Just like the old days when he and Sin and Helene and I would attend at least a dinner party a fortnight with either fellow Officers or friends and acquaintances of Sin in the Mining Industry.

The kids now-a-days more enthusiastic, well read and articulate than the supposed brains of our generation. Of our lot. The young movers and shakers of 'to-morrow' that would crowd around an extended table drinking Asti Spumante and nibbling bits of what-ever from fondue sets. Smoke from rollies settling low and pungent over the conversation.

Them were the days, though I doubted either Bazz, Syn or I would ever want them back.

We all hit the sack around midnight.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Bazz and I spent the Saturday morning preparing the boat. Checking equipment, engine, radio, safety gear and e-perb and fishing gear. Bazza was a stickler for safety. Everyone on board had to wear a safety vest with an e-perb attached. The planned itinerary mapped out to the finest detail with Syn being privy to his secret fishing hot spots. No alcohol allowed on board but this trip proved an exception. A bottle of J & B Scotch. Cold water and ice. A couple of cigars.

These in case the fish weren't biting.

An enjoyable fall-back was required!

The boat was a 32 footer in-board especially designed for outer-reef work.

He'd christened it "Bongo Drums" as his one concession to sentimentality.

A combination of both our call signs back when. After all this time, I can't even remember where the names originated from but they stuck. Which was rather ironic in a way as neither him nor I had a rhythmical bone in our bodies!

Musically, Billy said that I was also tone deaf.

Helene used to say that when-ever I sang in the shower it sounded like a dog having its nuts removed without any form of anaesthetic!

We left the river mouth Marina and headed out across the Bay around mid-afternoon under a blazing sun and not a ripple or a swell on the water. Not a breath of wind. It was beautiful with one almost forgetting that it was the middle of winter. Before crossing the Bar, we informed the Volunteer Coast Watch station of our intended course, duration and intended return.

We'd hardly crossed the Bar when he was into me.

The only guy that could ask me such personal questions and not expect a blow to the chin in reply. My health, wealth and welfare was his concern. My state-of-mind and any female company sniffing about or on the horizon. The same old same old that he asked me when-ever we were alone.

He still felt responsible for me.

I loved the guy.

We continued on a south-easterly course for some 35 minutes before Bazza cut the motors to idle and began looping in smaller and smaller circles.

“Can you get the burly trail going? We're over a table-top hill that stands proud of the sea bed by some 10 metres. The shoulders have overhangs and caves that the fish, especially Snapper like to sit in.”

“Sure...” I replied as I headed aft. “How deep is it down there?”

“To the top of the mesa about 70 metres.”

I began churning the bloody mass of meat, fish innards, porridge, dry dog food, minced up kidney and fish oil into the stainless steel burly container. I glanced back at Bazza who was concentrating on the depth finder and the GPS screens as he put the boat into a series of tight turns. I slipped the throw-away hand gun and the three old mobile phones, with batteries removed that I had had in my safe, over the side into the deep waters.

The Sim-cards I had burnt and discarded the day before we came down the coast.

“Hey.....you didn't throw a couple of sinkers overboard just then, did you Joe?”

“Arrh.....no.” I checked around the area. “No. I'm certain. Why?”

“Oh nothing. I thought I saw something sinking on the depth finder that's all. Musta been an aberration. Very little current so we should be able to drift up and down over this Mesa without too much problem. The trick is to have enough line out so that the bait falls over the edge as we pass over it.”

He cut the engines and we began our little game.

Nothing.

“The temperature down there is a bit too cold, I think. The Southern Ocean East coast current is a bit early and a bit cold for this time of year. Usually we're having the warmer current coming down from Queensland around here now. Did you see the news the other night?”

A nod of my head no.

“When I'm off work which is about the only time that I could catch the news, I rarely turn the blasted thing on.”

He nodded his head as though he was in agreement and completely understood.

“The AFP with State Cops did a combined, concerted series of raids across 4 states early the other morning. South Australia, Melbourne, Brisbane and about six addresses in Sydney's west. All known addresses and hangouts of members of that Bow-legged Hog Riders Gang. What a silly name. Who was the silly bastard who thought that one up?”

