Blood on their Hands: Representations of Class, Gender and Ethical Questions Attendant on the Act of Murder in Australian Crime Fiction, 1830-1980

An Original Creative Work (a Novel) and Accompanying

Theoretically Informed Critical Reflection

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BEd(AdEd)(UTS), BA, GradDipEd(Sec)(CSturt), MLitt(CQU)

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Language and Literature)

Faculty of Arts, Business, Informatics and Education

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ABSTRACT

Australia's first significant example of crime fiction, *Quintus Servinton* by Henry Savery, was published in Hobart Town in 1830. From this time, when the Australian colonies served as repositories for criminals, to the present day Australian crime fiction has seen considerable growth and development. Through the lenses of an original creative work, an historical detective novel titled *Blood on their Hands*, and an accompanying theoretically informed critical reflection this thesis refracts the changing representations of class, gender and some of the ethical questions occasioned by the act of murder within the pages of Australian crime fiction produced between 1830 and 1980. This thesis also explores key aspects of the craft of the detective novel including some of the issues associated with balancing an imagined plot line and characters with an historically accurate account of a well-known series of events and important historical figures. The results of this research demonstrate that historical crime fiction, in addition to providing entertainment, has the capacity to engage with serious social and moral issues and critically revisit historical events of continuing significance.

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP AND ORIGINALITY OF THESIS

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at CQUniversity or any other tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the material presented in this thesis is original except where due reference is made in the text.

Rachel Franks

1 March 2011

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Rachel Franks

1 March 2011

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LIST OF PAPERS AND PUBLICATIONS RESULTING FROM MY CANDIDATURE

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For SD:

Thank you for the pen, the paper and for

always being available to buy a vowel.

The writer's object is simply to communicate what he knows – to tell a plain, 'unvarnished tale' – not deficient in adventurous incident and the display of varied character.

William Burrows

The Adventures of a Mounted Trooper

in the Australian Constabulary

1859, p. viii

BLOOD ON THEIR HANDS:

A NOVEL

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LIST OF CHARACTERS

Miss Edwina Jones.....A Seamstress

Sister of Charles Jones

Lady Catharine Darling .....A Socialite

Sister of Douglas Longfoot and James Longfoot

Mr Charles Jones ..... A Private Investigator

Brother of Edwina Jones

Mr Douglas Longfoot.....A Man of Criminal Tendencies

Brother of Catharine Darling and James Longfoot

Mr James Longfoot .....A War Veteran, An Academic

Brother of Catharine Darling and Douglas Longfoot

Mr Elliot Miller .....A War Veteran, A Factory Worker

Husband of Molly Miller

Mrs Molly Miller .....A Housewife

Wife of Elliot Miller

Father Cronin .....The Parish Priest of St Joseph's Church

A friend of Edwina Jones and Charles Jones

Captain Anderson-Brock ..... A War Veteran, A Man of Independent Means

A Member of the New Guard

Chapter 1

An Acquaintance, a Friend and a Stranger

Wednesday, 6th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

Edwina Jones sat in her father's old chair, her legs curled up underneath her, drinking coffee and reading the paper. It was difficult for her to believe that the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the construction of which had taken nine years to complete and had claimed the lives of sixteen workers, opened almost three weeks ago. The *Sydney Morning Herald's* pages, recently dedicated to describing the pageantry that had celebrated the connection of the city's two main shores, were once again dominated by political chaos and social crisis. Wedged between grim headlines, display advertising and general notices, was story after story about Australia's inability to employ and feed all of her people. Edwina rarely read more than a page or two of news these days and, throwing the paper down on the floor, she suddenly vowed to no longer even read that much until the world went back to normal.

She ran her fingers through her hair and sank back, allowing the dilapidated fabric of her plain black house dress to act as camouflage against the worn and damaged leather of the heavy chair. Her brother, Charles, had gone out to Bathurst on a job. Work would keep him away from home for at least a week and the house was quiet without him and his constant stream of visitors.

The only other residents of the Union Street terrace were still sleeping. Elliot

and Molly were asleep in their room upstairs and Cleo was napping on an old rug; the retired brindle snored, grateful she was chasing rabbits in her dreams rather than out on the track. Edwina put her cup down on a small side table and slowly unfolded her long, and slightly awkward limbs, and stretched. The young woman stood up and the dog lifted her greying muzzle in response to a knock at the door. Edwina asked the dog to stay as she left the room. Cleo, not wanting to over exert herself, politely obliged. When Edwina opened the door she was surprised to see Catharine.

“Hello Eddie darling,” Catharine said as she stepped off the front verandah and into the cool hall without waiting for an invitation. “I’ve just come from my latest book launch, it was terribly dull.”

Eddie briefly compared Catharine’s beautifully designed chocolate brown suit with her own simple garment. She then tried to ignore the taller woman’s trademark accessories of an expensive red fox, draped casually around her shoulders, and blood red lipstick. Lady Darling always gave the impression she had just stepped off a Hollywood film set. Eddie found such a glamorous approach to life during a depression confronting and was not sure that she approved.

Stepping aside to let her visitor through Eddie asked: “Would you like some coffee?”
“Only if you don’t have any champagne,” Catharine said.

Eddie smiled, despite herself, and went into the kitchen and made another cup of coffee. When she returned, she found Catharine sitting on the floor playing with Cleo’s ears.

“I have decided, Eddie, that after I die I’m going to come back as your next greyhound,” she said.

“God doesn’t recycle people,” Eddie responded sharply.

“Then I need to make the most of the life I have here in Sydney.”

“So you’ve decided to stay?” asked Eddie.

“Yes, poor James, I haven’t told him yet.”

“I don’t think he’ll mind,” Eddie told her, *I don’t think I’ll mind either,* she thought quickly.

“I’m not so sure,” Catharine said, her tone more serious. “He has always preferred life without his siblings and he felt I was far too close to his carefully insulated environment when I moved to Melbourne. Oh well,” she laughed. “I’m sure he’ll adjust to the idea over time.”

Catharine stood up and, not even bothering to smooth out the creases of her suit, fell back into one of the mismatched chairs that took up most of the living room that also served as Charles’ very crowded office. Taking the cup and saucer from Eddie she saw a chip on the rim of the porcelain, which cut into a faded pattern of bramble roses and could have easily cut her lip. Catharine was about to make a comment but instead casually rotated the cup and held it in her left hand so she could sip the hot brown liquid safely.

The two women, dramatically different in many ways but with some surprising similarities, sat in the cluttered room and quietly drank their coffee. Although neither woman would have thought to describe themselves as friends, both would have readily admitted they felt comfortable with, as well as slightly curious about, the other. A casual observer would have thought that they were very unlikely acquaintances and would have been surprised to learn they had so much in common.

They had met each other, in very unusual circumstances, only a month before. Eddie had been delivering some curtains she had repaired to the Marlborough Hotel when she overheard two ex-servicemen discussing how they were going to liberate a man, by the name of James Longfoot, of the bulk of the wealth he had accumulated since the War. Eddie had decided to play detective. She found the ex-army officer and warned him about the two men, their plan to rob him and their willingness to kill him if he decided to be uncooperative. At first James had not believed Eddie's story but her persistence, and being shot at by two of the men he had served with while out on the Western Front, convinced him that his life was in danger. Catharine was grateful to the young woman who had saved her brother's life and wanted to thank her. As Eddie had already refused a cheque, she needed to find another way to show her appreciation of the risks that had been taken to protect James and to do that she needed to know much more about Edwina Jones.

Catharine finished her cheap coffee and sighed heavily before she finally spoke again: "Well, here we both are darling, unloved and unemployed."

"You're not unemployed," Eddie admonished, "you're just bored."

"True."

"But we are unloved," Eddie agreed in a voice that was almost inaudible.

The telephone rang. The bell sounded harsh and shrill against the women's voices. Catharine, knowing they were sitting in Charles' office and that a telephone call would probably be about business, looked anxiously at Eddie. As she leant forward her fox stole slipped from her shoulder and found a resting place on the dog at her feet. Cleo was slightly irritated by the fact she was suddenly being utilised as an accessories counter but decided not to do anything about it.

Eddie hesitated and glanced quickly at Catharine who nodded but said nothing.

On the third ring, with an air of determination Eddie answered the telephone: “Good afternoon, Jones and Darling Investigators.”

Catharine cringed slightly at the sound of her surname being used.

“Oh, hello Father, how are you? . . . No, no I’m not disappointed. It’s nice to hear from you . . . I’m alright . . . Jones and Darling, no it’s still Jones, I was being silly . . . Are you after Charlie? . . . He’s away, he’s out at Bathurst on a job but should be back in a week . . . Oh . . . Oh, really? . . . Are you sure? . . . I can’t imagine anyone doing that . . . Oh, I see . . . Well, maybe . . . Perhaps I could help, just until Charlie comes home . . . Yes, yes I could do that for you . . . Alright then, I’ll be sure to come and see you first thing in the morning . . . Yes, I’ll let Charlie know if he calls home . . . Thank you . . . Good bye Father.”

As Eddie talked, Catharine noticed Cleo had bitten into the fox’s neck so she started to work diligently at the delicate task of retrieving the stole. While Catharine waited for the call to end she was surprised to learn Eddie’s dog was capable of showing so much determination, as Cleo refused to release the fur.

“Well, it looks like we’re going to church in the morning,” Eddie said to Catharine as she replaced the telephone receiver.

“I couldn’t do that,” complained Catharine, “someone might see me.”

“Something tells me that if someone does see you in a church, it won’t be anyone you know.”

“I’ve been to church before. Several in fact,” Catharine stated defensively.

“Really?” asked Eddie.

“Of course I have. Why, sometimes it seems as though I’m either at a wedding or a funeral every other week.”

“I see,” said Eddie, as she crossed her arms.

Cleo finally decided that holding onto the fox required far too much effort and relinquished the long dead animal back to Catharine.

“Anyway,” continued Eddie, “we’re going to church tomorrow so we can try and find out what’s going on. Although you might have to leave that at home,” she added, pointing to the soggy stole.

Catharine’s hands touched Cleo’s saliva, on what was now a very damp piece of fur, and she said: “I might have to leave it here.”

“It would also help,” said Eddie, “if you wore something quite simple.”

Catharine raised one eyebrow.

“And maybe,” continued Eddie quickly, “you could wear a different lipstick. One that isn’t quite so . . .”

“Quite so what?” asked Catharine, both of her eyebrows now raised.

“Quite so . . . red.”

“Anything else?”

“No.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure,” said Eddie a little shyly.

“Why would I wear a beige dress and a boring shade of lipstick?”

“Oh, yes,” Eddie said quickly, grateful to change the direction of the conversation. “Father Cronin, who has been a family friend for years, thinks money is going missing from his church’s poor box. He wanted Charlie to see if

he could try to find out what's going on."

"But your brother is away," interrupted Catharine.

"That's right and at first Father Cronin thought he should wait until Charlie comes home."

"Then he changed his mind," Catharine continued.

"Yes. Father Cronin thought, with everyone knowing what it is that Charlie does for a job, it wouldn't be so obvious if I came down to see what I could find out."

"It sounds terribly dull. I think it would be easier if I just wrote him a cheque for the amount of money he thinks has gone missing."

"No, this is serious. We need to find out who's taking the money and why. Whoever is responsible must be desperate and if someone else finds out what's going on, then the police might become involved before Father Cronin has a chance to do anything to help. Besides," said Eddie slowly and in a more coaxing tone, "it could be fun. It is, after all, still an investigation and because it needs to be a very discreet investigation we would both need a disguise."

"Oh darling, a disguise, how exciting!"

"Yes, if we spent a few days disguised as cleaning ladies, we could maintain a close watch on the poor box without anyone asking us any questions."

"Oh really! Are you sure I can't just write him a cheque?" Catharine said, while she wanted to learn more about Eddie, she was not pleased about the idea of masquerading as hired help to do so.

Eddie was about to resort to some basic pleading but was stopped by the sound of someone at the front door. Catharine relaxed deeper into her chair while she waited for Eddie. Cleo, who was exhausted by visitors and telephone calls, drifted off to sleep again. When Eddie opened the door it was to someone she had never seen before and she took a startled step backwards. A tall man, his bulky and hunched over body managing to fill almost the entire doorway, was

trying to come in. He groaned as he clutched his stomach with one hand and held a small stained orange envelope in the other.

“Mr Jones,” he said, without making eye contact with Eddie.

Eddie did not respond. She wanted to say that Mr Jones was not available and slam the door closed but the stranger twitched and his left foot crossed the threshold. The heavy black shoe, covered in dried mud, seemed to force its way further and further into the hall, as though it belonged to someone determined to sell just one more set of encyclopaedia that day. Eddie could not move. She wanted to retreat but she realised that to do so would give the man free access to inside the house. She looked around quickly but the hall was empty with nothing and no one to help her. She considered calling out to Catharine. Then she wondered if she could yell loudly enough to make her voice carry through the thin walls of the terrace, and the heavier barrier of sleep, to wake Elliott up and bring him downstairs. She shivered. She didn’t understand why she was so frightened of a man she had never met before.

“Mr Jones,” he repeated, forcefully.
“He’s busy,” Eddie managed to say.
“Well then I’ll have to wait for him,” the man said and, releasing his stomach just long enough to push Eddie roughly out of the way, he forced himself inside.

Using the wall for support, he groaned as he staggered his way into the front room. Eddie heard a small yelping noise and was going to comfort her dog when she realised the sound had come from Catharine.

“What’s the matter sweetheart?” the intruder asked. “Not seen a dead man

before?”

Catharine was trying to avoid inhaling the man’s stale breath and as her naturally pale face flushed pink, the man laughed. He sprayed spittle and sweat in a large arc almost completely covering Catharine and Cleo. Catharine shuddered and Cleo went into hiding in a corner of the room. The man twitched again, much more violently than before, and with both of his hands now holding onto his stomach he sat down on the closest chair. He groaned and started to rock gently backwards and forwards whispering over and over: “Please help me. I’ve been murdered. Please help me. Please.”

His voice was raspy and he slurred his words slightly. Eddie and Catharine looked at each other as the pathetic pleas stopped and his heavy breathing became even more laboured until, crying out, he lurched forward and collapsed on the floor.

Eddie tried to lift him back up: “Give me a hand,” she said urgently.

Catharine, who was happy to leave their guest where he was, swallowed hard before she stepped forward and wove her hands together under the man’s arm so she could assist Eddie. He was too heavy to lift so the women satisfied themselves by hoisting him unceremoniously, into a generally upright position, wedged between two chairs. Suddenly, his head rolled backward and he gasped for air. Catharine recoiled at the sound, pulling away but the man caught her hand. His grip was tight but sweaty, allowing her to easily slide free from his grasp.

“You must stop them,” he pleaded as he dropped the orange envelope.

Eddie began to look more closely at the strange man sitting on the floor. He was a lot older than she had first thought. With a round face that had seen too much sun, he had poor posture, was morbidly overweight, had only a few strands of hair left and his hands were swollen with arthritis.

“I’ll make another cup of coffee,” Eddie said.

Catharine nodded and Cleo stayed in the corner. When Eddie returned, Catharine, who had been leaning up against Charlie’s desk with her arms folded, strode across the room towards her. Taking the coffee she drained the hot liquid so quickly she did not even bother to check the mug for any chips.

“That,” said Eddie harshly, “was for our visitor.”

“If you want to give our visitor a drink you might need something a little stronger than coffee.”

“Why?”

“He’s dead.”

“What?”

“He’s dead.”

“When?”

“While you were in the kitchen. He looked like he was going to get up for some tennis before deciding that it wasn’t worth the trouble.”

“Where?”

“Right there,” answered Catharine tersely as she fumbled in her purse looking for a cigarette.

“There?”

“Yes, there,” Catharine snapped as she gave the empty coffee mug to Eddie so she could upend the contents of her purse on Charlie’s desk.

“But, but how?” Eddie asked as she obediently took the empty mug from Catharine and gripped it tightly. “How could he just die?”

“Maybe he was murdered as he said he was, maybe his heart had just had enough and stopped beating, or maybe it was the thought of having to drink a cup of your Bushell’s Minute Pure Coffee.”

“He’s dead,” Eddie whispered as she sat down.

“Yes, and now you have asked all those policeman-type questions of ‘why’, ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘where’ all we need to do is establish the ‘who’ and clarify the ‘how’ and the case is practically solved.”

“A case!” said Eddie.

“A what?” asked Catharine as, her search for a cigarette now complete, she began looking for a box of matches.

“A murder case,” said Eddie excitedly.

“Well don’t just sit there darling, call the police,” Catharine instructed.

“We’ll do no such thing,” snorted Eddie.

“Why not?”

“A murder case,” Eddie said again. “Our murder case.”

“No,” Catharine said huskily through a small haze of burnt sulphur and smoke.

“We already have our first clue,” said Eddie as she put down the mug and picked up the envelope from the floor.

“No.”

“Please.”

“No.”

“But . . .”

“There will be no ‘buts’ darling, you’ll call the police right now and tell them what has happened. After you’ve done that, I’ll send for Elizabeth to clean up this dreadful mess and then we’ll open all the doors and windows so we can clear out this awful smell.”

Eddie turned away from Catharine and started to sniff.

“Don’t cry darling,” Catharine said impatiently as she stubbed out her half-finished cigarette, “only common women cry in a crisis.”

“I’m not crying,” Eddie said curtly. “I’m sniffing.”

“You’re what?”

“I’m sniffing,” Eddie repeated.

“Sniffing?”

“He does smell, doesn’t he?” asked Eddie.

“Oh darling, he’s a balding old man in a green tweed suit, of course he smells.”

“No, it’s more than that. It’s almost as if he smells . . . ,” Eddie hesitated. “It’s almost as if he smells stale,” she finished.

“Well, he is dead,” commented Catharine in a genuine effort to be helpful.

Not taking her eyes from the corpse Eddie slowly stood up. Catharine lit another cigarette while Cleo ventured out from the corner and began whimpering softly in front of the dead man. Catharine held her cigarette tightly with one hand and tried to comfort the dog with the other.

“I wonder who he is,” said Eddie.

“Was,” corrected Catharine.

“He may have family or friends or workmates looking for him.”

“As long as they don’t find him here. Just call the police,” Catharine pleaded.

“What would Charlie do?”

“I don’t know,” Catharine answered as she scratched Cleo’s ear.

Eddie looked at the envelope the man had brought with him. She sat down and, taking a deep breath, tore it open. She took out a white piece of paper, which

had, in small and neat printing, the numbers 3332 and a list of half a dozen names. Eddie did not know what the number represented and certainly did not recognise any of the names.

“3332,” Eddie read aloud.

“The price of something,” suggested Catharine.

“Not everything is about money.”

“A combination?”

“A combination to what, to a safe?”

“Maybe.”

“I’m not sure,” said Eddie unconvinced.

“A membership number?”

“That doesn’t seem very likely.”

“Part of an address?”

“I don’t think so.”

“A telephone number?” asked Catharine, tapping her foot.

“Of course!” Eddie said.

Catharine shrugged.

“You’re very good at this,” Eddie encouraged.

Catharine did not take the bait and smoked her cigarette in silence. Eddie carefully returned the slip of paper to the envelope.

Eddie looked at Catharine and asked: “Aren’t you even a little bit interested about this?”

“About what?”

“About who he is and who might have hated him or feared him so much they wanted to kill him?”

“I’m sure any curiosity I have about our guest will be satisfied by reading all about the case in the *Herald* over the next few weeks.”

“So,” said Eddie, trying a different approach, “do you think he deserved to be murdered?”

“Dressed like that he certainly deserved something.”

Eddie briefly visualised two corpses in her front room.

“I’m sorry your book launch was so dull,” Eddie offered.

“What?”

“Your book launch this afternoon, I’m sorry it was so dull.”

Catharine put out her cigarette and, frowning, started to explain: “They’re always dull darling. James doesn’t go with me anymore so I’m left alone to face the same organisers refusing to serve champagne before six o’clock, the same readers lining up for their pages of escapism, the same publishers lining up to collect their profits and the same literary types lining up to produce dreadful reviews.”

“It sounds terrible.”

“It’s absolutely ghastly.”

“I can see why you’re bored.”

“You would be too.”

“Yes, I would.”

Lighting her third cigarette in a row Catharine sat down next to Eddie and opposite the dead man. She frowned as she tried to inhale the tobacco but not the smell of the corpse. She carefully considered the body on the floor and

briefly wondered if his wife was the killer.

“You wouldn’t be bored if we were working on a case,” Eddie told her.

“I don’t mind working on a case with you but I’m not sure that a case with a dead body is really for me.”

“A few minutes ago you didn’t think a plan to disguise yourself as a church cleaner was really for you either,” Eddie countered.

Catharine felt stressed and she sat back and closed her eyes. Eddie examined the envelope delivered by the dead man. She turned it over and over in her hands but could see no obvious marks to help her to identify where it had come from. She pulled the piece of paper out again and wondered if the telephone number belonged to one of the names on the list. Her mind started to race as she thought that one of those names could belong to the victim or to the murderer. Eddie held the slip of paper more tightly when she considered that the killer’s name could be in her hand.

“We could call the police at any time,” she said in a voice that was only just above a whisper. “I promise.”

Eddie looked at Catharine. Catharine looked at the dead body. Cleo looked at both women hoping that someone would remember that she was there and give her a little something to eat.

“Well, I suppose that it could be slightly more interesting than going to visit Father Cronin tomorrow and trying to work out who is taking money from the poor box,” Catharine mused, as she leaned forward and considered the dead man.

Eddie's heart began to beat faster as Catharine put out yet another unfinished cigarette and sighed heavily.

"Alright darling, what do you suggest we do first?" Catharine asked.

"The first thing we have to do," said Eddie with great enthusiasm, "is hide the body."

Chapter 2

Moving the Body

Wednesday, 6th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

The sounds of creaking timber boards made Eddie and Catharine look up at the ceiling.

“What’s that noise?” Catharine asked.

“Elliot and Molly,” answered Eddie as she looked at the silver carriage clock on the mantel.

The clock’s shiny surface looked strange above a fireplace, which had been bricked up the previous winter because it had been more economical to cut off a cold draft than to buy more fuel. The timepiece was now the only thing she and Charlie had left that was of any value and the reliable black hands indicated it was almost four o’clock.

“They’ll be downstairs in a minute,” Eddie added nervously.

“But it’s practically the middle of the day,” said Catharine. “Really darling, I didn’t think that you working-class types were so decadent.”

“Elliot’s been working nights over at the Sydney Steel factory for a few years now,” Eddie explained. “Molly realised that if she wanted to spend time with her husband she had to fit in with his shiftwork.”

“I suppose some women like their husbands,” Catharine shrugged.

“Just because you’ve decided to change cities to avoid yours . . .”

“I thought of changing countries to avoid George,” Catharine said, cutting Eddie off, “but the English weather is ghastly, I can’t speak a word of French and the idea of going to America is just too awful.”

Eddie shook her head and Catharine frowned as they listened to the two pairs of footsteps come down the stairs.

“It’s alright,” Eddie reassured her, “they’ll go straight to the kitchen.”

“Will they come in here if they hear our voices?” Catharine asked.

“I don’t think so but,” Eddie paused, “maybe we should go and see them just in case they do decide to come and see us.”

“What about our guest?” Catharine asked. “We can’t leave him here alone.”

“He won’t be alone,” Eddie told her. “Cleo is here to stand guard over him and she’ll bark if someone comes near the house or if anything else happens.”

Cleo had only just finished hiding behind Charlie’s desk and was unimpressed with the entire situation. Neither woman believed the dog would go out of her way to bark for anything other than a biscuit. After scratching the belligerent brindle behind the ears Eddie, followed by Catharine, left the front room.

Eddie walked into the kitchen that she had spent so much of her childhood in. Memories, combined with the familiarity of the black and white chequered flooring, a kitchen dresser hidden under dozens of layers of paint and a large timber table weathered by years of use always made the room feel warm and comfortable. All Catharine saw was an old blue and cream Kookaburra enamel gas stove, which looked like it had been installed just after the War, a sink with exposed drainage pipes, an incomplete dinner set on display in the dresser and

curtains in dire need of replacement.

Elliot and Molly sat at the far end of the table with two empty cups in front of them. Elliot was crying quietly, Molly was holding his hand. Eddie and Catharine looked briefly at each other before they sat down. The chairs surrounding the table were in various states of disrepair and Catharine bit her tongue as the chair she sat on wobbled backwards without any warning.

“He’s dead,” Elliot whispered softly.

Catharine’s unstable chair wobbled again and the movement, combined with Elliot’s words, made her feel sick.

“He’s been poisoned,” Elliot added in an even softer voice.

“How . . . ,” Eddie faltered. “How do you know?”

“It’s obvious isn’t it?” Elliot said looking up at Eddie. “One day he’s fine and the next he’s in a terrible hot sweat and his stomach is being torn apart from the inside.”

“Poisoned,” said Eddie.

“Well, the police will have to be involved now,” Catharine stated, risking a sideways glance at Eddie.

“They are,” Elliot said, acknowledging Catharine for the first time.

“What happens now?” Eddie asked, disappointed her case had been taken away from her so soon.

“They’ll do an autopsy, find out exactly what sort of poison was used,” Elliot answered. “Then they’ll have to create a list of suspects and put the pressure on until they get a confession or get their man in a corner.”

“I just can’t believe someone would’ve killed him,” Molly said.

It was the first time Molly had spoken and Eddie was surprised to hear how upset she was.

“It’ll be alright,” Eddie promised her. “They’ll do an autopsy, like Elliot said and then the police will investigate and find out who did this.”
“But I can’t stand the thought of someone cutting him up. He was so beautiful and they’ll just cut him up like he was some sort of animal.”
“Well, he was an animal,” Elliot said, trying to console his wife.

Catharine raised her eyebrows.

“I know,” Molly replied, “but . . . ,” she shook her head.
“Those bloody Americans!” Elliot yelled slamming a fist on the table.

The Queensland maple shuddered under the impact. Catharine nearly lost her balance again, Molly flinched and Eddie jumped in response to an anger she had never heard or seen in her friend before.

Catharine, in an effort to dispel the tension in the room, broke the silence saying: “I was only just telling Eddie a few minutes ago about how awful those Americans are.”

Her voice had lost its usual sound of confidence and both her hands gripped the edge of the table, her knuckles were now as white as her face.

“Americans,” spat Molly.
“I reckon that it’s one of those gangsters you read about in the papers,” said Elliot. “The greedy bastards.”

“They’ll make mention of gangsters in the news reports for sure. The police will have to talk to them first,” Molly said.

“The news. Oh, how awful,” Catharine gasped, her face now so pale her red lipstick looked like a splash of blood on fresh snow.

“Gangsters? I don’t understand. How can the police be so sure Americans are involved? They haven’t even started investigating the case yet,” said Eddie. *My case,* she thought ruefully as she wrung her hands.

“Tell me who else it could be,” Elliot challenged. “He’s taken to America and, alright there’s some anticipation and a bit of talk, but he’s healthy. Then, he wins the Agua Caliente.”

“Winning in record time,” Molly said with a rush of pride in her voice.

“That’s right,” Elliot continued, talking faster. “He takes the Handicap and the $50,000 in prize money and then only a few weeks later, while his next races are being organised, he’s dead.”

“Murdered,” said Molly bitterly.

Eddie’s first reaction was to laugh with relief because her secret was safe and the murder of the man, who was now going cool on her living room floor, was still her case to solve. She had tried to take on cases before but her brother had always been in the background to interfere with her efforts. With Charlie in Bathurst there was suddenly an opportunity to solve a crime on her own, to right a wrong and to prove herself in the process. Then, she was overcome with sadness as she tried to take in the enormity of what she had just heard. Phar Lap, the only horse she had ever placed a bet on, was dead.

Swallowing hard Eddie said: “It must be after four o’clock now.”

Elliot nodded and stood up. He filled his pint-sized blue Thermos with tea,

wrapped up two slices of bread and dripping, put his coat on and kissed his wife.

“See you later Eddie,” he said. “I hope to see you again Lady Darling. I’m sorry about today, about my outburst, and the, well . . . well the swearing and all,” he said a little sheepishly.

“Don’t even think about it,” Catharine told him in a voice that was so gentle it surprised Eddie.

As Molly automatically started to clear away the tea things Eddie put a hand on her arm: “Don’t worry about that,” Eddie told her. “I’ll tidy up here. Why don’t you go back upstairs and rest?”

Molly did not respond.

“With Charlie away and Elliot not back until the morning there’s not that much to do,” Eddie reassured her.

Agreement came incredibly slowly and with only the very slightest nod of her head. Molly put her cup down and wiped her eyes with the cuff of her shirtsleeve. She mumbled her thanks to Eddie and tried to say good-bye to Catharine through fresh tears, before making her way out of the kitchen and going back upstairs.

As soon as Molly left, Eddie started issuing instructions to Catharine: “Go back to the front room, close the door, just in case,” she told her, “then, start pushing all of the chairs back towards the fireplace. The more clear space that we have to work in, the easier our job is going to be. I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

Catharine was so preoccupied with possible newspaper headlines, about murderers and their victims, that she did not ask any questions. Instead, she just nodded and went back to Charlie's office and started moving the furniture.

Eddie checked the front door was locked then, as quietly as she could, she went back down the hall, through the kitchen and outside. The dappled light, flickering playfully through the branches of gum trees, guided her through the garden to the back shed. She slid back the bolt, opened the door and looked at the shelf where the canvas sheets were stored. Selecting the sheet closest to the top, Eddie pulled at the piece of heavy fabric until it fell to the floor. After listening carefully for anyone that might be in one of the gardens on either side Eddie pulled, pushed and kicked the canvas outside before closing the shed door, putting the bolt back into place and returning to the house.

Catharine stood in the middle of the room, which now looked larger with the chairs pushed back against the walls. She was breathing hard from the physical activity and from the thought of a scandal. Eddie was also panting as she dragged the bundle of canvas to the middle of the floor and unfolded the twelve-foot by twelve-foot sheet. Catharine took her jacket off, revealing a caramel silk blouse, and draped it over the back of Charlie's chair.

After helping Eddie smooth out the canvas she asked: "Now what?"

"Now we slide him over onto the canvas, search him for any clues and wrap him up. Then we hide him somewhere."

"Can't we hide him first?" Catharine asked.

"No we have to . . ."

"But the press Eddie, this thing is already in the news."

"No, it's not."

“Didn’t you hear what was said in the kitchen?”

“It’s alright,” Eddie said, trying to interrupt.

“Oh, it’s fine for you. If your name appears in the paper it doesn’t matter because no one will recognise the name of a seamstress from the suburbs but what about me? Almost everyone knows my name. All of George’s dreadful affairs will be made public, every terrible detail laid bare in black and white under cruel headlines.”

“It’s alright,” Eddie repeated.

“It’s not alright. Look at Ivy Field,” Catharine protested. “Every day the city soaks up another piece of sordid information the press have uncovered about her marriage. Those nasty little men, they’ll be salivating at the thought of this story. Can you imagine what they’ll do to me? They’ve done everything they can to destroy Mrs Field and she’s never even seen a dead body.”

“Stop it!” Eddie snapped. “No one knows,” she said.

“Everyone knows.”

“Everyone knows a race horse is dead in a stable somewhere over in America. No one knows a man is dead here in this room.”

Catharine stared blankly.

“They weren’t talking about what just happened here,” Eddie stated slowly.

Catharine still looked confused.

“They were not talking about you,” Eddie specified.

“Oh.”

“Phar Lap died yesterday in America. Elliot and Molly were listening to the news reports about him in their room before coming downstairs.”

“Oh,” Catharine said again.

“You’re going to need to pay a bit more attention to what people say if you’re going to help solve this case,” Eddie gently chided.

“So no one knows?”

“No one knows.”

Catharine slid down into a chair and said assertively: “Well at least one person needs to know darling because we’re going to need some help.”

“We can’t call the police yet,” Eddie whined.

“We don’t have to call the police,” Catharine reassured her, “but we do have to call somebody to help us.”

“Why?”

“Eddie, really, we couldn’t lift him up into a chair when he was unconscious, we certainly aren’t going to be able to move him very far now that he’s dead and will be even less cooperative. I think we should call my brother.”

“James?”

“Oh no, he’s far too dignified and much too concerned about his reputation. We’ll call Douglas.”

Feeling better that her name was not going to be in the newspapers for the wrong reasons Catharine went to Charlie’s desk and made a short telephone call. Eddie did not feel comfortable about someone else becoming involved in the case but she did have to admit that she and Catharine would not be able to move a dead body very far on their own.

“Let’s make a list of evidence while we wait for Douglas,” Eddie said as she took a pad and pencil from the top drawer of Charlie’s desk.

The drawers of the large red cedar desk were always full of stationery so that

Charlie could find pads and pencils easily when he needed them. Had he kept these things on the desktop they would have quickly become lost amongst newspaper clippings, case notes, photographs, books and bits and pieces which had no immediate use but might come in handy for something one day. The only items that could always be easily found on the desk were: the lamp; the telephone; and, because it was so large, the latest copy of the *Sands Sydney Commercial Directory*.

Catharine started by searching the dead man's jacket pockets and counted out a few crumpled notes and some loose change.

"He was carrying six pounds, eight shillings and tuppence."

Eddie baulked at the idea of carrying so much money but wrote the amount down without comment. She then looked back at Catharine who, with some hesitation, emptied the man's trouser pockets.

"One white cotton handkerchief neatly pressed and monogrammed with the letters R.S."

"R.S.?"

"Yes."

"Where's that list of names?" demanded Eddie.

"It's there, there on the table," Catharine told her.

"Look!" Eddie said, quite excited. "There's a name on the list with those initials, R. Snook. We've only been investigating for a few minutes and we have already identified our murder victim."

"Possibly," Catharine conceded, "but R.S. could also be the initials for any one of a thousand men with the surname Smith," she said.

Eddie's shoulders sagged slightly before she asked: "What's next?"

"One set of keys, I think they must be motor car keys," Catharine continued. "There's an unused postage stamp, a rather nice fountain pen and there's also a small piece of card with a city address written on it."

"What's the address?"

"81 George Street, 81 is that near Town Hall?" Catharine asked.

"No, it's down the other end, down in The Rocks."

"That seems to be all there is," Catharine said as she stood up again.

"Is there a wallet?" Eddie asked.

Catharine shook her head.

"Are there any distinguishing features?" Eddie asked.

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know, a scar or something to help us work out who he is."

"Do revolting eyebrows count?"

Eddie approached the body and looked at the dead man's face. She examined the eyebrows, which were just small tufts of hair above the middle of the eye, rather than long strips of hair, which ran the whole length of the brow area.

"Look," said Eddie, "there's something wrong with his hands. There are strange marks on his fingernails."

Cleo sniffed at the dead man's shoes and started sneezing violently before she whimpered a hasty retreat. Eddie was startled by Cleo's reaction and looked at the dog but was quickly distracted by another knock at the door. This time Catharine went to answer it.

“Hello Douglas. You’ve made fabulous time.”

“Hello Cat, I caught a taxi. Here’s that string you asked for. Say, who owns the new Packard out the front? It’s really swish, much nicer than your Rolls. Hey, what’s the rush?”

Catharine didn’t respond, instead ushering her brother through the door, the first part of the hall and into the front room.

“Good grief! What’s the matter with him?” Douglas asked. “Is he drunk?”

“Yes, dead drunk,” said Eddie.

“Unfortunately darling, he’s just dead,” Catharine corrected.

Douglas’ face went an extreme shade of white and he carefully made his way around the canvas sheet, to the battered drinks cabinet on the far side of the room and poured himself some water. He desperately wanted whisky but could not see any.

“What happened?” he asked.

“We think he was poisoned,” Eddie told him.

“Oh,” said Douglas, putting the glass down without drinking from it.

“What’s the matter? You don’t look so well.”

“Catharine, there’s a body on the floor!”

“Yes darling, that’s why you’re here.”

“Me?”

“Yes, we need you to help us move him.”

“Me? Why me?”

“Because this is your area of expertise.”

“It certainly is not!”

“Of course it is Douglas, you move things all the time,” said Catharine.

“I move small packages, miscellaneous goods and the occasional motor car but I’ve never moved a person before and he’s dead!” Douglas cried.

“We know he’s dead,” said Catharine, a little irritated by her brother’s response to the situation.

“Yes, and if you keep yelling it out like that then the whole street is going to know,” Eddie said.

“Douglas, don’t be tiresome. I hardly ever call on you for assistance and here I am asking for your help and all you can do is be difficult,” Catharine lectured.

“I can’t help you Catharine, not this time,” Douglas told her, as he folded his arms.

Catharine flashed a dazzling smile. One that would have been easily capable of winning a war, or starting one, and Douglas began to relent.

“Who is he?” Douglas asked, picking up the glass of water again.

“We don’t know,” Catharine said.

“Didn’t something in his wallet tell you?”

“He wasn’t carrying one,” Eddie told him.

Douglas paused: “I’m not prepared to go to prison for you Cat. It’s not fair of you to ask me to.”

“I’m not asking you to go to prison, I’m just asking you to assist with a little bit of heavy lifting,” said Catharine.

Eddie held her breath until Douglas nodded reluctantly.

“Thank you Douglas,” said Catharine. “Now, let’s have that string that you brought for me.”

Over the next half an hour three people and one dog managed, with only a single piece of canvas sheeting and two balls of string, to neatly wrap up a man who weighed almost fourteen stone when he was alive and felt even heavier now that he was dead. It was difficult work, which left everyone very hot despite the cool late afternoon air.

“Well, at least we’ve managed to wrap him up,” Eddie said, panting.
“Yes, just in time for someone’s birthday or for an early Christmas present,” Douglas said.
“Honestly darling, it’s not too late to call the police. We’ll just say we found him on a street somewhere and brought him inside,” Catharine suggested.

Eddie shook her head as she considered the likely response of a policeman to the news they had taken it upon themselves to move a dead body. Something told her they would not be very sympathetic to her side of the story.

“Where do we put him now?” Eddie asked.
“What do you think Douglas?” asked Catharine.

Douglas shrugged and said nothing.

“Can we put him in the shed?” Catharine asked. “If we put him where you took this canvas sheet from he might blend in.”

They considered the heavy bundle in the middle of the floor, which, thanks to meticulous wrapping, could not be mistaken for anything but a body.

“What about burying him?” suggested Eddie.

“Now there’s an idea,” said Catharine coolly as she lit another cigarette. “There is a small patch of grass out the back or two pot plants on your front verandah.”

“Of course we wouldn’t bury him here,” said Eddie. “We would bury him at your place.”

“Absolutely not,” Catharine snapped. “Poor James,” she continued, “having a living sister move in with him is going to prove stressful enough. I’m afraid that having a dead body move in as well would be just too much for him.”

“How about burying him in a park,” Eddie suggested.

“No, most parks are on busy streets so someone would be bound to see us. I say darling, there’s always your friend Father Cronin,” Catharine said.

“Why do you say that?” Eddie asked warily.

“Surely he would have a few spare graves at the back of his church. Or, maybe just a grave with someone who wouldn’t mind a bit of company.”

Eddie scowled and started thinking she had a better chance of solving the case without Catharine’s or Douglas’ help. Then, without warning Douglas strode forward and snatched up the motor car keys that were sitting on one of the chairs against the wall.

“Where did these come from?” he demanded.

“The keys? They came from one of our guest’s pockets,” Catharine told him.

“So did all the other things we’ve lined up,” Eddie added.

Without saying another word Douglas left the room.

“Wait!” Eddie called.

“Oh, just let him go,” said Catharine petulantly. “His contribution to our current

predicament so far has been spectacularly disappointing.”

Eddie listened to the front door close and the front gate open as she stared at the corpse lying on the floor in its canvas cocoon. She sat down and ran her fingers through her hair. She was starting to regret that she had ever seen Mr Snook, or Mr Smith or whoever the dead man was, and was growing resentful of the fact he had decided to die in her living room. A few minutes passed and the front door opened again. Douglas, with a grand flourish reappeared in the front room. He tossed the keys up in the air and caught them again with a rather self-satisfied grin on his face.

“These keys,” he said, “are for that new black Packard parked outside.”
“So?” asked Eddie.
“So, we can put the body in the trunk of the motor car.”

Eddie folded her arms and Catharine rolled her eyes.

“It’s perfect,” Douglas insisted. “Look,” he explained, annoyed his genius had not been recognised, “the owner is not going to come for his motor car because he’ll be dead in the trunk. If anyone comes looking for the owner then we’ll be able to move him quickly and easily.”
“I like the sound of being able to move our friend more easily if we need to,” Catharine said, rubbing the back of her neck.
“Do you?” Eddie asked.
“Of course darling, all this manual labour is just too much.”

Eddie started to think of all the things that could go wrong but she knew that the body could not stay where Elliot or Molly or a prying neighbour could easily

discover it. Or worse, where it would be one of the first things Charlie saw when he came home from Bathurst.

“The motor car is just outside?” Eddie asked.

“It’s only a few feet from your front gate,” Douglas told her.

“It’s starting to get dark now,” Eddie observed. “It would be unlikely anyone would see us.”

“I can go and check that the street is clear and then open up the trunk,” Douglas said.

Eddie looked at Catharine.

“Do you think hiding him in his own motor car will work?”

“It’s not like we have many alternatives darling.”

“Alright,” said Eddie, dropping her hands from her hips. “Let’s do it.”

Douglas smiled.

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Back in the front room the three conspirators started to cover up all the evidence of their recent activities.

“Oh Douglas, I never doubted you. I knew you would come through. I just knew it,” gushed Catharine.

“Sorry he wouldn’t fit in the trunk,” Douglas apologised.

“I hope he won’t be seen,” said Eddie

“He won’t be, not with the blanket over him,” Douglas assured her.

“It is only temporary,” Eddie told them.

“It was a great idea,” Catharine said.

Catharine was very excited that the body was hidden even if it had meant sacrificing the good tartan picnic blanket from the trunk of her Rolls Royce.

“It was a great idea,” Eddie admitted.

“It was,” agreed Douglas, a little too smugly.

Eddie promised to telephone Catharine soon and stood on the footpath as Catharine and Douglas drove off. She then waved good-bye as though she had done nothing more unusual that afternoon than have a couple of friends over for a late lunch.

Chapter 3

A Clue at the Church

Thursday, 7th April 1932

Vaucluse, Sydney

A rich cream woollen carpet, with a border of dark red roses that were protected by deep green leaves, supported the many heavy pieces of modern, streamlined furniture. Each part of the understated, symmetrically designed bedroom suite was covered in a veneer which looked like fresh honey that had been contaminated with molasses, the darker of the two natural liquids created a series of stains that struck out aggressively in straight lines and danced romantically in soft swirls across a bed and over night stands, up wardrobe doors, wrapped around upholstered stools and covered a dressing table.

James had ordered the furniture from Vienna a few years ago. The carpet had come from somewhere in England while most of the room's other items including bed linens, marbled glass light shades and a Norman Lindsay etching of "Columbine" had been sourced locally. The browns, creams and reds all worked beautifully together and as Catharine walked over to the window she thought of how nice it was of her brother to have furnished her room with such meticulous care when he did not really enjoy having her stay with him.

A quick glance out across the harbour confirmed that Sydney was going to provide another brilliant day. Yawning, Catharine sat down on the soft cushion of the rectangular stool in front of her dressing table. She considered her

reflection in the tall mirror and sighed deeply. Although the exotic burled and striped zebrawood provided a very flattering frame she was worried she was looking older, or worse, that she was actually starting to look her age.

Perhaps I'm just tired, she thought. She had been trying, without success, not to think about the gory details of the day before and of how much all her muscles ached from helping to move the man who had, rather inconsiderately, died in front of her. She reached for a silver canister from the cluttered surface of the dresser and dusted her face with a light ivory powder. Taking a deep breath, Catharine broke one of her favourite habits as she ignored the different red lipsticks she had in her collection in favour of a pink lip-gloss.

She refused to wear beige but she had kept her promise to wear something simple to church that morning. Having already put on black stockings, black shoes and a plain wool crepe dress in charcoal she was ready to meet Eddie. Catharine wrinkled her nose up. She was annoyed because she believed Eddie had taken advantage of her. In agreeing to take on a murder case she had thought she would not have to undergo the dreadful charade of pretending to be a cleaner. Eddie, whose loyalty to Father Cronin was apparently as strong as her interest in investigating a murder, had other ideas. She had telephoned Catharine only hours after they had put a large, not to mention very poorly dressed, man into the back of a Packard to let her know what time they should meet for church the next day.

Although Catharine had to admit to herself that she did not know Eddie as well as she would have liked, she did trust the woman who had recently helped to save her brother's life. So, tired but unable to delay her departure any longer Catharine put on her hat, went downstairs, started her motor car and made the

twenty-five minute drive to Newtown. After collecting Eddie it was only a few more minutes before they reached St Joseph's Church, which stood on the corner of Bedford and Station Streets. Each piece of the old building's sandstone had been meticulously placed, the cream bricks only giving way to soaring strips of colourful glass.

The two women leaned back against the black and cream doors of the vehicle as they watched the parishioners leave the church grounds at the conclusion of morning mass. Eddie looked sideways at Catharine's dress and, although she was grateful she had kept her promise to wear something conservative, she could not help but estimate it was worth at least six months of Charlie's salary and probably a lot more. She felt the morning breeze touch her skin through her own, much cheaper, cotton pinafore and old blouse. Although Eddie was not ashamed of what she had become as a result of the latest world economic crisis, she was slightly annoyed that Catharine and the weather had conspired together to make it so obvious. She folded her arms tighter across her chest and tried harder to not draw comparisons between her world and Catharine's.

Catharine wanted a drink but suggested: "Shall we go inside?"

Eddie nodded and, tucking her hair up under her hat, she took a deep breath and walked towards the church gates. Catharine would have much preferred a drink, despite the fact it was only just over an hour since she had eaten her breakfast. She would have happily settled for a cigarette but she followed her companion instead.

"There's Father Cronin," Eddie whispered as she gently pushed Catharine into the last pew, "talking to Mrs Stewart from Australia Street."

Bored, after only a few minutes, Catharine started thinking this might be a good opportunity to learn more about Eddie.

“Does Charlie often have to leave Sydney to look for work?” Catharine asked, “I mean, Bathurst is a frightfully long way to go.”

Eddie finally answered: “Maybe four or five times a year. He’s usually given a good allowance for expenses when he travels which helps out at home. It’s very quiet when he’s away but I try to keep busy by taking on a little bit of extra work if I can. At least since we took in some boarders to help make ends meet there’s always some company for me at home when he’s not there.”

“Elliot and Molly?” asked Catharine.

“The Millers,” said Eddie, surprised she had told Catharine so much.

