**51**In the inky black night, fuming foreign tongues smacked the air and the scent of intoxicated nightlife drowned Henry Cottonwood. His burgundy Oxford button down shirt with two horses printed on the front was getting saturated by the rain which beat hammers and nails into his back. He had a six pound pistol pulsating behind his belt buckle, to which he didn’t know whether it shot straight or not. Henry wore shades like John Lennon, because he liked the way that the rose tinted his perspective of the universe. In the humidity his head gave off a smell like he had slicked his coal red hair back with carrion blood.

The stars, that looked like wasps, buzzed around the moon, which was an overturned piss pot, spilling into the ocean. Henry paused briefly, looking at the view, he thought about something dear to him. His face, bitter and scrunched up, felt like he was eating acid.

Down the road he decided to stop for a cold one in a bar called *The Waterfall*. His cuban heels thumped hard into the soft water logged floor, he didn’t fancy knowing what it was soaked in. At the bar he would have turned to look behind and ask his colleagues if they wanted a final drink on him, but he guessed that they had fallen behind in a Gentlemen’s club somewhere. This he didn’t mind because he had spent three months sailing for Britain, along the endless ocean with them and would do another four drifting along the North Pacific, so he felt like this time in perfect isolation was well deserved. Henry ordered a Singapore Sling from a barmaid with tattoo tears falling down her cheek which disappeared in her wrinkles when she put a smile on for him. *‘It’s one for every year he’s away’* he thought of her saying, and that she could have been a beauty before the alcohol kicked in.

He looked over the crowd of Tripotlian, Buckwanian, and Acredes faces, laughing and spewing juices into the neon lights. There was a lonely man with missing fingers stood on a table, playing a peculiar stringed instrument. His voice broke every now and then as he hit the deeper notes and then he would stamp on the table, like a restless mule.

Henry decided to shoot billiards with a woman, who had aphrodisiac hair and burnt umber lips, before he would take a seat. He lost to her with six blue balls to spare and tried to tell her she could have a beer on him. She didn’t understand him though.

There weren’t any empty tables so he went to the end of the bar, which was cluttered with flies like himself. He put his worldly belongings, other than his gun, out in front of him; his drink, some creased paper, a parker pen, small change, a lighter and a switch blade, then begun to release his thoughts.

Singapore, River Valley

June 16th 1965

Dear Indiana,

Thanks for the letters, I know you have been alone and I am devastated to hear that Rover died. So home doesn’t seem the same anymore? When I return I promise you that we will leave for Nailsea and start again. I know that I have been putting off starting a family for years, but I think the time now is right. It won’t be easy but my Brother said that we can live with him for a while and I could find a new trade, maybe fishing, who knows. You could even open that pet store you have been talking about for so long as well..

Even when I walk upon land I feel seasick, I am not supposed to be here, surrounded by faces of people that I thought I knew. Earlier this evening I looked up at the sky and thought, how can the same moon shining down on this Chinatown parade look down on Crosthwaite, and find you there? Sometimes at night my heart beats so hard, I don’t know why it doesn’t explode. I think it could be because I lie down next to dreams of you, but I know they will die at my side by the time the sun comes up.

I won’t be home for our anniversary so I left you something in the pocket of my blue coat. It was once my mother’s, but please, don’t look now, be patient and wait until August.

I will see you when the leaves fall in the Nightingale Woods. I love you Indiana Cottonwood, take care, take care, please, take care.

Yours truly,

Henry

As his attention slowly came away from his letter he felt nirvana drop through his fingers as his Parker fell from his hand. His mind had returned to *The Waterfall*. Henry couldn’t tell how long he had been there, but the singer’s voice had gotten louder and brittle, like broken china. *Was he crying?* Henry got up to leave and was stopped at the door by a sailor, one that he knew. ‘Where the phhhuuck is efferyone?’. ‘I don’t know, let’s go find another bar, the beers are warm and women are cold.’, replied Henry. And as the drunk followed him to the next joint it dawned on him that none of this mattered anymore, what he had to do for money, who he did it alongside and what dwelled in the past. It was almost like living in the present. He realised that by the end of the year he could be a father and is already married to a wonderful woman. That was something he could be happy for. He had just told his wife that he wanted to be a Father. *Henry Cottonwood wants to be a Father.* At the end of the ocean awaited a new life for him and Indiana. And with that, the wasps died and the incandescent street lights began to fade in the power of the morning sun.