We both gave a chuckle.

“About as silly as a team once known as Bongo Drums, don't you think?”

That brought us tears of laughter.

“No.....” He continued as the soreness of his stomach forced him to stop giggling. “I was speaking to the DI Narcotics in Sydney just before I knocked off on Friday night. They're got just about every member of the gang, about 30 blokes in lock-up and they expect some big things from the operation. A lot of unsolved robberies, drug dealing and transportation and a couple of cold murder cases to be resolved. Apparently the two top dogs were something special. Evil bastards from what he described.”

“Yeah I know. I knew of them.”

“Apparently they're confident that they've got them for JL's murder. He was your snitch in the old days wasn't he, from memory?”

“He was both our snitches. Don't you remember? That's bloody quick. The forensics would not be completed for some months, one would have thought.”

“Yeah, I guess so.” Bazza thought that that was a strange comment. “He was your snitch, wasn't he?”

“Yeh. Ours during our later Narc days. I kept him when I moved to Vice. A long time ago.”

We returned to the Marina a lot earlier than expected. Syn had contacted Bazza by mobile to say that a southerly change was due to hit in the early hours of the morning. When-ever Bazza went outside, she kept a weather eye so to speak, on the meteorology web site to ensure that no sudden nasty surprises lurked up from the Tasman Sea.

It was notorious for just that.

Not a decent fish was caught for our troubles though the bottle of JnB Scotch took a drumming and two cigars each were mightily enjoyed. Maybe that was the problem. The smell of cigars and the taste of Scotch not to the fishes liking.....not known as connoisseurs of such fine things like us humans!

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

It was some 4, maybe 5 months later that things seemed to hot up and it wasn't just the weather with summer now in full swing with oppressive humid heat.

We'd had a quieter period than usual on the murder front with two of the teams going over old unsolved cases to stay gainfully employed.

Or at least amused!

DS Church had both his squads outsourced to outside Inverell up in the New England area where a body dump of some seven bodies had been uncovered with several more burial plots identified that should reveal further bodies.

All the macabre work of one Benjamin 'Benny' Borvic who was once the henchman and muscle bound associate of the Crime Lord Jason Macready so the present theories went. The property had once been owned by Borvic. Research undertaken some time back when there was a series of related murders that commenced with the homicide death of Suzie Sapphire, who was Jason Macready's estranged daughter, dug up the ancient information that the father of the Crime Boss Jason Macready was the original owner of the Property.

As a State Member of the NSW Parliament between the Wars, he had taken it upon himself to free up several tracts of land both on the north-west slopes and in the Southern Highlands that had been State land.

He becoming the owner of both parcels of land albeit by several shelf companies.

To me this was all ancient history and of little value. All the players were dead either by criminal or natural means.

Who now gave a hoot!

DS Church was driven to identify all the bodies buried in that corner of the State and ascertain their cause of death.

All this explained to highlight the fact that the Murder Squad floor was about half empty with the remainder busy as snails at the moment going over 'unsolves' to fill in the time. I found these procedures boring and wasteful of my time, so I spent large portions of the day strolling around town.

This I was doing on this fine summer's day, sitting on a park bench in the City's centre watching the passing parade.

Trying to ascertain their profession as they hurried by.

I felt more than saw a figure sit next to me.

“Does vengeance taste sweet?”

“I beg your pardon.....?” I asked as I turned my head towards him.

It was Knickers....Blinkers.....Blazes or some such strange nickname.

The guy from AFP who had whispered some strange, very strange comments to me when he followed me into the Male Toilets some time back.

He could see that I was floundering with his name.

“Knackers.....Brendan Waszackinack. AFP Anti-Drug and Criminal Gangs Section. D3 Undercover Officer. Every one calls me Knackers.”

“Yes. That's right.” I replied as though he had just won a competition in remembering his name and position. A \$1,000 prize was his just reward. I just didn't have it on me at the moment.