“Are they both still upset about the horse that died?”

“I think they’ll be upset for quite some time,” Eddie said sadly.

“It was very strange yesterday to see a man in tears who is so . . . ,” Catharine didn’t want to say so covered in scars, “so . . . hardened,” she finished.

“Elliot was badly burned out on the Western Front,” Eddie explained.

Catharine nodded and both women fell silent.

“I imagine it must have been difficult for him to come home after the War, after suffering such injuries,” Catharine mused.

“With a wife like Molly,” said Eddie, “I think he would’ve been one of the few wounded men not afraid to come back.”

“Has she always been blind?” Catharine asked.

“Always.”

“Anyway,” Eddie went on, “they’re good people. Although it’s a mixed marriage,” she added her voice still quiet but now filled with a sense of scandal.

“Really darling,” complained Catharine, “so one’s a Catholic and the other’s a Protestant.”

“Oh no,” said Eddie, “Molly votes Labor but Elliot votes United Australia. Molly’s dad was furious.”

They both sat in silence for a few minutes, each woman thinking about more questions that they would like to ask the other. They also started to think about their current predicament. While working to protect James had been a dangerous undertaking, the timely arrest of the two ex-servicemen had ensured that there had been no dead bodies for them to deal with.

Catharine finally asked: “What about your brother, did Charles fight?”

“No, Charlie didn’t sign up. He was too busy hating people here at home to bother about hating people overseas.”

“Your brother hasn’t always been a private investigator though has he? Wasn’t he a policeman before he decided to start his own business?”

Eddie considered her companion carefully before she answered: “That’s right. He was a policeman for almost twenty years before he became Charles Jones - Investigator . . .”

“Discretion Assured,” Catharine finished for her.

“Yes,” Eddie said. “I think it’s a terrible thing to have on a card.”

“Twenty years is a long time,” Catharine said, ignoring Eddie’s comment on personal stationery choices.

“Yes.”

“What made him leave?”

Eddie hesitated before telling her: “Last year they told him to help execute an eviction order a few blocks from where we live and he refused. It was terrible. The families had nowhere else to go, they tried to stand their ground when the

police came. So many men were injured and one man died."

Eddie stopped and slouched back into the pew.

When Catharine did not say anything Eddie found herself sharing more of her family history: "Anyway, Charlie has been angry since our parents died and that just made him angrier. He was in a lot of trouble at work but he refused to back down so he decided to quit before they could sack him. He couldn't find any work so he decided to start out on his own."

Catharine still did not respond. Eddie paused as she considered her own question of Catharine. She knew that James was really responsible for all of the books that Catharine had published. Eddie also knew that James had fought in the War: "I know that James served in France, was he there for very long?" she eventually asked.

"Almost three years."

"Was he injured?" Eddie asked tentatively.

Catharine shrugged: "I think changed is a better word than injured. He might have been injured though, I'm not really sure. He rarely talks about what happened while he was away," she whispered.

Eddie wanted to ask more questions about the academic who preferred to be surrounded by books than by people but sensed Catharine was reluctant to divulge too much information, or at least divulge it so quickly.

"What about Douglas?" Eddie asked.

Catharine smiled: "Douglas was too young and besides, he had just a few too many business opportunities that he needed to pursue when War broke out."

“Does he . . . ,” Eddie paused, “does he really do things that are, you know, that are illegal?”

“Sometimes,” Catharine said as she muffled the sound of her giggling with a hand so perfect it could have been a fine piece of porcelain. “I know he may have complained a little too loudly last night but in the end he did help us to move a dead body darling. A move which was done with some efficiency I might add.”

“I see.”

Eddie was working out how she could phrase her next question about Douglas and his criminal activities when Catharine interrupted her thoughts.

“Sit up straight Eddie, here comes your friend Father Cronin.”

The two women watched Father Cronin walk, surprisingly quickly for a man his size, towards them. Eddie stood up and, when Catharine remained seated, she ensured a stray foot effectively encouraged her into a more respectful position.

“Hello there,” he said.

“Hello Father,” said Eddie, “this is Lady Darling. She’s offered to help us.”

“Hello and thank you,” Father Cronin said as he shook Catharine’s hand warmly, “thank you so much for coming.”

“That’s alright,” Eddie said.

“Please, please don’t stand up. Sit down, both of you,” Father Cronin told them.

Eddie and Catharine took their seats again as Father Cronin sat down on his own pew, twisting his body so that he could turn and look at both of his visitors.

“I must say that it’s really very exciting to have you here in our small church,” Father Cronin said animatedly, with a rush of colour in his face. “I don’t think we’ve had a real Lady come to visit before.”
“Oh, I’m not a real Lady,” Catharine assured him. “I mean it’s not like I managed to marry a hereditary peer,” she said.

Eddie was furious with her but Father Cronin was delighted and the sound of his laughter echoed loudly in the cold and damp space. Eddie was distraught. She did not know whether she should go and confess for imagining what it would feel like to scruff Catharine and throw her through the church doors and out onto the lawn or if she should actually benefit from the immediate experience of dispatching Catharine out onto the street and confess about the incident later. Father Cronin sensed the tension and, although he did not understand why Eddie had brought someone with her or how Eddie even knew Lady Darling, he played the part of peace broker.

“Thank you both again for coming,” he said, smiling broadly. “I can’t tell you much about what has been happening here over the last few weeks but I can tell you what I know.”

His carefree smile and his light tone of voice disappeared. After glancing around behind him, he started talking about the money he thought was going missing from the poor box: “I started to suspect something was wrong during the lead up to the opening of the Bridge,” he said, “so say, early March or it might have even been late February.”

Both women put their differences aside, temporarily at least, as they concentrated on the information Father Cronin was giving them.

“At first,” he continued, “I thought donations were down simply because people had less to give. Every day is a little harder than the one before it so I tried not to give the matter too much thought. Then, one morning after mass, I overhead young Miss Elizabeth Reddington, from Bucknell Street, telling Mrs Niles that she and her friend, Miss Walter, had saved up their pennies and had gone to the bank to exchange them for a shiny, new florin coin which they then put in the poor box.”

“But there was no newly minted florin in the box that week,” Eddie guessed.

“No,” Father Cronin confirmed.

“Have you noticed anything else?” Catharine asked him.

“No. Not really,” he said, “just an overall decline in donations to the point when some days the box is completely empty, and . . . ,” he paused. “Well, with less money we help fewer people.”

“I can’t imagine anyone taking from the church,” Eddie said.

“If someone is, they must be very desperate and that’s why I don’t want the police involved. Not until I really understand what’s going on anyway. That’s why I decided to call your brother.”

“Discretion Assured,” Catharine mumbled.

“Do you think it’s someone from our congregation, or do you think it’s an outsider?” Eddie asked over Catharine’s comment.

Father Cronin just sat and shook his head.

“Is there any money in the poor box now?” asked Eddie.

“About one and six,” Father Cronin answered.

“Don’t worry Father. We’ll start working on the case today and we’ll find out as much as we can before Charlie comes home,” Eddie promised.

“Charlie won’t mind will he?” Father Cronin asked her.

“Oh no, he won’t mind at all,” Eddie said with a little more confidence than she actually had.

Catharine, growing impatient with a conversation she felt had stopped providing information, interrupted by asking: “When should we start?”

“Oh, straight away. I have a plan,” Eddie said excitedly.

Catharine winced and Father Cronin looked surprised.

“Yes!” said Eddie, undeterred by Catharine’s reluctance for the disguise she had come up with the day before, she went on quickly: “Catharine and I are going to conduct the investigation by pretending we’re cleaners.”

“Cleaners?” asked Father Cronin.

“That’s right. I thought if we spent a few days giving the church a good clean we could keep a close watch on the poor box. This would let us make notes of when donations are made, and give us an opportunity to make a list of who comes and goes without attracting too much attention,” Eddie said in a rush.

“I think it’s a very nice plan,” Father Cronin said, “the church can always do with a scrub and I’ll be pleased to have the company. With everyone spending their days either working or looking for work it can be very quiet here.”

Eddie tried to smile even though Father Cronin saw her as a cleaner and not an investigator while Father Cronin noticed Lady Darling looking sideways at Eddie.

“What about if Lady Darling arranged the flowers?” Father Cronin suggested.

“I could put some flowers in a vase,” Catharine said. “I’ve watched other people do it many times.”

Eddie wanted to ask Catharine if she had ever watched someone else wash a

floor before but she held her tongue.

“Well!” said Father Cronin, clapping his hands, “the flowers were delivered this morning so I’ll show Lady Darling where they are and, Eddie, you know where the cleaning cupboard is.”

Eddie nodded as Catharine stood up.

Within a few minutes Eddie was breathing hard as she scrubbed the floor area in front of the altar and Catharine was complaining as she dithered with some roses and a few weeds masquerading as foliage.

“Really darling,” Catharine grumbled as she tried to force some African Feather Grass in with some Fishbone Fern. “The country has been able to establish an entire Government Department just to eradicate that dreadful Prickly Pear you would think, if it wasn’t too much trouble, it could do something about these awful things. I knew I should have just written a cheque.”

Eddie sat back on her heels and watched Catharine become increasingly frustrated with trying to create a tasteful arrangement out of garden scraps in a brass vase almost as tall as she was. The slightly younger woman was about to laugh and then she realised she would have to polish those vases later so she returned her attention to a small stain on the floor. Catharine was about to give up on her allocated project when she noticed a man standing in the doorway.

“Now he looks even more out of place here than I do,” Catharine whispered to Eddie as she used a bruised rose to point towards the entrance.
“Who is he?” Catharine asked.

“I don’t know,” Eddie said as she squinted into the light. “I don’t think that I’ve ever seen him before.”

“Look!” whispered Catharine as she grabbed Eddie’s elbow and pulled her up off the floor so they both stood hidden behind the floral display.

Eddie took out a notepad and a piece of pencil stub from her pocket, eager to write down anything that happened.

“He’s going towards the poor box,” Catharine said.

Eddie squatted down so she had a better view of what was going on: “It’s alright,” she whispered. “He’s putting something in rather than taking something out.”

“Are you sure?” asked an unconvinced Catharine.

“Yes I’m sure, but . . .”

“But what?”

“It doesn’t look like money.”

“What’s he putting in the box then?”

“Oh, I think it’s alright, it looks like it’s just a donation envelope,” Eddie told her. “Wait . . . ,” said Eddie before pausing, “it doesn’t look like one of the small envelopes usually used for donations.”

The man looked around the church quickly and then went back outside.

“That’s very strange,” said Eddie.

“What is?”

“He didn’t sit down.”

“That’s not strange,” Catharine countered.

“Yes it is,” Eddie said, “especially when the church is almost empty.”

“So?”

“Well, when most people come to church,” Eddie explained, “they sit down, even if they only sit down for just a few minutes.”

“Don’t be silly darling, the seating here is dreadful.”

Eddie made a note and put her paper and pencil away.

“So what do we do now?” Catharine asked.

“Well,” said Eddie slowly as she considered their options, “I wonder if we should follow him. Or,” said Eddie, coming up with more ideas, “we could keep our watch on the poor box and see what happens next or we could go to the poor box ourselves and see what he put inside.”

“I think you’re right,” Catharine stated as she picked up another piece of Fishbone Fern and stared at it despondently, “we should try to follow him.”

“I think you’re just looking for something to do that doesn’t involve having to put more flowers into another vase.”

“Should we follow him?” Catharine asked, ignoring Eddie’s remark.

“No,” Eddie said decisively. “No, let’s wait and see what happens.”

“If we can’t follow him I want to see what he put in the poor box.”

“Just try and be patient and do something with that plant, if you keep waving it about it’s going to fall apart.”

“Oh darling this is just too much, look, there’s another strange man.”

“Yes,” said Eddie, “a man that doesn’t know he should take his hat off when he enters a church.”

The light brown hat, with a dark brown hatband, sat neatly on the man’s head. The same could not be said for his brown suit. His jacket fell loosely about his shoulders and his trousers only stayed up because his belt had recently had an

extra hole punched into it.

“He looks very suspicious,” Catharine said.

“Why?” Eddie asked.

“Well, he . . . ,” Catharine paused, “he’s not sitting down,” she finally said.

“No, he’s not,” Eddie agreed, “because he’s going straight over to the poor box!”

“What’s he doing?”

“Look at that!”

“Look at what?”

Catharine’s floristry efforts were on the verge of coming crashing down around her as she tried to look through, around and then over the array of plants.

“He’s taken it,” said Eddie.

“He’s taken the money?”

“He’s taken that envelope, the one that was just put into the poor box, and he’s gone straight back outside.”

“What about the rest of the money?”

“Right,” said Eddie decisively, “we aren’t going to let another lead get away from us.”

“I didn’t let the first lead get away from us,” Catharine said defensively.

“Let’s follow him.”

“But follow him where?” Catharine asked.

“Wherever he goes,” Eddie told her as she left her bucket and brush on the floor and ran out of the church.

A side door swung closed with a loud crash as Father Cronin made his way back into the nave with an elaborately set out tea tray: “To thank you both for coming and for all of your hard work,” Father Cronin called out, “I thought I’d fix some morning tea for us.”

There was no response and as Father Cronin looked around all he saw was a bucket of soapy water, an old wire brush and a few scraps of greenery.

“She’s an odd girl, that Eddie,” he mused.

The old priest sat down and placed the wooden tray on his lap. Wrinkling his nose he decided that while he might not be able to drink three cups of tea he should be able to manage to eat some of the shortbread that Mrs Blake had given to him a few days before.

Chapter 4

The Postmaster-General's Department

Thursday, 7th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

Eddie and Catharine stood just inside the church gates. It took them a few seconds to make the adjustment, from the cool and dark interior of the old stone building, to being outside on the unusually hot autumn day. Without saying a word to each other they watched the man who had just taken an envelope from the poor box of St Joseph's. He soon turned right, out of Lennox Street and towards King Street.

"Are we following him on foot or taking the Rolls?" Catharine asked.
"I want to follow him on foot. I think he's less likely to see us that way," Eddie said, "but if he has a motor car nearby or if he takes a tram we'll lose him."
"Come on then Eddie," Catharine ordered, "we're taking the Rolls."

Eddie worried Catharine's motor car was not the most appropriate vehicle for a discreet pursuit but knew she had to make a decision quickly or they would lose the man in the ill-fitting brown suit and what he had taken with him from the church. Eddie heard the sound of an engine starting so she spun around and ran over to the motor car, opened the door and took her place in the front passenger seat.

"Our suspect is still heading towards King Street," Eddie said.

“Our suspect?” Catharine asked as she drove off. “Really darling, sometimes you say the strangest things.”

“Well,” Eddie said as she tried to justify her comment, “you did think he looked suspicious.”

“I suppose so,” Catharine admitted.

“And he did steal something,” Eddie said trying to convince herself as well as the woman next to her.

Eddie felt silly about her choice of words but she could not resist using the terminology, which Charlie had used as a policeman and used now as a private investigator.

“Don’t drive so close to him,” Eddie said.

“If I drive any slower darling I’ll stall the motor.”

“Well, just drive so that he won’t notice us.”

“Edwina,” said Catharine in a lecturing tone, “we’re in nearly £2,000 worth of motor car, just how would you like me to drive so that we’re not noticed?”

“Just try to drive casually.”

“There is nothing casual about a Rolls Royce Phantom II.”

“I knew we should have walked,” Edwina said in a sulk as she tried to picture what £2,000 would look like stacked in neat piles of crisp one-pound notes.

“He’s turning left now,” Catharine told her.

“He might be heading into the city.”

“Perhaps he’s meeting someone there.”

“Do you think so?”

“Oh yes, these sorts of people always have accomplices,” Catharine insisted.

“Really?”

“Darling, don’t you read the papers?”

“Not always,” Eddie said quietly.

Catharine sighed before she said: “Look, he’s stopped up there near the corner.”

“What’s he doing?” asked Eddie.

“I don’t know. He doesn’t seem to be doing anything.”

“Did this motor car really cost £2,000?” Eddie asked.

“Almost,” Catharine answered a little absently.

Eddie didn’t say anything but made a mental note to never lean back on the doors of the Rolls again as she had done earlier that morning.

“Look darling, had we decided to walk we would have lost our suspect.”

“Why? Where’s he gone?” asked Eddie, trying to peer through the early morning crowds.

“He’s taken that tram, that one there. He’s heading into the city.”

Catharine allowed a lorry to pull in between them and the tram. Eddie smiled as she realised the large load of vegetables would neatly obscure the distinctive grill and bonnet of Catharine’s Rolls Royce. If the man they were following turned around he would not see the motor car, which he would have seen parked outside St Joseph’s, following him along King Street.

Newtown’s main street seemed busier than usual. Pedestrians, motor cars and trams all squabbled for space on the strip of tar that funnelled thousands of people, and hundreds of different types of goods, into the city. Within a few minutes the man they were following stepped off the tram and made a gentle left turn into the grounds of the University of Sydney. Catharine watched the lorry as it continued its journey to the city. She then turned the large steering

wheel of the Rolls and drove through one of the many sets of gates which the University used as a general deterrent to people who did not belong within the carefully chiselled and beautifully manicured landscape.

Catharine parked under a fig tree. Their suspect was doing his best to avoid the heat of the warm April day by keeping close to the brick and sandstone buildings, and the meagre ribbons of shade that they offered, as he headed towards the Quadrangle.

“I’ll wait here while you follow him on foot,” Catharine said.

“What do you mean you’ll wait here? Aren’t you going to come with me?” Eddie complained.

“No, it’s too hot.”

“But . . .”

“Oh do hurry up Edwina.”

“What if someone sees me?” Eddie asked, frowning.

“Just do your best to blend in.”

“What if James sees me?”

“Don’t be silly, he’ll be happily hiding in his office at this time of day.”

“What if someone sees you?”

“Then I’ll drive back to your house and wait for you there.”

“I . . . ,” Eddie hesitated.

“Oh do hurry up Eddie,” Catharine pleaded, “you wanted to follow our suspect on foot. This is your big chance.”

“My big chance,” Eddie repeated as she opened the motor car door and slid out of her seat. “I’ll be back soon,” she promised.

Catharine nodded and made herself comfortable. She was happy to help Edwina

solve the case but after the excitement associated with moving a body the night before she felt she deserved a little rest. Eddie closed the motor car door and, pulling the brim of her hat down slightly to protect her face from the sun, she hurried off after the man wearing a brown suit and a hat that didn't seem to come off, not even for church. The man walked slowly, almost lazily, along the edges of buildings and across narrow pathways making it easy for Eddie to catch up to him. She was within a hundred feet of the man when he made a turn towards one of the administration buildings.

Eddie panicked when he looked behind him but he did not see her or, if he did, he did not take any notice of the woman wearing a cheap dress and carrying an old fashioned purse. Quite casually he went inside the building and, almost as casually, Eddie followed him. The man then reached into his inside jacket pocket and took out the envelope that he had taken from the church. He placed it under the door to one of the offices facing the hall. Whistling a popular tune the man in the ill-fitting suit then walked down the corridor towards another entrance and went back outside. Eddie waited to make sure he was not going to return before she went to the door.

"My big chance," she whispered.

One of the corners of the envelope protruded slightly from underneath the heavy timber. It was not much but it was just enough for Eddie to rescue it. She went to the door and leaned casually up against the frame in a way that suggested she might be waiting for someone to arrive and let her in. Eddie memorised the nameplate, which stated the office belonged to an A.M. Trembath, before letting her head fall forward a little so she could press her ear up to the wooden panelling. She listened for a few moments and was confident

she heard nothing and that there was no one inside.

She crouched down and retrieved the envelope. Breathing heavily she looked for clues but there were no markings of any kind not even Trembath's name. Fortunately, the envelope was not sealed so it could be opened without causing any damage. Inside a single piece of off-white card had, written in pencil, the following message: *Pearson's Fish Café. Observe During the Lunch Hours Every Day for One Week. Take NO Action. Instructions for Reporting to HQ to Follow.*

Eddie looked in both directions to check the corridor was still clear. With a deep breath she took her purse and deliberately emptied all of the contents: lipstick; comb; handkerchief; house key; and a few coins all over the floor. Taking her notepad and pencil stub she started transcribing the message on the card. Her heart raced as she heard the sound of footsteps approaching behind her. Working as accurately and as quickly as she could, she finished copying the message before returning the card to its paper casing.

"Had a bit of a spillage, have we?" the voice, belonging to a man Eddie did not recognise, asked.

"Yes," Eddie replied to the stranger, trying to sound relaxed but not doing a very convincing job of it.

"I suppose," he muttered, "that with all the stuff you ladies carry around these days, these sorts of things are bound to happen."

"We'll have to start using bigger purses," Eddie told him, "with stronger clasps."

"Mmm, I'm not so sure about that," he grumbled.

The stranger hesitated. He was a tall man in dark blue corduroy trousers, a white shirt and a light blue cable knit cardigan. There was a dark red stain and

some pastry crumbs on the cardigan's lapel. A jam tart was probably responsible and, judging by the way the garment's buttons were straining, it was not the first baked treat the man had indulged in.

He stood there considering the idea of women being allowed to flaunt their increasing levels of independence by such an overt symbol as a larger purse. An image of women, capably carrying purses so large they could be mistaken for pieces of luggage, without a man in sight, flashed through his mind. He shuddered at the thought of the contents of these newer, larger purses. *It all started to go wrong when we gave women the vote,* he thought. *We should have stood our ground when we had the chance.*

"Excuse me," Eddie said, interrupting his thoughts.
"Yes?"
"Would you be so kind?" Eddie asked as she pointed to her lipstick.
"Ah sorry, yes, yes of course," he replied.

As he turned to pick up her lipstick Eddie quickly squatted down and put the envelope back under the door. She stood up again just as quickly to take the small item and mutter her thanks.

"Not sure about those bigger purses," he mused, half to himself, half to Eddie.
"No, neither am I," Eddie told him wanting to leave and leave quickly.
"Ah splendid, absolutely splendid," he said, beaming broadly.

Eddie was a bit confused and was not sure how to react. Thanking him again she went back the way she had come. Grateful to be on the move Eddie was soon outside and heading towards where she hoped Catharine was still waiting

for her. She was relieved to see the Rolls still parked under the fig tree. Sliding into the passenger seat Eddie saw Catharine had utilised the twenty or so minutes she had been away, to alter her lipstick colour back to its default red, but she decided not to comment on the change.

“Well darling, did anything interesting happen?” Catharine asked.

“Yes,” Eddie said excitedly, “we have a great clue.”

“Just the one?” Catharine asked, sounding disappointed.

“Just the one,” Eddie conceded.

“Well let’s talk about it back at the house. All of this outdoor activity is just too awful,” Catharine complained.

Eddie was not sure how Catharine waiting in an expensive motor car qualified as an outdoor activity. Instead of trying to argue she let herself fall back into the leather seat and allowed her heartbeat to come back to normal while Catharine drove her home.

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As Eddie unlocked the door, letting Catharine inside, she was told Douglas was coming with today’s newspapers so they could look for clues.

“Why would we find clues there?” Eddie asked.

“Really darling, you must start reading the papers,” Catharine told her. “We may not find anything,” she continued, a little more gently, “but we might see something to help us identify our visitor of last night.”

“There can’t possibly be a story about the murder yet,” Eddie said, her voice a little louder than usual.

“Oh, I hope not,” Catharine agreed, depressed at the thought of even the smallest amount of publicity, “but I am hoping,” she continued, “that someone might have placed a missing person notice. If we can match a description from a notice then we will have a possible name for our friend as well as the name of someone who knew him.”

“I hadn’t thought of that,” Eddie said quietly, disappointed she was not as good an investigator as she wanted to be.

“I do have flashes of brilliance,” Catharine said, “just not very many of them.”

Cleo barked and Catharine obediently went over to play with her ears. Meanwhile, Eddie sat cross-legged in her father’s old chair and took her notepad from her purse so that she could read the message to Mr Trembath, which she had copied down, out to Catharine.

“Pearson’s Fish Café,” Catharine said to herself as she tried to remember where it was. “Have you been there?” she asked Eddie.

“No,” Eddie told her, unable to remember the last time she had eaten out.

“Well I might take you to lunch there soon. Although I do think, as an aside, darling, we should concentrate on moving our friend to a more permanent resting place.”

“If we’re going to solve that case then we need to call the telephone number 3332,” Eddie said, “and find out who it belongs to.”

Catharine frowned: “Maybe I’ll take you to lunch at Pearson’s tomorrow because we don’t want to let Father Cronin down,” she said.

Eddie dismissed Catharine’s sudden concern for Father Cronin.

“The number could belong to the victim,” Eddie said before she paused, “or to

the murderer," she added.

"Darling that number could belong to anybody, it could be my hairdresser's."

"I don't think so."

"We don't even know if it is a telephone number."

"Well, there's only one way to find out."

"Look Eddie, even if it is a telephone number we might have the number but we don't have the exchange."

"I know but I have a friend who works at the Postmaster-General's Department who might, if asked very nicely, be able to help us."

"That's it!" Catharine blurted out.

"That's what?" Eddie asked.

"Pearson's. I was trying to remember where it was, it's up near the PMG."

"I thought you might talk to her," Eddie said, ignoring Catharine's comment about the Café.

"Talk to who?" Catharine asked.

"My friend at the PMG."

"Darling, she's your friend."

"Yes, but she'd respond better to you."

"The woman has never met me, why would she help someone she doesn't know."

"Because, well," Eddie hesitated, "because you lead a more glamorous life. That's why," Eddie told her.

"Oh really," Catharine whined, "you've seen a photograph of my husband, there is absolutely nothing glamorous about George."

Eddie stood up and walked over to Charlie's desk to make the call.

"Good morning, this is the Postmaster-General's Department."

The switchboard operator's voice was clear and professional and Eddie tried hard to match it: "Hello, could I have Miss Alexander in Mr Adderstone's Office, please," she asked.

"One moment please."

"Good morning, Mr Adderstone's Office," another clear and professional voice.

"Hello Dot."

"Hi there Eddie!" Dot gushed. "How's tricks?"

"Alright, can you talk?"

"Sure, Eddie, the boss has just gone upstairs."

"Dot . . . ," Eddie said, "I need some information . . ."

"What sort of information?"

"Just something from the subscribers' lists."

"I don't know Eddie."

"It's not much."

"Is it for Charlie?"

"No."

"I don't know."

"Look, you know I wouldn't ask if it wasn't important."

"What do you need?"

"Just an exchange. An exchange for the number 3332."

"It's not my area Eddie," Dot told her. "I'd have to call in a favour with one of the girls who work the boards."

"Please."

"And this information isn't for Charlie?"

"No, it's for a friend of mine," Eddie said as, without any warning, she thrust the telephone into Catharine's hands.

Catharine scowled and then tried to sound glamorous, which wasn't terribly difficult: "Hello, is that Miss Alexander? This is Lady Darling here."

“Hello Lady Darling.”

“Please, call me Catharine.”

Dot took so long to respond Catharine thought the line had gone dead.

Catharine was about to replace the telephone receiver when a very soft voice said: “Please, please call me Dorothy.”

“Thank you Dorothy, I appreciate your help with my little . . . ,” Catharine hesitated, “my little assignment,” she finished lamely.

“Your assignment? Oh, gosh, espionage!” exclaimed Dot.

“Yes,” Catharine answered, now sounding more bored than glamorous.

“I’ll have something early next week,” Dot told her. “Just give the following code when you call.”

Dot kept talking and Catharine was going to make a comment on the silliness of codes but was disconnected before she had a chance.

Eddie looked at Catharine expectantly: “I’m to call her back on Monday or Tuesday,” she told her.

“Well, while we wait for that information let’s have a look at what we have so far,” Eddie suggested.

“I’ll make up a new list,” Catharine offered, taking a notepad from Charlie’s desk and a pen from her purse.

“What’s wrong with the old list?” Eddie asked.

“Oh darling, you’re always asking so many questions.”

“Where’s the list?” Eddie persisted.

Catharine withdrew a rather scrappy piece of paper from her purse and gave it

to Eddie. Eddie examined the still damp list and was sure the teeth marks would be a neat match for Cleo. She was tempted to wake the now dozing greyhound to check but decided it could wait until Catharine had left.

Eddie watched Catharine use her elaborate cursive handwriting to record the words: *1 x dead body*.

“How about I make the list,” Eddie said as she put the old list down and took the paper and pen from Catharine.

Beneath Catharine’s elegant script Eddie started writing in block letters. Eddie had only written a couple of words when her hand brushed across the page, dragging thin rivers of ink towards the edge of the paper, smudging the words and making them illegible.

“I’m so sorry,” Eddie said as she looked at the mess that she had created. “I’m used to writing with a pencil.”

“Oh darling, no one writes with pencils anymore.”

“That’s it!”

“What?”

“Who writes with pencils?”

Douglas entered the room with a couple of newspapers neatly folded under his arm: “The military use pencils,” he said.

“I’m quite sure our Imperial Forces are more modern than that,” Catharine told him curtly.

“It’s not about being modern, it’s about making sure written information can be read even if the paper is wet,” Douglas said in a voice which was just a little too matter of fact for Catharine’s liking.

Eddie ignored the sibling rivalry and asked: “How did you get in?”

“I let myself in,” Douglas said casually.

“I’m not sure I like that,” Eddie said, as strongly as possible. “You just letting yourself in.”

“Oh, it was no trouble,” Douglas said, completely missing the point that Eddie was trying to make.

Eddie shook her head and decided to move on: “The list of names,” she said, “which our murder victim brought with him here on Wednesday was written in pencil.”

“It might have been all he had,” suggested Catharine.

“No, remember he had that fountain pen in his pocket.”

“That’s right, he did have a pen the silver one with the . . .”

“Why would he use a pencil if he had a pen?” Eddie interrupted.

“An old soldier with old habits?” suggested Douglas.

“And the message taken from the church this morning!” Eddie exclaimed excitedly. “The one which I copied down at the University, I told you what it said but I didn’t tell you that it was written in pencil as well!”

Neither Catharine nor Douglas looked impressed with Eddie’s news. Eddie gritted her teeth.

“I think we should concentrate on writing up our list,” said Catharine.

“A list of suspects?” asked Douglas.

“No,” Eddie told him “a list of the clues we have so far.”

“I think you need to draw up a list of suspects,” Douglas told them.

“Darling, if we aren’t even sure of who our victim is how can we start to speculate about who the murderer is?” Catharine asked.

“Cat,” Douglas said, “someone has been killed and you could be in danger.”

“I know he’s a man darling,” Catharine said, “but he’s quite safe now that he’s dead.”

“I know he’s dead,” Douglas snapped. “I had to help move the body.”

“You’re forgetting he died in front of us,” Eddie said, irritated that Douglas was trying to tell them what to do.

“He actually died in front of me,” Catharine corrected.

“We know he’s dead,” Douglas told them, “but his murderer may not.”

“That just indicates a careless killer then, doesn’t it?” Catharine suggested.

Eddie reasserted she was in charge by handing the notepad and pen to Douglas.

“If we’re going to give a name to our victim, and find out who might have killed him, we need a list of all the evidence we have. If we can create as clear a picture as possible then we’ll see where the gaps are and where we need to focus our efforts,” Eddie said.

“Well I’ll play secretary then shall I?” Douglas said as he put the newspapers down and took the notepad and pen from Eddie.

Catharine was pleased that Douglas’ voice had lost its superior tone.

“Well, let’s start with what we have,” Eddie said.

“Unfortunately darling, it’s not very much,” Catharine told her.

Douglas took down the details as Eddie and Catharine gave them to him. There was the orange envelope and the note with a telephone number and a list of names. While from the victim’s pockets there were the following items: some money; an unused postage stamp; a silver fountain pen; a card with a George

Street address; and a handkerchief embroidered with the initials R.S. There were also the keys to a brand new black Packard.

“That’s not very much,” Douglas ventured.

“We also have the note from the church this morning,” Eddie said.

“That needs to go on a list of evidence for the case of the thefts from the poor box.”

“I suppose we could start a separate list,” Eddie said.

“What’s the matter darling? Surely you don’t really think that our other case has anything to do with the murder?” Catharine asked.

“I don’t know,” Eddie replied.

“Just because the two notes you have were both written in pencil doesn’t mean they’re connected,” Douglas told her.

“I don’t know,” Eddie said again, shrugging her shoulders.

Cleo sneezed.

“Yes, and there was all that nasty mud on his shoes which made you sneeze,” Catharine said to the greyhound.

“That’s right there was that strange coloured mud,” Eddie said.

“I wonder if it was the mud which made him smell so awful,” Catharine thought aloud.

“That still doesn’t give us very much,” Eddie said, visibly disappointed.

“Well, let’s look in the papers,” Catharine suggested.

“I’ve already had a look at them,” Douglas told them, “and unfortunately there were no missing person notices in either of them which matched our man.”

“I’m starting to wish he had decided to die in someone else’s front room,” Eddie whispered.

“Well at least he isn’t in your front room any more,” Catharine retorted.

“Speaking of our friend, have either of you gone out and checked the Packard today?” Douglas asked.

“Oh darling, whatever for?” Catharine asked.

“Well . . . ,” Douglas said.

“Is he still there?” Eddie and Catharine both asked in a panic.

“I don’t know,” Douglas answered defensively.

“What do you mean you don’t know?” Eddie asked.

“This was your stupid idea,” Catharine snapped accusingly.

“You thought it was a great idea last night when you could sit in this room and you no longer had to worry about tripping over a dead man sprawled on the floor,” Douglas sharply reminded them.

“You said he would be perfectly safe under the rug,” Catharine said.

“He should be,” Douglas told her. “I’m just saying that if you hide something you should check every now and then to make sure that it’s still hidden.”

“Well go and check!” Catharine ordered.

“You go,” he said.

“We’ll all go,” Eddie instructed.

“I don’t want to go,” Catharine whined.

“We’ll all go,” Eddie insisted.

They all went outside and made sure that there was no one else in the street that could see what they were up to. The three of them then very carefully inspected the victim, lying under the back seat of the Packard. The motor car and its contents had not been disturbed. Catharine pressed her face up against one of the car windows and complained about a rather disconcerting smell. Eddie was now so used to Catharine commenting about how things smelt that she ignored her.

Douglas, who knew he was in trouble, tried to regain his sister's favour by promising to do something about the smell. If he could not do something that night, he assured her, then he would definitely do something first thing in the morning.

Both women, who were very tired but extremely relieved the dead body was still hidden, decided to go their separate ways for the day. Catharine took Douglas home, although neither of them spoke to each other for the rest of the night. Eddie went back inside her cold terrace to spend an equally quiet evening with Cleo.

Chapter 5

Buying Information

Tuesday, 12th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

"The black swan flies low over the frozen lake."

Catharine felt ridiculous following Dorothy Alexander's instructions. She tried not to chew the end of her fountain pen as she waited for a response. Catharine had indignantly explained to Eddie she had been given a code phrase by Dot, the woman who thought that they had all suddenly become spies, to use when she called her. While Eddie had been apologetic she was insistent that it was Catharine who had to call Dot as arranged in order to obtain the exchange details for the number 3332. Catharine held the telephone receiver tightly with one hand and her pen in the other while she listened to Dot make her report about what she had found.

"Thank you Dorothy," Catharine said, before ringing off.

"You didn't write anything down," Eddie said nervously.

"Unfortunately there was nothing to write down," Catharine told her.

"But . . . ," Eddie paused, "it has to be a telephone number."

"The number 3332 isn't listed under any exchange. Dorothy had one of her friends who is a switchboard operator check all the lists they have in an effort to find the number. I'm sorry Eddie."

Eddie had convinced herself that the number 3332 was a telephone number. Of course there were the other possibilities that Catharine had already come up with. Eddie started pacing. If 3332 was a combination or a membership number it might be impossible to find out what the combination protected or where the membership was held.

“That number was so important,” Eddie said.

“It still is,” Catharine encouraged.

“That number was so important,” Eddie insisted.

“Don’t be tedious,” Catharine said, impatiently, “we may find 3332 leads to something much more exciting than a telephone number.”

“Maybe we should sit down and write up a list of absolutely everything that the number could possibly be,” Eddie suggested.

“That can wait until after we’ve had our lunch,” Catharine told her.

“Lunch?” asked Eddie.

“Oh darling, don’t tell me you’ve forgotten? We’re off to Pearson’s for some lunch today. We might learn something more about the note couriered from the church to the University the other day. If we don’t learn anything new then we’ll at least have had something to eat.”

“I think we should stay here and work out what this number is for,” Eddie said, worried they would not find the answer to the meaning of 3332 and because she was too embarrassed to say she could not afford to go out to lunch.

“Come on, it’s my treat,” Catharine encouraged. “It’ll perk you up.”

Catharine checked her appearance in the mirror above the mantel and picked up her purse before going outside. Eddie, still disappointed 3332 was not a telephone number, nodded in silent agreement as she left the room to follow Catharine, collecting her coat and hat on her way.

Pearson's Fish Café, at 173 Pitt Street, was not far from the Postmaster-General's Department. Eddie looked towards the heavy sandstone façade and wondered how such a massive building could not hold the answer to 3332. She then stopped to look at the carefully arranged window display of what had been her mother's favourite store, Will Andrade Books. Catharine, who clearly had other ideas, took Eddie by the arm and led her next door and under the distinctive signage of eight glass spheres, each of which displayed one of the letters required to spell out the name Pearson's.

Despite the Café already being busy, Catharine secured a table near the wall, which would allow her and Eddie to watch the people around them and, more importantly, would allow them to watch the front door of the popular establishment. As the two women made themselves comfortable a young man came up to them and asked if they wanted something to drink. Catharine did not want to attract any unnecessary attention so decided against asking for a bottle of champagne that she knew a Café of this type would not have. Sighing quietly she asked the young man for some water with slices of lemon.

Eddie frowned: "You know I drink coffee," she said.
"Only Americans drink coffee," Catharine dismissed.
"So why are we here?" Eddie asked, trying to hide her irritation.
"We're here," Catharine told her, "because I'm hungry."

Eddie's frown deepened.

"Oh do cheer up darling," Catharine pleaded. "We're here because the note you copied, the one taken from Father Cronin's poor box and delivered to the office of Mr Trembath at the University of Sydney, was a note about this Café."

“I know that,” Eddie said as she poured a glass of water. “So maybe, instead of having lunch, we should be trying to find out who Mr Trembath is,” she suggested.

“Oh that sounds boring. No, we’re going to have something to eat and watch who comes and goes and . . .”

“See who is watching who,” Eddie finished.

“That’s right,” Catharine said feeling rather pleased with herself.

A waiter, in his early thirties, came to take their lunch order. Catharine looked enquiringly at Eddie who just nodded. Eddie didn’t mind telling Catharine she had wanted coffee instead of water because a hot drink was only a matter of a couple of shillings. A hot meal was a more expensive enterprise and Eddie did not feel comfortable asking for anything from the menu. Catharine calmly asked for two fish of the day specials and a large salad for the two of them to share. Eddie looked very surprised and started to feel even more uncomfortable.

“I told you I was hungry,” Catharine explained.

Catharine was not really hungry and would have been content with her usual cup of tea and toast for lunch. She was concerned though about how much time they would need to stay at the Café. Catharine thought if they were to keep a table in a busy restaurant they would need substantial meals for them to pick at in order to stay there. She also thought Eddie looked a little thin.

Eddie and Catharine drank their water in silence while they watched the other people in the restaurant. The staff members at the Café were far more fascinating than their customers, they seemed to be everywhere at once as

they greeted diners, took orders, delivered meals, cleared tables and settled bills. Only a minute or so after their order was delivered to their table Eddie's face went very pale.

"Darling what's wrong?" Catharine asked.

"Look!" Eddie whispered breathlessly.

"I am looking," Catharine told her as she stared down at what she considered to be a most unappetising piece of fish. *Perhaps lunch could be salvaged*, she thought, *by the reasonable looking salad*.

"This is wonderful," Eddie said.

"Only if we ignore reality and convince ourselves life is just constant cod and champagne," Catharine complained.

"Look!" Eddie instructed.

"Where?" Catharine had been so busy concentrating on her lunch she had not seen Eddie pointing towards the front door of the Café.

"It's the Premier," Eddie told her. "He's incredible, oh, how exciting!"

Catharine reviewed the tall man. He had strong features, highlighted by that famous moustache which had provided the inspiration for so many cartoons in *The Bulletin*. He wore an inexpensive grey striped suit, a fob chain that almost magically managed to stretch across his large frame and an old hat. Catharine was not nearly as impressed with him as Eddie obviously was and returned her attention to the garden salad in front of her.

"Oh just wait until I tell Charlie!" Eddie exclaimed.

"He'll be thrilled," Catharine agreed sarcastically.

"I wonder who that man is who's with him," Eddie said.

Catharine looked up and said: "That's his Private Secretary."

“Really?” Eddie asked.

“Yes, something McCauley,” Catharine told her.

“McCauley?”

“Harold I think.”

“How do you know?”

“One of us has to read the papers darling.”

Eddie ignored the jibe and continued to look at Jack Lang and Harold McCauley. The Café’s door opened again and two more men came inside, they stared intently at the Premier for almost a minute and then nodded to each other before they made their way to a small table against the back wall. The men made Eddie nervous and, in her determination to keep an eye on them, she presumptuously opened Catharine’s purse. Although she could easily watch the two men from Parliament House she needed a mirror to watch the two men who were now watching Lang and McCauley. Holding Catharine’s gold compact, at what she hoped was a discreet angle, Eddie caught the reflection of the two men in brown suits whispering to each other.

“Do you think one of those two men is Mr Trembath?” Eddie asked.

Catharine briefly considered the two brown suits, and two brown felt hats, and compared them to the image she had seen of her older brother as he left for his office earlier that morning.

“I suppose that they look ordinary enough to pass for academics,” Catharine said. “Although they don’t look nearly as vague as James,” she conceded.

Eddie recalled the words of the message she had copied: *Observe During the*

Lunch Hours Every Day for One Week. Take NO Action.

“Their profession isn’t the issue, their purpose is,” Eddie whispered.

“What’s that?” Catharine asked as she played with a piece of fish.

“They’re here to watch the Premier,” Eddie told her, sure the way the two men were watching Lang and McCauley could not be just casual interest in the Premier and his Private Secretary.

“That doesn’t sound exciting,” Catharine told her, annoyed by the overwhelming smell of seafood and by Eddie who had just swallowed a small piece of her fish but was yet to remove the fork from her mouth. “Anyway,” Catharine continued, “if they wanted to see him they could just go and watch Parliament when it’s in session, the gallery chairs there are much more comfortable than the chairs here are.”

“No,” Eddie told her. “They’ve been sent to watch him but I don’t know why.”

“Sent?” Catharine asked as she returned her attention to the salad.

“Yes, sent,” Eddie said. “They’ve been told to watch for the Premier here, that’s why they were told to come every day for a week. If only we knew who they were and who had sent them.”

“We have the name Trembath but then he could just be another courier employed to push the note along,” Catharine suggested.

“What do you mean?”

“Trembath could have taken the message, which was taken from the church to the University, and then just delivered it to someone else,” Catharine said. “So we have absolutely no idea who either of those men are, we cannot even be sure they’re following out the instructions on the note, or if they’ve even seen the note.”

“I think they at least know of the note,” Eddie said.

“Darling, they are probably just here for some lunch,” Catharine said.

“No,” Eddie said firmly. “They’re here to watch the Premier. I just know it.”

“You make it all sound so sinister. Anyway, why would somebody write a note then leave it in a poor box at a church, only to have someone collect the note and leave it at an office at the University and all so that two men in bad suits could come into town, just to watch another man in another bad suit, eat his lunch. It’s too elaborate for words. Even the Germans didn’t go to so much effort to gather information.”

“You’re right.”

“Am I?”

“Yes!” Eddie exclaimed. “It’s a conspiracy!”

“Oh, conspiracy is such an ugly word darling. All those ‘s’ sounds and it’s so difficult to spell,” Catharine whined. “Besides,” she continued, “using words like that makes you sound like your friend Dorothy. We aren’t spies, we’re just two women who have found ourselves in a slightly awkward situation.”

Eddie thought only Catharine could reduce the act of concealing a dead body and taking on a murder case to being a situation that was considered to be only slightly awkward. Exchanging Catharine’s mirror for her knife Eddie continued eating her lunch in silence.

The Café’s chaos did not seem to ever come to an end as people came and went and the staff bustled to look after the lunchtime crowds. Eddie continued to watch the two men from Parliament House who spoke in hushed tones. Catharine did her bit to amuse Eddie by keeping a watch on the other table that was also interested in the State’s leader and his colleague. It wasn’t long before Catharine started to fidget and asked to leave. Eddie was becoming good at ignoring Catharine when she wanted to so didn’t answer the question until she saw Harold McCauley ask for his bill.

“We can leave whenever you like,” Eddie told her.

Catharine settled the bill while Eddie said to the waiter: “It must have been overwhelming to have the Premier in for lunch today.”

“The Big Fella?” the waiter replied. “No, not really. He comes in here every day at the same time, with Mr McCauley and has his lunch.”

“Really?” asked Eddie.

“Every day,” the waiter reassured her. “He and Mr McCauley comes in here and has their lunch. As regular as a clock they are.”

Eddie felt triumphant. Catharine resigned herself to collecting more questions and wished, not for the first time that day, that Eddie had let her write a cheque for Father Cronin. The men from Parliament House made their exit and were followed by the men in brown suits.

Back outside, in the bright sun, they stood on the footpath and Eddie made the announcement that Catharine had been dreading: “Let’s follow them.”

Catharine was not in the mood for another chase: “I understand your loyalty to Father Cronin, and that a few missing coins and a secret note is all terribly interesting darling, but we still have the matter of our friend to resolve.”

“But . . . ,” Eddie faltered.

She watched the four men, who had been the focus of her attention at the Café, as they went in opposite directions. Two men started going towards Macquarie Street while the other two headed towards George Street.

“If we don’t follow those men then what should we do?” Eddie asked.

Despite the crowds in the Café the streets of Sydney were relatively quiet with

most workers having returned to their offices and shops. Eddie thought following the two men in brown suits would be a difficult task and worried she would not know what to do if she and Catharine were caught. She took a deep breath and thought about how Charlie always had such a strong sense of purpose when he was on a case and always knew what to do.

“We should,” Catharine told her, “concentrate on the fact that a very unattractive man is hidden in a motor car parked out the front of your house. If we can’t solve that problem soon we’ll have to turn him over to the police.”

“Turn him over to the police!” Eddie cried.

“Well, we wouldn’t do it ourselves,” Catharine explained, “we would let Douglas take care of that little task for us, since he has been so helpful in taking care of a certain smell that was becoming an issue.”

“But he’s our body!” Eddie cried.

“He’s actually your body darling, however, I don’t want to touch it again and it’s far too heavy for you to lift on your own.”

“So what is it that you want to do?” Eddie asked.

“Well, while you were going through my purse looking for a mirror during lunch, you may have seen I’ve brought a small card with me,” Catharine said, “the one our friend was carrying in his pocket when he came to visit which had an address in The Rocks written on it.”

“Number 81 George Street.”

“I think that we should go and see who lives there.”

It was so unusual for Catharine to make such a proactive, as well as such a sensible suggestion that Eddie nodded in agreement and both women went back to the motor car. It took only a few minutes to drive the half a dozen or so blocks, which separated them from their destination. After parking the Rolls the

women walked along the quieter end of Sydney's main street and soon discovered Number 81 was not a residence but was part of the row of stone shops and offices that made up The Unwin's Stores.

"It's not a house," Eddie observed, a little bit surprised.
"It's a laundry," Catharine said with distaste.
"It's definitely the right address," Eddie said, checking the card again.
"Should we go in anyway?" Catharine asked.

Eddie nodded and held the small card tightly as she and Catharine crossed the street to the Kong Chong Laundry. A brass bell sounded as they opened the door and went inside to a very hot and stuffy room. A man, who was wearing a loose-fitting shirt and wide-leg trousers, both made out of calico, stood behind a slightly damaged and well-worn service counter. He stared openly at his two customers. He did not see very many white women in his laundry and he certainly did not see any women as well dressed as Catharine.

"Can I help you?" he asked.
"No thank you," Catharine told him, "we're just looking."

Eddie regretted she had not had the foresight to suggest Catharine wait for her in the motor car. While her response might not have been out of place at a department store, such as Anthony Hordern's or Mark Foy's, it could only arouse suspicion in an area of the city that was better known for vice than for shopping. Quickly casting her eyes around the laundry shop front she saw there was nothing to look at apart from: the counter; some canvas bags filled with either clean laundry ready for collection or dirty laundry that had been dropped off; a plain wall adorned only by a sign with Chinese characters that looked like

a price list; and a small painting of a monkey.

Eddie tried to fill the uncomfortable silence by saying: “Hello.”

“Can I help you?” the man asked again.

“Yes please,” Eddie said, trying to sound assertive.

There was another uncomfortable silence and Eddie thought about her brother. She wondered if he was a good investigator because of his experience or because Catharine was not constantly hindering him as he worked on his cases.

“Why you here?” the man asked.

“We’re here because of your laundry service,” Catharine said curtly.

“Quality service,” the man told them.

“I should hope so,” Catharine said.

“Quality service, quality laundry since 1917,” the man said.

Eddie, who was not sure where this conversation was going to lead them, watched Catharine effortlessly slide out of her finely tailored coat. The lightweight three quarter length black woollen garment with white silk lining, a creation of Coco Chanel, was draped casually over the laundry counter without Catharine saying another word.

“You want coat laundered?” the man asked.

“Yes,” Catharine told him, adopting the man’s defensive attitude.

Eddie nervously played with the address card, the perspiration on her hands quickly discolouring the small piece of paper. The man watched Eddie’s hands and he saw the card, immediately recognising his address and the handwriting

that had written it out. Without any warning the man reached over and snatched the small card from Eddie's hands before she had a chance to react.

"Ah, I understand. You want coat laundered. You bring special item for quality service," the man said quickly before disappearing through a back door situated behind the counter.

"He's taken my card."

"He's taken my coat."

"That card was evidence."

"That coat was expensive."

"There are more important things than clothes."

"I suppose there's jewellery."

"You would say that, wouldn't you?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

The two women stopped squabbling upon the reappearance of the man at the counter. Eddie noted, with considerable distress, he was no longer in possession of either the address card or Catharine's coat.

"It has been nearly one week since your friend drop off his laundry here."

Eddie hesitated. It was almost one week since a man had died in her front room and so she decided to take a risk and agree with his statement before Catharine could say anything.

"Yes," she said. "It will be one week tomorrow."

"He came to us with special item but we could not help him."

"What sort of item did he bring in?"

“He bring special item. He ask about stain.”

“What type of stain?”

“Bad stain. We tell him what make stain but we couldn’t help. Stain too bad.”

“No?”

“No. Some stain, too difficult. Some stain brought in too late.”

“So you couldn’t help him?” Eddie asked.

“No. Too late for stain.”

“So much for providing a quality service,” Catharine muttered.

Eddie wished Catharine would keep quiet. The man was going to say something but there was a knock from the other side of the back door and he disappeared behind it for a second time. When he came back a few minutes later he was, much to Catharine’s relief, carrying her coat. Eddie could not see the card.

“Fifty shillings please,” the man said as he placed the coat down.

“I beg your pardon!” said Catharine, quite shocked.

While she didn’t personally know of any of the details associated with having garments laundered she did think having to pay fifty shillings for a coat that had obviously not been cleaned was outrageous.

“You want quality service, you pay price!” the man yelled and he picked up the coat again and held it with a very firm grip.

“You want fifty shillings for a coat you haven’t done anything with?”

“You pay price!”

Catharine was clearly unimpressed with the situation. While she could easily afford to replace the coat she would have to endure the inconvenience of

having someone place an order for her and waiting for one to be shipped out from Paris. More importantly, while she thought it unfair the Kong Chong Laundry should make a profit of fifty shillings from returning her coat, she did not like the idea of a much larger profit being made by selling the coat to someone else. Catharine looked at the man's cheap calico outfit with contempt and then opened her purse. The sound of money being forced down onto the old weathered counter was unnaturally loud. The man handed over the coat and snatched up the money without saying anything. Catharine turned on her heel and left the premises as quickly as she could. When the little brass bell had stopped ringing Eddie, who had not moved, looked at the man behind the counter, he had a slightly victorious look about him.

"Your other friend much nicer," the man said, "pity he dead now."

Eddie was too startled to say anything.

"You seem like nice girl," the man told her, "you shouldn't look for trouble."

"I'm not looking for trouble," Eddie told him.

"You seem like nice girl. Nice girl not accept drink from strangers."

"Is that a Chinese proverb?"

"No is just quality advice. No charge," the man said, smiling.

"Oh."

"You need remember," he continued more seriously, "some stain bad. Some stain too difficult to remove."

"Thank you. I'll remember."

"You go now. Your friend look cranky waiting out on street."

The man who had been offering a quality laundry service from the same

location for fifteen years, as a front for a variety of other business activities, looked at the woman and wondered if she knew what she had become involved with. If she had known Robert Snook and knew he had been dead for almost a week then, even without any other information at all, her own life may already be in danger. Out on the street Catharine smoothed out an imaginary crease in her skirt and tapped her foot impatiently.

“Thank you again,” Eddie said as she turned to leave.

The man in calico hesitated and then said: “If you need come back, you bring real laundry with you.”

“Real laundry?”

“Yes. Look like bad customer with no real laundry. Bad for business.”

Eddie laughed and thanked the man before she left to join Catharine out on the footpath.

“I don’t know why you’re looking so cheerful. I was the victim of extortion but at least I have my coat back while I see you are still without your important piece of evidence.”

“Let’s go back to the motor car,” Eddie suggested.

Eddie carefully went through all of the pockets of the Chanel coat and found the address card from the murder victim’s body.

“I think that was money well spent,” Eddie announced.

“You might not sound so sure of that if it had been your fifty shillings.”

Eddie passed the card to Catharine to look at. The address still appeared on

one side but on the other side, which had been blank, was one word written in beautiful calligraphy: thallium. Underneath the word was a drawing of a rat. Catharine felt slightly more agreeable now she knew she had bought information rather than had just bought back her coat. Although she did not recognise the word or appreciate the significance of the drawing it was better than a simple receipt for a ransom. Returning the card to Eddie she reached over to remove a small piece of foliage that had come to rest on her motor car.

As she pulled the leaf litter off the number plate Eddie clutched her arm and cried: “That’s it! The number 3332,” Eddie said excitedly, “it’s a number plate.”

Catharine dropped the leaf and looked at her number plate, the four white numerals stood out on the plain black background and she had to admit that Eddie could be right.

Wanting to try and compensate for Eddie’s earlier disappointment about the number 3332 Catharine checked her watch and asked: “Would you like to go to the Road Transportation Department? Their main office will still be open but you will have to come up with a reason for why we need somebody else’s registration details.”
“Oh that will be easy,” Eddie said confidently.

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Eddie told the Road Transportation Department clerk she was running an errand for her brother. Her brother, Eddie explained, was buying a motor car and wanted to confirm the registration details because he had heard some people were selling motor cars they did not own. The public servant, who

wished he was closer to retirement than he was, lamented the increase in theft around the country and blamed the rise of criminal activity on hard economic times and a general decline in moral standards.

The motor car Eddie's brother was interested in was almost certainly stolen, as there was no record of a registration number 3332 belonging to a Mr John Middleton, there was no record of the registration number 3332 at all. Eddie could not believe they had run into another dead end. Even Catharine was disappointed.

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Sitting at Eddie's kitchen table, this time on a chair that didn't move every time she did, Catharine said: "Sorry darling. We may have to sit down and write out a list of possibilities for that number after all."

"We at least have the information we bought from the laundry."

"Yes, that was money well spent, a foreign word and a picture of a rat."

"I think it's the name of the poison used to kill our visitor," Eddie started to explain. "That's what the laundry man was talking about when he said our friend had a special item with a stain. By saying some stains were too difficult to remove he was suggesting that either there was no antidote for the poison used. Or, by the time our murder victim went to the laundry, it may have just been too late. I don't know what the rat means though," she admitted.

"What year is it?" Catharine asked suddenly.

Eddie paused and looked at Catharine before saying: "It's 1932."

"I know that," Catharine said peevishly. "What Chinese year is it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Chinese years are named after animals. One of the animals they use is a rat."

Eddie stared blankly.

“They have all sorts of animals,” Catharine went on, “they have Dragons and Monkeys.”

“Monkeys?” Eddie interrupted.

“Yes.”

“There was a picture of a monkey at the laundry. Maybe it’s the monkey year.”

“Year of the Monkey.” Catharine corrected.

Eddie remembered asking the man at the laundry if he had just told her a Chinese proverb. She thought about his response and then stood up and ran to the kitchen dresser. She sat on the floor, opening all the cupboards and emptying their contents.

Startled, Catharine asked: “Darling, is all of that noise really necessary?”

“Here it is!”

“What?”

“Our murder weapon!” Eddie declared proudly.

“What do you mean?”

“It wasn’t a Chinese proverb!”

“I think you mean Chinese Year.”

“No,” Eddie said, flustered, “the information we were given at the laundry, at first I thought it was a proverb but it’s not.”

“A proverb?”

“Something I had to work out, but it’s just a simple message.”

Standing up carefully amongst all the kitchen paraphernalia she had scattered on the floor Eddie put a small tube of Zelio Paste on the table.

“Rat poison?” Catharine asked.

“Yes,” Eddie told her, “look, the main ingredient is thallium.”

“I thought that arsenic was used for the prompt dispatch of rodents. Some people even use it to facilitate their own dispatch from this world. All those people committing suicide by taking Rough on Rats. It’s too horrible to think about,” Catharine said, shuddering at the thought of someone deliberately poisoning themselves.

“Arsenic is still used in a lot of products,” Eddie explained, trying to refocus Catharine, “but thallium was first used about ten years ago to poison rats. These rat poisons are used a lot out in the country. Charlie brought this tube, and a few others, home a few months ago from a job he did out on a farm.”

“Do you really think this could be the murder weapon?” Catharine said as she peered over to look closer at the tube.

“Have you seen what this does to rats?”

“Don’t be silly, we don’t have rats in Vaucluse.”

“Of course you do.”

“If that’s the case,” Catharine said, only just managing to hide her irritation with Eddie, “then this rat poison could be in James’ kitchen as well.”

“It’s likely.”

“Well if this poison is in my kitchen and your kitchen, it could be in every kitchen across Sydney. That hardly narrows down our list of suspects.”

“I think it does,” Eddie argued. “I think that because a household item is the murder weapon then it helps us a lot.”

Catharine did not look impressed.

“Look,” Eddie told her, “if an ordinary household item was used to kill then, if we identify the victim, we might find that someone close to him, someone

probably living in the same house, was the killer."

"But you said that this poison came from the country."

"You can buy it here in Sydney," Eddie said, "or, someone could have brought it back with them after a trip to the country, like Charlie did."

Catharine considered Eddie's idea: "Perhaps it was his wife," she said voicing the theory she had thought of the night the man had died.

"I think this is more serious than a tired housewife deciding to rid herself of her husband. Besides, remember he told us that we must stop 'them' if it was his wife he would have told us to stop 'her' instead."

"There you go, trying to complicate things again."

"I think that he knew who poisoned him, he just didn't have time to tell us who it was."

"I think we have done enough detective work for one day," Catharine said. "I'll let you clean up this mess and I'll see you again in the morning."

"I'll see you in the morning then," Eddie said, pleased that even though their progress was limited they were still working on the case.

"I'll collect you just after ten o'clock."

"Alright then," Eddie said, "oh, and Catharine . . ."

"Yes darling."

"Thank you for lunch."

Chapter 6

Trying to Avoid James

Wednesday, 13th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

James Darling stood in the front foyer of his Vaucluse home. The space was an enormous cube twenty feet across, twenty feet deep and reaching twenty feet to the ceiling. Doors leading to the rest of the house were discreetly located in the simple wall panelling on both the left and right of the room. The entrance hall was dominated by a black and white chequered marble floor which the irksome real estate agent, even if it was only for his own amusement, had described during the sale process of the property as: “the world’s most fabulous chessboard for really big people and their friends.” The foyer’s only adornments were two large antique gilded chairs upholstered in crimson velvet. This made the space more suitable as the throne room for a small, but historically important, monarchy in Eastern Europe than as part of the home of a lecturer in English literature.

James played with the house keys in his jacket pocket. This house used to be his sanctuary. The heavy timber front doors of 29 Greycliffe Avenue had been a reliable barrier that protected him from the outside world but those doors had allowed an intruder in. An intruder who had advised that, despite having arrived with so many pieces of matching luggage, her visit would be short.

“Hello darling. What are you up to?” Catharine called out as she entered the

foyer.

James stiffened: “I’m just on my way to the University,” he said.

“You’ve been doing some absolutely incredible hours there lately darling,” Catharine said. “I think that’s just too awful,” she continued almost without pause. “What is it that they have you doing to keep you for such a long time each day?”

James waited but Catharine did not fill the silence.

“I’m working on a review of a few of the courses for our Bachelor of Arts degree,” he told her.

“Really?” Catharine asked.

“Yes, we’ve been trying to make some of our material more relevant.”

“Oh, don’t be silly darling,” Catharine said dismissively. “Arts degrees aren’t supposed to be relevant. They’re supposed to make you interesting at dinner parties.”

James gripped his house keys tighter: “You’ve also been doing some rather long hours yourself these days,” he said in an effort to deflect Catharine’s interest in his work.

“Oh, I’m just doing what I can to keep busy,” Catharine said evasively.

The comment, even if it had been made flippantly, made James nervous. Catharine went out to lunch and she went shopping, she occasionally went out for a night at the theatre but she did not engage in activities that were in any way demanding or which made her busier than she actually needed to be.

“And what is it that modern women, who make a living out of marrying well and claiming the literary works of others as their own, do these days to keep

themselves busy?"

"You could always claim the credit for your romance novels but I really don't think your name on the cover would sell as many copies as my name and my title do. Besides, you need to keep your little secret so as not to tarnish your good reputation. Unless, of course, publishing entertaining fiction is part of your plans to make academic study more relevant."

"Alright, apart from spending time tormenting me what are you doing to occupy yourself?"

"I've been running errands, doing a little bit of shopping and supervising Douglas. Oh, and I went over and saw Eddie the other day."

"What did you go and see her for?"

"I like her dog."

"When exactly did you go over and see her and her dog."

"It would have been a day or so ago I guess. I was thinking of going over and seeing her again this morning. Just for a little something to do."

His nervousness was starting to border on anxiety. While he had always believed Douglas would benefit from the supervision of a law enforcement official he was not sure Catharine socialising with the sister of a former policeman turned private investigator was such a good idea.

Edwina Jones was also one of the very few people who knew that his primary source of income was the result of very large and very regular royalty payments from the publishers of romantic and sensational novels and not the meagre salary he derived from his more public occupation as a university lecturer. While he was prepared to admit that Edwina had, less than a month ago, helped to save his life he firmly believed that she had found out far too much about his private affairs in the process. The idea of the only two women

who knew about his secret writing career spending time with each other made him feel very uncomfortable. Catharine was preoccupied with the issues facing her and Eddie, so she was oblivious to her brother's distress.

Taking a risk, one which she thought that Eddie would not have agreed with, Catharine decided to ask James a question about one of their cases: "Tell me darling," she started, staring at her feet and playing with a lock of hair, "do you have many friends at the University?"

"I might have one or two," James offered noncommittally as he shuffled a bit closer to the door.

"Now James, there are so many people wandering around those grounds that you must have loads of friends."

"Why do you ask?"

In Catharine's world everything was about Catharine. She did occasionally like to know what other people were up to but she very rarely took an active interest in their lives. James could not recall her having ever asked about his friends before, not even when they were children.

"It's just that I may have run into one of your friends the other day," Catharine said. "A something or other Trembath. I can't remember his full name."

His hands started to sweat. Not only was his sister's stay longer than she had assured him it would be it was now becoming apparent that it was not going to be the uneventful visit she had promised.

"Trembath? I think his Christian name is Adam," said James as he looked sideways at Catharine to gauge her reaction to the name.

“Adam. Yes, that’s right,” Catharine agreed too quickly. “Adam Trembath.”

“I don’t know him well, I think I’ve only met him around the campus a few times.”

“Oh.”

“Where did you run into him?” James asked.

“Mr Trembath?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t remember,” Catharine said lamely.

“You don’t remember?”

“Don’t make a fuss, you know I’ve never been very good at remembering details.”

James thought she was not very good at lying either. The academic considered what Catharine had just said. He would never have called Alfred Trembath a friend and he would be hard pressed to even identify him as a colleague. Trembath was known as a man with strong views who had difficulty processing the opinions of others. He was also known by some to force his ideas on people who he perceived as weak or who dared to openly try and challenge him. Frowning he wondered how Catharine had met the University’s most unlikeable accountant. Although he doubted she had met him because Catharine was a clever woman and would have remembered his name was Alfred and not Adam. If she had not met him, why was she asking questions about him?

In James’ opinion Catharine and Edwina, together, represented too much disposable income and too strong a sense of curiosity, what he firmly believed to be a decidedly inappropriate combination. He knew with absolute certainty they were up to something and if that something was linked to Alfred Trembath in any way he needed to find out what it was and find out quickly.

“Well, I should leave for my office or I’ll be late,” James said.

James looked at his front doors and briefly considered if additional security measures would keep his siblings out of his house. He visualised steel struts and extra locks but thought they would still be an inadequate defence against Catharine and Douglas.

“Here, let me open the door for you,” Catharine said as she rushed over to the entrance and took a firm grip of the handle.

“Say hello to Edwina for me.”

“I will.”

“Good bye.”

“I’ll see you tonight then,” Catharine called out as James hurried off.

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Eddie opened the door.

“Hello Eddie,” Catharine said as she breezed through to the front room. “I know I’m a bit early but James was being rather boring today. I must admit he’s never been a morning person.”

“That’s alright,” Eddie said brightly. “Come in, I have some good news.”

“Fabulous. I could use some good news,” Catharine said as she went into the front room, dropped her coat and purse into one chair and then flopped herself down into the one next to it.

“Well, it’s not much,” Eddie told her, “but I have found out something about that message couriered between the church and the University the other day. Remember I told you the office where the message was delivered belonged to

an A.M. Trembath?"

"Yes darling, I know that name."

"But do you know his full name?"

"Adam Trembath."

"Stop guessing," Eddie instructed, annoyed with Catharine's attempt to diminish the importance of what she had discovered about Trembath.

"I'm not guessing," Catharine said as she patted the arm of her chair in an effort to draw Cleo out from her sleeping position underneath Charlie's desk.

Eddie frowned but she kept talking: "His full name is Alfred Michael Trembath," she said. "He works as an accountant in one of the University's administration areas. If I had known how easy it would be to find out more about Mr Trembath, I would've done it a lot sooner."

Catharine started to feel slightly nauseous.

"Are you sure his name isn't Adam?" Catharine asked.

"No, it's Alfred," Eddie insisted.

"How can you be so certain?"

Frustrated, Eddie started to explain: "Well, it was as easy as calling the University, which I did earlier this morning. I said I wanted to send some correspondence to Mr Trembath and asked the operator if she would kindly give me his full name as well as his location within the University."

"Oh."

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter darling. It's just that I thought Trembath's Christian name was Adam, that's all," Catharine said as she slumped forward.

"What made you think that?"

"Maybe I contacted the University this morning as well and asked the same

question.”

“Did you?”

“Well, sort of.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well . . .”

“Catharine, what have you done?”

“I might have asked James if he knew him.”

“If he knew who? If he knew Trembath?”

“It seemed like a sensible thing to do,” Catharine said in a rush. “As James works at the University, Trembath works at the University. It’s not unreasonable to think they might know each other.”

“I suppose not,” Eddie conceded as she heard how upset Catharine was.

“He said to say hello to you by the way.”

“Who did?” Eddie asked.

“James did this morning, just before he left for his office.”

It was now Eddie’s turn to feel sick.

“James knew you were coming to see me?”

“Yes, why?”

“And James told you that Trembath’s first name was Adam?”

“Yes, he . . . ,” Catharine was not allowed to finish her sentence.

“I think you were right.”

“I was right about what?”

“About it not being unreasonable for James and Trembath to know each other.”

“He knows,” Catharine gasped. “It’s too awful,” she said.

“He can’t know much,” Eddie told her.

“Darling, he knows something. He must. Why would he tell me Trembath’s

name was Adam? If he knows him, or at least knows of him, and it's logical he would then he would know his name is Alfred."

"Maybe he was testing you, you know, to find out what you're up to."

"Oh darling, he must know what we're up to. This is just too awful."

"He can't know much," Eddie said again, trying to convince herself as well as her fellow investigator.

"What should we do?" Catharine asked.

"You can start by just trying to avoid James for a little while. We don't know what information he has about what we're doing but we can stop him from learning anything more by not talking to him about anything. Anything at all."

"Well it's not going to take long for him to work out that Douglas is involved," Catharine muttered nervously.

"Douglas didn't want to help us in the first place, surely he won't discuss anything with James. Will he?"

"He's not known for his ability to stand up to James. The best thing to do is move our friend out the front to somewhere a bit more secure. Besides, I know Douglas promised to take care of that awful smell but if someone goes too close to the motor car it's not going to take a lot of sniffing to work out there's something under that blanket that doesn't belong there."

"What do you mean by more secure?" Eddie asked, disregarding yet another one of Catharine's complaints about the body.

Anyone would have thought that the corpse was parked out the front of Catharine's house. Eddie sighed, she was now checking on the Packard twice a day and, thanks to the efforts of Douglas, she could not smell anything.

"I mean we need to move him somewhere that cannot be associated with either of us," Catharine explained.

“No,” Eddie said firmly as she remembered the panic she felt when Douglas asked if the body was still where they had hidden it. She wanted to be able to keep checking on their friend quickly and easily. “We’ll leave the Packard where it is so we can keep an eye on the motor car and its contents.”

Catharine tapped her foot.

“I’m sorry I asked James about Trembath.”
“That’s alright,” Eddie said, in a slightly sullen tone, as she shrugged her shoulders and then nodded in acknowledgement of Catharine’s apology.

Both women sat for a few minutes without saying anything. Cleo sensed something was wrong and so she finally decided to come out from underneath the desk. Eddie was slightly miffed her dog chose to go and sit at Catharine’s feet and thought briefly that Catharine should buy her own dog. Catharine broached the subject of moving the body again but Eddie said the body would not be safer somewhere else, despite Catharine’s almost desperate insistence.

“What do you think we should do now?” Catharine asked, pulling at Cleo’s ears.
“I thought that we could go over and see Father Cronin today. We could ask him if he thinks any more money has gone missing or, if he has found any notes like the one we found while clearing the poor box.”
“Come on then,” Catharine said, grateful for some activity to distract her from the morning’s events.

Eddie and Catharine put on their coats and their hats and went outside. The drive to the church took slightly longer than usual. Catharine was not sure if the trip was longer because of the heavier than normal traffic on the roads or

because of the tension she could feel between her and Eddie. She knew Eddie was annoyed with her for talking to James about one of their cases, even if it was indirectly. Holding the steering wheel firmly she decided against giving Eddie any examples of Douglas' inability to keep a secret, she would just have to find a way to move the body by herself.

The church was deserted when they arrived. All the early morning worshippers had left and even Father Cronin was absent. Eddie took a cheap cotton handkerchief out of her pocket and automatically started dusting one of the pews as Catharine sat down and played with the hem of her skirt as she fought her craving for a cigarette.

"Do you think we should wait for him for a little while?" Eddie asked. "The office door is still open so Father Cronin can't have gone far."
"We can wait if you want to darling," Catharine said as she looked at the limp remains of her recent flower arranging efforts.

The light coming through the church's main entrance was suddenly blocked when a man, still wearing his hat, stood just inside the doorway before making his way across to the poor box.

"Look!" Eddie hissed as she quickly slid onto the pew Catharine was sitting on.

Catharine tried to follow Eddie's instruction but Eddie had already pushed her sideways instead. The high timber backboard of the heavy wooden seat now served to hide both women from the view of anyone looking towards the altar.

Twisting her head so that she could see Eddie, Catharine asked, as quietly as

possible: “Is it the same man we followed the other day?”

“I think so,” Eddie answered as she waved frantically at Catharine to stop talking.

The two women strained to keep as still as possible, as they listened to the man’s footsteps. A small creaking sound could be heard. Eddie recognised the familiar noise as the opening of the lid on the poor box. The box’s lid was then slammed closed and the man could be heard pacing backwards and forwards across the entrance. Eddie held her breath as she watched the man’s elongated shadow, walk to the right and then to the left, the dark image almost filling the aisle. Within only a minute or two, the shadow was joined by a twin. The two dark outlines seemed to merge but they did so only briefly and they separated as quickly as they had come together.

“You’re late,” one of the men said, his voice quiet but angry.

“Sorry mate, there’s a lot of traffic out on the roads today.”

“We can’t afford any excuses,” the first man said. “Not anymore.”

“Things are bad,” came the apologetic reply. “The worst they’ve ever been.”

“Lyons needs to do something about Lang.”

“Lyons has tried and failed,” retorted the second man with a confidence that indicated he had forgotten his recent transgression of not being able to keep an appointment on time. “Look at the mess created by the new legislation that means all income tax has to be paid to the Commonwealth now. Lyons brings in a legitimate law and Lang responds by sealing off most of the Tax Department. Canberra can’t access the records they need to issue assessment notices. The staff can’t even access the records, nearly two hundred people turned up for work and were turned away, all of them told they were on leave.”

“But Lyons is our Prime Minister,” the first man insisted, “it’s his duty to fix this

thing before we descend into chaos."

"Shhh!" the second man cut off.

"What?"

"Did you hear something?"

The men turned away from each other so they could scan the rows of pews and the stone walls that encased them.

"What did you hear?"

"Nothing. It was nothing."

They moved closer to each other and lowered their voices.

"Game has to do the right thing and sack him. Now."

"The campaign to dismiss Lang has been going on for months. The Governor doesn't have what it takes."

"Maybe Canberra should just go to the Tax Department, demand entry and take the information they need. They have the law on their side now," the man who had been late suggested.

"It's been barricaded up too tight to just walk in. And I heard that Lang has put on thirty or so thugs from the Timber Workers' Union to watch the place."

"What?"

"That's right, those unionists are everywhere. Something should've been done a month ago when Lang and his henchmen cleared out the Government accounts at the Bank of New South Wales and the Commercial Bank. Over a million pounds in cash was just withdrawn and taken over to Macquarie Street to be kept in the Treasury Building. And what does Lang do then? He gives lump sums to his union friends. That's what he does. All that money just given out to

the unions of nurses, police and teachers to supposedly pay their wages."

"Dirty commies."

"We'll be expelled from the Empire."

"That mad dog Lang needs to be stopped."

"That's right and it's going to be up to us to stop him. That's why there can't be any more excuses. No more mistakes."

"It's up to us."

Eddie continued to hold her breath as she watched the two silhouettes become more and more animated. Suddenly another shape appeared in the aisle and Eddie looked on in horror as she realised what it was. It was Catharine's hat.

Catharine could not see the men or their shadows and was in such an awkward position she had been unable to stop her hat from falling off. She pulled frantic faces at Eddie and tried to indicate one hand was keeping her balanced and her other hand was holding onto her purse, which would make a lot more noise than her black felt cloche if it hit the floor. The felted wool hat rolled in the subtle air currents and the out of place item would be easily spotted if one of the arguing men happened to look towards the church's main windows.

The men had finished talking but had not finished the business they had at the church that morning. Eddie continued to look at the aisle and at what reminded her of an old puppet show that she had seen as a little girl. The final scene in the show she was watching today was more sinister than the childish fairytale she remembered seeing with her parents. She watched one man delve into his jacket pocket, withdraw what looked like a small envelope and then give it to the outstretched hand of the other figure. The shadows retreated and then, like malevolent wisps of smoke from an extinguished fire, they were both gone.

“We have to split up,” Eddie ordered.

“But darling . . . ,” Catharine protested, as she used a rather ungraceful manoeuvre to make herself upright again.

“Look,” Eddie said urgently, “there are two of them and there are two of us. We have to split up so that we can find out where both of them go and what they do next.”

“It sounds efficient enough but . . .”

“They’re definitely the same couriers. The ones that we saw the last time we were here. One of them passed the other one another note, I’m sure of it.”

“How could you possibly see anything Eddie? We were both curled up like possums in a tree,” Catharine said as she retrieved her hat and put it on before rubbing her neck and watching Eddie almost sprint out of the church.

Catharine decided to quickly check the poor box on her way out. It was empty even though she had deposited a £1 note into the box as she had come into the church and Eddie had gone off in search of Father Cronin. She closed the lid of the box and hurried outside.

“Both of those men are on the move now and we’re running out of time. We have to act quickly,” Eddie said.

“I know. It’s just that . . .”

“You follow him. Look, he’s walking towards that motor car. He must have been the one who drove here,” Eddie whispered as she pointed out the taller of the two couriers to Catharine, “and I’ll follow the other one on foot.”

Catharine was going to protest but Eddie was gone, holding her hat, running out of the churchyard and after a courier. Catharine looked at her watch, muttered something under her breath that Eddie would have disapproved of,

and then made her way over to the Rolls.

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Eddie was still breathing heavily and her dress was damp with perspiration as she stood in Charlie's office and waited to be connected through to Catharine. The voice of an older woman eventually answered the telephone and Eddie assumed it was Catharine's personal maid Elizabeth. No, Lady Darling was not home. Yes, a message could be given to Lady Darling when she came in. Yes, she would attend to it personally. Carefully replacing the telephone receiver Eddie wiped more perspiration from her hands, sat in her brother's chair and stared at the telephone wishing it to ring.

Chapter 7

A Companion for Cleo

Thursday, 14th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

Catharine parked in front of the house that stood opposite Eddie's and Charlie's family home. She tried not to look at the sleek, black Packard and she tried not to think of its contents. She did not like their guest being separated from public view by only a motor car door and a picnic blanket. She liked even less the fact that Douglas had insisted the motor car windows were all lowered slightly to help dissipate what was a rather unsavoury smell. Taking a breath she crossed the street and knocked on the front door of number 247 Union Street.

"So darling, you have a plan," she said as she stepped inside.

"Yes. Yes I do," Eddie told her as she took Catharine's coat and hung it on a hook on the hallstand.

"Does it involve moving our friend out the front to a new location?"

"Ah, no," Eddie said.

Eddie knew her co-conspirator was anxious about the Packard. It was over a week since the body had been placed under the back seat and covered with a picnic blanket. In a period of eight days only three people knew what the motor car concealed, the same people who had given the vehicle its rather unpleasant cargo. Although Eddie admitted James knew she and Catharine were up to something, she continued to focus on the fact he had no idea of what that

something actually was.

Eddie kept repeating the promise Douglas had made not to say anything about, after Catharine's insistence that 'the body' was an ugly phrase, what was now being referred to as 'the parcel'. Catharine frowned. Douglas had, for as long as she could remember, possessed the frustrating habit of cracking under even the most moderate levels of interrogation. Catharine was convinced that if James asked Douglas any questions they would only have a few hours to move the parcel and avoid a stay as a guest of His Majesty's penitentiary system. She pictured her name in the newspapers and became more determined to move the parcel on her own.

They sat quietly in Charlie's office, the room where all of their current problems had begun. At least Eddie now knew better than to offer Catharine coffee. Eddie had to admit she was upset that despite a week of effort she was no closer to solving the case than she was the night the stranger had died. She was sure Charlie had never hidden a dead man before but was equally sure that if he had it would not have taken him this long to discover the identity of the murderer. Despite all her work she had not even learnt the identity of the victim.

Catharine broke the silence by asking: "So, what's your plan?"

"Well, it's more of an idea than a plan."

Catharine knew playing investigator was important to Eddie, although she didn't understand why: "Ideas can be useful too," she said.

Eddie took a deep breath and said: "Yesterday afternoon we went to see Father Cronin."

"I remember," Catharine said, trying to sound patient.

"You know Father Cronin wasn't in."

Catharine tried to feign interest in the details and said: “That’s why we were alone at the church when those two couriers met.”

“Did you have any luck?” Eddie asked.

“Not really. I followed him as far as the University but . . .”

“But what?”

“I saw James so I thought it was safer to abandon the chase and make my way home.”

“Did he see you?” Eddie asked anxiously.

“The courier? No, I don’t think so.”

“No, James. Did your brother see you?”

“Oh no, James wouldn’t have seen me. He was too busy with his head in a book,” Catharine said trying to persuade herself as well as Eddie.

“Well, as you know, I followed the other courier,” Eddie said.

“How far did you go?”

“I managed to follow him home, all the way to Leichhardt.”

“Did you find anything out?”

“Yes, he lives at the back of a house as a boarder of a man who breeds and sells tin hares.”

“That’s such a vulgar expression.”

“Sorry. Greyhounds.”

“What else did you discover?”

“Not much. I waited at the end of the street for almost an hour and a half but I didn’t see anyone else come or go.”

“Do you think knowing where one of the couriers of those notes lives is of any use to us? I know you want to solve both our cases but surely one should be taking a clear priority over the other.”

Eddie was frustrated with Catharine’s continued preoccupation with the parcel.

Douglas had taken care of the smell, although she didn't know how he had done it, so there was nothing to worry about anymore.

"Our case for Father Cronin might be more interesting than you think," Eddie told her. "Anyway, that's why I left you a message. My plan, well my idea, is to go and visit the man running the boarding house."

"We'll just knock on his door and invite ourselves in shall we?" Catharine asked.

"I thought we could go and see him about a dog."

"We already have a dog and I think Cleo enjoys being an only child."

"We don't have to buy a dog, we just need to look at one. Here, this is yesterday's edition of *The Referee*," Eddie said opening the weekly sports paper and passing it to Catharine. "Look at the advertisement at the top of the page."

Catharine studied the small section of boxed print, which listed details for dogs available at a Leichhardt address.

"So you want to ask about buying a dog?"

"I thought, actually, you might ask about the dog."

"Why do I have to all the horrible things?" Catharine asked. "You wanted to take on these cases and I'm the one that has had to help hide a parcel, give out a code and endure that dreadful ordeal at the laundry which cost me fifty shillings. Now you want me to talk to a man I don't know about a dog I don't want. Why, it's all just too awful for words."

"If you distract the man who owns the house I can sneak into the boarders' rooms and see if I can find out something about the courier that is more valuable to us than just his address."

"Darling that's a terrible plan."

"It's just an idea," Eddie said.

“You can’t have a plan without an idea,” Catharine said softly.

“Should we go over now and see what we can find out?” Eddie asked.

“Absolutely not.”

“But . . .”

“You can’t walk into a house and start searching people’s private accommodations. You could be caught and arrested.”

“I could also be arrested for something a lot more serious,” Eddie said.

Catharine thought that one of Eddie’s more unlikeable traits was her stubbornness and, sighing heavily, she decided to give in now rather than waste a lot of time and effort only to give in later.

Folding the newspaper Catharine stood up: “Come on darling,” she instructed, “if we’re going to end up in the hands of the police I’m sure breaking and entering is less likely to make the front page than some of our other recent activities.”

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They arrived at Leichhardt and saw that the boarding house was the most poorly maintained property in the street. There were cracks in the front windows, the garden looked as though it had not received any attention in years and the front fence was collapsing under the weight of an additional barrier, about four feet in height, that had been haphazardly constructed out of rolls of chicken wire.

“I don’t think this is a good plan or even a good idea,” Catharine said as she looked at the boarding house.

“Just take the advertisement,” Eddie told her, “and ask him about the dogs available for sale. A few minutes should give me enough time to find the courier’s room.”

“How will I know you’ve finished your part in today’s ill-conceived adventure?”

Eddie tried to think quickly: “I’ll go to the motor car and toot the horn.”

“Oh, how common,” Catharine said.

The idea of being tooted for as if she was a shop girl being collected by some factory worker for a night at the cinema was revolting.

“What if I just turn the engine over? You’ll hear the sound from inside the house and it’ll be less obvious.”

Catharine could not think of a viable alternative and gave Eddie the keys to the Rolls: “I still think this is a terrible plan and we should be spending our time concentrating on other matters.”

“I know you want to focus on our other issue but this is the best lead we’ve had so far in either case.”

“Come on then, let’s go and do this as quickly as possible.”

“Alright,” Eddie said, as she tucked a recalcitrant lock of hair behind her ear.

“Oh, and darling,”

“Yes?”

“Please don’t let anyone catch you.”

Having made a decision, they crossed the road together and then separated without a word. Catharine went through the gate and to the front door while Eddie went through a neighbour’s garden and down the side of the house. Catharine knocked and, the owner’s footsteps were so muffled by the sounds of barking dogs, she was startled when the door opened in front of her.

The man who answered Catharine's knock was also startled. Catharine did not exactly represent the average member of his clientele who consisted of a dozen or so men operating out of Wentworth Park and a few men who worked the country tracks. The only thing Graham Johnson recognised when he saw the woman who had knocked on his front door that morning, out of his career of almost forty years of racing, breeding and selling dogs, was the name of the newspaper she was holding in her hand. Catharine wanted to ask Mr Johnson to close his mouth but could not think of a polite way to phrase her request so she shook his offered hand instead. She regretted having taken her gloves off.

"Mr Johnson?"

"Yeah."

"You have an advertisement for greyhounds in *The Referee*," Catharine said.

"So, you've come to see me 'bout a dog, 'ave you?"

"That's right," Catharine said as she proffered the newspaper in an effort to back up her story.

"Ever 'ad a dog before?" Mr Johnson asked, as he slowly looked Catharine up and down a few times.

"No," Catharine told him, uncomfortable at the man's obvious appraisal of her. "I've had some horses though," she offered in an effort to draw out the conversation and give Eddie as much time as possible.

"Ah, 'orses 'ave you. Dogs are better 'an 'orses. Faster they are."

"Really?"

"Yeah. Put an 'orse an a dog out on the track and the dog'll win every time."

"Really?"

"Yeah. Over the shorter distances, the dog'll win every time."

Catharine accepted an invitation to go inside and found herself standing in Mr

Johnson's front room. She tried to think of something to say and she tried not to touch anything. She listened carefully for the sound of a motor car engine starting.

"It's the double suspension gallop what does it."

"Really?" Catharine asked again, not knowing what else to say.

"Yeah, most animals when they run, only have all four feet off the ground once in a cycle but the dog'll have all four feet off the ground twice in a cycle. That's why it's called a double suspension gallop."

"Because all feet are suspended twice instead of just once per cycle while they run," Catharine offered, grateful that she had managed to make herself contribute something to the chat she was having.

"That's it. More time flyin' through the air, less time runnin' on the ground, that's what makes 'em so fast."

"I understand."

"Tires 'em though. If you've 'ad 'orses you need to know you can't run a dog like you run a 'orse."

"I see."

"Yeah, shorter distances, less races per week. A dog'll still pay 'is way though. Get a good one that is."

"Your advertisement suggests you have many dogs available to choose from."

"That I do," Mr Johnson said as he nodded vigorously. "That I do."

"How many do you have at the moment?"

"Getting' near on twenty good dogs 'ere now. Good dogs they are. Prize winners all of 'em."

Unable to hear Eddie's signal Catharine knew that she had to play for more time so she asked: "Can I see some of the best dogs you have available?"

"Yeah, just give me a minute. You sit tight, I'll be back in a minute."

Catharine had no intention of sitting anywhere in that squalid room so she stood and hoped desperately the dogs were not kept near the boarding rooms. She fidgeted nervously waiting for him to come back with some of his prize-winners for her to have a look at.

Five minutes passed before Mr Johnson returned with four of his animals. The dogs were extremely quiet with none of the boisterous barking that could still be heard from the house's backyard. Their heads were bowed and their tails were rigid, tucked between their back legs and pointing to the ground. There was a brindle, which reminded Catharine of Cleo, there were two grey dogs and a brown one, which stood out because it was so tall.

"What d'ya think 'bout 'em?"

Catharine paused. She heard the familiar sound of a Rolls Royce engine.

"I think that you've been in the racing business for a long time," Catharine said.
"Told you I 'ad," Mr Johnson said, leaning forward. "I've raced more winners and bred more winners than I could tell you 'bout."

Catharine looked at the taller brown dog again and she thought, even in the poor light, she could see parallel welt marks across both of his thighs. She quickly judged the distance between the welts in each set of marks was roughly two inches. Catharine returned her attention to Mr Johnson: his old, soiled, and ill-fitting trousers; his worn shirt with no pockets and a long rip in the collar; his scuffed working boots without laces; and his brown leather two-inch wide belt.

"That very tall dog looks impressive," Catharine forced herself to say.

“Ah, you ‘ave an eye you do. Quite an eye to recognise a dog like that when you see ‘im.”

“Oh you would be surprised to learn about what I am able to recognise when I see it,” Catharine tried to say as casually as possible.

“I told you I only bred prize winners and ‘e would be one o’ the best ‘e would. A four-year-old, but ‘e still got plenty o’ life in ‘im. E’s got plenty o’ wins under ‘is belt and a few more wins left in ‘im yet.”

“Yes I can see that he would have had quite a lot under a belt,” Catharine said softly.

“A ‘ard dog to part with.”

“I’m sure he would be.”

“Can’t let my best dogs go cheap you know.”

“Of course not.”

“I’m still a business man I am.”

“Of course you are.”

“A good dog is Richmond Rascal.”

“I’m sure he is,” Catharine said, cringing at the sound of the dog’s name.

“It’s ‘ard to put a price on ‘im.”

Catharine did not respond.

As it turned out Mr Johnson was able to come up with a price for the dog without too much difficulty at all when Catharine started handing over new £5 notes. In return for emptying her purse Catharine was given some basic care instructions and the dog’s lead as well as an escort to the front door.

Catharine crossed the road again and stood calmly on the footpath while she waited for Eddie to open the motor car door and hop out from the driver’s seat.

She held the leash of the dog, with such a dignified grace, that a passerby would have thought she was waiting for a master sculptor to arrive and decide whether she would look better cast in bronze or carved out of marble. Even the dog was smitten by her beauty as he stood respectfully before her waiting patiently to be told what to do.

“What took you so long?” Eddie demanded as she joined Catharine on the footpath.

“I was not the one that took an extraordinary amount of time to search what I assume was only one very small room,” Catharine snapped in return.

“But I thought you would have left as soon as you heard the engine start.”

“I tried to darling but I didn’t want a very hasty exit to arouse any suspicion.”

Eddie looked more closely at the greyhound and forgot she had spent the last five minutes worrying about Catharine and if she was in trouble in the front room of the Leichhardt house.

“That,” said Eddie, pointing, “is the largest dog I’ve ever seen.”

“I’m sorry darling,” Catharine said. “I’m just so used to shopping for diamonds. Out of habit I simply took the biggest one he had.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that I simply asked for the largest dog he had and I was given this one.”

“So you bought a dog?”

“Yes.”

“You actually bought a racing dog?”

“Well had you been more efficient, I may have been able to buy a couple of collars and a little jacket for Cleo. Instead you conducted an incredibly long

search leaving me with Mr Johnson who, in addition to being a generally unpleasant little man, was a rather poor conversationalist. Not only was I given a complete history of the greyhound but I also was given a lecture on the proper care of a racer and on top of that I was given a dog. All in all it was a dreadful experience which cost me £25."

"You paid £25 for that?" Eddie could not believe what she was hearing.

"Yes I did," Catharine said a little snappishly, "so I hope you were able to find something worthwhile."

The two women and the large dog all took their places in the motor car. Eddie twisted around and considered the animal that was lying down on the back seat a little bit more carefully. The dog was exceptionally tall with legs that were almost as long as Catharine's. He was also exceptionally thin with many more than the standard three ribs showing and each of his vertebrae were clearly visible. The dog looked more like a skeleton that had been on display in a museum than a living creature that was supposed to earn a regular pay packet out of physical activity. Eddie was surprised the dog could walk, he certainly could not run. Eddie calculated in his current condition the three or four-year-old dog may have been worth £1 or £2, if that. She wondered if Catharine cared about the animal or if she just did not care about money.

"I've always liked red fawn for a colour," Eddie offered in an effort to say something nice about the dog.

"Oh darling, red fawn sounds so common," Catharine complained. "I think that his colouring is more like Arabian sand, don't you?"

Eddie knew it was sometimes safer to stay silent than offer an opinion different to Catharine's. Eddie sensed this was one of those times. Choosing to keep

quiet she patted the dog's head. The dog was oblivious to the conversation and to Eddie's attention, he was too busy craning his neck so he could look up at Catharine.

"The first thing we need to do darling is have some lunch."
"Lunch?" Eddie asked. "Aren't you curious about what I found?"
"Don't be so selfish. That dog doesn't look as if he's had a decent meal in over a month."

Eddie twisted around again to look at the dog and could not disagree.

"What's his name?" Eddie asked.
"I haven't thought of one yet," Catharine told her.
"Didn't the man who sold him to you tell you his name?"
"He did but I need to think of something more suitable."

Eddie shrugged her shoulders and Catharine, without any consultation, started driving back the way they had come.