He thrust out his hand for me to shake.

“When did you go to the toilet last?” I asked.

“About half an hour ago and yes, I washed my hands after.” He replied dead pan.

“What was it you said to me back then?”

“Oh....that was a fair while ago, you know. My memory is not that bloody good especially as I get older. Have you twigged yet where you knew or remembered my name from?”

“To tell you the truth it isn't something that I have been mulling over since then.....I know.....” Then suddenly like the enormous winds of a rapidly advancing tornado, it near bowled me over. “.....it has just suddenly come to me.....” I muttered. “.....um.....let me think.....weren't you?”

Perhaps not that strong a wind that it near bowled me over!

“.....you were.....weren't you Helene's partner at the time, her back-up at the time of her death?”

My voice indicating my growing anger

.

He nodded his head slowly.

“Yes.....not exactly. She was my back-up. My point of contact. My Point man we call them. I think you State guys call them 'Catchers'. We rotate them somewhat so that they're less likely to be nabbed. Helene was at the end of her 3 month stint almost. You knew that. I've never lost a partner before or since. Something that I have thought about every day since her death. You know? That wasn't the first time that I worked with her.....That incident.....”

“Incident? That's how you now view it?”

Anger.

I clenched my fists ready to take a swing at the smug bastard.

“Settle down. Take it easy. Get your foot off the pedal. I suffered too on her death. Not as much as you, of course, but imagine how you would feel if you had lost Barry Holtz out in the field.”

I could not imagine that, even though we nearly did have that experience. The cause for both of us to leave undercover. And Narcs. I took a couple of deep breathes, prepared to sit through this until the end, where-ever that may lead.

“How did you know my partner was Barry Holtz way back when.....?” I waved my arm. “Never mind.....” I relented. I knew how the Cops worked.....and the AFP was worse.....and more secretive about it.

“I'm not looking for or wanting your explanation after all this time. I read the official Police Report on the matter....”

“That was complete bullshit!”

“Are you now saying that you were to blame? I always felt that in trying to digest between the lines of that report and what was not in it.....I'm a cop. I know how these things can be controlled. White-washed. Smoothed over.”

“No. But I was there. I saw what happened.”

“So why didn't you open your bloody mouth. You were a witness? Fuck me.....bloody hell! You could have nabbed the mother-fuckers.”

The bile in the back of my throat rising again.

Bubbling.

“Back then? I had colour with the Angels. Was well inserted. Even respected. Looking for advancement up their seniority ladder. And back then, nearly every State in Australia demanded that all witnesses stand before the Court. In open Court. Before the Public gallery. My life would have been worthless. I would not be able to continue in my job. Undercover or not. The powers to be thought that my anonymity and standing within the Club was of more importance to the long term success of the operation than bringing to justice a creep that all thought wouldn't make it past his next birthday. It's changed now. I think Queensland is the only State in the Commonwealth who hasn't changed that bit of legislature.”

“Good for Queensland....or should I say, bad luck for Queensland.” I murmured sarcastically. “Who's the bastard who pulled the trigger?”

“I think you already have a good idea who that scumbag is. You know who it is otherwise you wouldn't have been planning retribution on him for all these years.”

I ignored the intimation and the straight out accusation.

I wasn't silly.

This bastard could have been wired.

“Baby Brudda or was it his brother Big D?”

“Big D wouldn't hurt a fly. He has sleepless nights if he sees a dog run over.....or any animal for that matter. Roadkill even. No....he hangs off the shirt tails of his psychopathic brother. Big D, while he would never cause heart burn to any Mensa member, has the cunning of a sewer rat and better street smarts than a crone who has lived her entire life on the streets. Baby Brudda on the other hand, has no brains, no feelings, no empathy to his fellow man but is sure talented in the ways of hurting those who piss him off. Your Helene's murder caused general mayhem in the ranks of the Angels. She was their favourite barmaid. I think 3 members lost their lives because of her murder. It splintered that Chapter of the Angels. The last thing that they wanted was a battalion of Cops careering down on their territory at the time.....they were trying their hardest not to make any waves.....they were in throes of setting up a national drug distribution network....they didn't want the cops around.”

He looked at the steady stream of passers-by. Enjoying the beauty of the younger female form.

"Um....The two brothers were unceremoniously expelled, dumped, ousted from the clan entirely. Never to wear the colours again. The two plus about three others who preferred the actions of Baby Brudda and his older brother went on a mini crime spree through SA and Victoria before taking up residence just down the road from your place. A coupla clicks

perhaps. The little gathering expanded to around a dozen and through their brave accomplishments, a steady trickle of like minded members leaked from other Bikie Clubs. I have no idea who came up with the club name or its motto, but it's even too trite for either of the brothers to take credit, don't you think?"

He gave a cut-off chuckle and leant forward to rest his elbows on his knees. He looked up at me. "Remember at the piss-trough? One of the things that I said to you was it was taken care of?"

I turned my head slowly to look him square in the eyes for the first time.

"How?" I demanded to know.

"If nothing else, I am a patient man. The minute that he pulled that trigger he became my life's work. My reason for living."

"Why didn't you just grab him and take him out into the outback and dig a shallow grave for him?"

He slowly shook his head. Looked down at his hands.

"Know your adversary. Get every bit of information on him that you can when you go undercover. That's a given. You know that.....you've been there. The number one rule when you're an undercover cop. Over the years I gathered reams on the bastard. One thing that I promised myself was that he was going to suffer. Big time. He wasn't afraid of death. Truly. What he was absolutely petrified of was two things. Being away from his mother for a long period of time and two, being incarcerated in a small space for a long period of time. That'll beat a quick bullet through the head every time for that twit!"

"So.....your clever plan.....I'm getting the impression that I may have beaten you to the prize."

He ignored the comment and continued in an easy, melodic voice.

"Their father was a brutal man by all accounts. Especially with Baby Brudda. For some reason he was singled out more than Big D. A daily belting and if that didn't satisfy the old man, he locked his young but dumb son in a cupboard all night. The cupboard in question is now in Baby Brudda's bedroom. I'm told that when he gets concerned or troubled....not scared, because he is incapable of that emotion, he will go and sit in that cupboard for long periods. It apparently soothes him....go figure the human condition."

Another chuckle.

He straightened up, half turning his body to me while crossing his legs. Simultaneously I bent, resting my elbows on my knees, cupping my chin in my hands.

We looked like a pair of Meercats learning all the wrong moves from a long accepted choreographic ritual. Unable to adopt the habitual dance of the rest of the group though synchronised with one another!

If we were those Meercats, than eviction from the group was imminent!

“No....” His abbreviated answer to my last question.

He glanced in my direction.

“Why were you sure Joe, that the brothers were involved with your wife's killing?”

“I was unaware that the two of them had moved to Sydney and set-up so close to my joint. We were sitting in a joint briefing where they drag those that aren't too busy on current murder cases into extra surveillance duties. It happens quite frequently with us. Especially if you've got prior experience in it. It was mentioned then.....their residential move to Sydney just down the road from where I lived....oh, maybe a kilometre or three, perhaps....My mind started its methodical planning....almost unconsciously in fact. Their names were in that internal report on Helene's death. Persons of Interest. The practise is that these POI's are not identified especially to the public unless everything points to their involvement but there is insufficient evidence to form that unbreakable chain. To put them in front of a jury. The local cops and the AFP knew who the culprits were.....I guess it was when the boys told me where they got the shit from....that kilo of weed, that Plans 1 to 5,000 clicked into resolution mode and within like a second....so it seemed.....I had a reasonable, plausible course of action that I thought was fool-proof with that chain link unbreakable. The planted evidence would lead any fool investigating Officer straight to the two of them....all I had to do was act.....and to take advantage of the planets falling into alignment.....act fast and decisively! Another name for it would be serendipity!”

“That you did, that you did. The speed of which even surprised me!”

“You were keeping a close watch on me all that time?”