"Where are we going?" Eddie asked.

The younger woman was feeling completely deflated. She had finally found some things of relevance to the case that involved the couriers, as well as the men who had watched the Premier over lunch at Pearson's Fish Café. Instead of discussing her finds with Catharine, she found that her co-investigator was distracted by a dog.

"There's a smart little restaurant at David Jones," Catharine told her.

Eddie shrugged again.

Finally, Catharine said: “Come on, you can tell me all about what you found while we drive over to DJs.”

“Alright,” Eddie said.

“The first thing you have to tell me darling is how you broke in.”

“I didn’t really break in,” Eddie told her as she tried to avoid eye contact.

“What do you mean?” Catharine asked her.

“The door was open,” Eddie answered without looking up.

“At least that means you were less likely to be arrested. So what did you find?” Catharine asked.

Eddie took a deep breath and started sharing what she had discovered with Catharine: “The first thing I saw was a large glass jar of coins.”

“Of course I prefer notes,” Catharine said, “but some people do collect loose change.”

“I think the jar was full of the coins taken from the poor box.”

“You saw the newly minted florin Father Cronin mentioned?” Catharine asked.

“That’s right,” Eddie said, becoming a bit more enthusiastic now that she knew Catharine was paying attention again.

“As we left the church yesterday I checked the poor box and it was completely empty, even though I knew there was money there before those men arrived,” Catharine said.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Eddie demanded.

“I’m sorry darling, I forgot.”

“I think the couriers are taking the money when they collect the notes,” Eddie suggested.

“What else did you find?” Catharine asked.

“I also found a bundle of blank cards that were the same colour, same shape

and same size as the card that the note to Mr Trembath was written on."

"So these men might be actually writing the notes as well as delivering them," Catharine suggested.

"It's possible."

"Was that all?"

"No," Eddie said as she took another deep breath. "There was a pile of newspaper clippings on a chest of drawers. I didn't go through all of them because I didn't want to disturb the room too much. All the clippings I saw though, which dated back about a year or so, were about a man by the name of Colonel Eric Campbell and an organisation called the New Guard."

"I've heard of them," Catharine said, "they're political types and from what I understand they're terribly boring."

"I've heard about them too," Eddie said, "and from what Charlie has told me, they are very active political types who have been consistently campaigning against Jack Lang and anyone that supports him or his Government."

"The papers are full of the fight between those for and against the Premier. I try to avoid it but every day there are just pages of it."

"Why would you avoid reading about something so important?"

"Because politics is so dull. That's why," Catharine explained.

"But . . ."

"Oh I pay attention during election season and vote when I have to."

"You vote when you have to," Eddie repeated, slightly incredulous.

"Of course darling, until recently I had never broken a single law."

"But . . ."

"But what darling?"

Eddie was going to say something, she was going to say several things actually, about why Catharine should pay attention to politics but she decided it was

safer to bite her lip instead.

“I also found a list of names,” Eddie said and then, after pausing briefly for effect, she told Catharine: “The list was identical to the list of names that our murder victim was carrying the night he died.”

“Good God!” Catharine exclaimed.

“Please don’t say things like that,” Eddie chided.

“I’m sorry but who could have guessed that our two cases were connected?”

Eddie bit her lip again.

“The two cases are more connected than you think.”

“What do you mean?”

“R. Snook was crossed out on the list in the courier’s room.”

This time Catharine bit her lip.

“Crossed out,” Catharine finally said.

“In red ink and,” Eddie paused, “pinned to a small collection of photographs, one of which was of a man identical to the man hidden in the Packard.”

“It was a good plan after all,” Catharine said quietly.

“I think it’s R. Snook who’s in the Packard,” Eddie told her.

“It has to be,” Catharine agreed. “Do you think the courier is the killer or at least knows who is?” she asked.

The dog was able to sense the seriousness of the conversation and so he waited for an answer to the question that had just been asked. Unfortunately, his mistress and her companion were silent until they pulled up near David

Jones. Catharine parked the Rolls on Elizabeth Street, not far from the entrance to St James Station, and then went to help the dog out of the back seat.

“Why are we here?” Eddie asked.

“I told you, we’re here for lunch. There’s a lovely restaurant downstairs.”

“You can’t take a dog through a department store.”

“Why not?”

“Because they won’t let you, that’s why.”

“Don’t be silly darling.”

Catharine faced the tall stone building. The dog looked longingly at the large park, with lush green lawns, in the opposite direction. When there was a sufficient break in the flow of traffic Catharine crossed the road with the dog obediently, and Eddie reluctantly, following her.

As they approached the heavy bronze and glass doors opened and the doorman said: “Good morning, My Lady.”

Catharine smiled, said good morning and mentioned something innocuous about the weather. Eddie followed her and the dog in disbelief. The dog struggled on the slippery marble surface and faltered at the top of the stairs leading to the main shopping floor, refusing to go down and refusing to go back outside. Catharine encouraged him with little noises and pulled his lead but the dog only whimpered. Eddie thought they were creating a terrible scene so she scooped the dog up in her arms, muttered that despite being underweight he was still heavier than Cleo, and carried him down the stairs.

“Good boy!” Catharine exclaimed. “What a good boy coming down the stairs.”

“Yes, what a good boy,” Eddie said, “he did it all by himself.”

“Don’t be tedious,” Catharine said as she petted and tried to reassure the overwhelmed animal. “You’re a very good boy,” Catharine gushed as she pulled his ears.

The dog lifted his head slightly in response to Catharine’s obvious approval of him. His tail wagged, just once, from right to left. The small group then made their way from one side of the floor to the other, walking past counters laid out with cosmetics, perfumes, hats and handbags, and towards the lifts. Other shoppers and shop assistants looked but no one stopped them because of the dog. When Catharine called the lift they all waited quietly but the dog became wary when the doors opened and he was expected to go into the small box.

“Good morning, Lady Darling. Morning, miss,” the lift driver said.

“Good morning, Ronald,” said Catharine.

“What floor would you like today?”

“Lower ground please, we’re off for a spot of lunch.”

“Very good, My Lady.”

The lift driver thought Lady Darling was becoming more eccentric by the day. Eddie watched the lift driver operate his machine and thought it was incredible they had been allowed into the store. The dog watched the doors close, he thought the sliding action was similar to the gates at the track and although he did not feel well if his mistress wanted him to run, then he would run. Catharine waited for the indicator light, the one that would tell them they were on the floor of The Soda Fountain, to come on and thought everything was normal.

“Lower ground,” the lift driver called as he opened the doors.

The dog, which had been waiting for the moment to make his new mistress proud, sprung forward. Catharine was lifted off her feet as she tried to hold his lead. Eddie called out a warning to the diners and shoppers in the dog's path but it was too late. People, products, chairs and tables went flying in all directions as the dog tried to go as fast as he could even though there was no defined track and he did not know what he was chasing. Confused and struggling with the slippery floor he ran because he thought his mistress wanted him to.

He worried if this woman did not think he was a good dog she might take him back to the man who did not like him. His most recently acquired set of welts on his right thigh stung as he forced himself to go faster. Catharine called out to a waiter asking for a table for three and called out to Eddie asking her to pick up her hat that had fallen off just outside the lift doors. Her voice could hardly be heard as the usually calm scarlet, green and white restaurant was transformed into a venue in complete uproar. Some people tried to help, most tried to stay out of the way, some were forced to actively clamber to safety. It was only a minute or so before the out of condition racer tired and, having run as far and as fast as he could, he lay down panting heavily in a corner.

The dog looked up at Catharine, his face clearly asking for some more approval. Catharine, who thought they had outstayed their welcome, pulled his ears and told him that he was a very good boy as she picked him up off the floor. She was struggling with the dog so Eddie carried her hat and purse for her while they found their way back to the lift.

"Was there nothing on the menu for you today, Lady Darling?" the lift driver asked, catching a glimpse of the damage that had been done.

“No Ronald,” Catharine panted, “not today.”

News of the incident spread quickly throughout the building and provided men and women in every section with hours of gossip. A man from maintenance and an accountant surveyed the damage. They calculated costs so a bill could be issued to Lady Darling who had been identified as the instigator of the small disaster. Upstairs the manager was told about the commotion and he called his secretary into his office and asked her to take down a draft document, which would prohibit animals from ever coming into the store and creating such a scene again.

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The three of them sat on the grass in the park watching the water of the Archibald Fountain. Eddie had been sent to find something for them all to eat and had managed to locate some sandwiches for her and Catharine and a few pieces of roast beef, which she had been able to buy at the sandwich shop for Catharine’s new friend.

“Do you think Cleo will like him?” Catharine asked.

“I think so,” Eddie said, taking another bite of her ham and cheese sandwich.

“We need to find out who Mr R. Snook is,” Catharine declared.

“We need to find out more about the New Guard.”

“There seems to be a connection, if we find out that Snook was a member we might find the other names on the list are New Guard members too.”

“Perhaps that’s what 3332 is. Remember, you suggested it might be a membership number? It could be his number for the New Guard.”

“Poor Eddie,” Catharine said, “you’ll not rest until you’ve solved that little

puzzle will you?"

"No. At least we now have some other leads to follow. We need to know as much as there is to know about the New Guard and see what we can find out about their leader, this Colonel Eric Campbell."

"I know they're a rather outspoken group," Catharine said, "but do you really think they're murderers?"

"I don't know," Eddie mumbled, her mouth still full of soft bread. "I don't understand what drives people to kill each other."

"Oh well, darling, we'll find out."

"Yes we will," Eddie said, swallowing hard.

"I think Cleo will like her new companion," Catharine said as she patted the dog's head again.

Eddie shrugged and thought of the name Snook and how it had been crossed out on the list that was held in the courier's room. She thought about the photographs in the courier's room and the handkerchief found on the body with a set of initials that could easily belong to R. Snook. She was thrilled that they were finally able to give a name to the parcel.

Finishing her sandwich she watched Catharine pull at the dog's ears and, as he had finished his lunch, Catharine then took a piece of ham from her own sandwich and offered it to him. The dog hesitated, just long enough to look up at her adoringly, and then took the small piece of meat and promptly devoured the salty snack.

Eddie watched the brief interaction between the wealthy woman and the half-starved ex-racing dog. She was still embarrassed by the scene they had created at David Jones but she felt better now that they were in the park and

she couldn't help but smile at the dog's attitude towards his new owner. Perhaps Cleo, who was prone to fits of jealousy at the best of times, would not like him after all.

Eddie had first thought Catharine had bought the dog because she was trying to give her time to search the courier's boarding room and because she placed no value on money. It was obvious now she had bought the dog for a very different reason. She wanted to apologise for snapping at Catharine earlier by saying something positive about the gangly and awkward looking greyhound.

"That dog can run really fast," Eddie said.

"It's the double suspension gallop," Catharine told her, smiling.

Chapter 8

Going to Hunter Street

Friday, 15th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

Eddie had seen Catharine's motor car pull up and park across the street so was surprised when she answered the door and saw Catharine's brother, James, standing there.

"Good morning Edwina," he said.

"Good morning," she responded, a little hesitantly.

They both stood there for a minute or so in an awkward silence, which was not broken until Catharine, growing impatient waiting for them both, tooted the motor car horn, making Eddie frown.

"Grab your coat old girl," James instructed.

"My coat?" Eddie asked.

"Yes, we're going on an excursion."

"Where to?"

"Catharine has told me she will explain everything on the way."

Eddie knew Catharine had been trying to avoid James and could not work out why she would have brought him with her to Newtown. She decided not to say anything as she went to the hallstand and quickly put on her coat and hat.

Giving Cleo a goodbye scratch under her chin she hurried to find her purse before following James to Catharine's motor car. Eddie felt sorry for Catharine who sat, her head bowed slightly forward, with both of her hands resting on the steering wheel.

All of Eddie's sympathy for her fellow investigator evaporated when she saw she had been displaced from her usual position, in the front passenger seat, by Catharine's new dog. The dog looked comfortable despite the front of the motor car only providing very cramped conditions for such a large animal. His body was curled up in a way that allowed his long neck to negotiate the obstacle of the gear stick, an arrangement that allowed him to rest his head on Catharine's lap. Catharine let one of her hands fall from the steering wheel and started playing with the dog's ears. Eddie thought Cleo would never have been allowed to sit in the front of Charlie's motor car.

"Have you given your new friend a name yet?" Eddie asked.

"No, not yet darling," Catharine told her, sounding very distracted.

"James told me we're all going on excursion," Eddie said, an emphasis on the word all.

"That's right," Catharine told her. "I have a plan," she said in a hushed voice.

"You're allowed to be frightened," James said to Eddie as he sat down next to her on the back seat. "I know that I am."

"Don't be unkind," Catharine complained, "it's a very good plan."

"A plan for what?" Eddie asked.

"That, old girl, is a very good question. In fact, I asked the same one as we left the house this morning," James said.

"Can't two women have a plan to spend a day in town?" Catharine asked.

"Just a day in town is it?" James asked, unconvinced.

“Yes, it will be terribly dull,” Catharine’s laugh was obviously forced and she attempted to cover her agitation by talking faster: “The plan you see,” continued Catharine, “involves a little trip to Hardy Bros.”

Catharine busied herself with the task of starting the engine and pulling out onto the road. The dog was excited by the activity and scrambled to stand up.

“Why do we need to go to a jewellery store?” Eddie asked, regretting asking the question in front of James as soon as she had uttered it.
“I think you’ll find Catharine doesn’t need a reason to go shopping,” James whispered to her.
“And what about you?” Eddie asked, trying to find out why he was with them instead of at work. “Do you need an excuse to go shopping?”
“Not usually, but today is different,” he told her.

Eddie caught a reflection of Catharine in the rear view mirror and saw that she was frowning. The motor car then started to go a little faster. The dog whimpered as he slid on the leather surface and Catharine immediately pacified him by giving him a little pat and by pulling a small snack out of the glove box for him.

“You see, today,” James continued, “is a Friday and, as my dear sister recently pointed out, I have been doing some excessive hours at the University lately, so I thought I would treat myself to a long weekend.”
“A long weekend?” Eddie asked.
“That’s right, I’m taking the whole day off,” James said, as he stretched his legs. “I thought I could use the time to see what Catharine has been doing to keep herself so busy these days.”

The motor car halted and then lurched violently as Catharine applied the brakes, narrowly missing a small lorry. Catharine said something under her breath while her two passengers slid across the back seat. The dog was too busy enjoying the new sensation of having his head hanging out of the window, and trying to account for so many different smells, to notice the erratic movements of the motor car. Despite some more unconventional driving, the three people and the one dog, all reached the city in good time and Catharine found a parking space close to where they needed to be. They collected their coats and bundled out of the Rolls and onto the street. Catharine walked around to the front passenger side and opened the door for the dog.

“Do you really think that’s a good idea?” Eddie asked, her arms folded.

“What’s the matter darling?”

“Do you not remember what happened yesterday?”

“Oh,” Catharine said, sounding disappointed. “I suppose that David Jones has some awful rule now about not letting dogs in their store.”

“I have a rule about not letting dogs inside my house,” James said, interrupting the two women, “but that hasn’t stopped you from bringing an uninvited, unwanted and unusually large example of one into my home.”

“Don’t say such awful things, he’ll hear you.”

“I think he should stay in the motor car,” Eddie said as her memory replayed vivid scenes from yesterday’s visit to David Jones.

“It might be too hot for him to stay in the motor car,” Catharine said.

“We can leave the window down for him,” Eddie suggested. “Besides, we will not be gone for long, will we?”

“I don’t know,” Catharine said, genuinely unsure of what to do. “He might be bored or lonely if he’s left on his own.”

“You’re letting him sit in the front though,” Eddie said, still a little bit upset she

had been relegated to the back seat. “Cleo doesn’t mind waiting in the motor car alone for a few minutes and she isn’t allowed to sit in the front.”

“Oh darling, Cleo isn’t a real greyhound. She’s just a scatter cushion that moves occasionally.”

“She is so a real greyhound,” Eddie said angrily.

“You could always just secure his leash to the door handle and let him wait outside the motor car,” James suggested.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Catharine snapped, “someone might take him.”

James and Eddie looked at the less than perfect specimen of a dog and then looked at each other. Catharine, meanwhile, had walked around to the trunk of the vehicle and was busy going through the picnic basket. She quickly located a bowl and a flask of fresh water and took both items to where the dog was still sitting. After filling the bowl with water and placing it on the floor in front of the dog’s seat, she wound the window down the rest of the way and then promised sincerely she would not be gone for very long. James asked, sarcastically, if her green tartan picnic blanket would make the dog more comfortable. Eddie held her breath while she waited for an answer and Catharine snapped saying she did not know where the blanket was. Eddie wanted to ask if the Rolls Royce would be safe with the window down but decided she did not want to risk Catharine’s feisty response. Catharine was still worried about the dog so he was given some more reassurance before the three of them walked the short distance back into Hunter Street and then down to the Hardy Bros store.

Eddie had never been inside a jewellery store before and did not want to go into one now. There was no time to voice her concerns though because Catharine and James walked straight through the heavy and imposing doors. Eddie did up the last few buttons of her coat, in an effort to cover up her

unfashionable day dress, and followed her companions quickly to avoid being left alone out on the street.

In every direction on the store's main floor, glass cases held fabulous diamonds and stunning jewels in every conceivable colour. Each glittering object was beautifully enhanced by a series of ornate chandeliers which also provided the light for an extensive collection of silverware: candlesticks; cruet sets; flatware; goblets; service trays; vases; and dozens of items that Eddie did not even recognise. The only familiarity for Eddie, who was feeling quite distressed about being surrounded by such obscene wealth, was the rhythmic ticking of a silver carriage clock. In sharp contrast Catharine looked at home and very relaxed in the opulent environment. James was too busy watching Catharine and trying to work out if her visit to Hardy Bros had a connection to her claim to have met Alfred Trembath to really pay any attention to the treasures on display.

Catharine turned to her brother and tried to be as assertive as she could under the circumstances: "Darling if you could just provide a little distraction, Eddie and I will take care of our small errand."

"What errand?" he asked, trying to use his height to intimidate his sister, a primitive ploy, which had not worked for many years.

"I told you, we're just two women here to do a bit of shopping."

"What errand?" James asked again.

"Don't be tedious James," Catharine complained. "I just want you to distract the staff for a few minutes."

"What do you mean distract the staff? What do you want me to do? Start a fire? Rob the place?"

"You don't have to do anything drastic," Catharine said in an effort to calm James down. "Just buy something very expensive. That way everyone will be

occupied while Eddie and I go and find out about a little something I'm interested in having commissioned."

James sighed heavily and considered walking out of the store. He could not do that though because if he wanted to find out what was going on, and assess how much trouble his sister was in, then he needed to stay incredibly close to both Catharine and Edwina. He sighed again and reflected on how he always seemed to lose a little bit of his sanity as well as a little bit of his bank balance every time his sister decided to come and visit him.

"And please don't be frugal darling," Catharine instructed. "Nobody likes a frugal person."

Resigned to his fate James obediently walked across to the main jewellery counter. Catharine put her arm through Eddie's and steered her quickly over to another counter and a very serious man in a very serious black suit. The man stood guard over a collection of silver calendars, inkwells and a wide variety of desk ornaments designed for those people who were not impacted by, or in some cases were not even aware of, the fact that much of the world's economic system had collapsed.

"I'm so sorry darling," Catharine said.

"Does he know what's going on?"

"No, not really."

"Not really?"

"Well, he knows something is up but he has absolutely no idea it involves an old man rotting away in a new motor car outside your house."

"Shhh."

“Sorry.”

“But how did he know you had a plan?” Eddie asked.

“I’m not completely sure but it’s possible he might have overhead me talking to Douglas.”

“What were you talking to Douglas about?” Eddie demanded, still upset Catharine had involved Douglas in their investigation in the first place.

“I was talking to him about my plan.”

“What plan?”

“My plan to find out more about our friend R. Snook and the poison used to murder him.”

“I don’t understand,” Eddie complained, becoming frustrated by a situation, which she blamed Catharine for creating.

“There are two very important reasons for us being here,” Catharine said quickly in an effort to ignore Eddie’s tone towards her. “The first one is to find out what we can about that silver fountain pen which our murder victim brought with him the night he died. By learning about a person’s accessories we can learn a lot about the person,” she pointed out. “The second reason,” Catharine explained, “is so we can find out a little bit more about thallium.”

“We know about thallium though,” said Eddie.

“Do we?” Catharine asked.

“Well, we know enough about it that we’re reasonably certain it was used by the murderer to kill his victim. We also know the murderer probably used the thallium found in rat poison.”

“Darling, the idea a household item was used to commit murder is just too ordinary for words.”

“I really don’t think murderers are trying to make a statement,” Eddie said. “I think they’re just trying to do what they want to as quickly as possible and make sure they’re not caught doing it.”

“Did you know,” Catharine continued, completely ignoring Eddie, “that thallium is given to children to make their hair fall out for the easier treatment of ringworm?” Eddie looked horrified and mumbled something but Catharine had more to say. “Did you also know thallium is used to help make some types of jewellery?”

“No,” said Eddie, “no I didn’t know that.”

“So it’s a good plan then?” Catharine asked.

“I suppose so,” Eddie said as she tried to keep an eye on James and what he was doing.

“Come on darling, I supported you when you wanted to search a strange man’s boarding room. All I want to do is ask a few questions about a pen.”

“Yes, it’s a good plan,” Eddie grudgingly admitted.

“Thank you.”

“Do you have the fountain pen with you?” asked Eddie.

“It’s in my purse,” Catharine told her.

“I’m just worried about James,” Eddie said.

“Me too,” Catharine sighed.

“If you’re worried about him, why did you still come here today?”

“I had no choice. I’d already made the appointment.”

“You could have rescheduled,” Eddie pointed out as she nodded towards where James was in conversation with a sales assistant.

Catharine sighed again: “Even I don’t have the nerve to irritate one of the senior staff members of a master jeweller,” she explained.

Eddie rolled her eyes.

“Come on darling, please be cooperative, we don’t have a lot of time.”

“Alright then. What do you want to do?” Eddie asked.

“Well, let’s just start with asking a few discreet questions about our fountain pen,” Catharine said as she signalled to the man in the black.

“Can I help you madam?” the sales assistant asked.

“Yes please. I am Lady Darling. I telephoned yesterday afternoon about a fountain pen.”

“Ah, My Lady. Yes, I remember your call about the pen. You wanted to know if we could help by creating a matching piece for you.”

“Yes, that’s right. I was wondering if you could make a pencil so that this pen would become part of a set,” Catharine said as she took the silver fountain pen out of her purse and placed it on the counter.

“An elegant piece madam,” the sales attendant said as he appraised the item and identified his company’s hallmark. “Of course Hardy Bros would be pleased to assist you and create a pencil to match.”

Catharine asked about what the work for a pencil would involve. While Eddie was not surprised Catharine knew so much about jewellery she was surprised as she listened to Catharine effortlessly create a conversation about how jewellery and other precious items were created, a conversation which resulted in both women gaining a better understanding about one of thallium’s more industrial uses. Eddie was still not convinced. The information from the Kong Chong Laundry clearly indicated that rat poison had been used to bring an early end to the life of Mr Snook.

While Eddie was thinking about some of the possible motivations of Mr Snook’s murderer, Catharine was visibly cringing at the concept of faux jewellery. She found it completely offensive that one of Sydney’s finer establishments would reduce themselves to the mass manufacture of such items. It was too awful. She also found it slightly disconcerting that women, possibly women she knew,

around the country were happily wearing paste brooches, earrings and miscellaneous other baubles which were made with the same chemical used to eradicate rodents. The attendant did his best to reassure one of Hardy Bros' favourite customers that only the finest sterling silver would be utilised to craft a pencil. The two women thanked him for his time and moved away from the counter.

"The whole concept is just too awful," Catharine said. "The mass manufacture of costume jewellery, who would even think up such a dreadful idea? Why the next thing that will happen is cruise liners will be crowded by women carrying fake Louis Vuitton travel cases."

Distraught, Catharine put the pen back in her purse as she considered what she believed was a strong warning that society as she knew it was on the verge of collapse.

Eddie, who was of the opinion society had collapsed long ago, did not acknowledge Catharine's concern about jewellery not being shaped out of the world's most valuable materials. Instead she asked her companion: "So you really don't believe it was rat poison which was given to our friend? You think the thallium could have been sourced from a jewellery store? Maybe this jewellery store?"

"It's just that sometimes, darling, you allow your enthusiasm to exclude other possibilities," Catharine continued. "We need to be sure. That's all," she fidgeted with her purse, "we need to be absolutely sure about everything."

Eddie knew Catharine was right, she was just having difficulty admitting it. She thought she should do the right thing and acknowledge Catharine's efforts but

was worried if she did then she would lose what little control she still had in running the investigation.

“We have to hurry,” Catharine ordered, interrupting Eddie’s thoughts.

“What?” Eddie asked.

“Look at the time darling,” Catharine said as she quickly checked her wristwatch. “We’ve been here for nearly ten minutes, the poor dog will think we have forgotten all about him.”

“You can’t keep calling him ‘the dog’,” Eddie said. “You need to come up with a proper name for him,” she complained.

“I’ll think of something,” Catharine reassured her.

The two women started to make their way out of the store when James walked up to them.

“So darling,” Catharine said, “you didn’t have to start a fire or rob the place after all.”

“Ah, no. No, I didn’t,” James said as he fumbled with a small but perfectly wrapped package.

James hesitated and then suddenly forced the package he was holding towards Eddie: “Catharine told me to buy something while we were here and well, I didn’t want anything, and well, Catharine already has far too much jewellery, so I thought you might like this. Of course you don’t have to. You know, like it that is. I can return it, or I can change it for something else or I could . . .”

Catharine was worried about the dog waiting for them so decided it was time to rescue her brother. She elbowed Eddie, giving her just enough of a jolt so her

hand moved upwards sufficiently to accept the neat little package that had been offered to her.

Then, turning to James, Catharine said: “Thank you darling, I’ll drop Eddie back at Newtown so I’ll see you at home in about an hour or so.”

“I’ll come with you to take Edwina home,” James said, no longer nervous now he had presented his gift to Eddie. “I have the whole day off. Remember?”

“How could I forget?”

“Right,” said James. “Right,” he said again, a little more forcefully, and then he turned around and walked quickly across the main area of the store before disappearing out through the front doors.

Eddie cradled the small package carefully in her hands.

“Aren’t you going to open it?” Catharine asked gently.

“No,” said Eddie. “Not yet.”

“What’s the matter?” Catharine whispered.

“Nothing. It’s just that, it’s only that . . .”

“What?”

“Charlie might not like it,” Eddie said quietly.

“Charlie’s in Bathurst,” Catharine said in a very matter of fact tone.

Eddie did not say anything. She just nodded and put the package into the pocket of her coat. Having made her decision to keep her present, despite what Charlie might think, she hurried to follow James out of the jewellery store. Catharine did her best to keep up.

The dog was delighted when everyone finally returned to the motor car. After

Catharine had reassured herself he had survived his ordeal of being left alone she took her place behind the wheel and drove her three passengers back to Newtown. When they finally made it back to Union Street Catharine became quite annoyed.

“Oh, really,” she muttered. “Someone has taken my parking place.”

“Oh, no,” whispered Eddie.

“I always park there,” Catharine said, irritated the only other place to park was behind the black Packard which was just a little bit closer to, what she was still calling the parcel, than she wanted to be.

“Oh, no,” Eddie repeated, a little louder.

“What’s the matter?” James asked.

“Charlie,” Eddie breathed.

“What was that darling?” Catharine asked.

“That’s Charlie’s motor car,” Eddie said, pointing to the vehicle that was parked where the Rolls Royce was normally left so it could benefit from the protection offered by the trees on that side of the street. “He’s home.”

Chapter 9

An Accident, an Experiment and the Truth

Friday, 15th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

"It was inconvenient this morning when my brother told me he was taking a day off so we could all spend some time together," Catharine said. "That your brother has decided to make an appearance now is most inopportune."

Eddie resented Catharine's ability to understate situations. Although she had to concede, that with James with them, it was probably better to be subtle than to complain openly they did not want Charlie home because he might find out they had been hiding a dead body for over a week. Catharine parked her Rolls just behind the Packard. Charlie, hearing the vehicle from the front room, left his office then opened the front door and walked out to the street.

"You'll have to move the parcel darling," Catharine ordered Eddie. "I'll do my best to distract your brother."

"Move it? Where to?" Eddie demanded.

"Move what? Move what parcel?" James asked.

"You'll think of something," Catharine said as she found the keys to the Packard in her purse and then offered them to Eddie.

"Why do you have those keys?" Eddie asked, refusing to take them.

"I was going to meet Douglas here today."

"Douglas?"

“Yes. Apparently, attending to that, that you know, that . . . um . . . new motor car smell, requires some regular maintenance,” Catharine said.

“What new motor car smell?” Eddie asked, before realising Catharine was referring to the unpleasant smell of the murder victim. “Oh, that smell.”

“Move what parcel?” James asked again.

“Come on darling, there’s no time to waste.”

“But . . . ,” Eddie hesitated, “but I can’t,” she said.

“Please don’t be difficult. I’ve been driving you around for days and all I’m asking you to do is this one little thing. Even if you just drive it up the street a little way, it will be enough to take the parcel out of Charlie’s line of sight.”

“What parcel?” asked James again.

Eddie looked petrified as the keys were pushed into her hands. Catharine then made an elegant exit. Something which could not be said for the dog who, instead of waiting for his door to be opened, scrambled across leather and driving instruments and then tumbled out of the motor car until he stood at Catharine’s feet. He tried to sit, he had seen other dogs do it with great impact on their owners, but somehow his tail kept interfering. He reluctantly decided to remain standing up but compensated by standing as tall as he possibly could. James, who was irritated he had been completely ignored by both women, decided to stretch out across the back seat of Catharine’s motor car and have a nap until his sister returned.

Charlie looked at Catharine and considered the outcome of a class action, presented by all married women and ministers of religion, to keep Lady Darling under house arrest for the next thirty years on account that her looks presented a threat to the moral fabric of society. Perhaps the Judge would allow her out supervised on Sundays to attend church provided she wore long,

shapeless brown dresses and had all of her red lipstick confiscated.

Walking up to the woman and what was possibly the largest greyhound he had ever seen, he said: “Hello.”

“Hello,” Catharine replied.

The driver’s door of the Packard was opened and then closed.

“What’s Eddie doing? Charlie asked casually.

“Eddie? Oh, nothing,” Catharine said as she shuddered at the sound of crunching gears.

Then it happened. Instead of going forward the Packard went backward violently, crashing into Catharine’s prized Rolls Royce Phantom II. Glass shattered and timber split, while steel and chrome scraped, buckled and finally twisted under the heavy impact. The silence that followed was as sickening as the noise of the crash. The stillness was only broken when Catharine found her voice again and screamed. The dog suddenly discovered that he could, despite the uncooperative nature of his tail, sit after all.

“What on earth did you do?” yelled Catharine, who was still struggling to process what she had just witnessed.

“I don’t know. I really don’t know,” Eddie said helplessly as she left the driver’s seat and, not believing she would be able to stand up on her own, closed the motor car door and then leaned heavily against it.

“Look at my Rolls Royce,” Catharine wailed.

“I can’t.”

“Look at it!”

“I’m so sorry,” Eddie said, shaking and in tears.

“What did you do?”

“I don’t know, it just, it just happened.”

“It just happened!”

“I’m sorry.”

“She can’t drive,” Charlie interrupted.

“You can’t what? What do you mean that you can’t drive?” Catharine demanded. “It’s the twentieth century, everyone can drive!”

“Well, well you can’t speak French,” Eddie screamed at her defensively.

“No darling, I can’t speak French but I can still say *Moet et Chandon*.”

“What? What does that mean?”

“It means that I can do the basics darling.”

“Well driving isn’t basic!” yelled Eddie.

“But you didn’t even have to really drive anywhere. All you had to do was go in a straight line.”

“I tried to but . . .”

“But you were not very successful,” Catharine said, cutting Eddie off mid-sentence, “unless of course your intention was to completely destroy the more expensive end of a £2,000 motor car.”

Eddie suddenly missed Catharine’s capacity for understatement.

The small group was interrupted when Douglas appeared and said: “Hello.”

Catharine’s younger brother was holding a pair of heavy work gloves and a very old and tattered suitcase.

“Oh Cat, what happened here?” Douglas asked as he ignored inquisitive stares

and looked at the wreckage of the two motor cars.

“Ask her!” Catharine said as she pointed an accusing finger at Eddie.

“Hey!” said Charlie. “There’s someone in that motor car!”

“No there’s not,” said three voices in unison.

Charlie ignored the choir of disagreement and walked up to the Rolls Royce. He jerked the back door open which caused a piece of chrome, that had once supported a headlight, to fall off the motor car and into the gutter and James to emerge. He was a bit shocked but essentially unhurt by his recent experience of being crashed into.

“Now everybody’s here,” Charlie said, “does someone want to tell me what’s going on?”

Eddie looked at her feet. Charlie, James and Douglas looked at Catharine. The dog decided it was safer not to look at anything and closed his eyes. James looked at Eddie and saw that she was shivering.

“Hey, old girl, you’re not hurt are you?” he asked, walking up to her.

“No. No, I’m not hurt.”

James leaned up against the Packard next to Eddie and said: “No wonder you’re so cold, this Packard is freezing!” he exclaimed as he turned around and looked in through the window.

“James, don’t!” Catharine yelled.

Before anybody could think of anything else to say, Douglas had leapt forward, still carrying his work gloves and the suitcase, and positioned himself between James and the motor car door, the same motor car door which, if opened,

would reveal the parcel to everyone standing there. Well, almost everyone, the dog still had his eyes closed.

“Yes, it’s marvellous, isn’t it?” Douglas asked, while he looked meaningfully at Catharine.

“Yes, absolutely marvellous,” Catharine said playing along, even though she had no idea of what Douglas was up to.

Charlie and James stared intently at Douglas. Even Eddie looked up.

“What could possibly be better on a typical Sydney scorcher than being in a nice cold motor car?” Douglas asked.

“Nothing,” Catharine said as enthusiastically as she could.

“What are you both talking about?” Charlie asked.

“We’re talking about,” Douglas continued, “a motor car that is as cool and as comfortable as a modern office building.”

“You’re talking about an air-conditioned motor car?” Charlie asked.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” James scoffed.

“It certainly is not ridiculous,” Catharine said. “I for one would like a motor car that provided air-conditioning based on a slightly more sophisticated system than the air-conditioning I have at the moment,” she finished as she looked at her shattered windscreen.

“It’s all terribly top secret though,” Douglas said leaning forward, as he started to really engage with his subject. “There are, of course, a few more experiments needed but if we work hard and play our cards right then we’re on our way to taking the motor car industry by storm.”

“By storm,” echoed Catharine.

“So this is what the three of you have been up to?” James asked Catharine. “All

the running around you've been doing, all the hushed conversations and all the secrecy, it's all just tied up in Doug's latest scheme?"

"Oh, scheme is such a nasty word darling, please don't use it."

"Doug doesn't sound much better," Douglas muttered. "Now, if you would step away from the motor car please?" Douglas asked James.

James did as he was told. Eddie and Catharine, however, were too frightened to move. Douglas, satisfied his latest deception was working wonderfully put on his leather gloves, opened his suitcase and opened the motor car door. He took a block of ice and placed it on the floor of the motor car just in front of the rear passenger seat. A small piece of ice broke off and landed in a puddle on the road creating a cloud of mist, which disappeared in the breeze as quickly as it had formed. Douglas thought the mist looked absolutely fabulous and served to reinforce that he was in the middle of an important experiment.

"Where did that come from?" James asked.

"It's called dry ice," Douglas said proudly.

"I know what it's called," James said. "I asked where it came from."

"Yes darling, where did it come from?" Catharine asked.

She was annoyed Douglas had not resolved the issue of the parcel's smell more subtly. Had she known that he was turning the Packard into a miniature morgue she would have dealt with the matter herself.

"Where? Well, they use some of this at the University, research and other things," Douglas explained. "Peters have also been using it for a couple of years now to transport ice cream."

"Catharine?" James asked, interrupting his brother and trying to attract his

sister's attention.

"Yes James," Catharine answered in a frosty tone.

"Is that your picnic blanket?"

"I'm actually a little bit more worried about something else at the moment James," Catharine said curtly as she continued to stare at Douglas.

So intent on her younger brother and the risk he had taken by stealing dry ice to keep the parcel cold, and as fragrance free as possible, Catharine did not see Charlie walk over to the Packard. Charlie crouched down, reached in and lifted the blanket back, then carefully unfolded an edge of canvas sheeting and made the grim discovery, the body of a man whose decomposition had been arrested only by the creation of a near freezing environment.

Standing up, he said: "Lady Darling, I have to tell you there's a dead body in this motor car."

"Well I know where that came from," Catharine snapped. "I want to know about where this dry ice came from."

"You know there's a body in that motor car?" Charlie asked.

"It's all my fault," Eddie said softly.

"It's your fault?" Charlie asked, shocked. "What do you mean? Did you, did you kill somebody Eddie?"

"No, of course not," Eddie told him, horrified that her own brother could think that she had killed a man, "he had already been murdered when he walked through the front door."

Charlie stared at his sister and tried to work out what to do first. Douglas made a feeble effort to rearrange the picnic blanket, mumbled an apology to the dead man and then closed the motor car door. Catharine just stood there angry,

exhausted and scared of what would happen next but still beautiful. Eddie continued to lean against the Packard, taking comfort from the cool steel. The dog opened his eyes, decided that was a very bad idea, and promptly closed them again.

James took in the entire scene and silently acknowledged to himself he was a shattered man. In defeat he folded his body, creasing his grey woollen suit with his efforts, and sat down cross-legged in the middle of the footpath. Taking a silver cigarette case, and some matches from the inside pocket of his jacket, he managed to select and light a thin tube of encased tobacco. Closing his eyes he inhaled deeply. It was his own fault, he thought to himself miserably. He had wanted to know what his siblings were up to and he should have known better.

“What’s the time?” Charlie asked suddenly.

“It’s almost lunchtime,” Catharine told him after looking quickly at her watch.

“I’m not hungry,” James complained.

“I might be hungry,” Douglas said quietly, although his appetite had been tempered by recent events, he had missed breakfast.

“I’m not hungry either,” Eddie said.

“Are you able to arrange for someone to come and collect your motor car Lady Darling?” Charlie asked.

“Yes,” Catharine answered.

“Okay then,” Charlie said. “I’ll drive you and your brothers back home, you send someone around to pick up your motor car so that it can be taken to a garage for repair and then we’ll meet back here at six o’clock tonight.”

“Six o’clock?” Catharine asked.

“Yeah, I need time to work out what to do and I figure you all need time to get your stories straight.”

No one had the energy to come up with an alternative so Douglas, James, Catharine and the dog went over to Charlie's motor car while Charlie took Eddie inside the house. It was a quiet group that went to Vaucluse that afternoon. Everyone was busy thinking about what would happen at six o'clock except for the dog who was trying to work out why he wasn't allowed to sit in the front. Charlie pulled up outside James Longfoot's house and everyone made their way out of the motor car. Just as Charlie was about to drive off again, Catharine stopped him.

"Oh, Charles," she said. "I almost forgot. I had to have James create a small diversion while Eddie and I were at a jewellery store this morning, so he did a little bit of shopping while we were there. I know you must be really miffed, about the body and everything. Anyway, I just wanted you to know that I believe Eddie was the beneficiary of James' little purchase."

Charlie frowned.

"You won't be boring and make a fuss will you?" Catharine continued quickly.
Charlie decided it was best not to commit to anything until he had all the information so he just said: "I'll see you at six."
"Tonight at six," Catharine confirmed. "We'll all be there," she promised.

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Eddie resented being taken inside and then sent upstairs by Charlie as if she were a small child. She listened as Charlie left the house and then lit an old wax candle in her room, and sat on the edge of her bed so she could consider the small parcel, which James had given to her at Hardy Bros that morning.

The brown paper had been folded and sealed to protect its contents with such care, and such precision, that she had to force herself to tear the package open. As the paper fell to the floor a simple black box was revealed. Opening the box as slowly as possible she saw the inside lid of cream satin and the famous Hardy Bros logo and Hunter Street address embossed in gold print. It was the box's contents though that made her catch her breath. A black velvet base supported an incredibly delicate brooch measuring only two inches across and half an inch high. It was a greyhound in full stride that had been crafted in platinum, and was covered in small brilliant cut white diamonds, in bezel settings. Edwina was positive she had never seen anything so beautiful before.

She didn't know how long she sat there gently tilting the box backwards and forwards to allow the gems to catch the meagre light. Her breathing finally returned to normal and she closed the box, which was then carefully tucked into her pillowcase. Edwina then picked up the brown paper from the floor and folded it into a neat square. She hesitated and then placed the paper in her pillowcase with the black jewel box. Eddie felt exhausted as she undressed, put her clothes away and put on her nightgown before blowing out the candle and crawling into bed. Sleep came quickly and was full of strange dreams crowded with motor cars and with dead people and with diamonds.

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James sat in one of Charlie's office chairs, away from the others. He was breathing heavily and sweating profusely which was hardly surprising. His carefully constructed life built on a reliable, if slightly boring, routine that was based on his work, avoiding his siblings and voting conservatively at all public elections now faced almost certain ruin.

In the last few hours James had argued with his sister, been badgered into spending an exorbitant sum of money at Sydney's leading jewellery store, been in an argument with his brother and had discovered that sister and brother had been hiding a dead body for nearly a week and a half. The only consoling thought James could come up with was that, as he was only an accessory after the fact, he would be given a slightly shorter prison term than everybody else in the room.

They had all gathered promptly as promised in Charlie's office at six o'clock. It was now a quarter past the hour and each of them was so determined to not be the first to do any of the talking, they had been busy drinking Eddie's coffee to avoid engaging in conversation. Everyone was tense because no one was willing to tell the truth, not yet anyway. Even Cleo and the dog looked at each other from opposite corners of Charlie's office with suspicion.

Finally, Charlie decided he was not prepared to wait any longer for an explanation: "Why don't you start from the beginning?" he suggested, careful to ask his question of no one in particular.

Eddie and Catharine looked up at each other. Catharine nodded and Eddie put her coffee cup down on a small side table.

"Catharine came to visit me just over a week ago," Eddie started.
"It was the day that news had reached Australia that Phar Lap had died," Catharine offered so everyone was clear about the date.
"That's right," said Eddie, "it was a Wednesday afternoon. Anyway, we were just sitting and drinking coffee when a man, who we now believe to be Mr R. Snook, came to the door."

“He had originally asked to see you Charles,” Catharine said.

“Yes, he had a note for you,” Eddie said as she reached up and took a book off a shelf where, hidden in between the last page and the back cover of a very weathered copy of *Up the Country*, was the small stained orange envelope.

Charlie opened the envelope and looked at the names and the number on the small sheet of paper. Not wanting to interrupt his sister he placed both the list and the envelope on his desk without making a comment.

Eddie took a breath and continued: “He looked really sick when he arrived. I didn’t want to let him in but I didn’t have a choice because he forced his way inside,” she told everyone. “He told Catharine and me that he’d been murdered and we had to stop them.”

“Stop who?” Charlie asked.

“He died before he could tell us,” Catharine said.

“Anyway, we searched him for clues,” Eddie continued, “but we didn’t find very much,” she told him quietly.

“Can I ask why you didn’t call the police?” Charlie said.

Eddie didn’t answer and Catharine shifted uncomfortably in her seat.

“Edwina, a man died,” Charlie said. “He died under suspicious circumstances and he died here. You should have called the police and let them deal with the situation,” he finished, his words slow and deliberate, as he tried to keep his temper under control.

Catharine saw Charlie growing angrier with his sister and intervened: “We didn’t call the police because we wanted to solve the crime ourselves and we didn’t think the local constabulary would let us tag along on an investigation.”

“What made you think you could possibly solve a crime, any crime at all, let alone one as serious as murder?” Charlie asked, angry that he did not know which woman he should be blaming for what had happened and therefore which woman he should be glaring at.

“Of course the first thing we had to do,” Catharine said, completely ignoring Charlie’s question, “was to hide the body. As he was far too heavy for Eddie and I to lift we decided to call young Douglas here for some assistance.”

“Hiding the murder victim in his own motor car was my idea,” Douglas interrupted proudly.

Everyone turned to look in his direction but nobody said anything. Douglas stopped smiling and started sulking instead.

“As it turns out,” Catharine went on, “hiding Mr Snook and taking on the case was the most sensible thing Eddie and I could have done.”

“And how did you manage to come to that great conclusion?” Charlie asked incredulously.

“Because,” Catharine went on, “as Eddie and I were soon to find out, the key to the case of Mr Snook’s murder is another crime, a crime which the police don’t know anything about. Isn’t that right darling?” Catharine said as she looked over at Eddie.

“Yes, that’s right,” Eddie confirmed as she picked up their story again. “The night Mr Snook died, Father Cronin called about the poor box at the church. He was worried money was going missing but didn’t want the police involved. Not until he had a better idea of what was happening and why. So Catharine and I went to the church disguised as cleaners to keep a watch on what was going on.”

“Eddie went as a cleaner and I went as a florist,” Catharine corrected.

“What we discovered,” Eddie went on, “was that money was being stolen from the poor box.”

“Who would do that?” Charlie asked, so outraged he momentarily forgot he should be directing his anger at Eddie and Catharine.

“Message couriers for the New Guard,” Eddie told him.

“The New Guard?” James asked, startled out of his self pity by what Eddie said.

“Yes,” Eddie confirmed. “They’ve been using the poor box at St Joseph’s as a drop off and collection point for some of their messages.”

“What sort of messages?” Charlie asked.

“Unfortunately we’ve only had an opportunity to read one note,” Eddie said. “When Catharine and I were at the church we watched one man drop the message into the poor box then, just a few minutes later, another man arrived at the church and took it.”

“While helping himself to whatever else was in the poor box,” Charlie guessed.

Eddie nodded: “We managed to follow the second man as far as the University where he delivered the note to the office of a Mr A.M. Trembath.”

“Alfred Trembath,” Catharine said, looking directly at James.

James shrugged his shoulders and lit another cigarette.

“It was a short message,” Eddie said. “Just an instruction really, telling whoever the message was meant for to go to Pearson’s Fish Café, every day at lunch time for a week, to watch and then report back to headquarters.”

“Watch what?” Charlie asked as he leant forward.

“Well, Catharine and I went there for lunch the other day and found out the instruction was not about watching *what* but was about watching *who*. Two men turned up, that we didn’t recognise, and all they did was drink coffee and watch the Premier and his Private Secretary.”