“Hell no.....I think that you would have picked it if I had.....no.....but the intelligence I had on you was pretty expansive.....”

He then continued on with his line that he seemed to have pre-determined a long time ago.

“The bullet that killed your wife.....sorry, but it was a mess. So badly deformed that the Techs could not get any noticeable patterns off it that would be acceptable in a Court of Law. So ill-defined and missing were any markings that the bullet didn't even make it onto

the National Ballistic Codex library that had been set up by the AFP and all State Law Enforcement Groups just before Helene's homicide. The bullet fragments were just placed in an evidence bag and filed with the rest of the stuff on her death. In the AFP Evidence vault. You have no idea how many bullets I put through that bloody handgun trying to duplicate as close as possible the damage to the bullet while retaining some evidential markings that would solidly show that the bullet came from Baby Brudda's favourite little hand gun. Yer missus sure musta had a bloody hard skull you know!"

I couldn't help but grunt at that.

Three missing front teeth were the proof of that! A \$2,600 Dental bill with a dental plate the end result. A lovable wrestling match the cause.

I said as much.

Knackers chuckled along with me.

"I did it eventually."

He turned to me.

A smile of satisfaction and pride across his face.

"I replaced the bullet with one that I thought would do the trick, placed its characteristics and microscopic details onto the Ballistics Codex and gave Baby Brudda back his gun. He was none the wiser. I had taken it on the pretext that I needed to get in some practise and all I had to do to throw him off any suspicious thinking was to regale on the beauty of the bloody thing. It was his favourite piece.....he loved nothing better than to place it on the side of some-one's head and pull the trigger. He reckoned he could hear the bullet whizzing about in the skull, turning the grey matter into broth.....sick, eh?"

"Bloody hell, Knackers. That took real balls...is it possible that some-one mat twig...remember that the original bullet was too far damaged to have been of any use in being able to be connected to that little hand gun?"

"What? Nine, ten years after the fact. I doubt that there would be any Officers left in the Force who could have known anything about the case."

He chuckled at that.

Nodded his head.

Gave that comment some thought, so I calculated by the length of the pause of his narration.

"I mean, to actually place a bullet into the system that originated from a ten year old murder of an AFP Operative....if that was ever to come to light, you'd be up shit creek, huh?"

He nodded his head. Thought about it. Smiled. He eventually picked up the thread and kept going.

"Huh.....Then I sat back and reviewed my efforts. I had truly believed that that was all I needed to do to link him irrefutably with the murder. Get the paper for his arrest. But that lacked substance and was truly garbage in the bright light of day. The powers to be already knew of his culpability in the matter. They had, if they truly wanted to act on the matter, have at least a dozen witnesses, including me remember, several of whom are now resting at the Gov'ners pleasure and would sing better than the Vienna Boys Choir on the matter in order to have their Court acquired times shortened. I didn't want to rattle the can too vigorously as that would only bring the spotlight back to me.....that I didn't want, as the powers to be are not that stupid. The ex-partner of a slain undercover AFP agent causing too much grief would look a little suspicious even to them.....so I figured I had to come up with a Plan B. We had a bright, intelligent and enthusiastic young star who we had only just signed on. After the normal 6 month education program that we run for all of our new cadets straight after the Academy, we put her out in the field. Undercover. At the Uni which is super safe where she could hone her visual skills and her art of instant spiel in complete safety. Uni students have no idea that they are being closely monitored, especially by undercover units. You knew our young friend as Malisa....."

I sat bolt upright. A slow recognition of the masterful manipulation fermenting in my grey matter.

He just nodded his head slowly. Looking intently at a group of three attractive office girls trying to sit together on a park bench diagonal to us with as much womanly aplomb as possible. They wore those short, short, fanny high, tight skirts. Aplomb and personal reservations couldn't hide their knickers. Why the girls wore those short, short skirts when they were aware of the areas that they exposed was well beyond me !

Knickers exposed.

Knackers had a wide grin on his face.

"You arrh.....you arrh.....watched my son and his mate steal those dried mature plants?" I asked incredulously.