“They were watching Lang and McCauley?” Charlie asked.

“It was obvious they weren’t there for any other reason. Then our waiter told us that Premier Lang and Mr McCauley have their lunch there every day without fail,” Eddie finished.

“I can’t imagine why,” Catharine said, reflecting on her fish of the day special.

“Why would members of the New Guard want to spend their time watching Lang and one of his offsiders eat lunch?” James asked as he put out his cigarette. “They’re hardly the Government’s strongest supporters.”

“I don’t think any Government in this country has been more openly despised than Lang and his men are despised by the New Guard,” Charlie agreed. “Is there anything else you can tell me Eddie?”

“Yes. Only a couple of days ago Catharine and I were at the church when the message couriers turned up again.”

“One of the men was late and there was an argument,” Catharine said. “It was very unpleasant.”

“When they left the church, Catharine and I split up so we were able to follow both of them. Catharine had to give up the chase when the courier she was following made it as far as the University.”

“Yes, you wouldn’t have wanted to run into your old friend Mr Trembath,” James said, glaring at his sister.

“The courier that I was following ended up at a boarding house over at Leichhardt,” Eddie said, ignoring James. “Catharine and I went back the next day, Catharine distracted the owner of the boarding house while I found, and then searched, the room of the message courier.”

“That’s where I bought the dog,” Catharine said softly as she leaned forward to play with the dog’s ears.

“Yes, for £25,” Eddie grumbled, still upset about Catharine’s ability to spend money so easily.

“You paid £25 for that?” Charlie asked in disbelief.

“At least I’m not the only one spending large amounts of money because of all of this,” James muttered.

“I found a pile of stationery, the same stationery that we have seen used to courier messages, as well as a lot of press clippings about Colonel Eric Campbell and the New Guard. The most important thing that I found though was a list of names,” Eddie said as she picked up the sheet of paper that was sitting on Charlie’s desk, “identical to this one, the only difference was that the list at Leichhardt had R. Snook crossed out and was attached to a photograph of the man in the motor car out the front.”

“Crossed out in red ink,” Catharine added dramatically.

“If members of the New Guard are watching the Premier then someone needs to find out why,” Charlie said.

The only sound in the room came from Cleo who was snoring peacefully underneath Charlie’s desk.

“What do you know about this?” Charlie asked as he took the paper from Eddie and read through the names on the list.

“Not much,” Eddie admitted.

“And the number?” Charlie asked.

“Well, we started with a list of possibilities,” Eddie said, the frustration she felt evident in her voice, “and so far we’ve found out 3332 isn’t a telephone number or a motor car registration number.”

“Does anyone else know anything about the body?” Charlie asked, as he shifted his attention from the slip of paper back to Eddie.

“No,” Eddie and Catharine both said emphatically.

“Are you sure?” Charlie asked them slowly.

“We’re absolutely sure,” Eddie reassured him. “He was carefully hidden the night he died and I‘ve been checking the Packard every day. No one has disturbed his hiding place until you lifted the picnic blanket and shifted the canvas sheeting this afternoon.”

“The only thing that was really in any danger of giving the game away,” Catharine said, “was the parcel was decomposing a little faster than we were investigating. That particular problem though was taken care of soon after we put him in the motor car.”

“The dry ice was my idea too,” Douglas said, although he was careful to make his point a little less forcefully than his last interruption.

“So why were you all at a jewellery store this morning?” Charlie asked.

“We went on a field trip because we wanted to learn as much as we could about thallium,” Catharine told him.

“Thallium?” Charlie queried.

“Yes,” Eddie said, “it’s the main ingredient in Zelio Paste, the type of poison we think was used to murder Mr Snook.

“How can you be so certain?” Charlie asked.

“Because one of the clues we found in the pockets of Mr Snook’s suit,” Eddie started, “was a card with a George Street address on it. Catharine and I went there and discovered it was a laundry, amongst other things.”

Charlie raised his eyebrows and Eddie took another volume from the bookcase. She efficiently retrieved the card that had an address down at The Rocks on one side and the word thallium and the drawing of a rat on the other. Charlie made a mental note to go through all of the books in his office to see if Eddie had hidden any other scraps of important information.

“I believe,” Eddie said, “Mr Snook went to the Kong Chong Laundry to find out

what had been used to poison him but it was too late. Knowing he didn't have much time left he decided to come to you and give you those names and that number."

"I wonder what he wanted me to do with this list," Charlie whispered to himself.

"I think he wanted you to warn everyone else on the list," Eddie said.

"Warn them of what?" he asked.

"Warn them that perhaps his name is not the only one that is going to be crossed out in red ink," Eddie suggested.

The air in the room suddenly felt hot and oppressive as everyone took in the enormity of what Eddie had just said. They all realised at the same time the lives of five people could be at risk.

"And you are sure no one else knows about the body?" Charlie asked, trying to force Eddie to make eye contact with him.

"Quite sure," Eddie said.

"And he had absolutely nothing at all unusual with him except for these two pieces of paper?" Charlie asked as he held up the list of names and the address card.

"He had a few other things with him," Eddie said, "a pen, a postage stamp and some money but nothing that told us anything really useful."

Charlie put his head in his hands as he thought about what Edwina and Catharine had just told him.

When he looked up again he asked: "Just out of curiosity, what were you going to do when you solved the case? Were you going to confront the killer yourself? Or, were you thinking of making an anonymous tip to the local police station or

just letting someone at the *Herald* know?"

"I don't know," Eddie said.

"I don't know either," Catharine said so her fellow investigator did not feel quite so alone in not knowing what to do.

Douglas had an idea about what to do but was tired of his genius being disregarded so he decided not to say anything. James had an idea to call the police and, with his blood pressure at a record level, was inclined for the call to not be an anonymous one.

"Well, the first thing we have to do," said Charlie with great seriousness, "is work out what to do with the body."

Chapter 10

Moving the Body Again

Friday, 15th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

"You can't possibly be serious?" James yelled as he lit another cigarette.

"Please don't whine darling," Catharine complained.

"I'm reasonably sure they don't serve champagne in prison my dear sister," James said.

"From what I understand they don't serve champagne in University offices either," Catharine told him.

"What's that supposed to mean? James asked.

"It means, darling, we have an opportunity to do something that's important."

"Somebody told me nearly eighteen years ago that I had an opportunity to do something important. After years of fighting in France, I can confidently advise you all, that important things are highly overrated," James informed everyone sullenly.

Eddie looked carefully at the once quiet, but now chain smoking, academic. He looked utterly exhausted and she wanted to say something to let him know everything would be alright but she could not find the right words.

"What you need is a plan," Douglas told them.

"Thank you for taking the trouble to clarify that for us, of course the situation is just so much easier to deal with now," Catharine said.

“I have a plan,” Douglas said.

“Charlie’s right,” Eddie said. “We need to work out what to do with the body. We can’t leave him in the Packard.”

“I have a plan,” Douglas repeated.

This time Eddie heard him: “You do? Is it something illegal?” she asked.

“It might be,” Douglas said with a sly grin.

“You actually want to do something illegal,” Charlie asked his sister.

“Maybe,” Eddie whispered.

“Was keeping the body of a murdered man from the police not enough for you?” Charlie asked.

“It’s not fair,” Eddie tried to explain. “I’ve only been able to break one law, when I searched the room at the boarding house, since this whole thing began,” she said.

“Really?” Charlie asked, pretending to be sympathetic.

“Yes, the rest of the investigation has just been waiting and following people, and trying to find out what the number 3332 is for,” Eddie said.

“Oh, darling, if it’s any consolation, since we tucked Mr Snook in for his little nap in the Packard, I haven’t broken any laws,” offered Catharine.

“None of the legal ones anyway,” clarified Charles.

“Kiss me,” Catharine said as she leaned across the desk.

“No.”

“Kiss me,” she repeated.

“No.”

“Ouch! Was that really necessary?” Catharine asked as she rubbed her leg.

The dog was startled by Catharine’s cry and was clearly unimpressed with Charlie’s attitude towards his new mistress and he emitted a low, deep-throated growl.

“I’m sorry,” Charlie said, “I thought you asked me to . . .”

“Yes, I’m sure you did,” Catharine said cutting him off and pacifying the dog.

“I have a plan,” Douglas said for the third time.

“What’s your plan darling?” Catharine asked, sounding terribly bored.

“We all agree we need to move the body,” Douglas said, trying to obtain everyone’s attention. “So, where do bodies belong?” he asked.

“Bodies belong in cemeteries,” James declared, “and,” he continued, “as I feel I am on the verge of a demotion from a living human being to just a body at any moment I would like to request a quiet cemetery, maybe something rural. I would prefer a plot under a shady tree.”

Catharine rolled her eyes.

“Of course a view would be nice,” James continued.

“Oh do stop rambling,” Catharine ordered. “You’re making this whole thing much more complicated than it needs to be.”

“Where else do bodies belong?” Douglas asked, irritated by the interruption.

“I don’t know darling,” Catharine said, realising Douglas would not rest until his riddle had been answered: “where do bodies belong?”

“Bodies belong in morgues,” Douglas said.

“Well that’s sensible enough I suppose,” Catharine said. “So bodies belong in morgues, I think most people know that.”

“So our body belongs in a morgue,” Douglas told her.

“What do you want to do?” Charlie asked. “Drive the Packard all the way into the City Morgue, park out the front and knock on the door?”

“Maybe even a view of the ocean,” James said wistfully.

Douglas sighed and went on with the revelation of his plan: “I have been thinking about this for a few days. Firstly, I know Catharine is unhappy with the

current location of the body and I think we all agree that he can't stay where he is. Secondly," Douglas continued, "the dry ice needed to keep our friend cold and, ah, to, ah, prevent him from attracting unwanted attention, needs to be replaced every twenty-four hours or so and is becoming difficult to procure."

"Procure?" Charlie said. "So that's what they're calling it these days."

Douglas ignored Charlie's comment and said in his smuggest tone of voice: "I have managed to obtain this official consignment form from the offices at the City Morgue. As you can see," he said as he passed the form across to Catharine, "it has already been completed and it indicates our friend Snook has been in residence at 102 George Street since the night he died."

"Marvellous," said James so sarcastically he sounded like his sister.

Douglas didn't know how much longer he could tolerate the dismissive attitude towards his intellect.

Giving everyone in the room one last chance, Douglas said: "We can't be in trouble for hiding a body we technically never had."

"Brilliant!" exclaimed Catharine, as she realised Douglas was right. "I knew you'd come through darling. I knew it!"

"Where did you manage to find that form?" Eddie said, clearly impressed with Douglas' solution to their predicament.

Douglas was noncommittal.

"Assuming you didn't like my idea to just knock on the front door," Charlie said, "how do you propose to put our friend in the Morgue?"

"Ah, well, that's the tricky part," Douglas confessed. "We'll need to provide the Morgue with two bodies."

Everyone stared.

“Let me explain,” Douglas started. “We tell the attendants on duty we’re delivering two bodies for the Coroner and collecting one body to take to a funeral home. The first body delivered will be one Mr Snook and the second body will be one Mr Longfoot.”

Douglas was dismayed at the lack of reaction from his audience.

“We need three bodies for our plan to work.” Douglas said. “Two for the Coroner and one for the funeral home. Our friend, Snook, is body number one. He remains body number one and he remains in the Morgue. I am body number two and, once I have been inside and have planted the paperwork in the right place, I become body number three. This way I am brought back out of the Morgue again under the guise I am the body being collected for the funeral home.”

Eddie frowned: “I think it’s incredibly dangerous,” she said.

“Oh come on,” pleaded Catharine, “I know you wanted to keep him so you could find his killer but you can’t keep him now. We have to move the parcel and we have to move it as soon as we can.”

“Catharine’s right,” Charlie said.

Catharine smiled. Charlie may not have kissed her but he had at least stopped calling her Lady Darling.

“I still think it’s very risky,” Eddie said, “but I do like the idea that Mr Snook could never be traced to us because the authorities would believe they had been taking care of him all along.”

Charlie looked at the carriage clock on the mantelpiece: “Is it too late to move tonight?” he asked.

“I think we should plan for tomorrow night,” Douglas said.

“Oh darling, can’t we please move the parcel tonight? It would be lovely to have this all out of the way,” Catharine pleaded.

“I need to procure,” Douglas said, staring defiantly at Charlie, “a few more items to make this all work.”

“I suppose we can wait one more day,” Catharine said, disappointed.

“Charlie and I will make sure nothing happens between now and tomorrow night,” Eddie offered as reassurance.

“I’ll take the tyres off the Packard first thing in the morning,” Charlie said, “and I’ll throw a canvas sheet over the whole motor car. It’ll still look like it needs major repairs but at least it will more closely resemble a work in progress so it will not be so suspicious to anyone who happens to walk or drive past.”

“So, shall we all meet back here at six o’clock tomorrow night?” Douglas asked.

Everybody nodded except for James.

“We’ll all need to meet here again tomorrow,” Douglas said, staring at James.

“I won’t be here tomorrow night,” James declared. “I’ll be busy selecting the music for my funeral service.”

“Darling, I do wish you wouldn’t say such depressing things,” Catharine said.

“We need your help if this has any chance of working,” Douglas told him.

“Why do you need me?” James asked. “When you were explaining the finer points of your latest plot there was no mention I was required as body one, two or three.”

“You don’t need to be one of the bodies,” Douglas told him, “but when was the last time you saw a woman working as an undertaker?”

James stared blankly.

Douglas sighed again and spoke as patiently as he could: “Look, only three men know about Snook. One of us is going into the Morgue which means the other two are going to have to carry the bodies in and out.”

“No,” James said.

“There is no one else,” Douglas explained.

“No,” James said again.

“Oh, don’t be so awful darling,” Catharine said, “you’ve never played nicely, even when we were little.”

“And I have no intention of playing nicely now,” he told her.

“Come on James,” Catharine said, sounding desperate. “You know we can’t tell anyone else about what we’ve done and this plan can only work if you help Charlie carry the bodies.”

“No,” James told her.

“I certainly can’t carry a body on my own,” Charlie confirmed.

“No,” James told him.

“Please don’t be so repetitive,” Catharine complained. “All we have to do is this one thing, just this one small thing to keep out of prison, keep all of our names out of the newspapers and keep all of our reputations intact.”

James sat silent, his attention focused entirely on his next cigarette.

“Please help us,” Eddie whispered.

James looked up and met Eddie’s eyes. He then looked at everyone else in the room. He stubbed out his cigarette, pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the sweat from his face.

“If I don’t end up with a nice burial plot under a shady tree I will be very upset,” James declared as he nodded at Eddie.

“Oh darling, you’re wonderful!” Catharine said clapping her hands.

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Saturday, 16th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

“This whole thing is just too awful,” Catharine whined.

Douglas had made his sister put on an old undertaker’s jacket and matching cap. The industrial clothes did not fit her properly and she suspected they had not been washed since they were last worn.

“Do I have to wear them?” Catharine asked.

“No, you don’t have to wear them if you’re happy for Eddie to do the driving,” Douglas told her. “Is everyone ready?” he asked.

Charlie and James, who were both dressed as undertakers in preparation for their excursion to the morgue, nodded. Eddie, who was dressed in plain black so she would not be noticed easily, held the consignment form detailing the death of Mr R. Snook for the City Morgue tightly in her hand also nodded. Everyone was quiet as there had already been an ugly argument with Catharine, who had insisted the dog be allowed to come with them, and as a result no one had anything much left to say. Cleo was not involved in the argument because she wasn’t interested in anything after dark that did not involve food and so was happy to be left behind at the house.

Eddie, Catharine, Charlie, Douglas, James and the dog all went outside. A 1924 Hudson Hearse stood where the Rolls Royce had been parked the day before. The street was empty but Eddie and Catharine still took their allocated positions to keep watch while the men worked to move Snook, out from under the picnic blanket in the Packard, and into a lightweight timber casket in the Hudson. Although it took longer than Eddie and Catharine wanted, the transfer was done reasonably quickly and, apart from a few muffled sounds associated with heavy lifting, reasonably quietly. Catharine then took her place behind the wheel and Charlie and the dog sat up the front with her. Douglas, James and Eddie crowded into the back with the two caskets. Catharine pulled out and, as everyone had agreed to avoid the major roads, she headed into the back streets of Newtown.

It was not very long, before Catharine started to complain: “Douglas, was this really the best motor car you could find. I feel like I’m driving a tank.”
“Sorry Cat,” Douglas said, “there aren’t many options for this type of vehicle.”

Catharine did not respond, as she was too anxious to finish what they had to do, an anxiety that was being reflected in her driving.

“Hey,” Eddie whispered, “slow down.”
“I don’t really think you’re in a position to tell me how to drive darling,” Catharine said briskly.
Eddie was prepared to risk bearing the brunt of Catharine’s anger if it meant they avoided attracting any unwanted attention because they were speeding: “Just try to drive, I don’t know, drive respectfully,” she suggested.

Again, Catharine did not respond but she took a deep breath, swallowed hard

and reduced the pressure she had been placing on the accelerator. As the Hudson slowed it started to appear as though it was carrying the cargo for which it was designed and, even at a reduced speed and having taken a convoluted route, it was soon near its destination.

“Are you ready?” Eddie asked Douglas.

“Of course I am,” Douglas said, not very convincingly.

“Don’t worry about him, old girl,” James told her. “This was his idea, remember.”

“And a fine idea it is,” Eddie proclaimed.

Douglas smiled and with James’ and Eddie’s help he managed to make his way into the second casket. Eddie gave him the consignment form and told him she would see him soon before she and James lifted the casket cover back into place.

“We’re just about to go onto George Street,” Charlie informed everyone.

Eddie and James crouched down so they would not be seen by any of the people, who were out on a Saturday night, taking advantage of so many public houses to choose from in such close proximity to each other. Catharine made an effort to maintain her respectful driving style but could not help but speed up slightly when she had made it across to the other side of George Street and into the area behind the Coroner’s Court and the City Morgue.

“Right, everyone knows what to do?” Charlie asked.

Everyone nodded.

“Right. Let’s go,” Charlie said.

“See you soon old girl,” James said to Eddie as he unlatched the back door.

Charlie met James at the rear of the Hudson and helped him to unload the first casket that they carried to the business entrance of the Morgue and placed on the ground. They rushed back for the second casket that they also carried to the door.

Eddie and Catharine could hear Charlie’s voice bellow: “Hey, mate, can you give us a hand with one of these?”

The two women heard more voices, the opening and closing of doors and then nothing. It wasn’t long before they both started to worry.

“I think something’s gone wrong,” Eddie said.

“Don’t say that darling,” Catharine told her.

A few minutes went by and a door was heard creaking slowly open and then slamming closed. Catharine looked and saw Charlie and James, carrying a casket at a speed that would not be considered appropriate by any member of the undertaking fraternity. Eddie opened the back door of the Hudson. Catharine then opened the driver’s door and hopped out, so she could go and sit in the back with Eddie, clearing the way for Charlie to drive home. Charlie and James heaved the casket into the back of the hearse and went up the front with the dog. No one had to tell Charlie to start driving. Eddie wriggled around in the back so she was in a better position to open the lid of the casket.

Eddie screamed.

It was not the scream of a young girl who had walked into a kitchen and interrupted a mouse fetching a late afternoon snack. It was the scream of a woman who had been confronted by a corpse that, despite a vile process of decomposition, simply refused to disappear.

“Oh darling,” complained Catharine, “don’t make a fuss, it’s only a body and we’ve seen that one before.”

Eddie stared at the contents of the casket in disbelief. Her heart was racing and she was having difficulty breathing.

“Oh no, Douglas!” Catharine cried.

“What’s going on?” Charlie demanded.

“Oh darling, this is just schmawful.”

“Schmawful?” queried Eddie.

“So much more than awful,” explained James as he turned around to see what was going on.

“What’s wrong?” Charlie asked, unable to take his eyes off the road.

“We still have Mr Snook with us, that’s what’s wrong,” Catharine told him. “You and James have left Douglas in the Morgue!”

“What do we do now?” Eddie asked.

“Let’s just tell the truth,” Catharine suggested.

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“Good evening,” Catharine said. “I had some friends around here earlier this evening and I think they might have left something behind. Do you mind if I look for it?”

The morgue attendant couldn't speak. He had never seen anyone so beautiful. He had read about beautiful women but did not believe that they existed outside of cinemas. He did not even see that there was a dog standing beside her who was as smitten as he was. Catharine had discarded her undertaker's jacket and cap and stood in the doorway wearing plain black wool crepe trousers and a matching sailor-style top. Two strands of perfectly matched pearls adorned her neck. The black and white image was only disrupted by flawlessly applied red lipstick. The morgue attendant had a vague idea she had asked him a question but he could not remember what it was.

Catharine was about to ask her question again when the unthinkable happened. The dog broke free from her grasp and raced inside. The morgue attendant's colleague came to the door and Catharine pushed both of them out of the way so she could follow the dog. Catharine was frantic, she had lost her brother and now she had managed to lose her dog as well. She heard a crash and decided to head in that direction, the two men on duty that night were not very far behind her. The main part of the Morgue was awful, she kept saying to herself, just awful. There was: a sweet, almost sickly stench; there were bodies absolutely everywhere; there were lots of pieces of equipment she did not recognise; there was the dog creating complete chaos as he ran around and chewed on something she did not want to think about; and there, huddled in a corner under a bed, was Douglas.

"Come on darling!" she called out.

Douglas did not respond but within seconds the dog was sitting obediently at her feet. She looked at what he was holding in his mouth and tried, desperately, not to faint.

“Douglas!” she screamed as she stamped her foot.

Douglas was sluggish but he slowly stirred into action. He stood up, stepped over a body and went up to his sister.

“Douglas, make him drop it. Make him drop it right now.”

Douglas boasted about his many skills but had never even hinted about his ability as a dog trainer. He started by saying please and then resorted to picking up a piece of sheeting and, protecting his hand with the fabric, tried to pull the item from the dog’s jaws. The result was the most revolting example of tug-of-war that Catharine had ever seen. The display did nothing to impress the morgue attendants either, one of which grabbed the dog around the neck.

“How dare you!” Catharine shrieked, as she launched herself at the man who had assaulted her dog.

The two people wrestled violently on the floor until the second morgue attendant grabbed Catharine by the hair and pulled her off his work mate. Catharine squealed and struck out behind her, the second man released his grip so he could put his hand to his stinging face. She rolled over only to find herself caressing a corpse that had found its way to the floor in the uproar, which had almost completely destroyed, the main room of the City Morgue.

Douglas said, as firmly as he could: “Drop! There’s a good boy.”

The dog had already dropped the small body part that he had been holding so he could go and assist his mistress. A minor detail Douglas did not seem to

notice as he called out: “It’s alright Cat, I’ve taken care of the little problem with the dog.”

The dog had set up a defensive position between his mistress and the two men. His growl was so low it could barely be heard but it could be seen as it made his top lip curl and vibrate slightly, clearly revealing each one of his teeth. The men were terrified just long enough for Douglas to help his sister up and for both of them to start running. The dog turned and ran after them. The two men realised they needed to give chase and finally found the courage to go after the strange trio but it was too late, all of the intruders had gone.

“Oh darling, you were amazing!” Catharine said as they clambered over the casket that they assumed Charlie and James had left at the door and which they hoped contained Mr Snook.

“That’s alright Cat,” Douglas told her, forgetting that only a few minutes earlier he had been sobbing as he hid from the Morgue staff.

“I’m so glad that’s all over,” Catharine panted as they all ran across to where the Hudson was waiting for them.

“Me too,” Douglas agreed. “You really do need to give the dog a proper name though, it might make him a bit more obedient.”

“I’ll think of something,” Catharine assured him.

Inside the Morgue the attendants did what they could to restore order to the mess that had been made and to find room for the body that had suddenly appeared, although when they checked the file they realised they had actually had the extra body for ten days. It was hard work but they managed to make it appear as if nothing had happened. They saw they had an hour or so before the next shift arrived so they found an old bottle of rum, which had been hidden in

a desk drawer in one of the offices. They raised their glasses and looked solemnly at each other as they silently agreed to never mention the night's events to anyone.

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"Is everyone okay?" Charlie asked.

No one said anything.

"Is everyone alright?" Charlie asked again, much louder than before.

One by one, everyone nodded and the dog wagged his tail, just twice, from left to right and then back again.

Charlie seemed satisfied everyone had survived the visit to the City Morgue so he drove and kept driving until he went right through the intersection where he should have turned off into Union Street.

"Where are we going?" Eddie asked, when Charlie missed the turn.
"We're going to a place where we can have a drink," Charlie told her.

Everyone nodded.

Chapter 11

Going to Macquarie Street

Sunday, 17th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

Eddie stayed behind after mass to talk to Father Cronin. She fidgeted nervously as they sat and talked about the sermon Father Cronin had delivered that morning. They talked about Sarah Gittens' fruit cake, about the beautiful flower arrangements for this Sunday and about Ann Forbes buying some fabric in town during the week. Eddie talked about everything she could think of to avoid talking about the missing money from the poor box, the notes being couriered by members of the New Guard or her trip to the City Morgue the night before. She was just summoning up enough courage to talk about what was really troubling her, when she and Father Cronin were interrupted.

"Why, hello Lady Darling, what a surprise," Father Cronin said.
"Good morning Father," Catharine replied as she shook Father Cronin's hand and sat down next to him. "How are you this morning?"
"I'm well, I'm very well indeed," Father Cronin told her. "It's always so nice to see you here in our little church," he said.

Catharine was wearing a new suit the colour of weak coffee. Eddie was wearing her best navy blue day dress, the same dress she wore every Sunday.

"Good morning," Eddie said to Catharine.

“Hello darling,” Catharine said. “Why, I’ve been looking for you everywhere Eddie, it’s been utterly exhausting.”
“I’m sure it was,” Eddie said, unconvinced.

Eddie did not know how Catharine could be exhausted and how looking for her at home, and then a few blocks away, could possibly classify as having had to look for her everywhere. She did have to admit to herself though that the woman, who had been her co-investigator before her brother had come home and put an end to their activities, did look tired. Although, she suspected Catharine’s lack of sleep was because of events last night rather than events that morning.

Catharine sighed as she checked her watch: “So what are you doing here darling?” she asked Eddie.
“It’s Sunday,” Eddie said, thinking her two-word explanation sufficient.

Catharine shrugged.

“How did you make it to Newtown?” Eddie asked suddenly, unable to picture Catharine on public transport.
“I drove here,” Catharine told her curtly.
“But, the crash . . . ,” Eddie stopped talking.
“Let’s not talk about that,” Catharine instructed Eddie, her voice conveying how tired she was. “That was too awful for words.”

Eddie should not have been surprised to learn that Catharine would have another motor car at her disposal. She sincerely hoped that it was not another Rolls Royce.

“Well, now I’ve finally found you, we really should make a start.”

“Alright then,” Eddie said, “we can leave now if you want to.”

Eddie had been going to ask Father Cronin for some advice about the murder of Mr Snook but had lost her nerve. Now, all Eddie wanted to do was leave.

“Well, thank you both for coming,” Father Cronin said as he watched both women walk toward the main door of the church.

“Good bye,” Catharine called out.

“Good bye Father,” Eddie said. “I’ll see you soon.”

The older man hesitated for a moment. He wanted to thank Lady Darling for the flowers, which she had arranged to be sent to the church. He just did not think that now was the right time. Instead he just whispered his thanks again to both of them for coming to see him while he watched them rush off to do whatever it was they were off to do that day.

Eddie and Catharine went outside and Father Cronin went back to his office. He was worried about Eddie and what she had been up to. He wanted to know what was going on but he knew Eddie would not talk to him until she was ready. In the interim he had some fruitcake sitting on his desk requiring his urgent attention.

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The two women left the church and Father Cronin behind in a hurry and then slowed down slightly as they walked to where Catharine had parked her 1931 MG D-type Midget.

The two-door, four-seater convertible's ice green paint and sleek chrome accessories glistened in the early morning sun. The dog's head could be seen resting on the back of the driver's seat as he waited for his mistress to return.

"So what is it that we're doing today that's so important?" Eddie asked, noting the dog was lying down in the back of the motor car, allowing her to take her preferred position in the front passenger seat again.

"We have an appointment to meet someone in town," Catharine said.

"We do?" Eddie asked.

"Yes."

Eddie busied herself by folding the fabric of her dress and trying to fold her legs into the small front space of the little sports vehicle. She frowned from the effort and from the realisation the dog was sitting in the back for logistical reasons and not because Catharine had decided she was suddenly allowed to sit in the front again with her.

"Of course it's not a proper appointment," Catharine told her, "because," she continued, "he doesn't actually know we're coming to see him."

Eddie decided to give up and she twisted around in her seat and started talking to the dog believing he would make more sense than Catharine.

"I couldn't sleep last night," Catharine started to explain in an effort to attract Eddie's attention. "So, I sat up and thought about those half a dozen names on the list, the list which featured the name of our friend Mr Snook."

"At least you aren't calling him the parcel anymore," Eddie said.

"That's because he isn't a parcel anymore. He is a legitimate resident of the

City Morgue where he has been, according to his paperwork, safely ensconced for some time."

Catharine spoke with such confidence and with such conviction Eddie almost believed her.

"I must admit, although I'm sorry he was found by Charlie, I'm relieved he's no longer outside my house," Eddie told her as she faced the front again.

"Did Charlie talk about the case this morning?" Catharine asked.

"No, I think he said all he's ever going to say about the case last night when we were having a drink. Even if he did want to say something else he was asleep when I left for church this morning."

"Charlie didn't go with you to the service today?"

"He hasn't gone to church in years," Eddie said in a soft voice.

"That's a relief," Catharine said as she took the next corner a little too sharply, forcing both of her passengers to brace themselves as the MG struggled to keep all four tyres in contact with the road.

"So who are we meeting this morning?" Eddie asked.

"We're meeting someone with something in common with Mr Snook," Catharine told her.

"What?" Eddie asked, surprised. "How can we possibly do that?"

"It's simple, we don't have many options Eddie. We have to act quickly before Charlie starts interfering," Catharine said.

"I don't think Charlie has any intention of interfering," Eddie said sullenly. "He helped us last night because he didn't have much of a choice, he wanted to keep all of us out of trouble and out of prison. As far as he's concerned the case of the murder of Mr Snook is closed."

"But it's not closed," Catharine said firmly. "We still don't know who disliked Mr

Snook so much they decided to kill him."

"And I don't think we'll ever know," Eddie whispered.

"Don't be tedious darling," Catharine said impatiently.

"I'm not being tedious," Eddie said defensively. "I know that Charlie helped us deal with Mr Snook but he also took all the evidence we had about his murder. My brother doesn't want us to solve this crime and neither do your brothers for that matter. I'm just trying to face the facts."

"You aren't facing facts darling, you're just giving up."

"That's not fair," Eddie said.

"Isn't it?"

Eddie looked at the buildings, while Catharine drove, and saw the Government Treasury Building, and some of the men who she assumed were the unemployed members of the Timber Workers' Union, keeping a fairly obvious watch over the premises. Although she could not explain why, she suddenly decided that it was a good idea the Premier had arranged for some additional protection for the Treasury.

Catharine parked her MG in front of the main entrance to the Royal Automobile Club. The elegant sandstone building situated at the northern end of Macquarie Street looked a little bit forbidding. It was certainly not a place where women were openly welcomed.

"What are we doing here?" Eddie asked.

"I told you," Catharine said. "We're meeting someone this morning but not if we don't hurry."

"Are we meeting someone that knew Mr Snook?" Eddie asked.

"We certainly are," Catharine said, encouraged slightly by Eddie's interest in

their errand. “Well, I’m reasonably certain he knew Mr Snook. Unfortunately he doesn’t know either of us and I don’t know him but I’ve been provided with a fairly detailed description.”

“So you know what he looks like and you know he’ll be here this morning?” Eddie asked.

“Well, like you darling, many people spend their Sundays at a club.”

“Church is not a club,” Eddie said frostily.

“Of course it is, it’s just a club that serves less alcohol than most,” Catharine insisted as she stepped out of the MG and onto the road.

Eddie didn’t move, instead she changed the subject: “So how did you find someone who knew, or who you think knew, Mr Snook?” she asked.

“As I said, I was thinking about the list of names that Mr Snook was carrying with him the night he died,” Catharine explained.

“The list that Charlie has now and is keeping with all of the other clues he took from us.”

“Well of course he has the original darling but he doesn’t have the copy of it I made the other day,” Catharine said, annoyed Eddie kept interrupting her.

Eddie raised her eyebrows and pursed her lips. She was impressed with Catharine having made a copy of the list of names but not so impressed that she felt compelled to say anything.

“Anyway,” Catharine continued, “there are six names on that list and Snook’s name was one of them. That means we have five names on the list of people who probably knew Snook or who at least have something in common with him.”

Eddie had to acknowledge Catharine’s reasoning sounded logical. She was

frightened of the consequences of continuing the investigation though. She did not want to think about Charlie's reaction if he discovered she and Catharine were still trying to solve the case.

"The most unusual name on the list," Catharine went on, "is name number one: a T. Anderson-Brock."

Eddie nodded in agreement as she thought of the other names: names two; three; four; and six were all quite common. Name number five on the list was R. Snook.

"So I was thinking how these hyphenated names are terribly popular in certain circles so I called a friend of mine early this morning. Eleanor knows everyone in Sydney who's worth knowing and I asked her if she'd ever heard of an Anderson-Brock," Catharine said.

"And . . ."

"She knew a Matilda Anderson-Brock."

"Oh."

"I called Miss Anderson-Brock an hour or so ago and she told me she has a nephew."

"She does?"

"Yes, his name is Thomas."

"So you were given a description of what her nephew looked like and you were told you would find him here this morning."

"That's right darling."

"You just called a complete stranger and asked a series of questions about her family name and if there was anybody she knew with the letter T as a first initial."

“You make it sound so simple,” Catharine said, irritated by Eddie’s synopsis of what had happened. “It was actually a very difficult task requiring almost ten minutes of conversation and my having to issue Matilda with an invitation to come to tea.”

“And what do we do if Matilda’s nephew turns up?”

“I think that it’s your turn to ask the questions darling,” Catharine told her.

“Charlie might not like it if he finds out we’re still trying to work out who murdered Mr Snook,” Eddie said quietly as she stepped out onto the footpath and let Catharine close the motor car door for her.

“Charlie doesn’t like lots of things darling. He could almost be classified as difficult to be around,” Catharine complained.

“Well you have to admit there’s not a lot to like about being hurt by the same people who thought Mr Snook was in their way, or about us falling into the hands of the police and being questioned and then charged for . . . ,” Eddie could not complete her sentence.

“Being charged for what?” Catharine demanded.

“Lots of things,” Eddie insisted as she made a mental list of all the different laws she and Catharine had broken recently.

Catharine realised Eddie was right about how long it would take for a policeman to write up their charge sheets, so she decided not to pursue that particular point. Instead, she asked Eddie to retrieve one of her hairpins.

Eddie proffered the hairpin to Catharine who shook her head: “Just push the end of the pin into that small valve there,” she instructed.

“What valve?” Eddie asked, utterly confused.

“That little valve there,” Catharine pointed. “On the front tyre.”

“You actually want me to damage your motor car?” Eddie asked.

“Come on darling, it’s only a MG.”

Eddie wanted to know what Catharine was up to but was too tired to ask more questions so she squatted down beside the tyre and used her hairpin to apply pressure to the valve Catharine had pointed to. The dog was fascinated by the sound of the escaping air.

“Now what do we do?” Eddie asked as she looked at the flat tyre.
“Now we wait,” Catharine said as she checked her watch again.
It was not very long before Catharine whispered urgently: “Eddie. Eddie! I think this might be who we’re waiting for.”

Eddie looked up and saw a man walking towards them. She wondered, briefly, if she would recognise his face from one of the photographs she had found in the room of the New Guard message courier. Both women looked at the tall man wearing cream trousers with a bold orange and white striped cricket style blazer. He also wore a white polo neck sweater under his blazer, a white hat with a black band, a smart black belt and highly polished black shoes.

“Quickly! Kneel down and look at our flat tyre!” Catharine ordered.

Eddie did as she was told even though she did not like the way Catharine kept telling her what to do. Crouching down she used one hand for balance and the other to try and control a stray lock of hair.

“I say!” the man said as he approached, “What’s the matter here?”
“A bit of trouble with our motor car I’m afraid,” Catharine told him trying to sound helpless.

“Ah, terrible,” he said sympathetically. “It’s always bad timing to find you have a flat tyre. Particularly bad luck on a Sunday morning drive. At least you’ve run into difficulties at a very convenient place,” he said as he smiled and pointed to the signage of the Club.

“Oh, would you be able to help us?” Catharine asked.

“Of course,” the man said with a very flamboyant gesture.

“That would be wonderful,” Catharine said.

“No trouble at all,” the man assured her.

“That’s so kind,” Catharine gushed. “Why, I don’t even know your name. I’m Lady Darling and this is my friend Miss Jones,” Catharine said shaking the man’s hand.

Edwina took her cue to stand up and turn around.

“I say!” the man declared, breathlessly, as he presumptuously took Eddie’s hand and kissed it. “Captain Thomas Bligh Anderson-Brock, MM, at your service.”

Catharine was delighted their efforts had not been wasted and they had found the person they were looking for. Eddie was too busy trying to extract her hand from the Captain’s strong grip to think about if he had known Mr Snook or not.

“The first thing I need to do,” the Captain said, not taking his eyes off Eddie, “is to take both of you ladies out of this ghastly heat. Then, I’ll send a man out to look at that tyre for you.”

Instead of releasing Eddie’s hand, the Captain took her arm and led her into the exclusive Club. As Eddie was no longer standing on the footpath and could not

tell her that she shouldn't bring her dog with her, Catharine let the dog out of the motor car, played with his ears, and helped him up the Club's front steps. As Catharine scurried to catch up with Eddie she could hear Captain Anderson-Brock's voice telling somebody he was taking a couple of guests into the lobby. The voice then stopped another man walking through the vestibule area and sent him out to have a look at the tyre on the MG.

Catharine and the dog made it inside in time to see Eddie still trying desperately to retrieve her hand. Unfortunately this was proving an almost impossible task as her captor was too busy explaining to her that he was a strong advocate for the relaxation of rules for clubs right across the country, so that more women could attend. Eddie finally rescued her arm when they sat down in comfortable occasional chairs in one of the corners of the ground floor lounge. Catharine and the dog made themselves comfortable and Eddie rubbed her arm in an effort to renew blood flow to her hand. The Captain ordered drinks from a waiter, the usual for him and some tea for his guests.

"Thank you so much for rescuing us," Catharine said. "It really is very kind of you to help."
"It's no trouble. No trouble at all," he replied, even though he had not stopped looking at Eddie.
"Yes, it's kind of you to help," Eddie said trying to be polite, even though she was feeling more ill at ease with each passing minute.

Catharine saw Eddie was struggling to keep calm. Even though she felt she had already made more than her fair contribution to the day's efforts, she started questioning the Captain, although she thought that asking questions should be Eddie's job.

“I believe I may know your aunt,” Catharine started.

“Matilda?”

“Yes,” Catharine confirmed. “Although I don’t know her very well.”

Not at all, Eddie thought to herself.

“Sydney must not be such a big city after all,” Catharine commented.

“Obviously the city is large enough for me to not have found you before today,” the Captain said, making another move for Eddie’s hand.

Eddie’s nerves were starting to fray: “I wonder if there are any other people in Sydney we both know?” she asked in a tone that could almost have been thought of as aggressive.

The Captain sat upright, and put his planned assault on Eddie’s hand on hold, in response to the question. Catharine mumbled something to the dog about Eddie’s lack of subtlety.

“It’s possible,” the Captain answered cautiously.

“So many things are possible these days,” Catharine said in an effort to return the conversation to friendlier ground.

A few awkward minutes went by. Eddie and Catharine were sipping their tea when the man who had attended to their flat tyre suddenly appeared.

“I couldn’t find anything wrong with that tyre,” he told the small group. “I pumped it up and it seemed to be fine but I put the spare on for you just in case. You can have the one that went flat checked by a mechanic if you like but it should be safe enough to keep as a spare if you need it some time down the track. Anyway, you’ll make it home safely enough this afternoon.”

“Thank you Stuart,” the Captain said.

“Yes, thank you. Thank you very much,” Catharine said to the man with blackened hands.

Stuart bowed in acknowledgement of Catharine’s thanks then he gave the Captain a smile, a mock salute and promptly left.

“It must be a relief to know your motor car difficulties are not as serious as you first thought,” the Captain said, now looking directly at Catharine.

“A huge relief,” Catharine said very quietly.

“Do you know a Mr R. Snook?” Eddie blurted out.

“Yes, I know Robert Snook,” he said cautiously. “A fine man. Not sure about his wife though. Still a fine man doesn’t mean a fine decision maker.”

“What do you know about him?” Eddie asked.

“Hey, what’s all this about?”

“It’s about, it’s about . . . ,” Catharine’s voice trailed off as she could not think of anything to say which would answer his question and secure his help.

“Have you seen him recently?” Eddie asked cautiously.

“Have I seen who? Snook?”

“Yes,” Eddie said.

“There was absolutely nothing wrong with your motor car was there?” the Captain asked suddenly.

Eddie and Catharine did not answer the question, instead they just looked at each other and then back at the Captain. Eddie thought the situation was deteriorating rapidly and had a sudden urge to talk Catharine into dropping the case, as Charlie had told them to do.

“When was the last time you saw him?” Eddie asked again, realising it was too

late to turn back now, so she might as well take the risk and struggle on with the attempt to gather the information they had come for. “Please, it’s very important.”

“I would have last seen Snook, oh, I don’t know, maybe a fortnight ago,” he told them.

“We have to tell him,” Catharine said.

“Tell me what?”

“We have to tell you that Mr Snook died nearly two weeks ago,” Eddie said.

Thomas Anderson-Brock was clearly shocked by the news that Robert Snook was dead. He drained his whisky glass almost as quickly as the colour drained from his face. He placed his glass on the table before signalling a passing waiter for another drink.

“We are both truly very sorry for our little subterfuge this morning,” Catharine told him, “but we need your help.”

The Captain looked at both women suspiciously while he waited for his second drink to arrive.

“Please,” Eddie said, “we don’t really know who else to go to.”

The Captain sat and said nothing.

Eddie was starting to feel incredibly ill. It had been a foolish idea to think she and Catharine could just randomly approach the other names on the list. She thought back to the night Robert Snook died and she had wondered if one of the names on the list belonged to his murderer. The idea she was sitting at the

same table as a killer was proving too much. She was wishing that she had stayed at church that morning and told Father Cronin the truth. Catharine, who was feeling overtired and overwrought, was having her own regrets about intercepting a name on the list.

A whisky and soda was placed on the table. The Captain picked up the glass and then put it back down on the table again.

Catharine was feverishly trying to work out how she could extricate herself, Eddie and the dog from what was an incredibly unpleasant situation when the Captain asked: “Are you quite sure Snook is dead?”

“We’re quite sure,” Eddie whispered.

“And you’re sure he’s been dead for nearly two weeks?”

“Yes,” Eddie told him. “Well, almost. It’s two weeks on Wednesday.”

“I see,” the Captain said as he reached for his glass again.

“I’m sorry we lied to you,” Eddie said.

“You’ve lied to me about Snook?” the Captain asked, confused.

“No,” Eddie told him, “about the motor car.”

“Well now I know the real reason for you wanting to see me I quite understand. Telling a man his friend is dead is not something you can come out with in the middle of the street.”

“No. No, it’s not,” Eddie agreed quickly.

“We are both very sorry,” Catharine added. “We didn’t know he was your friend. We’re very sorry that we’re the ones to have given you the terrible news.”

“I saw his wife yesterday,” the Captain said as he took a sip of his drink. “While I would not have expected the perfect picture of a grieving widow, I’m surprised she was able to tell me so casually her husband had been delayed on

a business trip to Queensland."

The Captain continued to drink. Eddie started to fidget. Catharine became more committed to her theory that Robert Snook had been murdered by his wife. The dog slept peacefully on the thick carpet.

"Can you tell me what happened?" the Captain asked.
"Not really," Catharine said, a little too quickly.
"We saw your friend the night that he died," Eddie started to explain.

The Captain cast looks at both women and then started to stare at his drink. He could not work out if he should ask them to leave or if he should listen to whatever it was they had to say.

"He gave me a piece of paper just before he passed away," Eddie said.

While she did not really believe T. Anderson-Brock was the murderer, he was too obviously devastated by the news of Snook's death, she still thought she should not give too much away. The Captain said nothing, he just nodded to indicate he was prepared to listen to whatever it was Eddie wanted to say.

"The piece of paper had a list of names on it," Eddie continued.
"I have a copy here," Catharine said, reaching into her purse and taking out a sheet of paper to putting it in front of the Captain.
"Unfortunately Mr Snook died before he could explain what it was that he wanted us to do with the list," Eddie said very softly. "As your name was one of the six names he brought to us, we were hoping you might be able to help."
"I see," the Captain said.

Although Eddie had omitted the bulk of what she knew, she was still worried she had said too much. Catharine was worried the Captain would have hundreds of questions to ask and that he would not leave them alone until they gave him the answers he demanded. It was a surprise to both women when the Captain simply picked up the piece of paper, unfolded it, read the list and then put it back down on the table.

“Can you tell us anything about the list?” Catharine asked him.

“Can you tell us anything at all?” Eddie asked.

The Captain sat back in his chair and said: “I can tell you that I know all of those men.”

“And . . . ,” Eddie said, encouraging him to say something more.

“We’re all friends,” the Captain went on, “we all live on the North Shore and we’re all members of the New Guard.”

Catharine gasped and Eddie nearly knocked over her cup of tea. The Captain obviously enjoyed being able to create such a reaction.

“You’re a member of the New Guard?” Eddie asked, slightly shocked.

“There are approximately 100,000 New Guard members. Surely I’m not the first man you’ve met who belongs to one of the country’s largest organisations.”

Catharine decided if she was going to keep mixing with such unsavoury types, she would need to start carrying something in her purse that was a little bit more dangerous than a spare hatpin. Eddie could not believe what she had just heard. Although she realised she was not going to receive much assistance from a man who was committed to a group she felt was dangerous and she

actually wanted to stop, she had to take one more risk that morning.

“Can you tell us what this number is for?” Eddie asked him.

“What number?”

“This number here,” Eddie said as she pointed to the four neatly printed numerals above the list of names. “The number 3332. At first we thought it was a telephone number or the registration number for a motor car,” Eddie said.

“It’s not a number,” he said casually.

“What do you mean it’s not a number?” Catharine asked indignantly.

“It’s not a number,” he said, “it’s a date.”

“A date?” said Eddie.