"Yeah. Christ they made a noise. At one stage I was worried that the slumbering fools would be woken up. I have no idea what would have been the outcome, if that scenario had occurred."

“You arrh.....you watched my little charade in entering the house that night. After I had....um....kept an appointment with LJ?”

“Yep. That's right. You were, I must admit, a little more professional in your approach, execution and exit from the joint. Although if I had been you I don't think I would have looked back through the open gate. By the way, the only time that that gate didn't have a chain and lock on it was during that time with your son and his mate doing the initial reconnaissance.....by the way, on their second recon outing, they almost nabbed me.....and so did you on your little sojourn. Arrm.....I came up from SA about three months after Big 'D' and Little Brudda had settled into that semi-detached joint down the road from you. They'd bought it outright. Both sides of the house. They had a bloody good, vicious guard dog then. Baby Brudda shot it after I turned up because it kept on barking during the night. My doing actually.”

He let out a deep sigh.

“A bloody good dog actually. So I was signed on as the guard. A nightly fee of \$125 cash plus a baggie a week plus my normal undercover wage with entitlements and penalty pay. I was on a bloody good wicket. It was me who organised the expansion of the garage into the neighbouring lot. Me who knocked down internal walls of the other semi-detached section to make a drug factory. It never got into full swing though. The machine that they had was capable of banging out a 100 ecstasy tablets a minute. But things always was wrong with it. Little things. Screws coming loose. That kind of thing.”

Another chuckle. A cut-off harrumph.

“I used to watch you jog down the road in the middle of the night or before dawn in the morning. A bloody wanker I used to think to myself. I knew you were a cop and Helene's former hubbie. A plan developed slowly.....you should be able to guess the rest.”

He looked over at me with this expression on his face.

A kind of questioning look.

A bit of smugness there too.

A grin of satisfaction perhaps.

He kept on.

“The raid on the joint and every known Hog Rider's address in four states a couple of months ago yielded more than we bargained for. Forensics is still sifting through it. Widening the area of guilt of the two of them. Not only the gun that's been positively identified being the one that killed your wife because of the ballistics characteristics that

were similar to the bullet that was removed from your dead wife's skull,..huh...the one that I planted only months before actually, but the gun that killed LJ, a baggie with LJ's figure prints all over it, the weed inside forensically proving its connection to the crop in the garage, a minute splash of LJ's blood on Baby Brudda's hog which was a nice touch I must say, and several other sawn-off's, rifles and handguns that had been used in robberies in Victoria, Queensland and New South. Two other killings linked. The good part of course, was that we had no idea beforehand, on the wealth of information that Big D was simply willing to divulge. He was scared to death of sharing a cell with his Baby Brudda. The little guy would go ape-shit and out of sheer blind rage, fury and terror tear to shreds any-one or anything that maybe in that cell with him. He is in a very padded cell on a 24 hour suicide regime. Stoked to the eye-balls with strong sedatives to keep him calm. I'd say will be for the rest of his natural life. He'll never be released, so says the DPP.”

“Wait one moment, let's forget about the raid and its repercussions and what-ever you may have found out since then. Before that, all you thought you had on the two was tainted evidence. What if I hadn't shot LJ? What if my son and his mate had gotten cold feet and not knocked off those two plants?”

“Malisa would have supplied the weed directly to them.....and I knew that you would shoot LJ.”

“How....?”

“As I said before, know your adversary. You have a well founded reputation as a very imaginative and resourceful fellow.....and there are strong whispers about you and Holtz's back history and the fact that there maybe a few skeletons hiding in shallow sandy graves. But think about it, it's wise in hindsight I know, but we still had that Search Warrant and raids up our sleeves. You know from your experience, that parallel raids especially interstate ones, takes some time in the planning. Those raids were in the melting pot for something like 4 weeks before the event. If everything had gone pear-shaped with my little plans involving you and your son and his mate, then we still had those planned raids. OK.....to be truthful. I didn't know until 2 days before the event that the raid was going to take place on that semi-detached joint at that time. Some-one forgot to include me in the loop.....which could have been very embarrassing.....”