“Yes, it is 3.3.32. It says the 3rd of March, 1932.”

“What’s so special about the 3rd of March?” Catharine asked.

“It’s the date of a New Guard meeting held at their Chatswood Locality. The names you see written here were in attendance at that meeting, as was our leader, Colonel Eric Campbell.”

“That must have been a memorable occasion,” Catharine quipped.

“It was a memorable occasion indeed,” the Captain informed her, managing to completely ignore Catharine’s tone. “That was the night when our leader, the Colonel, told us: ‘The time is finished for talk’.”

“The time is finished for talk,” Eddie repeated. “What’s that supposed to mean?” Eddie asked him.

The Captain finished his drink, put his glass down on the table, and said: “Your guess is as good as mine.”

Eddie swallowed hard and regretted having spent the morning talking to Captain Anderson-Brock about Robert Snook instead of spending it talking to Father Cronin like she had originally planned. Catharine started to consider how

she could retract the invitation she had given to Matilda Anderson-Brock to come for tea as she woke the dog.

“While I appreciate your concern for Snook, and your efforts in letting me know about his untimely death, I don’t want to become involved in what is going on here,” he told them as he stood up. “After all, there is only so much whisky one man can consume in a day.”

He walked back to the Club’s entrance and Eddie, Catharine and the dog followed him.

“Well, you now know I am Captain Thomas Bligh Anderson-Brock, MM,” he said as he made another attempt to snatch Eddie’s hand. “I am . . .”
“Yes, yes,” Catharine interrupted. “You’re at our service. Come on darling,” she said, taking Eddie’s arm and leading her to the entrance of the club. “We must rush. We don’t want to be late for lunch.”

The Captain watched both women drive off with their dog in the back seat of their motor car. He would normally have spent most of his day at the Club but he thought he should go back to his room at the Australia Hotel where he had recently taken up temporary residence. He needed to jot down some notes, make a few telephone calls and check his cache of weapons.

Chapter 12

A New Man for the New Guard

Sunday, 17th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

"Darling that was awful, just awful. What were you thinking?" Catharine demanded as she ignored their immediate safety by driving much faster than she should have.

Eddie was astounded Catharine had come to the conclusion the morning's fiasco at the Royal Automobile Club was somehow her fault. She was starting to resent Catharine's involvement in the case and starting to resent Robert Snook for dying in the first place. She wanted to go home and go to bed and not wake up until the case had been solved and, preferably, solved by someone else.

"Where are we going now?" Eddie asked.
"We're going home," Catharine told her.

Catharine headed towards the Eastern Suburbs. Eddie decided not to remind Catharine that she lived on the other side of the city and risk starting an argument. She was too tired, so she started thinking about the ferry trip from Vaucluse back to Circular Quay and how long she might have to wait for a tram to take her home from the city. She wondered if she should go and see Father Cronin straight away or if she should wait. Catharine turned into Greycliffe Avenue and parked in the grounds of her brother's house.

“Come on darling,” she said to Eddie. “I think we could both do with something to eat.”

Eddie sighed as she followed Catharine and the dog into the house. When the three of them had made their way through to the conservatory they saw James was already there, reading a newspaper, drinking a cup of tea and eating some sandwiches from a silver serving tray.

“Haven’t you two had enough of each other’s company yet?” he asked.
“Hello darling. Are you going to share what you’re having for lunch with your guests or are you just going to sit there and be unsociable.”

James liked being unsociable but pushed the sandwich tray across anyway. He was not surprised when the first sandwich selected was given to the dog. Catharine told the dog he was a good boy while Eddie sat down without saying anything at all. She picked up a linen napkin and carefully chose something to eat from the tray. While Catharine and Eddie nibbled on their delicately cut finger sandwiches James went over to the tea cabinet and fetched two more cups and saucers. His body ached, because of his involvement in one of his sister’s more unconventional escapades the night before, so he moved much slower than normal. He did not even manage to pour any tea when he made it back to the table.

“At the risk of being told about another murder victim, can I ask what you were both up to this morning?”
“We haven’t been up to anything,” Catharine told him indignantly. “I collected Eddie from Newtown this morning and brought her back here.”
“Is that so?” James asked, not believing a word of his sister’s claim.

“Darling, after last night I think we’re all too exhausted to be up to anything more demanding than a little something to eat and a nice cup of tea.”

Eddie wanted to ask for coffee but kept quiet. James looked at Eddie to seek confirmation of Catharine’s story but she was using the task of eating as a ploy to avoid making eye contact. A sign, he thought, his sister was not being truthful. He was about to assert his authority as the senior sibling and demand an explanation of what she and Eddie had done, or worse, were planning to do when Catharine’s maid arrived.

“Excuse me Lady Darling,” she said, as she walked over to pour tea into the two additional cups James had set out. “Your visitor has just arrived, should I take him through to the library or will he be joining you here for lunch?”
“Who is it Elizabeth?” Catharine asked. “I’m not expecting anyone today.”
“It is Captain Anderson-Brock visiting,” Elizabeth told her.

Catharine’s face went incredibly pale at the news that the Captain was there and wanting to see her. Eddie gasped and dropped her napkin.

“Should I save us all some time and effort and make a telephone call to the police now?” James asked.
“No. Let’s go and see what the Captain wants,” Catharine said with an unusual air of determination.
“We can’t call the police now,” Eddie said emphatically. “Besides, even if we did call them, what would we tell them?”

James wanted to know if he had any say in the matter. While dead bodies can be inconvenient they at least do not have much to say for themselves. People

who are still alive, however, have the rather unpleasant habit of talking and usually to the wrong people at the wrong time. Elizabeth waited patiently to be told what to do.

“Take the Captain through to the library please, Elizabeth,” Catharine told her. “Offer him something to drink and let him know I’ll be joining him in a few minutes.”

Elizabeth nodded and left the conservatory. James realised he obviously did not have a say in what was going on, so he started eating another sandwich.

“What we need is a plan,” Catharine said.

“A what?” Eddie asked.

“We need a plan,” Catharine repeated forcefully. “Surely after what happened this morning you must realise that we can’t afford to be unprepared. Not again.”

“It wasn’t my fault things went wrong this morning,” Eddie said defensively.

“What do you think?” Catharine asked, turning to James.

“I think I’m going to need something slightly stronger to drink,” he told her.

“We all need something to drink,” Catharine said curtly. “We also need to know what we’re going to do about our visitor, we can’t just leave him to his own devices in the library.”

James, who had lost his appetite, threw his sandwich back on the tray, took a deep breath and asked a question he knew he was going to regret: “Who is he?”

“Captain Thomas Bligh Anderson-Brock,” Catharine said.

“MM,” Eddie added.

“He . . . ,” Catharine was cut off.

“I am going to ask some questions,” James informed her. “All I want is for you to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Do you think you can manage that?”

“Darling, you are being . . .”

“Just say ‘yes’ or ‘no’,” James said.

“Yes,” Catharine answered, leaning forward so she could reassure the dog who was now looking almost as anxious as she was feeling.

“Is Captain Anderson-Brock involved in the murder of Robert Snook?”

Catharine didn’t answer.

James tried again: “Is Captain Anderson-Brock somehow involved with anything that happened last night?”

“No.”

“Is Captain Anderson-Brock involved with the New Guard?”

“Yes.”

“Do you know the Captain?”

“Not really.”

“Just say ‘yes’ or ‘no’,” James told her.

“Darling, this is ridiculous,” Catharine complained.

“There were six names on the list Robert Snook was carrying with him the night that he died,” Eddie cut in. “Robert Snook’s name was on that list and so was the Captain’s.”

“And you both thought it was a good idea to make contact with him?”

“Yes,” Catharine said, without looking up from the dog.

“Did you have to invite him here?” James asked.

“No!” Catharine said adamantly. “I would never have invited him here.”

“Never?”

“No,” Catharine insisted. “You heard me tell Elizabeth I wasn’t expecting

anyone today."

James was extremely frustrated and was about to give up: "So what is he doing here?" he finally asked.

"I really don't know," Catharine said, her voice betraying how uncomfortable she was feeling. She was aware her brother was running out of patience with her and didn't want to make things more difficult than they already were.

James looked at Eddie.

"We knew the Captain would be at the Royal Automobile Club this morning," Eddie started to explain. "Catharine and I decided we would meet him there and ask him if he knew Mr Snook so we could try and establish a link between all of the names on the list."

"Did he know Snook?" James asked.

"Yes he did," Eddie told him.

"Did he know anything about what had happened to him?"

"About his murder?" Eddie asked

James nodded.

"No," Eddie told him. "He didn't even know he was dead. I felt horrible breaking the news to him."

"Robert Snook's wife had actually told the Captain, only yesterday, her husband was away on a business trip," Catharine explained.

"But he knows now?" James asked Eddie, trying to ignore his sister.

"Yes," Catharine said, trying to contribute but stay out of trouble.

"He did give us some valuable information though," Eddie said. "He was able to tell us all the names on the list are all friends, they all live on the other side of

the Bridge and they are all members of the New Guard."

James closed his eyes.

"He also told us what that number was, the number 3332," Eddie said, still upset she had not worked out what the number was on her own. "It's the date of a New Guard meeting that was held over at Chatswood."

"They have meetings all the time. I wonder what was so important about that one," James said, annoyed that he was curious about what was going on.

"All the men on the list were there," Eddie told him. "So was the leader of the New Guard."

"Eric Campbell was there?" James asked.

"Yes," Catharine chirped in quickly. "Apparently he was there to give them a little pep talk," she added.

"And, after you went to see the Captain at the Royal Automobile Club this morning, you were not expecting to see him again?"

"No," Catharine said.

"Come on then," James said as he stood up. "Let's go."

"Go where?" Catharine asked.

"Go to the library and find out why someone would want to see you twice in one day," James told her.

"You're going to come with us?" Eddie asked.

"Well, I'm hardly going to let you go and see the Captain again on your own," James told her.

"Douglas always has a plan, shouldn't we have a plan?" Catharine asked.

"Probably," James said as he walked towards the door.

"But, we don't have one. We need to think of something. We can't go in there without a plan," Catharine protested.

James ignored his sister and left the room. He was followed by Eddie, Catharine and the dog.

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The library had always been the coolest space in the large house, consistently offering relief from Sydney's hot summer days and stifling evenings. This afternoon was different though and nobody felt more comfortable there than in any other room. Catharine and Eddie actually felt distinctly warmer in the library than they had felt when they had been sitting in the conservatory.

The Captain stared. James, Eddie, Catharine and the dog stared back.

After a minute or so had passed, James broke the silent stalemate by taking a seat near the Captain. Eddie and Catharine followed his lead and sat down on the brown leather Chesterfield opposite the men. Eddie was grateful for the set of small antique timber tables, which were covered in old books and magazines and this week's newspapers. They were not much but they did offer some sort of barrier between her and the unwanted visitor.

"How did you find me?" Catharine finally asked, dispensing with the usual courtesies she would normally have afforded to a guest.
"You know my Aunt Matilda," the Captain said abruptly. "You don't know her very well, of course, but you know her well enough for her to have kept your address and telephone number."

The dog did not like the way the strange man looked at his mistress and issued a very low growl. James did not like the way the Captain looked at Eddie and

stood up again to mix some drinks.

“Why are you here?” Catharine asked the Captain as confidently as she could.
“I’m here because, Lady Darling, you and Miss Jones went to a great deal of effort to find me this morning and ask me about a list of names you had, a list that had been given to you by Robert Snook.”

Neither Catharine nor Eddie responded.

“I’m here,” the Captain went on, “because I didn’t tell you everything I know about that list. I didn’t tell you how important it really is.”
“If you wanted to tell us something more, you could have done so this morning,” Catharine said.
“Yes,” Eddie said, trying to support Catharine. “You could have very easily told us anything that you wanted to tell us when we were at the Club this morning.”
“I couldn’t,” the Captain said, now looking suddenly very tired.
“Why not?” Catharine demanded.
“There were too many people around,” he said simply.

Catharine was angry this man had turned up to see her without any warning at all. While she may have done something similar earlier in the day by locating the Captain, she had at least been polite enough to find him in a public place rather than intrude upon him at home.

Their visitor considered his words carefully before he finally started to talk again: “I told you the names on the list you showed me earlier had four things in common: we are all friends; we all live on the North Shore; and we are all New Guard members.”

“Yes,” Eddie said. “We remember. You also told us you all attended a New Guard meeting over at Chatswood in early March.”

“That’s right,” the Captain agreed. “I did not, however, tell you that those names have another thing in common.”

“What’s that?” Eddie asked.

“Those six names are the names of the six most hated men within the New Guard.”

“What happened?” Catharine asked with mock concern. “Were you all late in submitting your membership dues?”

The man laughed and took a sip of his drink. James had already finished his own Scotch and soda while the two women had left their glasses untouched.

“Let me start at the beginning,” the Captain said. “Eric Campbell has always been rather keen on the New Guard demonstrating it has what it takes to control New South Wales without the interference of a democratically elected Government. Most people know the New Guard have the numbers.”

“Are there really 100,000 of you?” Eddie interrupted.

The Captain nodded.

“That’s an almost unbelievable number,” James said, as he thought about how many people lived in New South Wales. “Why, it’s almost five per cent of the State’s total population!” he calculated quickly.

“And when you consider there are no women or children who are members,” the Captain explained, “and most of us would not describe ourselves as being terribly advanced in years, it becomes obvious it’s an organisation with incredible reach.”

“Who are all these people?” Catharine asked.

“They’re mostly ex-military types,” the Captain told them. “Of course not all of them did their bit during the War. Some of the chaps were unable to enlist because they weren’t quite fit enough and some of them were just too young when the War broke out.”

“What would bring so many veterans and civilians together?” Catharine asked.

“An unswerving loyalty to the Crown,” the Captain said, raising his glass as if he were making a toast.

“What about their loyalty to Jack Lang?” Eddie asked. “He’s our Premier.”

“The New Guard believes you cannot be faithful to the King and support a communist at the same time.”

“I wouldn’t have described Lang as a communist,” James said.

“I wouldn’t describe him as one either,” the Captain agreed.

“Is that why you aren’t very popular at the moment?” Eddie asked.

“That’s one of the reasons,” the Captain admitted. “The main reason though is because of what happened at that meeting at Chatswood last month.”

“The meeting held on the 3rd of March?” Eddie asked.

“That’s right. At that meeting six men decided to confront Colonel Campbell while he was there and tell him he was going too far.”

“The six men on the list,” Eddie said.

“Yes. The six of us thought things were starting to spiral out of control. You see, I said most people know the New Guard has the numbers to run the State. What most people don’t know though is that they also have the resources to actually stage a complete take over.”

“What sort of resources?” James asked him.

“Well, they certainly have quite a bit of money, although they would probably argue they don’t have enough. They also have weapons and ammunition as well as access to vehicles and other heavy equipment. They also have the

required amounts of arrogance and lunacy to pull it all off," the Captain revealed.

"I don't understand," Catharine said. "What is it that they want to pull off?"

"A military coup," he answered, almost casually.

"But . . . ," James hesitated. "That would launch us into civil war."

The Captain didn't comment and no one else could think of anything to say. Everyone just sat there silently, lost in their own thoughts of the potential for bloodshed on the streets of Sydney.

"Would they really take over by force?" Eddie finally asked.

"They're certainly going to a lot of effort to give that impression," the Captain said.

"What sort of effort?" Catharine asked.

The Captain considered his drink carefully and then started to tell them what he knew: "Almost two months ago, over 700 men from the New Guard were drilled over at Belmore. Some reporters were there from a newspaper they don't approve of and they assaulted the men who tried to take photographs. Only a few days later they were flaunting their numbers at Lansdowne Bridge where they conducted a transport exercise. They've also been busy disrupting meetings across the State, meetings that support the Government in any way. These clashes between the New Guardsmen and any group who does not agree with them are becoming more and more violent. Up at Coffs Harbour thirteen New Guardsmen were arrested after they tried to break up a meeting where one of Lang's men was making a speech."

"My brother, Charlie, was telling me about some meetings of unemployed men that New Guard members broke up not long ago in Newtown and out at Bankstown," Eddie contributed.

“In addition to breaking up as many meetings as they can,” the Captain went on as he nodded at Eddie, “they’ve been holding extra meetings of their own. In the last few weeks or so they’ve held meetings in Bondi, Double Bay, Rose Bay and Woollahra in an effort to prepare all members for general mobilisation.”

“What do you mean?” Eddie interrupted.

“I mean the senior officers within the New Guard are working day and night to prepare the rank and file for war.”

“Don’t be ridiculous!” Catharine cried. “They can’t just start a war because they don’t like how things are being done.”

“It’s happened before,” James commented.

“Well it can’t happen now and it certainly can’t happen here,” Eddie said, the colour rising in her cheeks.

“I don’t think that there’s anyone who can stop them,” the Captain insisted.

“But . . . ,” Catharine was cut off.

“Look,” the Captain said, “for months now there have been zone inspections every Saturday. That means between three hundred and fifteen hundred men parading openly. There have also been huge rallies, including one at Sydney Town Hall. There were thousands of men, thousands, each one eagerly raising their right arm in a fascist salute to solemnly swear their allegiance to the New Guard.”

“Good God,” Catharine whispered.

“I’ve asked you not to say things like that,” Eddie lectured.

“Sorry darling,”

“Alright, you’re saying the New Guard has the numbers and the resources,” James said. “Do you really think they want to plunge the State, and possibly the whole country, into chaos?”

“They believe the time is finished for talk,” the Captain answered.

“The police are watching them though,” Catharine argued. “Ever since that incident when one of the New Guard members tried to open the Bridge before the Premier had a chance to cut the ribbon himself.”

“That’s right,” Eddie said.

“An awful little man, he was, riding a most unattractive horse. I can’t seem to remember his name though,” Catharine said.

“Francis de Groot,” James told her.

“The Irishman,” scoffed the Captain.

“That’s right,” Eddie said, “he came through and slashed the ribbon with a sword and they had to tie it together again so that the Premier could officially open the Bridge.”

“I couldn’t believe that someone would make such a dreadful display,” Catharine said indignantly, “and while the Governor and his wife were both there too. Really!”

The Captain shook his head: “That stunt may have embarrassed the Government but it’s not the worst the New Guard can do.”

“But the police must know about all of the things that you’ve told us,” Eddie exclaimed. “Surely the New Guard will back down if they realise the police are prepared and are ready to put a stop to them.”

“They have absolutely no intention of reigning in their activities,” the Captain continued. “I know they have scheduled more military drills over at Killara and that is probably only one of dozens of activities they have planned for next week. I also know these men are determined to crush communism and believe that means crushing Lang. They’ll use whatever force they think is necessary to take on the police, or even take on the army, if they feel they have to.”

“I wonder if all this increased activity has something to do with why they’re watching the Premier,” Eddie gasped.

“They’re surely up to something darling,” Catharine said. “After all, they’re

going to a lot of trouble to have him watched."

"We have to do something," Eddie said.

"Haven't you listened to a single word that I've just said?" the Captain asked. "You can't stop the New Guard. No one can."

"Of course we can," Catharine said indignantly as she sat up a little straighter in her chair. "It'll be just like Samson and Goliath."

"David," Eddie whispered.

"What darling?"

"It'll be just like David and Goliath," Eddie corrected.

"Whoever darling," Catharine said in a dismissive tone.

"You can't be serious," James said. "These people murdered a man."

"They what?" the Captain yelled.

"Please don't raise your voice," Catharine instructed. "It upsets the dog."

"How do you know they murdered somebody?" the Captain asked quietly.

"They murdered Robert Snook," Eddie told him.

"Well, we're reasonably sure it was the New Guard who decided it was no longer necessary to have Snook around," Catharine clarified.

"You told me Snook was dead," the Captain said aghast. "You didn't tell me he'd been murdered."

"He came to us the night he died," Eddie told him. "He wanted to give the list of names to my brother but Charlie wasn't home. He told us he'd been murdered and then passed away only a few minutes later, leaving the list with Catharine and me."

"Did your brother know Snook?" the Captain asked Eddie.

"No," she told him. "We just assumed he wanted to see Charlie because he's a private investigator. He probably wanted his help to find out who had poisoned him."

"Good God," the Captain said before muttering a quick apology to Eddie and

then asking: “What else do you know?”

“Not much,” Eddie said as she ran the fingers of both her hands through her hair. “We know Robert Snook was murdered. We know the New Guard are using my local church as a drop off and pick up point to move messages around the city. We know they’re interested in Jack Lang because one of the messages was an instruction to watch the Premier at Pearson’s Cafe.”

“We all need to walk away,” the Captain said as he looked imploringly at James for another drink.

“That’s the first sensible comment I’ve heard all day,” James said as he went to fetch the decanter.

“We can’t,” Catharine said.

“Charlie wouldn’t like it if we decided to keep going with the investigation,” Eddie said. “He wouldn’t like it at all. He was extremely clear last night in telling us we weren’t allowed to have anything to do with any part of this case anymore,” she reminded Catharine and James.

“You didn’t seem to have too much difficulty following up a lead this morning,” Catharine said. “In fact you played a very active role at the Club.”

“I suppose not,” Eddie answered as she avoided looking at the Captain.

“Besides, Charlie was very specific he didn’t want you or I involved. As we’ll not be the ones doing the investigating from now on, he will not have anything to complain about.”

“What do you mean we won’t be investigating?” Eddie asked.

“We’ve reached a point where we need to delegate,” Catharine informed her.

Eddie thought about how she could put a stop to Catharine always telling her what to do. This had been her case. Well, it should have been her case but Catharine was the one issuing all the instructions. Despite the fact that, all she had wanted to do initially, was call the police.

“From now on,” Catharine continued. “James will investigate for us.”

“And just how do you propose that I do that?” James asked over the rim of his glass.

“You can join the New Guard darling.”

“That’s brilliant!” Eddie cried out excitedly as she instantly realised the potential of Catharine’s idea.

Eddie then looked down and frowned at her shoes. Such an open endorsement of one of Catharine’s plans could only encourage her to keep trying to take control of the investigation. James was not nearly as impressed with his sister’s latest scheme. In fact, James thought if Catharine did not move out of his house very soon then he might have to. He briefly pictured a small cottage in the Blue Mountains where he could spend his days reading and writing and not being bothered by his siblings or dead bodies.

“It’s a fabulous idea,” Catharine gloated proudly.

“It’s a terrible idea,” the Captain insisted. “These are violent people who will stop at nothing, we already strongly suspect that they’ve killed one man who they thought was in their way.”

“If they murdered Snook though, a man who was in the way, would they hesitate to murder Lang, a man who they are determined to stop?” Catharine asked.

The room fell silent again.

“Please,” Eddie said as she leant forward earnestly. “All we’re asking you to do is to try and find out what’s going on. If we’re wrong about the New Guard then hopefully no harm will come of you joining them. If we’re right about them

though, if they really are planning to start a war then maybe you could come up with enough information for us to take to the police."

"You would go to the police?" James asked her sceptically.

"Yes," Eddie promised.

"Oh yes," Catharine chimed in. "Eddie said, right from the beginning, that we could call the police at any time."

"At any time," Eddie repeated.

"You could go to the police now," James suggested.

"We could," Eddie agreed, "but we really don't have that much information to give them."

James shook his head and mumbled something derogatory about good ideas. He then stood up and walked across to a telephone on an antique sideboard. He rang an operator and asked to be connected to A.M. Trembath. Trembath had cornered him several times on campus and tried to bully him into joining the New Guard. Apparently men like James Longfoot were the quality types the Guard was looking for. The organisation needed men who had a military background, were from a good family and were respected in the community. Trembath was delighted to hear from his colleague. It was a personal relief, he said, that James had finally realised something needed to be done about the crisis created by a communist Government ruling an Australian state.

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Sunday, 17th April 1932

George Street, Sydney

James felt his stomach churn as he sat in the small coffee lounge, opposite

Trembath, and read through the application form that had been put in front of him. By filling in his details he was committing to unswerving loyalty to the Throne and the British Empire, ideas he had signed up for during the Great War with limited success. He was also agreeing to strive for sane and honourable Government throughout Australia, which might be reasonable enough but was completely unrealistic. There was also the demand to ensure the suppression of any disloyal and immoral elements in Government, industrial and social circles as well as the abolition of machine politics. Finally, he needed to sign on to fight for the maintenance of the full liberty of the individual.

The normally reclusive academic had detested the idea of belonging to any group since he had left the army. James wiped the sweat from his hands on his trousers and he tried not to think about the revolver he had caught a glimpse of when Trembath had pulled the application form out of his briefcase. With a signature, that clearly lacked its usual confidence and flair, he completed the document. He was reasonably sure it would have been less intimidating to sign himself into the care of a local facility for the mentally infirm.

Chapter 13

Locating the Last Name on the List

Monday, 18th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

Eddie had managed to stay out of Charlie's way since Saturday night. Her brother knew nothing about her trip to the Royal Automobile Club. He also did not know anything about what she, Catharine and James had been told about the activities of the New Guard by Captain Anderson-Brock. All she had to do now was make sure she did not say anything about James having joined the New Guard. She hoped that if the Guardsmen were really planning to do something to endanger the life of the Premier, then it would not take long for James to find the information they needed so they could go to the police and let them know what was being plotted. Although Eddie had avoided talking to Charlie, there was one person that she did need to talk to and she needed to talk to him soon.

Father Cronin sat in his office eating a stale ANZAC biscuit and drinking a glass of milk. The priest snacked in silence while Edwina told him a story that started the night he had first let her know about money going missing from the church and finished with her convincing a friend to join an organisation that he did not think very highly of. When Eddie had finally finished what she had to say he was able to narrow his focus down to three main concerns. Firstly, he did not

like the idea of Edwina being mixed up with people who could be murderers. Secondly, he was worried that some of the things she had said about the New Guard might be true. Finally he was troubled that men were using the church, not as a place of prayer and refuge, but only as a mechanism to avoid a more established postal service.

There were lots of questions he wanted to ask but he knew Edwina did not have the answers. So, he picked up another biscuit and asked the only question he really could under the circumstances: “What do you want to do now?”
“I don’t know,” Eddie whispered.

The old man brooded over his second biscuit before looking more closely at the young woman sitting across from him. She had changed so much since her parents had died, changes that ran much deeper than being forced to grow up too quickly. He worried about her and about what made her want to be so much like her brother, when she only ever needed to be herself.

“Do you know if any more money has been stolen?” Eddie asked, interrupting his thoughts.

Father Cronin shook his head.

“That might mean no more messages have been left here,” Eddie suggested.
“Eddie . . . ,” Father Cronin started.

Eddie held her glass of milk a little tighter as she braced herself for the lecture, which would serve as a twin, to the one she had received from Charlie on Saturday night.

“I’ll help you,” Father Cronin told her, his voice very quiet but very determined.

“You will?” Eddie asked, surprised.

“Of course I have no idea how,” he said, chuckling to himself and rubbing his stomach. “I’m not really in any condition to start chasing people down King Street you know!”

Eddie smiled.

“I’ll think of something,” he said solemnly. “I promise.”

“I suppose I should go home,” Eddie said. “Catharine is coming over.”

Father Cronin recognised Edwina’s look of impatience: “Don’t be so hard on her,” he said.

Eddie shrugged and said: “I’ll try. It’s just that . . .”

“What?”

“It’s just that she keeps trying to take over. It’s my case and she’s always ordering me about.”

“From what you’ve just told me she’s taken a few orders from you as well over the past couple of weeks.”

“Maybe one or two,” Eddie reluctantly admitted.

“People are not always what they seem,” he said.

He leaned back in his chair and thought about the flowers Catharine had sent to the church, the cheque she had mailed to compensate for the losses from the poor box and the note asking him not to say anything about either donation.

“Sometimes you need to remember to look below the surface,” he told her.

Eddie was unresponsive.

“Try to remember the words of Ephesians,” Father Cronin said, “be kind . . .”

“To one another,” Eddie finished for him.

“Oh, and Edwina.”

“Yes Father.”

“Try not to be so hard on yourself either,” he told her.

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It took Eddie longer than usual to walk from Bedford Street back to Union Street. Her pace slowed even more when she saw that Catharine was already there, sitting in her motor car, waiting.

“You’re early,” Eddie said, surprised to see her.

“Sorry darling. I was hoping we could run a little errand over at Chatswood before we went into town,” Catharine told her.

“What did you want to do?” Eddie asked as she patted the dog in the back and then slid into the front passenger seat.

“I want to go and visit Mrs Snook,” Catharine said softly, looking straight ahead instead of looking at Eddie.

“You what?” Eddie asked, unable to believe what she had just heard.

“Well, as we did spend all that time with her husband I thought that it seems only fair that we . . .”

“I don’t think it’s a good idea,” Eddie told her.

“It probably isn’t,” Catharine admitted.

“Then why do you want to go?” Eddie asked.

“Look darling,” Catharine said, in a more serious tone. “I just want to . . . ,” she did not finish her sentence, instead she just continued to stare at some distant point in front of her.

“You don’t really still think that Mr Snook was murdered by his wife do you? Not with all of the information we now have about the New Guard?”

“It’s just that . . . ,” again, Catharine hesitated.

“It’s just that what?” Eddie prompted.

“I don’t understand why Mrs Snook would lie to Captain Anderson-Brock and tell him her husband was in Queensland.”

“You don’t understand why she would tell a lie?” Eddie asked

“I don’t understand why she would tell such a silly lie,” Catharine clarified. “Look, I would never say George was away on a trip unless I was certain that he was. I would certainly never say he was away to one of his friends and specify he was in Queensland when his friend could very easily know he was in Western Australia.”

“Now I don’t understand,” Eddie said frustrated by Catharine who, she thought, was talking in circles.

“I think,” Catharine said slowly as she turned and looked at Eddie, “that Mrs Snook knows her husband has been murdered.”

“Well she might know that he’s been killed but she couldn’t possibly know about us,” Eddie countered, suddenly worried that too many people were finding out about their detective efforts.

“I don’t think she does know about us or, more importantly, about how we, um, how we looked after her husband for a little while.”

“Then why do you want to go and see her, why would you want to take a risk like that?” Eddie asked.

“If Mrs Snook does know her husband is dead,” Catharine told her, “then I want to know why she’s telling people he’s interstate when she should be telling the police his body is missing and there’s a murderer on the loose.”

“Oh.”

“Even I would go to the police if something happened to George.”

“You would?”

“Well, maybe not right away,” Catharine said, “but I certainly wouldn’t wait a fortnight before I said something to somebody.”

Eddie considered what Catharine had told her. The dog barked to remind the women he was there but instead he reminded Eddie of how Catharine had supported her idea to go out to Leichhardt.

“Alright,” Eddie said, taking a deep breath, “let’s go.”

Catharine did not say anything. She turned over the motor car’s engine, pulled out onto the road and started driving towards the North Shore. The trio arrived at the Snook residence in good time despite the fact that Catharine did not speed once during the drive there. Leaving the MG at the far end of the street Eddie, Catharine and the dog walked back towards the house. On a continuum of grandeur, number 72 Albert Avenue in Chatswood, lay about half way between Charlie’s terrace at Newtown and James’ property at Vaucluse. Although both women thought the house was empty as they drove by, they decided to be cautious as they walked along the fence line of the double fronted, double brick home. Eddie was worried Mrs Snook would make a sudden appearance. Catharine was more worried about neighbours, with too much time and not enough to do with it, peering through lace curtains.

“What should we say if we’re caught being here?” Eddie whispered.

“We’ll simply say that we’re out walking our dog,” Catharine said, pleased she was able to justify the dog’s presence.

“You need to give that dog a . . .”

“Look darling!” Catharine exclaimed, cutting Eddie off.

Catharine took off one of her leather gloves and, using a linen handkerchief from her purse, she picked up a small clump of hard baked earth that lay in the driveway. The crumbling dirt, which was an unusual shade of red, was offered to the dog for inspection. He sneezed violently, backing away from his mistress. She dropped the crumbling dirt and patted the animal with her still gloved hand. His forgiveness was instant.

“That must be the dirt Robert Snook had on his shoes the night he died,” Eddie said, quickly comparing the dog’s reaction to the red dust with the sneezing fit Cleo had after she had sniffed the shoes of the dead man.

“So,” Catharine said, “he must have driven from here straight to Charlie.”

“Yes,” Eddie agreed. “Most of the mud from his shoes came off in the Packard, the rest of it would have surely come off while he was walking if he had been anywhere else first.”

Catharine leaned on the fence and frowned: “Why would she lie?” she asked. “I don’t understand, it doesn’t make any sense, no sense at all.”

“Maybe she didn’t lie. Maybe he lied to her and she really does think he’s in Queensland.”

“What did we do when we put Mr Snook in the City Morgue the other night?” Catharine asked.

“What do you mean?”

“When we checked our friend into more suitable lodgings, what did we put with him?”

“The paperwork to . . .”

“The paperwork to make our city officials think they had been taking care of Mr Snook all along.”

“So . . .”

“So, we’ve given ourselves an alibi. We’ve done this by having people believe

Mr Snook has been in the morgue since the night he died."

"And you think Mrs Snook is doing the same thing. She's giving herself an alibi by telling people Mr Snook is just away on business."

"Yes."

"But what happens when everyone realises that Mr Snook's dead."

"Then she keeps to her story, as we will keep to ours, and she acts just as surprised as we do," Catharine said flatly.

Eddie's mind raced: "We have to go inside," she said.

"Darling, we can't just break in," Catharine said but Eddie was already making her way down the driveway.

Catharine reluctantly followed, dragging the even more reluctant dog behind her.

"Eddie," Catharine hissed.

Eddie ignored her.

"Edwina!"

"What?"

"We can't break in," Catharine told her emphatically.

"But we're not breaking in," Eddie said as she carefully removed her shoes and handed them to Catharine, "we're just climbing in through an open window."

Eddie slid over the windowsill as quickly as a cat being called in for its dinner. Catharine, terrified of being caught, tried to hide behind a camellia tree.

Monday, 18th April 1932

The Australia Hotel, Sydney

Eddie and Catharine waited in the lobby of The Australia Hotel. Eddie was fascinated by all of the comings and goings and could have spent the day sitting there and watching all of the activity. Catharine, however, had seen it all before and was growing impatient.

Catharine was also annoyed with Eddie for what she had done over at the home of the Snooks. Although she had gone all the way to Chatswood with the hope of seeing Mrs Snook she was grateful the wife of their murder victim had been out, and had decided to stay out, that morning. She tried to imagine Mrs Snook's reaction to Eddie searching her kitchen in stockinged feet. Eddie, of course, was delighted with the expedition having found three tubes of Zelio Paste in a cupboard under the sink. Eddie had also found, on display on the kitchen table a typed letter, supposedly from Mr Snook to Mrs Snook, advising that he was on his way to Queensland for business and, although he was not sure how long he would be away, he would see her on his return.

"I can't believe you took your shoes off in public," Catharine complained.

"If I hadn't I would've dragged red dust all through the house."

"Well, you're very lucky you weren't caught."

"We're very lucky that *we* weren't caught," Eddie corrected.

"I wasn't doing anything wrong," Catharine said defensively. "I was just out walking my dog."

"In somebody else's driveway?"

"At least I had my shoes on," Catharine snapped.

"What about that letter though," Eddie said, ignoring Catharine's attitude.

“It is very strange for a husband to type up a short note like that to his wife,” Catharine forced herself to agree.

“Do you think she typed it herself?” Eddie asked.

“Anything is possible Eddie. Why?”

“Well,” Eddie started. “It was such a strange note. It was typed, it wasn’t signed, it wasn’t dated and it doesn’t really say very much at all. I’m starting to think that not only does Mrs Snook know her husband is dead but that she knows something about how and why he was murdered.”

“So, one potentially fraudulent letter and three tubes of rodenticide and you think Mrs Snook was involved in the death of her husband.”

“As you just said, anything is possible.”

“Even with all the information we have about the New Guard,” Catharine persisted.

She was cranky Eddie was only just taking her idea of Mrs Snook’s involvement in, or at least her knowledge of, her husband’s murder seriously and she was not going to any effort to hide it. Eddie thought about Father Cronin’s words earlier that morning about being kinder to Catharine. She tried hard to think about the words, which Saint Paul had written to the people of the ancient Roman capital of Asia, but it was proving difficult.

After almost fifteen more minutes of waiting and of not talking to each other the two women started to worry Captain Anderson-Brock was not going to keep the appointment he had made with them. Another five minutes went by and they started to wonder if the Captain, who in an effort to avoid any unwanted attention from other members of the New Guard, was so well disguised they had not seen him enter the busy lobby. Finally, the Captain could be seen making his way down the hotel’s main staircase. Catharine was pleased that his

military career was not one that had been related to important intelligence work. Even Eddie thought his disguise was terrible. He sported another white polo neck sweater and another pair of cream trousers. The smart leather belt and the highly polished black shoes were as distinctive today as they were the day Eddie and Catharine had first met him. All that was missing was his bright cricket style blazer. The only addition was a pair of Foster Grant sunglasses.

Edwina had been waiting on an immaculately upholstered sofa and the Captain sat down next to her, closer than she would have liked. She looked at Catharine who, having sat on a chair clearly designed for single occupancy, shrugged as if to say Eddie knew who they were meeting and should have known better.

“I say, how is Mr Jones today?” the Captain asked Eddie.
“My brother is fine, thank you,” Eddie answered.
“Ah,” the Captain said as he moved his arm and draped it casually around Eddie’s shoulders, “so I have confirmed that the only Mr Jones in your life is a sibling rather than a spouse. Spiffy!”

Eddie’s face went white. The Captain was oblivious to her distress.

“So how long have you been staying here?” Catharine asked.
“Oh, just long enough to gather my wits and a few bits and pieces to defend myself. This thing with the New Guard will only become nastier you know.”
“So what are you going to do?” Catharine challenged him. “Make a stand here in the lobby with a rifle and a pistol while a battalion of fully armed men make an assault?”
“I didn’t let the Germans take me,” the Captain informed her quietly: “I certainly have no intention of being taken by a few men with erroneous ideals

and a penchant for bossing people about."

"You have something for us," Eddie said as calmly as she could.

"I certainly do," the Captain replied as he tried to make eye contact.

Catharine, worried Eddie was on the verge of creating a very public scene, interrupted and said: "The list you promised us. Did you bring it with you?"

"Of course," the Captain told her as the hand, which was not attached to Eddie, reached into a pocket and took out a neatly folded piece of ruled paper. "Here are the full names of the six men, and their telephone numbers, who were on the list that Snook was carrying with him the night he died."

Eddie snatched the piece of paper and stood up so suddenly the Captain lost his balance. He certainly did not lose any of his determination though. As he watched Eddie rush out of the hotel and onto Castlereagh Street, closely followed by Catharine, he decided that he was going to marry her.

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Monday, 18th April 1932

Vaucluse, Sydney

"Cheer up old girl," James said cheerfully as he walked into the conservatory.

Eddie put her notepad and pencil stub down and tried to smile.

James sat down and asked: "Where's Catharine?"

"She's outside playing with the dog."

"Ah, the trials of being a private investigator must be proving too difficult for her."

“Maybe.”

“I think she quite likes that dog,” James said, trying to change tack.

“Not enough to give the poor thing a name,” Eddie complained.

“Tell me,” James said. “Why did you ask for my sister’s help?”

“I guess I . . . ,” Eddie paused, she was embarrassed but wanted to be truthful with James. “I guess that, while I knew I wanted to be a private investigator, I also knew that investigating a case, any type of case, is expensive and I couldn’t afford to conduct an investigation on my own.”

“That’s a relief,” he said. “I was worried that you were relying on her intellect and her people skills.”

Eddie thought about Catharine’s behaviour when they were at the Kong Chong Laundry. She smiled but she did not say anything.

“So,” James said, “how’s the investigation going?”

“Well,” Eddie started as she picked up her notepad again, “there were six names on the list that Robert Snook wanted to give to Charlie. His name was one of them and Captain Anderson-Brock’s name was another.”

“Leaving four men to find,” James said.

“That’s right.”

“And . . .”

“And,” Eddie went on, “Captain Anderson-Brock met Catharine and me this afternoon to give us the Christian names of those men as well as their telephone numbers.”

“Go on.”

Eddie started to read: “John Edwards of Lane Cove; Matthew Richardson of Artarmon; Henry Chisholm of Chatswood; and David Scott, also of Lane Cove.”

“Have you made the telephone calls yet?”

“Yes,” Eddie told him, looking depressed again. “Mr Edwards listened politely and then told me I had the wrong number.”

“Warning received but with his wife in the room.”

“Mr Richardson listened politely and then told me he did not need any additional landscaping services at the moment.”

“Warning received but with a servant in the room.”

“Mr Chisholm said something that I am not able to repeat.”

“Warning received but not taken very seriously.”

“And Mr Scott left for England last week with no date for his return.”

“Warning received by someone else.”

Catharine and the dog burst into the conservatory, her face was flushed and the dog looked exhausted: “Hello James,” she panted. “Have you been to your first New Guard meeting yet?”

“No,” James said. “I don’t have to front until Thursday next week.”

“Oh darling, that’s too awful.”

“I’m sure it will be,” James agreed.

“No, it’s really too awful,” Catharine insisted. “Eddie and I are going to need more information about what’s going on well before Thursday.”

James sat and tried to think of a list of things that could be worse than sitting in a room with Trembath and a few of his fascist friends. It was a short list.

“Can’t you do something sooner?” Catharine asked.

James felt next Thursday would come soon enough and, standing up, he said: “I’ve never been a spy before my dear but I understand that patience is one of the most desirable attributes of your average secret agent.”

“Really? I would have thought it would have been . . .”

“An ability to blend in with the people you are spying on,” Eddie cut in before

Catharine could say anything more.

James left the room on the pretext of avoiding the dog and his dirty paws.

“You’re right,” Eddie said softly.

“About what darling?”

“About needing information sooner than next Thursday.”

“Of course I am but James just doesn’t seem to see it.”

“We need to find the information ourselves.”

“The New Guard isn’t one of those clubs that lets women in.”

“No, it’s not.”

“Then we can’t do anything but wait for James to go to his meeting.”

“Remember the note I copied, the one left with Trembath?”

“Yes.”

“It said that more instructions would come from HQ.”

“Yes.”

“If there is any information to be found, it will be found there.”

“At HQ?”

“That’s right.”

“So?” Catharine said, sounding bored.

“So, we need to break into the New Guard’s headquarters,” Eddie told her.

Chapter 14

Going to Angel Place

Monday, 18th April 1932

Vaucluse, Sydney

"Really darling," Catharine said, folding her arms, "this breaking and entering is starting to become a habit."

"We need more information," Eddie insisted. "You said so yourself."

"Well hopefully James will be able to come up with something when he goes to his first New Guard meeting," Catharine told her, suddenly content to wait for James to do what he could.

"I think we both know we can't wait that long to find out what they're really up to," Eddie said.

"Assuming the New Guardsmen are not as careless as their couriers or Mrs Snook about leaving doors and windows open, how do you propose to gain entry to their headquarters? Are you just going to walk through the front door during office hours?"

"No."

"Do you even know which door to walk through?"

"I think so," Eddie told her.

"You do?" Catharine asked, raising an eyebrow.

"From the papers I saw in the boarding room at Leichhardt, and from the copy of the New Guard journal that James was given when he joined up, it looks as though the New Guard have two offices in town," Eddie explained. "One is at Twyford House in Castlereagh Street which I think is mainly used for

administration. They use the place to process their membership fees, produce their official journal and that sort of thing."

"And the other office?"

"Is at Wingello House in Angel Place."

"And you think that's their headquarters?"

Eddie nodded.

"Do you really think we could break in?"

Eddie noted Catharine had said 'could' instead of 'should': "I don't know," she admitted. "If they're as determined as the Captain said, then their headquarters will be locked down really tight."

"And with all of those members the place will probably be busier than the hat department at Mark Foy's."

"If we went in the middle of the night, we could . . ."

"No. It's too dangerous," Catharine said, shaking her head.

"But . . . ," Eddie started to whine.

"Darling, we've had a bit of beginner's luck so far and have snuck into two properties in the suburbs without being caught."

"And the City Morgue," Eddie reminded her.

"I don't want to talk about that," Catharine said and she leant forward and covered the dog's ears so he could not hear what Eddie was saying. "That little episode was just too awful for words."

Eddie rested her chin in her hands: "I'm worried that we're running out of time," she said softly.

"We probably are," Catharine agreed, "but even with what we found in Mrs Snook's kitchen today we haven't been able to confirm that she knows her husband is dead."

“I know, it’s just that . . .”

“What darling?”

“I still can’t help but think that she knows about Mr Snook’s murder and that she might even be involved in it.”

“But,” Catharine said, taking a deep breath, “until we have any more information we have to consider that Mr Snook was probably poisoned by someone in the New Guard. Darling, if they murdered one of their own members what do you think they would do to us if we were caught where we weren’t supposed to be?”

“I don’t know,” Eddie said, even though she had a very good idea of what the New Guard might do if she were found snooping through their files.

“Besides,” Catharine said, “we don’t have the skills.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, we call it breaking and entering darling, but taking advantage of an unlocked door and an open window is really just a property inspection without the burden of making polite conversation with a real estate agent.”

Eddie slowly leaned back and closed her eyes.

“Hello Cat,” Douglas called out as he walked into the room. “Hi there Eddie.”

Eddie thought about how easy it had been for Douglas to let himself into her home a couple of weeks ago. She opened her eyes and smiled. Catharine just sat there and sighed as she resigned herself to having to break the law again.

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Douglas sat down on a finely upholstered sofa and picked up a copy of the

Sydney Morning Herald from a table. Eddie and Catharine stared at him.

Using the day's headlines as a very flimsy shield, he peered over the top of the paper and asked: "What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong," Catharine reassured him.

"No, nothing at all," Eddie chimed in eagerly.

Douglas lifted his newspaper slightly higher.

"Are you doing anything this afternoon?" Catharine asked.

"Not much," Douglas said as he shifted awkwardly in his seat.

"Maybe you could spend some time with us," Eddie suggested.

"Please don't tell me you've found another body," Douglas pleaded.

"We didn't find the last one darling, it found us." Catharine said.

"We haven't found anything," Eddie said calmly.

"You haven't?"

"No," Eddie said, "but we want to."

"You do?"

"Yes, we want to find out some more information about the New Guard," Eddie told him.

"More specifically, we want to know what they're up to," said Catharine.

Douglas lowered his newspaper and carefully folded it up but continued to maintain a tight grip on the ink-laden broadsheet.

"Will you help us?" Eddie asked.

"I've already made it clear I'm not prepared to go to prison for Cat, and I'll say right now, I'm not prepared to go to prison for you either," Douglas said.