I began to laugh causing the three young office girls to look in my direction.

There was something niggling the brain cells way back. Tingling the strands. Exciting the synapse so that I could almost smell the burning. I couldn't bring the image into focus or provide the correct chemical substance that would successfully douse the smouldering electrical connections.

Something still smelt like 5 day old Chinese.

“LJ.....he was your snitch in the old days?”

I nodded my head slowly.

“He wasn't long for this world you know. When the autopsy was done on his body, almost the entire body was riddled.....”

“He was, in his own way, a good man. While we have 'tags' for them in house.....so as to isolate them somewhat.....his street 'cred' was 'Cutter John'. In the Office, it was Number Ten....my tenth snitch....and one of my longest running ones at that. John was his middle birth name.....Larry John Holloway. Small time crook and drug seller who at one stage was one of the major cocaine and heroine 'cutters' in the game. After a stretch inside, came out and refused to have anything to do with the 'powder'.....made a small fortune in cutting and selling baggies of weed though.....he had principles.....”

“That was a rather cunning scenario in killing him and framing the brothers.....I'd give you ten out of ten for that.”

I didn't like it one bit. That another person would have that knowledge over me for the rest of my life. And what possibly made me angrier, was the fact that I was played like a chump. I said as much.

“Look.....you stewed over your wife's murder for what?.....ten years? Having all these scenes whiz around in your head on how you could force maximum damage as revenge on the pair.....am I right?”

I nodded my head slowly. That was very true. It was starting to send me crazy.

“So now that the deed has been done, how do you feel?”

It was true. I felt a degree of satisfaction and I was not concerned about the finger ever being pointed at me for my part in the 'frame' or for that matter, my killing LJ. I sat there for some moments slowly nodding my head, thinking back over the episode. Feeling almost smug at what I had done.

“Forgetting our 'framing efforts' of those two,” I slowly uttered. “.....if the raid had gone ahead then they would have still been in a lot of shit.....including being snared legitimately for Helene's death.”

“Well, yes and no. Don't forget that the bullet now in the system may have come from the gun that was used to kill your wife....but it most definitely wasn't the slug that was taken from her skull all those years ago.” He smiled., looking across at me. "But now they're officially been booked for a murder that we....the two of us.....know irrefutably that they did

commit.....And another that we two.....know irrefutably that they didn't commit! And for that, both will never see the light of freedom again.

I saw the beauty in that! I liked that!

I stood up offering my hand as I did so.

“Congratulations.” I said between laughs. “I'd like to buy that schooner of beer for you.”

“I think that I may have offered the first shout actually, back when.”

“Then we'll have two.”

As we walked down the winding path in full sun towards the street boundary of the beautifully manicured grounds of the park, I commented on the situation.

“The irony of it all is that on one hand we have them on trumped up evidence caused by the tampering and replacement of evidence with false items that allowed you to charge them with a murder that they did commit, while on the other hand the supply of false evidence items allowed them to be charged with a murder that both you and I know, Baby Brudda never committed.”

“Ain't the taste of revenge sweet?”

“That it is....” I replied. “That it is. I don't suppose you're taking on any new recruits are you.....in the AFP?”

As we crossed the street against the lights and amidst the blaring honk of horns from irate drivers, I barely heard his reply.

“Ya got no chance mate, of ever getting into the AFP. Even with a good word from me. You'd fail the psychological assessment exam dismally.”

We barely made it to the safety of the opposite footpath where we both stood bent over supporting one another. The loudness of our laughter appearing to bother those close by, judging by the expressions on their faces and the wide berths that they gave us.

I knew then, that this would be the start of a friendship that would span the years and I was grateful for it.

pcb©

If you enjoyed reading my book I would be delighted if you would leave a star-rating and send some feedback via my obooko.com[download page](#). *Please note: This is an authorised free edition from www.obooko.com. If you paid for this free e-book, or to gain access to it, we suggest you demand an immediate refund and report the transaction to the author and obooko.*