“You make everything sound so dramatic,” Catharine complained.

“Moving a dead body not once, but twice, is pretty bloody dramatic.”

“Please don’t swear,” Eddie asked.

“Sorry,” Douglas apologised.

“Look,” Catharine said in a softer tone, “all we need you to do is to show us how to open a few doors.”

“I thought that opening doors was your area,” Douglas said.

“Not social doors, actual doors,” Catharine told him.

“Well, I suppose that might be a bit more my area than yours,” Douglas admitted. “What doors did you have in mind?”

“The doors that will let us into the New Guard’s headquarters,” Eddie said.

Douglas’ face started to redden and he found that he was breathing a lot faster than usual.

“Really,” Catharine complained when she realised her brother was not going to respond, “you’re such a conservative criminal. Just the slightest whiff of danger and . . .”

“Hey!” Douglas interrupted, as he loosened his tie and shirt collar. “Who came up with the idea that finally saw Mr Snook off your hands? I think travelling around in a coffin, delivering a corpse, spending time on an autopsy table and being chased by two men carrying very sharp instruments doesn’t just constitute a whiff of danger but positively reeks of the stuff.”

“I think that you were actually under the table darling,” Catharine corrected.

“It doesn’t matter anyway,” Douglas told them. “The New Guard will not have a place that you will be able to just walk into. If you do decide to break into their headquarters, all you’re going to do is run the risk there will be two more bodies for the Coroner to deal with.”

“Of course,” Eddie said very slowly, “the doors at the City Morgue were actually opened for you. All Charlie and James had to do was knock. I suppose, as this job would be a lot more difficult than anything that you have done in the past, there might not be that much you could actually do to help us.”
“You have a point there darling,” Catharine said as she leaned across and placed a hand on Eddie’s forearm.

Douglas bristled as the two women sat and openly questioned his skills. The very same skills he had used to forge a rather successful, if slightly unconventional, career for himself.

The two women stared at him.

“Come on,” Douglas finally said as he put his paper down. “Neither of you really think that James actually lets me into his house, do you?” he asked them with a wry grin.

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To the great surprise of Douglas, it proved to be an incredibly productive afternoon. After everyone had eaten some club sandwiches, Douglas took his two apprentices through the art, history and theory of lock picking. A few practical exercises revealed that, while one of his pupils had a talent at opening social doors, the other had a natural gift for opening a wide variety of actual doors. Eddie’s long and slender fingers had already been tested for work requiring patience and skill through her many years as a seamstress. She now showed that, in addition to creating detailed garments of the highest quality, her hands were perfectly suited to the delicate task of teasing locks gently open

without the, often inconvenient, need for a key.

As the three of them, followed obediently by the dog, made their way around the large Vaucluse property Eddie managed to open a variety of heavy mortice locks. She opened the doors that led to the glasshouse, the kitchen and scullery as well as the gardening shed. She was also able to open small drawers with delicate locks such as the ones found on Catharine's writing desk and on one of her many jewellery boxes. Douglas suggested that Eddie should be tested on the most difficult locks in the house, the only locks to have ever defeated him. They were a set of four locks down in the basement that led to James' private wine cellar. Catharine, who had believed for many years that James had been deliberately hiding his best champagne from her, thought this was an excellent idea. Eddie, massaging her hands, declined arguing that she needed to have some rest before the busy night ahead.

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Tuesday, 19th April 1932

Angel Place, Sydney

It was almost three o'clock in the morning and the large crowds that had earlier filled Sydney's very busy music district had all gone to illegal clubs or had managed to make their way home. Catharine parked at the far end of Ash Street where Douglas would wait with the dog. The plan was for Douglas to drape a piece of heavy fabric over the motor car, which would cover the number plate and obscure the distinctiveness of the MG. If there were any suspicious pedestrians, or any type of vehicular traffic, at the small intersection behind him while Eddie and Catharine were inside Wingello House, then he

would issue a warning with an old policeman's whistle that he had managed to acquire a few years ago.

Leaving the lookout party the two women walked back towards the awkwardly shaped laneway. In the cold and the dark it was difficult to understand why someone would have named the grubby, narrow alley connecting George Street and Pitt Street, Angel Place.

Eddie and Catharine approached Wingello House where they began their work quickly and silently. Any man who had spent time in gaol, for committing a similar crime, would have looked on with envy. After gaining access to the inner city building they carefully made their way upstairs to the rooms that the New Guard used for their headquarters. Eddie, her hands trembling, struggled to open the door. Catharine tried not to look while Eddie tried to regulate her breathing. After several attempts, and almost ten minutes, Eddie's persistence was rewarded with the distinctive click which told her the lever mechanism had shifted and the door was now unlocked.

Once inside Eddie turned the door latch so that it would lock quickly behind them when they left. She also turned on a couple of desk lamps to give them just enough light to move around. The two women found that the office was not very different from the thousands of other offices that could be found across the country, although it was probably a little untidier than most. Even the secretary's desk, usually a site unruffled by the disorganisation of co-workers, was strewn with papers, stationery and old air force memorabilia.

Eddie practised her newfound skill by unlocking five of the six filing cabinets that were like soldiers, forever standing at attention, along the far wall. The

speed with which she completed her task was only outdone by Catharine, who managed to open the sixth cabinet with a set of keys she found in a rectangular glass dish on the secretary's desk. There was an amazing amount of correspondence that advised the men of the New Guard on everything that members of a paramilitary organisation needed to know. The information ranged from a policy about the need to carry revolvers at all times to a general warning about the dangers of catching taxis, particularly around the Pyrmont area, where many of the drivers were known communists.

Catharine thought filing cabinets always look dull and ordinary so she went towards the desk, which she assumed was the workspace of Colonel Eric Campbell. It was a large desk and not as cluttered as the rest of the office space. She picked up a photo frame featuring a picture of a heavy man with a round face who was wearing a very snug fitting uniform with a leather strap across his chest. Catharine thought the Prime Minister of Australia was unattractive enough and could not understand why someone would have a photograph of the Italian Prime Minister displayed so prominently.

"Come and help me look through these files," Eddie instructed Catharine. "I can't go through all of them on my own, there are hundreds."

Catharine put the picture of Benito Mussolini down and went to join Eddie at the row of six, four-drawer cabinets. Two pairs of gloved hands went through and carefully searched the vast number of cardboard folders. They found numerous files on New Guard activities including the recruiting of new members, rallies and public drill displays as well as information on how to write a coded message. They discovered files on people and files on organisations. They also found a file with plans to kidnap the Premier of New South Wales.

“Good God,” Catharine gasped.

Eddie did not scold her for her blasphemy. Instead she just stood silently beside her and shook her head as she pulled the clearly labelled file out of the drawer and opened it.

“You were right,” Catharine said aghast, “about those men we saw at Pearson’s. They were at the Café just so they could watch the Premier.”

“Maybe not,” Eddie told her. “Look. It says here that they’re going to steal an ambulance and use it to kidnap Mr Lang on his way home to Auburn. But . . .”

“But what?”

“But this was all scheduled to happen before the opening ceremony of the Harbour Bridge.”

“Did something go wrong with the kidnapping attempt or did they just change their minds?” Catharine asked.

“It doesn’t say,” Eddie told her as she flipped through the pages in the file.

“I don’t think that it’s very likely they all suddenly decided such a plan was a bad idea.”

“Me either.”

“Which means . . . ,” Catharine started.

“That they’ll try again,” Eddie finished.

Eddie started to take down notes from the file while Catharine kept looking for more information on the New Guard’s plans for Premier Jack Lang.

“Eddie!” Catharine said urgently.

“What?” Eddie asked as, finishing her notes, she returned the file to the hanging sleeve that it had come from.

Catharine pulled another, thicker and much heavier, file from the bottom drawer of the last cabinet. The typewritten label on the cardboard cover read: *Taking Control of the State of New South Wales.* Underneath the typed words was the handwritten statement: *In the Name of Decent Citizens!*

"In the name of decent citizens," Eddie read aloud. "That's what Francis de Groot called out on the Bridge, on opening day, when he charged forward and cut the ribbon before the Premier."

Catharine swallowed hard as she stood up next to Eddie and opened the file that held the New Guard's plans for war. Eddie looked at the first document and felt the hairs on the back of her neck stiffen and, despite the cold air, she started to sweat. Catharine started to read through the opening pages that detailed how battalions of fully armed New Guardsmen would take hold of every major approach to Sydney, effectively cutting the city off from the rest of the country. Eddie started scribbling in her notepad at a furious pace, as she tried to keep up with the information that she was being given.

"After they've secured all the main roads in and out of the city, they are going to take control of Bunnerong Power Station and cut off all the electric light."
"They couldn't possibly do that."
"It says here that, after seizing the Power Station, small groups of men, under the cover of darkness, will overthrow Parliament House before taking control of buildings that accommodate Government Departments."
Eddie tried to say something but Catharine kept reading: "Further discussion is required on finalising the location for the incarceration of the members of the Cabinet of the State of New South Wales." Catharine took a deep breath and then went on. "There are drawings here of some disused hulks off Ku-ring-gai

Chase and of the Berrima Gaol. It looks like both locations have already been thoroughly assessed, as likely detention centres, for at least some of our elected officials."

"What do you mean?" Eddie managed to say.

"Along with the drawings," Catharine started to explain, "is information on how each site would be defended . . ."

"Defended from what?" interrupted Eddie.

"From the police or maybe even the army," Catharine guessed. "Anyway, whoever they're expecting, they'll be ready for them. They've identified all the strategic places for the mounting of machine guns and have outlined what sort of facilities each site has."

"What sort of facilities?"

"Ah, there's a list of things here," Catharine said as she turned back a page, "they've looked at things like sleeping accommodation, kitchens, bathrooms and storage."

"I know that the Captain said the New Guard were determined but so are Lang's men. Even if they were all kidnapped, they would never stand for being gaoled like common criminals," Eddie protested.

"It says here . . . ," Catharine stopped reading as she started to cough.

Eddie snatched the file from Catharine's hands and saw the words: *anyone who tries to escape will be shot*.

Both women heard the piercing sound of a policeman's whistle.

"What do we do now?" Eddie asked.

Douglas' whistle was heard again, longer and louder than before.

“Leave!” Catharine ordered.

“Should we take the file with us?”

“Absolutely not!”

“But we have to take it. We need something substantial to give to the police, otherwise they won’t believe us,” Eddie protested.

“We won’t be giving anything to the police if these men find out that their most important file is missing.”

“I thought that you wanted to go to the police.”

“That was before I started to picture platoons of soldiers mounting Lewis machine guns in the park opposite James’ house,” Catharine said as she snatched the file back from Eddie and shoved it back roughly in the bottom drawer.

Eddie and Catharine stopped arguing at the sound of the ground floor door slamming closed. Catharine clutched at her chest. Eddie started to breathe much faster.

“Where are those keys?” Eddie asked.

“Where are the what?”

“The keys,” Eddie said, “the ones that you used to open that last filing cabinet.”

“Why do you want those?”

“Because, these men would never believe that they left the office for the night with all of their secret files sitting in unlocked cabinets. We have to make sure we leave everything as we found it.”

“There’s no time!”

“Where are they?” Eddie demanded.

Catharine ran to the desk and fumbled with the keys she had used earlier.

“Give them to me,” Eddie said. “Now go and turn all the lights out.”

Catharine did as she was told and then went back to Eddie who, in the now pitch black room, was feeling her way down the row of filing cabinets, locking them as quickly as she could. Footsteps could be heard coming up the stairs.

“Hurry!” Catharine urged her.

“I know.”

“Eddie!”

“I know.”

The last cabinet was being incredibly uncooperative and would not lock. Eddie was trying to lean up against all the drawers at once in an effort to force the cabinet closed.

“What are you doing?” Catharine demanded.

“It won’t close,” Eddie whispered.

“What?”

“The filing cabinet. I can’t lock it again,” Eddie told her.

Catharine used her body weight as well and finally, the cabinet tipped back far enough for all of the drawers to align properly, and the reluctant locking mechanism slipped into place. As the women stepped backwards the cabinet, which was no longer being pushed back by their combined weight, lurched forward before rocking back to rest up against the wall again.

“What was that noise?” Catharine asked in a panic.

“I think that was my notepad and pencil being thrown onto the floor.”

“Where were they?”

“On top of that filing cabinet.”

“Why did you put them there?”

“I had to put them somewhere,” Eddie said defensively.

“Turn the lights back on.”

“We can’t.”

“Darling we have to find them.”

Despite the darkness both women were on the floor in an instant, desperately trying to locate the items that would reveal that someone had been in that office. The detailed notes that Eddie had taken would also divulge what had been found there.

Hands scrambled frantically across wooden floorboards as footsteps could be heard coming down the corridor.

Chapter 15

Playing Games

Tuesday, 19th April 1932

New Guard Headquarters, Sydney

The sound of footsteps grew louder as Eddie and Catharine tried to find the notepad and pencil stub, which had fallen to the floor. The items would give away that they had been in the office as surely as a well thought out letter, detailing their activities that morning, left on Colonel Campbell's desk.

"I have it!" Catharine whispered.

"What?"

"Your notebook darling."

"We need the pencil."

"No," Catharine ordered, "we need to leave and leave now."

Eddie, lying on her stomach, forced her fingers to stretch out just a little bit further. Her effort was rewarded when she touched the cold piece of pencil. Her hand quickly claimed the timber encased lead stub. She held onto it so tightly she could feel the flesh of her palm being pierced. Outside, angry voices now accompanied the noise created by heavy footsteps.

Both women knew that their path of escape was cut off and the only option for them now was to hide. They quickly sought refuge under the largest piece of furniture in the room. As the office door opened, the room was flooded with

light, and a very loud thud was heard. It was Catharine's head colliding heavily with one of the solid timber struts that supported the secretary's desk. While Eddie frowned at Catharine's clumsiness, she made a mental note to thank her later on, for having the decency to not call out in pain and give their position away. Sitting as close to the centre of their impromptu canopy as they could, Eddie and Catharine each drew up their knees and hugged them tightly. They waited for the men from the corridor to come into the office. Their faces were pulled taut as they concentrated on not breathing, on not moving, on not reacting to what they were hearing, on not doing anything at all.

"How many more cases do we have?" the voice was rough from years of hard drinking.

"Another dozen or so," came the quick reply.

"We've been shifting this stuff all night," the first voice complained.

"Yeah, well, this is the last load. So quit talking and start hauling and you'll be home in bed in less than an hour."

The first man spat and then dropped the case he was carrying in disgust. The thunderous sound made Catharine flinch and Eddie drop her head slightly. Between the legs of the desk and the legs of the delivery men Eddie saw what had made the frightening noise: a green metal case with the word ammunition, and the number .303, stencilled on the side. She thought of all the weapons that the Captain had told her the New Guard had collected and she shivered.

"Hey!" the second man said. "Someone will hear us."

"It's the middle of the night. There's no one around."

"Well if you're so worried that you're one of the only men in Sydney still awake let's finish this job quickly so I can send you off to hide under your blankets."

The first man did not answer but turned around and went back down the stairs. The second man put his own case of ammunition down and pushed it out of the way. Yawning, he followed the truck driver who had been assigned to help out at short notice because his regular driver was sick. He had only seen this man for the first time a few hours ago and he hoped that he would never have to see him again.

Eddie and Catharine risked a sideways glance at each other. They both realised this was their best chance to make a break for it. Crawling out from underneath the desk Eddie took off her shoes and revealed stockings that had been recently repaired. Catharine rolled her eyes but she knew they could not afford to make even the slightest sound. She stood up and took her shoes off as well, exposing finely stitched silk seams. The two pairs of stockinged feet walked out of the New Guard's headquarters and down the corridor, back the way they had come. After going only a few yards, Eddie turned around and pointed at the office which was closest to the stairwell. Catharine nodded and reached out to take Eddie's shoes and pencil stub. Then, with expert skill, and with an ease that made Catharine wonder if Eddie would now turn to more unusual forms of employment, the seamstress picked the lock of the small office.

Once inside Eddie turned the latch and they both sat down with their backs against the door. Feeling safer than they had a few minutes ago they waited for the deliverymen to come back up the stairs. The men had set themselves a hard pace, averaging just under ten minutes to bring up two cases of ammunition and go back down to the laneway and fetch another load. It felt like forever but finally the job was done and Eddie and Catharine heard the door to the New Guard's headquarters slam closed and the men go downstairs for the last time. Waiting until they were sure that it was safe, they made their

own way back out into Angel Place. Douglas started the engine of the MG and pulled up the cloth, which had been draped over the motor car, as soon as he saw his sister and her friend turn into Ash Street.

“Do you have any idea how long you’ve been gone?” demanded Douglas as Eddie and Catharine sat down and he put the motor car into reverse.

“It wasn’t our fault,” Catharine claimed as casually as she might have explained a delay in being served at a coat counter at David Jones on a cold winter’s day.

“That’s right,” Eddie told him, the rush of adrenaline making her talk faster than usual. “There were two men. They were making a delivery of ammunition. This was their final delivery for the night. Anyway, we had no choice but to wait until they’d finished bringing it all upstairs. I think they brought in a dozen cases but it could’ve been more.”

“Bloody Hell,” Douglas gasped.

“Please don’t . . . ,” Eddie started.

“Don’t tell me what to do,” Douglas cut in. “I have every right to swear and I’ll do it as loudly and as often as I like,” he said before he quoted some rather colourful language that he had heard at a pub a few nights earlier.

“Really darling,” Catharine started to lecture. “That was not at all necessary.”

“Damn it Catharine! I saw those men go upstairs. I saw they had guns. You could have both been killed tonight!”

Neither of them could truthfully deny what Douglas had said so they sat like young children, who knew they were in trouble, for the rest of the drive back to Vaucluse. Eddie rubbed the palm of her hand while Catharine tried, in vain, to stop the dog from licking her face.

Tuesday, 19th April 1932

Vaucluse, Sydney

Charlie, who had gone in search of his missing sister, and James sat in armchairs opposite each other smoking. They looked almost as pale as Eddie and Catharine. Douglas stood in the doorway, his face flushed and his eyes bloodshot, as he tried to work out if he should pour himself a drink, go to bed or strangle his sister. The dog was exhausted and went straight across the room to the Chesterfield. After lying down on the cool leather he dislodged some cushions and promptly fell asleep.

“Do you want to tell me what you’ve been up to?” Charlie asked.

Eddie, who was too exhausted to talk, gestured to Catharine to pass her small notebook across to her brother. Charlie read all of the notes aloud about the plot to kidnap the Premier. Douglas’ face went a deeper shade of red as he finally walked into the room and sat down. James drained his glass of Scotch and lit another cigarette.

Tossing the notebook on the table, and running his hands through his hair, Charlie asked: “So, what do you want to do now? Not that my opinion usually carries a great deal of weight,” he added, staring at his sister.

“I think we should walk away from the whole mess,” Catharine said as she rubbed her head. The bruising from her recent collision with the New Guard secretary’s large desk was very painful.

“That’s a good idea,” Charlie offered, feigning interest in what Catharine said.

“Of course it is,” Catharine said.

“We can’t walk away. We had promised to go to the police,” Eddie reminded

her.

“Well somebody else can work out what’s going on and run that errand. I’ve had enough.”

“Finally,” Douglas muttered as he thought about the danger they had all been in that morning.

“Finally,” James repeated as he stubbed out his cigarette.

“Charlie, please,” Eddie whispered as tears threatened. “We have to do this. We just have to.”

“I know a man who knows Superintendent Billy Mackay,” Charlie said. “He’s the copper that Lang has entrusted to personally ensure the police put a stop to the New Guard and whatever it is that they’re up to,” Charlie explained.

“Will you go to him?” Eddie pleaded.

Charlie rubbed the back of his neck.

“We have all this information,” Eddie argued. “We have to tell somebody. If we wait, if we wait, for someone else to find out what the New Guard is planning to do, then it, then it might . . . ,” she trailed off, unable to go on.

“It might be too late,” Charlie finished for her.

Eddie nodded. Catharine folded her arms and refused to contribute. Douglas sat picturing men with guns and thought about his mortality. James then sat, picturing what a normal life might be like, and contemplated his next cigarette. The dog slept, his dreams filled with long motor car trips to clear fields, which stretched for miles and were only interrupted by the occasional rabbit.

“Alright then,” Charlie said, having made his decision. “Let’s all try and get some sleep. I’ll make a telephone call once the rest of the city has woken up.”

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Thursday, 21st April 1932

Town Hall, Sydney

“Darling, this was a dreadful idea,” Catharine moaned.

“Stop complaining,” Eddie pleaded.

“It is very hot,” said Douglas.

“You could always go home,” Eddie told him curtly.

“Don’t worry about them old girl,” James encouraged.

“It’s too awful,” Catharine went on. “Where did all of these people come from?”

“All over, I suppose,” Charlie guessed.

“Langites, they’re called,” Douglas informed everyone in a tired voice.

“There must be nearly fifty thousand people here today. The crowds go back for blocks,” Charlie said as he tried to look around.

“With that many supporters I don’t know why we had to come,” Catharine said.

“Cat’s right,” Douglas said. “We should have stayed at home.”

“We came,” Eddie reminded them, “because the police have had the information we found on Tuesday morning for almost two days and they haven’t done a thing about the New Guard.”

“Well, they haven’t done anything that we know about,” Charlie clarified.

Catharine shrugged as she watched the Premier take his place on the podium. She couldn’t believe that anyone in a leadership position would wear a brown suit in public.

The man who was called the Mad Dog by his enemies and the Big Fella by those who believed in him started his speech. His voice was strong and his message

was powerful but he struggled to compete with tens of thousands of people screaming: “Lang is right! Lang is right!”

Through the roar of the crowd Eddie could only catch scraps of what he said but she heard enough. She listened to him talk about the need to fight England’s demands for interest payments on war loans and caught his famous slogan: “people before money”. She watched him raise his fist into the air and openly defy the New Guard and everything that the New Guard stood for. She also felt him provide hope for everyone who was there that day: the unemployed; the homeless and the hungry; the men struggling to keep their families together; the young people who desperately wanted change; the older people who had voted for Federation and believed that their new country was worth fighting for; the unionists who were waving banners in every conceivable colour; and the women who had already given their brothers, husbands and sons to England for the Great War and were not prepared to give the Mother Country anything else.

Then, like a match struck in a gunpowder factory, the crowd burst into song and the strains of *For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow* flowed out from the Town Hall in all directions. The atmosphere was electric. Even Catharine was paying attention and Douglas had stopped sulking and started singing.

Charlie took his sister’s arm and said, just loud enough for her to hear him: “If the police haven’t done anything yet then they had better do something soon. This much open support for the Premier can only make Colonel Campbell and his cronies more determined.”

Eddie saw how worried her brother looked. She did not say anything. She just gently touched his arm and nodded.

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Friday, 22nd April 1932

The Domain, Sydney

"That could have gone better," Eddie said.

"Darling, you approached the Governor of New South Wales while he was on a morning walk without any warning whatsoever. You then proceeded to inform him that the New Guard were planning to carry out every threat they have ever made, as well as a few more threats they just haven't had time to make public yet. Considering you used a lot of awful words like bloodshed, chaos, fascism, kidnapping and murder I think that it went rather well," Catharine told her.

"I just wish the police would hurry up and do something," Eddie muttered.

"It's alright darling," Catharine assured Eddie. "We're having afternoon tea with the Governor's wife next week. She'll know what to do."

"We are?"

"Yes. I've arranged to meet her at Government House, supposedly to discuss a few ideas on how to raise money for war widows. I organised it yesterday, just in case today's little plan didn't work out very well."

Eddie's eyes lit up at the thought of going to Government House. They darkened again, just as quickly though, as she wondered if the Premier would live that long.

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Wednesday, 27th April 1932

Government House, Sydney

Eddie and Catharine were guided, by a softly spoken servant, through the main hall of Government House. The hall held the coats of arms of all the past Governors and Lieutenant-Governors of New South Wales and the leadlight windows allowed light to playfully flicker across the family crests that represented generations of privilege and wealth. The Gothic Revival archways of yellow block sandstone soon gave way to intricate wall coverings and soft furnishings, as their guide took them through a series of opulent spaces, and then finally out into the garden.

Standing up, as soon as she saw her guests make their way across the flagstones, Lady Game held out her hand to Catharine and then to Eddie. The three of them sat down at a table covered in white linen. The delicately embroidered cloth had been carefully weighed down by a tray of scones, an arrangement of fresh fruit, teacups, saucers and bread and butter plates, a bowl of sweets, a crystal vase filled with short stalks of fresh lavender and violets, pots of cream and of strawberry jam, an antique three tiered cake stand that was crowded with pineapple and raspberry tarts, thin slices of lemon laid out on a small dish, elaborately designed silverware and a deep green porcelain tea set with a ribbon of fine gold trim. Catharine braced herself for yet another formal afternoon tea while Eddie was so excited that she did not even think about asking for a cup of coffee. Gwendolyn Game smiled at them both warmly, her short brown hair falling in gentle waves, which framed her face.

The Governor's wife then went on to chat with them about the weather and department store window displays and how wonderful it was that the Sydney Harbour Bridge was finally open after so many years of construction. Eddie looked at the rolling lawns that created an emerald green carpet that led down to the gardens and to Farm Cove. While Eddie tried to count the different types

of plants that she saw, Catharine started talking about some of her latest ideas to raise money for struggling war widows.

The breeze picked up and the conversation changed. Sympathetic comments were made about how cruel Sydney society could be. It was just not right, Catharine declared, that the Governor's wife and his children should be openly punished because of a political crisis they had no control over. The temperature dropped and Catharine explained just how seriously the New Guard was taking the Governor's repeated refusals to sack the Premier. Their elegant hostess listened to the details of the kidnapping plot politely as she poured more tea for everyone and then put some extra clotted cream on Eddie's plate.

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Thursday, 28th April 1932

Royal Automobile Club, Sydney

James paid the taxi driver a bit more than he needed to and stepped out onto the footpath. He could not help looking behind him as he went up the steps of the Royal Automobile Club. Satisfied that he had not been followed he went inside to keep his appointment with Captain Anderson-Brock. He was relieved to see that the Captain was already there and waiting for him. He was more relieved to see that a glass of Scotch was waiting for him as well. Sitting down he picked up the heavy lead crystal glass and stared intently at the amber liquid.

"So," the Captain started, "how was your first New Guard meeting?"

"I'm starting to wish that the Germans had shot me after all," James told him

as he took a sip of his drink.

“It went that well, eh?”

“I should never have let Eddie and Catharine talk me into going. With the information they found last week I didn’t need to. I didn’t need to go at all.”

“They wanted you to go because they’re worried the police haven’t done anything yet. I have to admit, I’m a bit worried that the police haven’t done anything yet either.”

“But you said that you didn’t think the police could do anything.”

“They could make a few arrests,” the Captain suggested. "Kidnapping people and threatening to kill them is not only un-gentlemanly behaviour but is also, in this state, still enough to have the hangman test his rope work skills.”

“What’s wrong with these men?” James asked as he slammed his glass down on the table. “They all went to the War, they’ve seen what it’s like. Why in God’s name would they want to try and start another one?”

“Fascism is a bloody ugly thing old chap. I don’t pretend to understand it.”

“But you’re a willing volunteer,” James accused him. “You read the application form, you knew what this group was all about and you still signed on.”

The Captain shrugged: “I've made mistakes. Trusted people I shouldn’t have, made the odd poor investment choice, that sort of thing. While I can't undo everything I've done wrong, I can try to make amends for some of my more obvious blunders.”

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Friday, 29th April 1932

The Financial District, Sydney

Nearly two thousand police officers had braved bad weather to march, drive

and ride through the streets of Sydney. The band played while thousands of cheering onlookers enjoyed the pageantry, which, while not on the same scale as the festivities for the opening of the Bridge, was still a welcome relief from the routines of work and looking for work. Premier Lang and Governor Game took the salute from the men in the parade. Eddie and Catharine stared at the King's representative and wondered if he, or his wife, had taken anything they had told them seriously. Charlie and Douglas looked at Superintendant Billy Mackay.

"Surely a public parade will not stop the New Guard," Douglas grumbled.

Charlie nodded in agreement as he tried to light a cigarette: "They might think a show of force will be enough to buy them some time."

"Time for what?" Douglas asked.

"I'm not sure but I don't think this little display will put them off. There are probably members of the New Guard standing here watching the parade with the rest of us," Charlie said, frustrated by the New Guard and wet matches.

Then, almost as if on cue, Eddie called out: "Look!" as she pointed through the parading police officers to two men standing on the other side of the road.

"Colonel Eric Campbell and Captain Francis de Groot," Charlie said as he instantly recognised the men from photographs he had seen of them.

"Where?" Catharine asked, straining to see. "Oh yes, the Colonel looks rather pleased with himself for some reason. So does that awful little Irishman. Fancy having the nerve to show up in public after that dreadful incident on the Bridge," she complained.

"Why don't you like him?" Eddie asked.

"Yeah," Charlie said, "I thought all you middle-class types stuck together."

"He's hardly middle-class," Catharine said peevishly, "the man's in retail."

"Retail?" Eddie asked surprised.

“Yes, furniture or something,” Catharine told her.

“Furniture, eh?” Charlie asked as he laughed at Catharine and had another go at lighting a cigarette.

Catharine thought that Charlie was being rude, so patiently stood there and watched him struggle with his matches, while she thought of the new Ronson cigarette lighter she was carrying in her purse.

“I certainly wouldn’t be showing my face in public after being locked up and then dragged through the courts,” Douglas said.

“Dragged through the courts is one thing,” Catharine told him, “but being dragged through the press is quite another. Why, his antics were reported in every newspaper across the country.”

“Why are you always so worried about what’s in the papers?” Eddie asked her.

“Only common people want their names in the newspapers,” Catharine said.

“And scandalous people,” James explained, “being identified as common is one thing but the idea of a scandal does not sit well with Lady Darling.”

“James, this might be Sydney, and we might all be very modern, but a good scandal can still destroy somebody,” Catharine informed her brother curtly.

“Would a scandal destroy the New Guard?” Eddie asked suddenly.

“I don’t know,” Catharine said.

“Then let’s find out,” Eddie said enthusiastically.

“How?”

“By linking the New Guard to a scandal, by proving that it was one of their members who murdered Robert Snook,” Eddie said.

Chapter 16

Socialising with Mrs Snook

Friday, 29th April 1932

Newtown, Sydney

"I think that the best thing for us to do now darling, is to go and intimidate Mrs Snook," Catharine said.

"You mean, go and rough her up?" Eddie asked, shocked.

"Don't be vulgar Eddie."

Charlie listened to the two women talking while he sat at his desk and finally managed to light a cigarette.

"Do we have a say in what's going on?" James asked him.

"Probably not," Charlie admitted.

Ignoring both men, Catharine said: "I've sent Douglas off to fetch our tickets for *Madama Butterfly*."

"What?" Eddie asked.

"*Madame Butterfly*," James translated for her. "It's the next opera in the Williamson Imperial Grand Opera Season. It's supposed to be quite good."

"Why?" Eddie asked, slouching a little. "How does that help us link the New Guard to Mr Snook's murder?"

"It's alright darling," Catharine reassured her and, deciding not to directly comment on James' clumsy assumption Eddie would not recognise the name of such a popular performance, she told her: "Douglas is only buying two tickets."

“I thought you wanted to see Mrs Snook,” Eddie said.

“I do.”

“So why have you organised opera tickets?”

“Because Mrs Snook will be there.”

“She will?”

“Of course darling, everyone will be there.”

Eddie did not look convinced: “If we’re going to confront Mrs Snook, we should go and see her at her Chatswood home, instead of trying to find her in a public place.”

“I think you’re safer finding her at the theatre,” Charlie offered. “If you think that’s where she’ll be,” he said.

“Well, I’m reasonably certain she’ll be there,” Catharine admitted. “Douglas has a friend at the Box Office so he’ll be able to find out if Mrs Snook is going tomorrow night and, if she is, where she’ll be sitting.”

“Is that why he left the police parade in such a hurry earlier?” Charlie asked.

“Yes,” Catharine said. “You see, I’ve been thinking a bit about our friends the Snooks lately. Then I saw a J.C. Williamson poster down near the Stock Exchange this morning.”

“And you wondered what else would a woman, pretending to be a wife when she is really a widow, be doing on a Saturday evening,” Charlie said as he thought of what he had recently learned about Mrs Snook.

“It’s just that . . . ,” Catharine started.

“It’s just what?” Charlie asked her.

“It’s just that, I still think Mrs Snook not only knows that her husband is dead but that she also knows who killed him, so I’ve had Douglas follow her for the last week or so.”

“How could you?” Eddie demanded angrily. “This is our case. If anyone is going to be following somebody it should be us.”

“Oh, following people is so tedious. Besides, Douglas needs to do something to earn his pocket money,” Catharine said.

Eddie folded her arms and stared at Catharine: “You should have told me,” she finally whispered.

“I’m sorry Eddie,” Catharine apologised. “I didn’t want to tell you because I didn’t want you to be disappointed if Douglas didn’t find anything out. I suppose I could have followed her myself but, quite frankly darling, after our little excursion to Angel Place the other morning I’ve been feeling absolutely exhausted.”

“But you’re not too tired to go to the opera?” Eddie asked her.

“I can have a little nap during the overture,” Catharine said.

“Did Douglas find out anything while he was tailing Mrs Snook?” Charlie interrupted.

“Well, nothing that would see her in court charged with murder,” Catharine told him. “And being busy is hardly suspicious behaviour.”

“That depends on just how busy she’s been,” Charlie suggested.

“All Douglas has been able to tell me is that she is hardly ever at home. Apparently she spends most of her time going shopping, and when she’s not relieving the city’s best stores of their burden of new stock, she’s going to parties and going out.”

“Going out where?” Eddie asked even though she was still fuming that Catharine and Douglas had pursued a possible lead without her.

“She’s attended a couple of performances and she’s also spent a day at the races. Douglas hasn’t been able to find out much more except that she’s always in a different dress and she’s always with the type of people who like to see their names in the newspapers and their photographs in magazines.”

“So you really think she’ll be at the opera tomorrow?” Eddie asked her.

“It’s an opening night and there’s not much else that’s happening this weekend.

If she wants to see, and to be seen, then she is going to be there."

"What do we do if she does turn up?"

"We introduce ourselves, we ask her about her husband and then we see how she reacts."

"What do you think Charlie?" Eddie asked, seeking his opinion in an effort to show Catharine that she should not be making decisions on her own.

"I suppose you can't create too much trouble in a crowded theatre," he said as he looked at his sister's face and saw, quite clearly, that she had already made up her mind to go to the opera with Catharine.

"What?" James asked. "You're not going to try and stop them from doing this?"

"Are you?" Charlie retorted.

James looked at Eddie and then at Catharine. He stretched up and picked a book off a shelf before telling himself he did not care what they did anymore. *The important thing*, he thought to himself as he thumbed the title page, *is that I don't have to go with them*.

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Catharine returned to Newtown, as promised, a few hours later with a delivery.

"Hello darling," she said as she handed Eddie a large box tied with a silk ribbon. "Since you're such a practical girl I decided that you would prefer something that you will be able to wear again."

Eddie was not sure that she liked the way Catharine used the word practical, but did not say anything, as she led Catharine down the hallway to the kitchen. Carefully putting the dress box down on the kitchen table she then made

Catharine a cup of coffee.

“It should fit you but, as I’m a few inches taller than you are darling, you’ll have to do something with the hem,” Catharine said as she carefully selected a chair.

“I’m not sure,” Eddie said as she sat down next to Catharine.

“You’ll have to do something with it darling, or you’ll trip and fall.”

“I’m not sure that we should go tomorrow night,” Eddie said.

“What’s the matter Eddie?” Catharine asked.

“I don’t know, I guess it’s just that. I didn’t think that things would become this complicated.”

“Darling, men, even murdered ones who no longer have anything to say for themselves, never set the scene for a simple life.”

Eddie smiled: “I suppose so. Still, it would have been a lot easier if Mr Snook had been murdered for money or revenge instead of because of his connection with a major political conspiracy.”

“It’ll be alright,” Catharine told her. “Besides, we obviously can’t just sit around and wait for the police to act.”

“I don’t understand why they haven’t done anything yet,” Eddie said, frustrated that she and Catharine had already taken so many risks to try and stop the New Guard and were about to take one more.

“Maybe it’s because their wages have been cut to help some accountant somewhere balance a ledger. Still, that’s no reason for them to have suddenly lost all interest in protecting people.”

“Is it worth it?” Eddie asked.

“If you had asked me a few weeks ago I would have said that it wasn’t. But things have changed. I don’t know what war is really like but I know what it does to people and I know that I don’t want books written, years from now,

about how many people died in the Australian Civil War."

Eddie nodded.

"I also know," Catharine continued, "that we have a responsibility to do what we can to protect the Premier."
"You don't even like Jack Lang," Eddie said, surprised.
"Just because I didn't vote for the man darling doesn't mean that I think he should be carted off and incarcerated by a few ex-army officers without enough to do."

Catharine drank some coffee and saw Eddie's only pair of black shoes had already been polished and were sitting on a sheet of newspaper near the back door. She realised that the idea of going to the opera must be almost as nerve-racking as the idea of asking Mrs Snook about her husband.

"Perk up darling. Here," she said as she put a small bag on the table next to the box, "this is a wrap to go with the dress, a little black one which belonged to my grandmother, just in case you're worried about the cold. And, remember, we have tickets, so no breaking and entering is required."
Eddie laughed: "It will be nice to go somewhere and not have to worry about being arrested," she said.
"I had best be off darling," Catharine said. "The dog will wonder what I've been up to and you need to start work on altering that dress."

Eddie saw Catharine out and then went back to the kitchen where she finished her coffee. Then, pulling gently at a length of cream silk, she undid a perfectly symmetrical bow, and opened the dress box.

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Saturday, 30th April 1932

Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney

Catharine's hair was immaculate. She wore a plain black sleeveless evening dress, which fell, rather fashionably, just below her knees. She also wore a Cartier necklace with three rows of rubies that were separated by two rows of perfectly matched natural pearls. The hundreds of carats were all neatly held together by diamond encrusted, platinum clasps. Although there was a limited market for such items, in the middle of the worst depression the world had ever seen, the necklace would have created a flurry of activity at any good auction house. The funds raised would easily build a hospital wing, a couple of schools and new housing for the entire population of a medium-sized country town.

Eddie was wearing the silk, bias cut, dress in grey steel Catharine had given to her the day before. She had been embarrassed to discover the dress was new. She had assumed it would have been an old one that Catharine just did not want anymore. The dress fitted beautifully but it had been too long so she had carefully raised the hem at the very front of the gown to create an elegant sweep train. The only adornment was the small brooch of a greyhound in full stride that James had bought for her at Hardy Bros. The antique wrap of black Italian lace had been folded so that it could serve the dual purpose of falling gracefully at her side and covering her small purse with its broken clasp. Unable to afford a visit to the hairdresser Eddie had, in an effort to control her unruly curls, used some of Charlie's hair cream to slick them all back. The effect was striking. Catharine knew they would probably run into Captain Anderson-Brock at the opera and she hoped he could manage the strain.

Charlie had agreed to drive both women to the theatre, which had stood for almost half a century on the corner of Pitt and Market Streets. As Douglas had done earlier in the week at Angel Place, he would wait for them parked in the shadows while they went to gather what information they could.

Eddie and Catharine paused very briefly at the main entrance to the theatre, which could seat around two thousand people on four levels. They then went inside and descended into a wild sea of furs, feathers, chiffon, georgette, lace, silk and taffeta in black, blue, burgundy, a dozen shades of green, white, silver and gold. Riding the crests of each wave were fabulous jewels that shone brilliantly under the electric lights. The two women manoeuvred their way through the throng and towards the massive marble staircase. They paused by one of the heavy balustrades so they could catch their breath and take a better look at their surroundings. Eddie and Catharine had studied a number of photographs from the social pages of newspapers and magazines and were confident that they would recognise Mrs Snook as soon as they saw her.

“What do you think?” Catharine asked Eddie as she gestured to everyone who had gathered for the performance.
“Well, apart from being inside and apart from people dressing a little bit better, it’s actually not much different from spending a night watching the races at Wentworth Park.”

Catharine smiled. She was relieved that Eddie was no longer so nervous about her surroundings because she knew that they both needed to concentrate on finding Mrs Snook. Eddie did not think that it was possible but people continued to pour inside. Catharine was noticed, she always was, by a woman just coming through the main entrance.

Margaret Hamilton, who had worked with Sir George Darling for many years, was now carving out a path through the crowd towards Lady Darling and the woman standing next to her. A much younger man trailed anxiously behind her, carrying her coat and her purse and two glasses of champagne he had deftly collected from a passing waiter. The two of them navigated the hectic activity of patrons jostling in all directions: to the bar; to the cloakroom; to the powder rooms; and to the staircase that would take them to one of the three levels above. The man tried desperately not to step on anybody while the woman kissed cheeks, shook hands and waved at almost everyone who was there.

“She’s incredible,” murmured Eddie.

“No, she’s just a moth at a light bulb convention,” Catharine corrected.

“Catharine,” the woman gushed as she finally made it to where Eddie and Catharine were standing.

“Hello Margaret, how nice to see you. This is my friend Edwina,” Catharine said.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen you with such a small entourage before,” Margaret said, her voice was rather rough, possibly from too many years of very heavy smoking but probably from something else.

“Oh darling, shouldn’t you be wearing low level pumps at your age?” Catharine asked as she saw the heels on the other woman’s shoes.

“God didn’t give us all legs as long as yours Catharine.”

“Yes, for all this propaganda about a generous God he can be so frugal, can’t he darling?” Catharine said in mock sympathy.

“I always find *Butterfly* a bit depressing,” Margaret confided, dismissing Catharine’s remark. “They’re doing *The Barber of Seville* next week though, it’s my favourite.”

“Tell me darling,” Catharine said, changing the subject again, “do you know a Mrs Roslyn Snook?”

“Yes, I saw her over at the cloak room just a few minutes ago. You can’t miss her, she’s loud and she’s wearing entirely the wrong shade of red.”

“What do you think of her?” Catharine asked as casually as she could.

“Not much.”

“No?”

“Oh, she’s one those anxious social climbers. She’s always in such a hurry to go to the next big event, the next private party, that sort of thing.”

“Thanks darling,” Catharine whispered.

“Well, I can’t be seen standing in one place for too long,” Margaret told them. “I have to keep moving. I need to say hello to everyone that’s here and still make sure my young friend has an early night,” she said, winking at Catharine.

“Sex at sixty, how depressing,” Catharine sighed.

“You just wait until you’re my age,” Margaret scoffed.

“I can assure you that I won’t even be shaving my legs at sixty let alone doing anything else,” Catharine informed her.

Margaret wrinkled up her nose. She then readjusted her dress with a flourish, told Eddie she was holding a fabulous wrap and kissed Catharine on the cheek, before moving quickly to the next stop on her circuit. Margaret’s young friend said good-bye and then left, trying frantically to keep up with her.

“Who was that?” Eddie asked.

“That was one of George’s ‘special friends’,” Catharine said.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” she said.

“Don’t be,” she told her.

“Who was that man that was with her?”

“Why, that’s her current ‘husband’,” Catharine told her.

“But . . .”

“But what?” Catharine asked.

“But how . . . don’t they . . . shouldn’t they . . .”

“Oh don’t be silly darling, married people don’t have sex.”

“Not with each other anyway,” a disgruntled man’s voice interrupted.

Catharine turned and glared at the man who was obviously not on his first martini of the evening.

“Well, so I’ve heard,” the man snapped at Catharine before he scuttled away.

“Oh, well,” Eddie said, completely ignoring the rude man. “It was very nice of her to say that she liked my wrap.”

“That bit of lace has been around even longer than she has. We both live in a young city but old money will always carry more weight,” Catharine explained.

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Eddie and Catharine took their seats upstairs, which were just one row behind Mrs Snook who was, indeed, wearing entirely the wrong shade of red. They both took turns in leaning forward slightly, which allowed Eddie to catch a glimpse of Mrs Snook’s face and Catharine to note that she was still wearing her wedding ring. They then sat back and listened to her giggle with the woman she was sitting next to, and gossip about what everyone else was wearing, until the curtain came up.

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Captain Thomas Bligh Anderson-Brock had overheard, while standing at the bar, that Lady Darling had been sighted out in the foyer.

He hoped that if Catharine was at the opera then it meant that Eddie was not too far away. He had not seen either woman before the performance commenced, so he was determined to find them at interval. Making a dash for the door as soon as the curtain started to come back down, the Captain left the theatre and ran along the passageway. He then positioned himself at the top of the stairs where he had a reasonably good view of everyone coming into the foyer. All he had to do now, he thought, was to watch and wait. His patience was soon rewarded when he saw Catharine and Eddie emerge from the Dress Circle and walk towards him.

“I say,” the Captain muttered as he felt his chest tighten.
“Hello,” said Eddie, “are you enjoying the show?”
“I am now,” he told her.

Eddie tried to turn and go back inside but it was too late. Hundreds of people were already behind her while the foyer below was flooding with patrons and programme sellers and waiters. There seemed to be no escape.

“Marry me,” the Captain said passionately, taking her hands in his.

Catharine rolled her eyes again and Eddie, crowd or no crowd, tried to step away from the Captain.

“It could be fun,” he whispered to her. “I’m frightfully rich you know. I’ve been to all the good schools and am reasonably well travelled. I’d also be more than happy to establish Anderson-Brock & Jones Detectives if you wanted to be one of these progressive wives who has a hobby. What’s the matter? I’m not that terrible to look at, am I?” he asked her.

Eddie muttered something but her words were overwhelmed by neighbouring conversations. She then forced herself into the crush of champagne glasses and animated patrons and disappeared.

“Why are you looking so pleased with yourself?” Catharine asked the Captain. “It’s not as if Edwina burst into tears, threw her arms around your neck and started drafting a guest list for the wedding.”

“Edwina,” the Captain repeated wistfully.

“Besides,” Catharine said, trying to regain the Captain’s attention “you shouldn’t be asking such questions of a woman you only met the other day.”

“Don’t you believe in love at first sight?” he asked her.

Catharine briefly thought about her husband George: “Absolutely not,” she said emphatically. “There is only convenience at first sight.”

“Lady Darling,” the Captain said as he stood a little bit taller, “I am surprised that such an educated woman can be so unknowledgeable about such an important subject.”

“You consider love to be an important subject?”

“It’s the most important one that there is,” he told her as he stared at the spot where Eddie had been standing.

Despite images of Charlie flashing through her mind Catharine tried to convince herself that anything even remotely romantic was ridiculous.

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Eddie was not sure what direction she was heading in. She just kept darting into any small gap in the crowd that she found, issuing a constant stream of apologies to people as she went.

She finally made her way to a wall and then walked down one of the many side passageways until she saw a couple of lounges and caught a glimpse of red fabric, fabric that could only have been part of Mrs Snook's evening gown. Edging closer Eddie could hear Mrs Snook lecturing somebody. Curious, she tilted her head to listen. At first, Eddie thought Mrs Snook sounded like an old school teacher, the type who enjoy publicly humiliating young children for failing to memorise their times tables. A man's voice, full of contempt, responded. The cutting remarks enraged Mrs Snook and she launched into a shrill tirade, littered with threats, where each hateful word bled into the next. Eddie draped Catharine's wrap around her shoulders to ward off a sudden chill in the air and something else that she could not define. Then, not even bothering to apologise to the people she pushed into, Eddie rushed back towards the staircase, desperate to find Catharine.

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The Captain decided to stay in the foyer. He had seen the opera a few times before and the foyer seating was far more comfortable than the old chairs inside. He called for a drink and lit a cigarette. He thought about how nice it was to be in the same building as Edwina. He closed his eyes and felt content.

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Eddie made it back to where she had left Catharine, only to find that the foyer was almost empty and Catharine had already gone back inside. Frantic, she rushed to find her way back to her seat.

"Where have you been?" Catharine asked her. "I was worried about you."

“I’m alright,” Eddie whispered as she sat down.

They watched the next act. When Catharine tried to engage Mrs Snook in conversation at the second interval Eddie stopped her with an almost desperate look of warning. Catharine was confused and started to ask what was going on. Eddie cut her off with a story about wanting to stay inside the theatre so they could avoid the Captain, a story Catharine did not entirely believe but went along with anyway. The two women stayed seated and watched the rest of the performance. Finally, the opera reached its dramatic conclusion, the applause died down and the house lights came back up. As she stood up to leave Mrs Snook dropped her programme, the thin booklet falling to rest neatly in between the small space between her seat and the seat next to her. Eddie reached forward, her slim hand easily rescuing the souvenir.

“Excuse me, I think that this is yours,” Eddie said as she offered Mrs Snook the programme.

“Oh, thank you. Thank you very much,” Mrs Snook said.

“Did you enjoy the opera tonight?” Eddie asked.

“Of course not,” Mrs Snook snapped at her. “It’s a stupid story. She should have killed him instead of killing herself.”

Catharine gasped and, momentarily forgetting good breeding and good manners, she openly stared at Mrs Snook.

Eddie did not gasp, she did not stare, she did not even blink.

“What an appalling creature!” Catharine exclaimed.

“Most murderers are,” Eddie whispered to her.

Chapter 17

For King and Country

Saturday, 30th April 1932

Market Street, Sydney

"That was just ghastly!" Catharine complained as Charlie opened the motor car door for her and she made herself comfortable on the back seat.

"Yeah, opera's not my thing either," he told her, slamming the door closed before taking his own seat behind the wheel.

"Oh no, the performance was lovely. It was that dreadful woman which ruined my evening," Catharine explained to him.

"I take it you found Mrs Snook," Charlie said.

"We sure did," said Eddie, who had been left to open her own door.

"And she was truly awful," Catharine insisted.

"What happened?" Charlie asked as, now that everyone was seated, he pulled out and started driving towards Vaucluse.

"You see, I was running away from the Captain," Eddie started to explain.

"The Captain was there?" Charlie asked.

"Yes he was. Catharine and I saw him at the first interval," Eddie said.

"It's not important darling," Catharine interrupted quickly.

"Anyway," Eddie went on, "I ended up in a side passage where Mrs Snook was complaining to somebody."

"What about?" Charlie asked.

"In that dress she had absolutely no right to complain to anybody about anything," Catharine piped in.

Eddie took a deep breath and started recounting what she had heard: “Mrs Snook was complaining to a man, I don't know who he was, about how she hadn't been allowed to join up and go to the War.”

“But women can't enlist,” Charlie said.

“I think that was her point,” Eddie told him.

“Why didn't she go as a nurse if she wanted to go to the Front?” Catharine asked. “Thousands of women were posted overseas as nurses,” she said.

“That's what the man she was with said but it only made her angrier.” Eddie told her.

“I don’t know why,” Catharine said. “It was a perfectly sensible suggestion.”

“Mrs Snook didn’t seem to think so,” Eddie said. “She started talking about how she had just as much right to kill for her country, and to protect a way of life that she believed in, as any man did,” Eddie swallowed hard before she continued. “She also said she thought there were elements within the New Guard who were weak and who were putting their mission at risk.”

“Elements such as her husband?” Charlie asked.

“I suppose so,” said Eddie.

“And I thought she was rude to us,” Catharine said. “Did she say anything else?”

“Only that she had done someone else’s work for them but she didn’t mind because it was the responsibility of everyone, not just men, to put a stop to Jack Lang. She said that she had taken care of her husband, not for money or for revenge but simply because it needed to be done. She tried to explain that she was saving lives, that with her husband out of the way any conflict between the New Guard and the Government would be short. One day, she told him, Australia would be grateful to her. She was so full of hatred but she didn’t seem to care, I mean I know that she wasn’t in the main foyer but anyone could have heard what she was saying. And then she . . . ,” Eddie hesitated.

“Then?” Charlie prompted.

“Then she started to laugh,” Eddie told them.

“Really? How odd,” Catharine said.

“And I know that it sounds silly, but . . .”

“But what darling?” Catharine asked.

“It frightened me,” Eddie said.

Eddie shivered and pulled her wrap tighter.

“So, you finally agree with me? You think that it was Mrs Snook who killed her husband?” Catharine asked her.

“I think she knew that her husband, and a few of his friends, were going to take on Colonel Campbell and she didn’t like it. By poisoning him she put a stop to what he was trying to do as well as sending a message to the other men whose names were on the list and . . .”

“And what?” Charlie asked.

“And she proved that she could,” Eddie said, shaking her head.

“What’s the matter darling?” Catharine asked.

“I just thought, I mean I know that we suspected Mrs Snook,” Eddie said, “but I still thought we would have found out that the murderer was a member of the New Guard.”

“Really Eddie,” Catharine started scolding, “you want equality but not so much that you wanted to think that a woman killed our victim?”

“I’m not struggling with the fact that we now know the murderer is a woman, I’m just having difficulty with the motive. That’s all,” Eddie said defensively.

“It doesn’t matter Eddie, because what can we do?” Catharine asked. “Even with the, almost certainly forged, letter which is supposedly from her husband and the tubes of rat poison you found in her kitchen we don’t have enough

evidence to take to the police."

"I know," Eddie said, "and I think now that Mr Snook knew it too. That's why he was trying to give the list to a private investigator. He just happened to pick Charlie's notice out of all the other notices listed in the *Herald*."

A few minutes later Charlie turned into Greycliffe Avenue.

"I just don't know what we should do now," Eddie said.

"We'll think of something in the morning," Catharine promised.

Charlie stepped out onto the road and opened the motor car door again for Catharine. He then saw her safely inside her brother's home. Within minutes his hands were back on the steering wheel and he was busy telling Eddie about what he thought they should do about Mrs Snook. Eddie was not listening to him though. She was sprawled out on the back seat, fast asleep.

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Friday, 6th May 1932

Vaucluse, Sydney

"I can't believe it's been almost three weeks since Charlie tipped off the police," Eddie said as she started to tidy up some newspapers on one of the side tables.

"Don't fuss darling," Catharine told her. "James won't be able to find anything if you keep shuffling bits around."

"I'm sorry," Eddie said as she made a half-hearted attempt to spread the papers out again.

"Please try not to worry. We're doing what we all agreed to do: Douglas is

keeping an eye on Mrs Snook; James is attending his New Guard meetings; and Charlie is watching the New Guard's headquarters."

"I suppose so," Eddie said as she fidgeted with a pile of essays that James had not marked yet.

"Maybe the New Guard has decided not to go ahead with any of their plans darling," Catharine suggested.

"They're going ahead with some of them," Charlie said as he, breathing hard, burst into the library.

"Mr Jones is here to see you," Elizabeth said meekly before making a hasty retreat. She did not really know what her employer was up to but she knew enough to understand that she did not want any of the details.

"What do you mean?" Eddie asked, knocking some pencils onto the floor as she stood up and walked towards him.

"I've just heard they've attacked Jock Garden. That's why I'm here."

"Who's he?" Catharine asked.

"He's a Baptist Minister turned trade union man," Eddie said.

"Yeah, and he helped found the Australian Communist Party about ten years ago," Charlie added, "so he's just the sort of person the New Guard would like to see knocked down a peg or two."

"What happened?"

"A group of four men," Charlie started telling them, "claiming to be coppers, went to his home out at Maroubra, just before two o'clock this morning. They told him they'd received some reports of suspicious activity in the area and that they just wanted to come in and take a look around."

"He let them in?" Eddie asked in disbelief.

"He thought they were coppers and, while Jock's certainly had more than just a few brushes with the law, he's basically a law abiding man," Charlie said. "So he led them through the house and out to the backyard where another four

men were waiting for him. The next thing the poor bugger knows, he's been hit across the back of his head with a spanner."

"Is he alright?" Eddie interrupted.

"He will be," Charlie explained. "It was a good thing that his sons were there. The first lad came out but he was no match against so many men. When the second lad made it out the back, he thought that three against eight wasn't fair, so he decided to even up the odds a little bit by setting the dog on them."

"Oh no," Catharine said, horrified: the idea of putting her dog in the path of danger was just too much to think about.

"It's a good thing he did, the dog got the better of one of the men, a man by the name of William Scott." Charlie said. "Anyway, once Mrs Garden had recovered from what had happened, she spent some time patching up Scott's hand, which the dog had done a bit of damage to, and made him a cup of tea."

"Is the dog alright?" Catharine asked.

"Yeah the dog's fine."

"What about the Gardens?" Eddie asked.

"They'll be okay but I don't know about this William Scott. He started off by saying how sorry he was, and then his story was one of just going along with the other men and not really knowing what he was in for. Although, he admits they're members of the New Guard, he says that he had never met them before. Either way, he's now cooperating with detectives."

"How did you find out all of this?" Eddie asked.

"There was nothing happening in at Angel Place, so I went home and a good thing that I did. About an hour ago I took a call from an old friend of mine, Adam Hughes, telling me what had happened out at Maroubra. He's been behind a desk since he came back from the War but he's still a good cop and he knows when something isn't right," Charlie said.

"What do you mean?" Eddie asked. "What isn't right?"

“Hughes overheard some of the little chat that the detectives were having with Scott. The coppers have all the information that you and Catharine found at New Guard headquarters but . . .”

“So why haven’t they done anything?” Eddie interrupted.

“Because,” Charlie went on, “they think that it’s all old news and that the plans only related to a coup which was scheduled back in early March. Hughes reckons that there’s more to it than that, he thinks that this Scott bloke is being surprisingly cooperative and that something’s up. I think so too. That’s why I drove straight here,” Charlie said.

“Why didn’t you call us,” Eddie asked.

“I tried to call but the operator kept telling me that the line was engaged.”

“Sorry about that darling,” Catharine apologised. “James has been calling cemeteries all morning. Something about purchasing a plot under the shade of a couple of nice gum trees.”

“I don’t understand,” Eddie said, “if the New Guard wants to kidnap the Premier, then why are they going after a trade union leader?”

“A bit of a trial run?” Charlie suggested.

“I don’t like the sound of any of this,” Catharine said. “I thought if we showed the New Guard is not the patriotic organisation protecting the Crown that it’s pretending to be, that they’re just common criminals, then they would lose the bulk of their support. I thought if the police went public with the information we gave them, if they showed the New Guard has been planning to kidnap the Premier and his Cabinet, then . . .”

“I thought so too,” Eddie interrupted, “but it looks as though we’re running out of time to publicly tie the New Guard to kidnapping or to murder or to anything at all. We can’t even tie Mrs Snook, acting in the name of the New Guard, to murder.”

“Eddie’s right,” Charlie said. “We need to find another way to stop them.”

“But how?” Eddie asked. “We don’t know what they’re really up to, we certainly don’t know why they’re pretending to be police and charging into people’s homes in the middle of the night.”

“Then let’s go and ask him,” Catharine said.

“What do you mean?” Eddie asked her.

“Darling, if the police are talking to William Scott then we should be talking to Jock Garden,” Catharine told her.

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Friday, 6th May 1932

Maroubra, Sydney

Charlie drove Eddie and Catharine out to Maroubra. The Garden’s family home was a well-proportioned house, which stood still and silent. The building betrayed nothing of what had happened earlier that morning. Nobody noticed two men pull up and park only a few yards behind them, in an old Ford Model A. The men, who had been following Eddie and Catharine for a few days now, both clutched crude hoods made out of cheap black fabric and crowbars.

“I hope Mr Garden will talk to us,” Eddie said as Charlie switched off the engine.

“He’ll tell us what happened,” Charlie said, “even if he can’t tell us why.”

“It all looks so . . . ,” Catharine stopped as she frowned and started to fidget with her coat buttons.

“Looks so what?” Eddie prompted her.

“I don’t know, it just all looks so ordinary,” she finished.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Charlie asked.

“I’m not trying to be horrible,” Catharine started to explain as she stepped out

onto the footpath. “I’m just trying to say that I feel as though the country is in the middle of a war and everything looks so normal.”

“What were you expecting Lady Darling? Mud, trenches and some barbed wire?” Charlie asked.

“No,” Catharine said.

“But we’re not at war,” Eddie said. “Not really.”

“Yes we are, luv,” a man’s voice told her harshly.

Charlie tried to turn around to see who had spoken but it was too late. A crowbar came down, striking him in the middle of his shoulder blades. As he collapsed to his knees under the force of the blow, he pushed Eddie out of the way of a second man who was coming up behind her. Catharine screamed and Eddie, now lying on the footpath, looked up to see her being dragged towards a black motor car. She crawled towards the second man as he threw Catharine into the back of the old Ford. Catharine screamed again and Eddie reached out and grabbed her hand. Eddie called out for Charlie as she tried desperately to hold onto Catharine who was being pulled further and further inside the black motor car.

Catharine’s screaming was brutally silenced.

Eddie felt her friend’s hand go limp and heard a motor car engine starting. The two hooded men were leaving and they were taking Catharine with them.

The first man stayed on the back seat with Catharine and started shouting: “Drive you stupid bastard! Drive!”

The second man did as he was told and, not even waiting for his partner to

close the back door, he took off and left Eddie sitting in the gutter, holding one of Catharine's gloves.

Eddie blinked back tears as she was pulled up onto her feet: "Come on!" Charlie yelled at her. "We have to follow them."

Seeing that Catharine had dropped her purse, she quickly snatched it up off the ground, and then went with her brother. Determined not to lose sight of the old Ford, Charlie drove as fast as he could, dodging other motor cars, a horse-drawn cart, pedestrians, and a couple of stray dogs. They wove their way back towards the city, edging closer and closer, to the men who had attacked them. It was not long before they had made it back into town and were then finding their way through the back alleys and tight laneways of Paddington.

Charlie pulled up and, by forcing his run-down motor car up over the gutter, he managed to navigate a tight parking spot which was half on the footpath and half on the roadway: "Wait here," he whispered.
"No," Eddie said. "I'm coming with you."

Anxious to keep on the trail of the men they had been following, and not wanting to waste any time, he decided not to argue. Once out on the street he started to run, hiding in the shadows of run down buildings, with Eddie close on his heels. Within minutes they saw the motor car, which the two hooded men had used to kidnap Catharine, parked outside an old terrace that was wedged in between its neighbours. They walked a bit further and stopped near the gate. Charlie took out his notepad and pencil and wrote down the registration number for the motor car as well as the address of the terrace. As he mumbled something and ran his hands through his hair, Eddie knelt down and picked up

a small hairclip of yellow gold with two rows of seed pearls.

“Look!” she said. “It’s Catharine’s.”

Charlie took the small ornament and clutched it tightly before turning around and walking back down the street.

“Where are you going?” Eddie demanded.

“I’m going to give this information to the police,” he told her. “Now that we know where Catharine is we have to do something.”

“That’s right,” said Eddie, who had recently lost all faith in a police force that was paid to protect people like her and Catharine. “We have to do something.”

“Eddie, wait!” Charlie called out. “Where are you going?”

“I’m going to help her,” she told him.

“The police are the ones who need to take care of this, we have to let them handle it.”

“They might do something,” Eddie conceded. “They also might do something about the New Guard.”

“Eddie this is out of our hands.”

“No it’s not, I talked Catharine into this whole mess and it’s my responsibility to help her. You wait around for the police if you want to but I’m going to make sure that she comes out of that house.”

“Edwina, stop.” Charlie called out, but she could not hear him because she was already running towards Oxford Street.

Eddie made it to the main road, panting and panicked. Quickly opening Catharine’s purse, she counted how much money her co-investigator had been carrying, and then she hailed a taxi.

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Friday, 6th May 1932

Paddington, Sydney

I wonder if any of the women on the pages of the novels that James writes faint at the sight of a gun. Catharine thought to herself. *I don't think that any of the women in the Lady Darling romance novels have ever fainted: Diana drives her ambulance fearlessly from one battle front to another; Beatrice fights the heat and the hunters in Africa; Sarah saves countless lives in a poorly equipped hospital; while Ruth rescues orphaned children from callous slave traders. No, I've pretended to be the author of sixteen novels for James with sixteen heroines and I'm sure that there's not a single faint among them. I suppose if you're navigating an impossibly wide variety of dangerous situations in search for true love you don't have time to faint.*

True love she scoffed as she thought about the Captain and his strange ideas. She thought about her brothers and promised herself that she would read all of the novels that James had written and would try to be a little bit more patient with Douglas. She thought about Eddie. She thought about her dog. She wondered briefly where she was. She tried not to think about Charlie. When she heard voices she decided to try and crawl closer to the corner of the room. The men stopped talking at the sound of her movement, so Catharine curled herself up into a ball and tensed all of her muscles in an effort to keep as still as possible. The men hesitated, Catharine could not see them but she could smell them.

"She still 'ere?" one asked.

The other kidnapper did not respond immediately. He waited until an exploratory foot made contact with the woman, who had been tied up with strips of sisal, and left on the floor of the back room in the old terrace. Catharine grunted.

“Yeah, she’s still ‘ere,” he answered.

“When she comes ‘round, we’ll have to tell the others and get them over here double time. It’s their job to be askin’ all the questions, not ours.”

“Let’s just hope they find out how much she knows.”

“She might just be a snooping Sheila pokin’ her nose in where it don’t belong,” one of the men suggested.

“Maybe not,” the other man said.

“It woulda been better if we coulda got the both of ‘em.”

“Yeah, normally they just go out the pair of ‘em. That bloke what was with ‘em today has messed things up a bit.”

“It’ll be alright. It’s this one they really wanted, she’s the one that’s been making telephone calls and asking questions she shouldn’t be asking about some of Snook’s mates.”

“I still think we needed ‘em both.”

“Nah, the guys in charge will be able to get what they need out of this one.”

“They better, we’ll be stuffed if she knows somethin’ about next week and they can’t keep a lid on it.”

“They’ll be right, they’ve served their King and Country before and they know how important this is.”

“Bloody Lang,” the other man spat.

“We’ll get the bastard. Just one more week, then we’ll get ‘im.”

“Yeah, well, let’s put this one in the trunk ‘till she decides to join us again. We don’t want anyone hearing her if she starts screaming the place down when she

wakes up."

"It's been hard work followin' all these people around."

"Yeah, at least when Mrs Snook knocked off her old man, it was one less person that we had to keep an eye on."

The man, who had started dragging Catharine by her feet towards the trunk, said: "That's enough talk 'bout work. Tell me, ya seen any lady action lately?"

"Ah mate," the other man said, laughing, "I've bin gettin' more arse than a toilet seat!"

"I tell ya, it's gotta be the best bloody thing about mass unemployment."

"Yeah, tell me 'bout it. All you gotta do is promise a bitch a couple a shillings and she'll do anything."

"Do you really pay 'em?"

"Nah, I just reckon that it's more fun to watch 'em cry afterwards and then listen to 'em tell you some stupid story 'bout not havin' any food or needin' to go to a doctor or tryin' to pay their rent or puttin' some brat through school."

"I always give 'em something, never what I promised but something. Cause you gotta be careful. One of 'em might come back and try and burn ya," the other man warned.

"Nah mate, what are they gonna do? They're shit scared to tell anyone they know and the coppers are too busy to worry about some dumb Sheila that got herself into trouble. The few that have tried to give me a bit of stick I've just taken care of them the old fashioned way with a bit a rope, a few bricks and a nice little boat trip out on the harbour. Yeah, it's all good, I could play this scam on 'em forever and never get caught."

"Do you think we'll get to have a go at this one when the others have finished questioning her?"

"Don't see why not. We'll tell 'em it's like fishing, we caught her so we get to keep her."

The men laughed. Catharine kept still. She did not fight as she was put into the damp smelling trunk. She did not call out when the lid slammed closed. She listened. She tried not to cry. She swallowed her own bile.

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Friday, 6th May 1932

Oxford Street, Sydney

"You alright, miss?" the taxi driver asked.
"Yes," Eddie told him. "I just need to reach The Australia Hotel as quickly as possible."

The taxi driver did not believe Eddie was alright but he did believe she needed to make it to The Australia Hotel in a hurry. He put his foot down and Eddie held on. After she had paid and thanked the driver, Eddie went inside the Hotel and walked straight to the registration desk. She tried not to tap her foot as she stood at the end of a queue full of business people, residents and tourists.

A young bellboy noticed how agitated she was and asked: "Can I help you miss?"
"I'm a . . . ," Eddie hesitated. "I'm looking for Captain Anderson-Brock, he's recently taken up residence here in the Hotel."
"Sure, I know the Captain," the bellboy told her. "I'll take you to him if you like."

Eddie wanted to ask for a message to be delivered to the Captain to meet her downstairs and would have settled for finding a suitable chaperone to escort

her to the Captain's room. Knowing that there was not time to wait on formalities, she took a deep breath, nodded at the young man who had offered to help her and followed him upstairs. Her hands were sweating and her heart was racing as she stood at the door to Captain Anderson-Brock's room.

"Hello sir," the bellboy said, "I have a visitor for you."

"Ah yes, Miss Jones, come in. Thanks Andrew," the Captain said as he gave him a couple of coins. "Leave the door open, will you."

"Yes sir, thank you sir."

"I'm very sorry to bother you," Eddie said, avoiding eye contact.

"Don't be sorry, you're the most beautiful distraction I've had in days."

"I need your help," Eddie blurted out.

"What can I do?"

"It's Catharine. She went with Charlie and me out to Maroubra this morning to talk to Jock Garden. Anyway, there were these two men, they were wearing hoods, and they took her. They just pulled her by the hair into their motor car. We followed them to a run-down place over at Paddington. Charlie said that we have to wait for the police to do something but I don't want to wait. They just took her and I want to do something but I don't know what to do. They just took her and I don't know what to do."

"Well," the Captain said, "we'll go and fetch her shall we?"

"Really?" Eddie asked, looking up at the Captain. "You'll help me?"

"Of course," he said. "Firstly, I don't like the sound of men, hooded or otherwise, kidnapping women in broad daylight. Secondly, I think risking life and limb for you is the start of a sterling plan to win your heart."

"You have a plan?" Eddie asked, hopefully.

"Not yet but I'll think of something Edwina," he assured her. "May I call you Edwina?" he asked.

“Most people call me Eddie.”

“I’m not most people,” the Captain said as he went over and closed the door to his room before opening up both silky oak doors of the wardrobe.

Eddie inspected the vast array of weapons the Captain had on shelves, in drawers and behind his clothes: “No, I suppose you’re not most people,” she admitted.

Chapter 18

Black Friday

Saturday, 7th May 1932

Newtown, Sydney

Edwina was exhausted. She wanted to stretch out but even the smallest movement seemed an extraordinary physical challenge, best left to an Olympic athlete. Her eyes felt very hot and dry and as though they were filled with tiny grains of sand. They were uncomfortable open or closed. Taking a deep breath she forced herself to bring her arms out from beneath the cotton bed covers and place her hands over her eyes. Edwina rubbed them gently at first and then started to attack them furiously but no amount of pressure was able to provide her with any relief. There was a washbasin and cloth on the other side of her bedroom but it seemed so far away.

She lay there and tried to remember everything that had happened to make her so tired. Charlie opened the door and then proceeded to make his way silently inside. Cleo also came into the room, although a sneeze and the sound of her feet on timber floorboards made her entrance not as subtle as her owner's. Charlie felt Eddie's forehead, said nothing, and went to the washstand. He soaked the face washer in the cool water and then pressed the damp cloth to Eddie's face and the young woman finally felt some relief.

"You need some more rest so try and sleep," he whispered to her. "I'll be back in a couple of hours."

Charlie left the room but Cleo remained. The old greyhound stared at Eddie for a few minutes before jumping up on the end of the bed. Eddie considered telling the dog to get down but her warmth and her weight were comforting.

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It was almost four o'clock in the morning and everyone had gathered, as promised the night before, at Charlie's and Eddie's house. They were all sitting quietly in the front room while the Captain distributed weapons and boxes of ammunition. Enfield Revolvers were given to Charlie, James and Douglas while Eddie was presented with a small Philadelphia Derringer.

The Captain checked his rifles as he started to go through the plan: "We all agreed last night that the safest time of day to rescue Lady Darling was around zero five hundred. By raiding the terrace at this time her kidnappers should be tired and off their guard. Also, if these men have scheduled some sort of shift change, then we should make it there before any reinforcements arrive."

Everyone nodded.

"We'll take three motor cars out to Paddington," the Captain continued, his voice soft but determined. "James and Charlie will be in the first, Douglas and Eddie will be in the second and I'll follow in the third," he explained. "Then, once we arrive, Douglas and Eddie will take a position in the laneway behind the terrace, where they will be able to raise the alarm if they see Lady Darling being taken out through the back door. I'll set myself up at the front of the building and will fire three shots into the front door. I'll then lay down covering fire while James and Charlie move into the terrace and begin their search for

Lady Darling.

No one else said anything.

“Once she has been located Charlie will use a whistle, as a signal to me, to cease firing. As soon as Lady Darling has been moved to safety, Charlie will use the whistle again. I’ll then resume fire to delay any pursuit attempted by the kidnappers. Then we’ll all meet back here,” the Captain finished.

“That’s it?” Douglas cried out. “That’s all you have? You’ll set yourself up as a target and then just hope that you’re a better shot than they are?”

“That’s it,” the Captain agreed. “Are there any questions?” he asked them.

“Yes.”

Everyone jumped at the sound of Elliot’s voice coming from the doorway.

“Are you going to give me a revolver or a rifle?” Elliot asked the Captain.

“Elliot!” Eddie exclaimed. “What are you doing here?”

“I live here,” he said, very casually.

“Look, you don’t need to do this . . . ,” Charlie started before he was cut off.

“Yes I do,” Elliot told him. “I don’t know what you’ve all been up to these past few weeks but I know you’ve been up to something. We’re mates so I don’t need details, I just need to do my bit to help. Besides, Molly likes Lady Darling so she’d be disappointed in me if I didn’t help her if she was in trouble.”

The Captain, looking through the severe facial and neck scarring to the man beneath, handed Elliot a rifle and some boxes of ammunition.

Saturday, 7th May 1932

Paddington, Sydney

“Oh yes,” Catharine said, as she threw her head back in defiance. “A raised fist, the trite response of the illiterate.”

Catharine was struck across the face and was about to fall victim to another blow when her attacker was interrupted by the sound of gunfire. Three shots blasted through the front door of the terrace. The minutes that followed were the sights and sounds of a nightmare. More shots were fired, with each explosion instantly followed by the sounds of splitting timber and shattering glass. Men’s voices could be heard, Catharine recognised the slightly muffled shouts as belonging to her hooded captors but there were other voices too, they sounded clearer and more familiar. In the chaos a revolver clattered to the floor, Catharine threw herself off her chair and onto the floor and made a desperate grab for it. Despite still being tied up, she found herself clutching the weapon tightly with both hands. A grip that tightened when she felt herself being picked up and then carried outside.

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Catharine tried to stand up and took a few faltering steps backwards until her back hit the wall. She was grateful that bearing her own weight was no longer entirely her responsibility and leaned into the timber panelling. She managed to remain upright for a minute, possibly two, before her legs required a complete reprieve from supporting her and she slid down onto the floor. Charlie followed the worn track in the carpet, as he took his usual route from his office door to his desk, where he opened the bottom drawer and took out a bottle and a

couple of shot glasses. He went over and sat down next to Catharine. Pouring Scotch into the two glasses he carefully took the revolver from Catharine's hands and replaced it with a glass of Scotland's finest.

Gently guiding the glass to her lips he said: "Here, drink this," he told her. "It'll make you feel better."

Catharine obediently sipped the warm brown liquid but started to gag when the Scotch reached her throat.

Charlie laughed: "I hear that petrol tastes better," he said, "but they don't sell it in these pretty glass bottles."
"How can you drink that stuff?" Catharine asked incredulously.
"Because it's not as difficult to swallow as Eddie's coffee," Charlie told her.

Catharine laughed.

Eddie was going to say something but stopped herself when she saw the Captain walk through the door: "You're bleeding!" she gasped.
"Not much," he reassured her.
"What happened?" Eddie demanded.
"Just a bit of a scuffle, that's all," the Captain said.
"I'll see if we have any ice left," Eddie told him as she dashed out of the room and towards the kitchen.

The Captain was about to protest but decided that being fussed over by Edwina, while not stipulated in his plan to rescue Lady Darling, might not be such a bad thing. Douglas sat in a corner hoping Eddie would come back with

some ice and that he would be also be given a glass of Scotch. James smoked and thought of the burial plot he had purchased the day before. Charlie looked at Catharine's stained clothes and tear-streaked face. Her hair was in complete disarray and, for the first time since he had known her, she was not wearing any lipstick. He thought that she had never looked so beautiful.

"Well," Elliot said, "if no one is needing me for anything else, I'll be off to bed."
"Good night Elliot," Catharine said. "It was very kind of you to help fetch me."
"Good night Lady Darling," he said as he tipped his hat and left the room.

When Eddie returned a few minutes later, carrying a laden tea tray, Charlie was just putting the telephone receiver back into its cradle.

"I figured, with all the noise that we made this morning, someone might have contacted the police. So I thought I'd put in another call and let them know what happened."
"That's a good idea," Eddie said sarcastically, as she put some broken pieces of ice, wrapped up in a tea towel, on the Captain's cheek. "After all, they've been very helpful so far."
Ignoring his sister, Charlie said: "Anyway, I've told the boys to say that the tip off came from William Scott. That puts him in a little deeper with his New Guard friends and keeps our names out of the newspapers."
"Thank you darling," Catharine whispered.

Charlie leant forward and kissed her. She helped.

"There certainly have been a couple of close calls recently," Eddie said as she took Catharine's glass of Scotch and replaced it with a cup of hot tea from the

tray.

“So?” Catharine asked.

“So,” said Eddie, “do you still think that there is such a thing as reincarnation?”

“I hope not darling,” Catharine told her, clearly exhausted, “I’ve decided that once around this block is more than enough.”

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Monday, 9th May 1932

Vaucluse, Sydney

James sat in his favourite armchair and read aloud from the newspaper: “A dramatic police raid was made at dawn on Saturday on the headquarters in Wingello House of the New Guard.”

“Finally,” Eddie whispered.

“The police, under the direction of Superintendant Mackay,” James continued, “first detained the secretary (Mr Sutherland) and used his keys to enter the offices and examine its contents.”

“Come on darling,” Catharine complained, “just read the important bits.”

James cast his eyes down the column of tightly packed, black print: “Ah, it says here the New Guard has built up another organisation, the Fascist Legion of the New Guard, which is modelled on the Ku Klux Klan of the United States.”

“That explains their poor fashion sense,” the Captain quipped.

“This new organisation,” James read on, “is based in Paddington and has around fifty members.”

“Does the paper say anything about what the police found at their headquarters?” Eddie asked.

James scanned the next couple of paragraphs before telling everyone: “Only that the contents of a number of filing cabinets received the most attention, that the papers were loaded into motor cars and transported to detective headquarters and the New Guard are considering legal action against the police.”

“Good grief!” Eddie exclaimed. “Surely they couldn’t. Could they?”

“I don’t know,” Charlie said. “It’s possible. Eric Campbell is a solicitor and I don’t think the police followed all the rules raiding the place the way they did.”

Eddie shook her head: “At least,” she said, “the police finally did something with the information we had given to them.”

“This may sound terribly selfish of me,” James started, “but does this mean my life is allowed to return to normal?”

“Really darling, you do think that it’s all about you,” Catharine whined.

“Actually Catharine I’ve been a bit concerned this past month that it’s been all about you. This should only ever have been about the New Guard, the Government and the police.”

“He’s right you know Cat,” Douglas said when he saw this sister was about to argue: “I think that you’re starting to run out of lives.”

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Tuesday, 10th May 1932

The Australia Hotel, Sydney

Eddie waited in the foyer of The Australia Hotel, holding tightly onto a piece of neatly folded linen, and the dangerous contents it concealed. The Captain arrived, the bruising from the blows he had suffered a few nights earlier, still clearly visible.

“Hello,” Eddie said.

“Hello.”

“I wanted to thank you again for your help,” Eddie told him.

“It was no trouble at all,” he said gallantly. “So tell me, how is Catharine?”

“She’ll be alright.”

“How are you?” he asked softly.

“I’ll be alright too,” Eddie whispered as she handed him a small Philadelphia Derringer pistol wrapped in one of her handkerchiefs.

“What’s this?” he asked.

“It’s the pistol that you gave to me the other day. I wanted to return it to you,” she said.

The Captain took the handkerchief and put it in his pocket, he then pressed the Derringer back into Eddie’s hand.

“Please,” he said, “I’d like you to keep this. At least until all this nasty business with the New Guard is over.”

“But it is over,” Eddie assured him.

“I’d like to believe that but we may have just angered the beast.”

“Do you . . . ,” Eddie hesitated. “Do you think those men, the ones who took Catharine, do you think they’ll go to prison? It’s just that Catharine told me about them. Well, one in particular, and some of the things that he said he’d done. I’d like to think he’d go to prison.”

The Captain shrugged: “Justice is always done, one way or another,” he said in an attempt to reassure her.

Eddie didn’t say anything more but she did slide the weapon discreetly back into her purse.

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Friday, 13th May 1932

Newtown, Sydney

A squeal of tyres was heard and a moment later Catharine was knocking frantically on the door: “Darling, are you there?” she called out.

“I’m here,” Eddie said as she opened up her front door.

“Hurry up and let us in,” Catharine said.

“What’s the matter? Eddie asked as she was jostled out of the way by Catharine and the dog as they both rushed through to the front room.

“I’ve just been to see your friend, Miss Alexander, from the PMG,” Catharine told her as she went into Charlie's office and sat down.

The dog, loath to leave his mistress’ side for even a few minutes after their recent enforced separation, lay down at her feet.

“Catharine, what's wrong?” Eddie asked.

“I wanted to call you but I couldn't, she said that it was too dangerous to use the telephone.”

“Slow down,” Charlie said, as he came out from behind his desk, then walked over to the drinks cabinet and poured a glass of water, which he handed to Catharine.

Holding the glass tightly, Catharine took several gulps before she started telling Eddie and Charlie what had happened: “Do you remember when we believed that 3332 was a telephone number and we asked for Miss Alexander’s help to find out which exchange it belonged to?”

“I remember,” Eddie said. “You didn't want to call her back for the information

because she thought that we were all spies.”

“Apparently she had a better sense of the situation than I did,” Catharine told them. "She left her office this morning and used a public telephone to call and ask if she could see me.”

“Why would someone leave the main exchange to make a telephone call?" Charlie asked.

“Because she's worried that the calls in and out of the main exchange are all being tapped,” Catharine said.

“They can't do that!” Eddie exploded.

“I don't know if they can or can’t but she sounded terribly frightened, so I arranged to meet her during her lunch hour at a little place on George Street," Catharine said, pausing just long enough to drink some more water. "She looked deathly pale so I ordered some tea and sandwiches and then she told me about a flurry of telegrams that were sent yesterday.”

“What sort of telegrams?” Charlie asked her.

“Telegrams to and from Canberra,” Catharine told him. “Minister Beasley requested information about connections between the New Guard and the Department of Defence.”

“What?” Eddie asked.

“It’s madness darling,” Catharine agreed, “but one of the telegrams asked for an urgent confirmation from Secretary Shepherd that the Department is in no way associated with the New Guard and has had no communications, official or otherwise, with them.”

“I don’t understand why he even asked the question,” Charlie said. “Everyone in the forces were told months ago they couldn’t join paramilitary organisations and, if they were already members, that they had to quit.”

“Why would it matter?” Eddie asked.

“I think the Government was worried at one stage that their men might start

picking and choosing whose orders they were going to follow," Charlie told her.

"Just in case of civil war," Eddie whispered.

"The police have put a stop to the New Guard though," Charlie said.

"Oh, the police have only inconvenienced them," Catharine insisted.

Eddie remembered the warning from the Captain that the business with the New Guard was not over, not yet. There was another knock at the door. Eddie went to open the door again and saw the Captain standing there with a dozen long-stemmed red roses.

"Hello," the Captain said. "I hope I'm not bothering you."

"No," Eddie told him. "No, of course not. Come in."

The Captain followed Eddie into Charlie's office and stood there awkwardly holding the flowers.

"I'm not trying to be difficult," Catharine was saying to Charlie. "I'm just trying to convince you that the New Guard are planning something and, from what those men out at Paddington were saying, whatever they are going to do, they are going to do it this week."

The Captain offered a polite greeting but Catharine and Charlie were too busy glaring at each other to notice. Eddie was about to ask the Captain if he wanted a cup of coffee when there was another knock at the door. Cleo, who had been trying to sleep, was not impressed with so many visitors. Past experience told her that this amount of activity usually meant trouble.

When Eddie answered the door she saw Father Cronin standing there, his face

was flushed and he was having difficulty standing still: “Hello Eddie,” he said.

“Hello Father,” Eddie said, surprised to see him.

The last time that Father Cronin had paid a house call to her and Charlie was just after their parents had been killed in a motor car accident.

“Is your brother home?” Father Cronin asked.

“Yes, he’s in his office,” Eddie told him.

“Good,” Father Cronin said as he stepped across the threshold and went into the front room.

“Hello Father,” Charlie said as soon as he saw the older man.

“Hello Charlie, oh, hello Lady Darling, it’s always lovely to see you.”

Catharine, who was angry with Charlie for not believing that the New Guard was still planning to attempt a military coup, managed to mutter hello. Edwina then introduced the local parish priest to the Captain.

“Ah, hello,” the Captain said as he put the flowers down on Charlie’s desk and took Father Cronin’s hand. “Thomas Anderson-Brock, I’m a friend of Edwina’s.”

“Hello,” Father Cronin said, disappointed Eddie and Charlie had visitors.

“What can we do for you Father?” Charlie asked.

Father Cronin hesitated briefly but his message was too important to wait: “Someone from the New Guard has left another message at the church,” he told them.

“I knew it!” Catharine yelled out as she jumped up. “What did it say?”

“When did they leave it?” Eddie interrupted.

“I was just thinking about putting on a pot of tea,” Father Cronin said, “when I heard somebody come into the church. I’d been expecting Mrs Smith to call by

so I went out to see if it was her."

"But it wasn't," Eddie guessed.

"It was a man I hadn't seen before, he was putting something in the poor box and then he left. I've been trying to clear the poor box as soon as I know that there's something in it so I went over and instead of finding any money I found a note."

"Written in pencil on a small card," Catharine said, staring defiantly at Charlie.

Charlie took a deep breath and forced himself to ask: "What did it say?"

"It said: Lang's Black Friday, Parliament House, 16:00."

"Black Friday?" Eddie asked.

"Friday the 13th," Catharine said.

"But that's today's date!" Eddie exclaimed.

"And 16:00 is four o'clock," the Captain told them, "which gives us just over half an hour."

"Just over half an hour for what?" Father Cronin asked, he had known the message he had found was important but he did not know what it meant.

"For us to make it to Parliament House and stop the New Guard," Charlie told him as he rushed out of the room.

Father Cronin suddenly found himself alone as Charlie, Eddie, Catharine and the Captain, followed obediently by two dogs, left so quickly that no one even bothered to close the front door. The priest stood there for a few minutes and then, having made his decision, he closed the front door of number 247 Union Street and went back to St Joseph's Church.

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The small group parked at the northern end of Macquarie Street. The Captain

took Catharine inside the Royal Automobile Club just long enough for her to make a rather cryptic telephone call to James. Once back outside, Catharine saw that Eddie had made makeshift leads for the two dogs, which tethered both of them securely to the motor car.

“Darling, what have you done that for?” Catharine asked.

“Just to keep them safe,” Eddie told her.

“But . . . ,” Catharine started to protest.

“We don’t know what we’re walking into,” Charlie told her. “They’re safer if they stay here.”

Catharine nodded and the Captain pointed impatiently to his wristwatch. In silence, the four of them started walking up the hill towards Parliament House. They each took reassurance from the other members of their small group, as well as from the weapons they were all carrying. They walked along the edge of the Parliamentary Bowling Green and towards a group of half a dozen men who were clustered outside the gates of the two-storey Georgian building.

“G’day luv,” one of the men said to Catharine. “You shouldn’t be ’ere, you shouldn’t be messin’ about with things that aren’t your concern.”

Although she did not recognise his face, Catharine immediately recognised the voice of one of the men who had kidnapped her the day she had tried to see Jock Garden. The voice of a man who had boasted about raping and murdering women on his weekends. Revolvers were drawn and the next few seconds looked like a scene from a motion picture, one where the operator in the projector room had reduced the speed of the reel, each frame separated from the next by an agonising delay. The dog heard a gun go off and his mistress

scream. He did not hesitate - he lunged forward. The rope burnt his flesh but his strong neck muscles easily broke through the feeble restraint. No longer tethered to the motor car he ran, faster than he had ever run before, towards Catharine.

A young greyhound who had been purchased for £600 had, only a few months before, set a new record of 28.52 seconds over 500 yards at The Laurels in Wimbledon. Had Catharine's dog been on a track and not on Macquarie Street, hundreds of punters would have held their breaths while they watched him smash the record of Future Cutlet, as the dog easily reached his top speed of almost forty miles-per-hour.

Cleo, who had been sitting up in the back seat of the vehicle, saw her companion break free and run off towards Parliament House. She looked slowly around, yawned, and then decided that she should stay behind and look after the motor car. The dog heard his mistress shout at the man in front of her and he tried to go even faster. His lungs were searing and his heart was pounding after having already run, at full sprint, further than he had ever had to run before. As he neared the trees outside the Mitchell Library he heard another gunshot. With one last desperate effort he forced himself forward and jumped up and bit the man who was threatening his mistress. The dog's serrated teeth tore through the man's skin while his powerful jaw easily caused irreparable damage to bone and cartilage.

The man, who was not so brave without his hood and had lost the last of his hubris with a gun pointed at him, cried out in agony and struck out at the dog. Eddie and Catharine both took aim and fired their revolvers. In the distance a policeman's whistle shrilled.

Another gunshot was heard echoing down the street. Eddie turned around but it was too late. She fell to her hands and knees as she saw Catharine, lying motionless in the gutter, covered in blood. Eddie couldn't speak as she crawled to her friend's side.

"Hurry up!" a man's voice yelled at her.

Eddie could not see Catharine breathing and was so frightened she did not hear, or even see, Father Cronin pull up next to her.

"Hurry up!" Father Cronin yelled again.
"Edwina, come on!" the Captain said as he easily lifted her up off the ground.

Father Cronin, his foot poised above the accelerator, issued instructions from behind the wheel. The Captain took charge of the situation and started to issue a few orders of his own. After Catharine and the dog were lifted into the back of Father Cronin's motor car, the Captain gave Charlie an address in Surry Hills and told him to meet them there. Charlie ran back to where Cleo was patiently waiting for him, or anybody else, to return. The Captain started giving directions to Father Cronin out to Surry Hills, via The Australia Hotel. Father Cronin broke every law and regulation that pertained to the safe driving of a vehicle in New South Wales. Only a slight drop in speed saw the Captain open his door and fall out onto the footpath. Not even bothering to brush himself off, he raced into the Hotel.

Forcing his way to the front of the queue at the Registration Desk, the Captain told a startled clerk: "Get Dr George Hardy of Surry Hills, on the line, right away. This is an emergency!"

The young woman at the counter looked blankly at the man standing before her who was covered in sweat and blood. A one-pound note spurred her into action.

Holding the telephone receiver tightly to his ear the Captain said: “Hardy? Who are you? . . . No, I don’t want you . . . I want Hardy, where is he? . . . What do you mean he’s having a snooze? . . . Well for God’s sake man, go and wake him up!”

While he was waiting on the telephone he saw a young lad who he knew would recognise him and called him over: “Say, John can you go to the bar and pick up a bottle of champagne for me? Have them put it on my account will you?” Then, returning his attention to the telephone, he said: “Hello, Hardy? Right, it’s Anderson-Brock here. Look, I have a bit of an urgent medical situation. Are you in a position to help me out?”

A few more words were exchanged before the Captain slammed down the telephone receiver. He then went to the main entrance of the Hotel, collecting his bottle of champagne from John on the way. Once the Captain was back in the motor car, Father Cronin needed no encouragement to take off. The old priest was given some more directions and a few more traffic laws were broken. The Captain then turned around to look at Edwina, Catharine and the dog in the back seat. He popped the champagne cork, the sound a little too much like gunfire for Eddie’s liking, and then handed the bottle to Catharine.

“Don’t be silly darling, I need a glass,” Catharine told the Captain curtly.
“It is in a glass,” he pointed out.

Catharine took the dark green glass bottle and looked at it carefully before she

shrugged her shoulders slightly. She brought the bottle up to her lips and she drank. She looked down at the dog. She had never seen so much blood. She kept drinking.

“You shouldn’t drink on an empty stomach,” Father Cronin said, sounding quite concerned. “Here,” he struggled to retrieve something from under his seat. “I have these,” he said as a small brown paper bag was proffered. It was full of slightly stale Peek Frean’s Family Assorted biscuits. Catharine was too busy drinking so the Captain took the bag and passed a small biscuit to Eddie.

“You should eat something,” he said softly.

Eddie accepted a small piece of shortbread but did nothing with it.

“Come on,” the Captain encouraged.

“You’re quite good in a crisis,” Eddie told him as she stared intently at the biscuit.

“Yes, I should have mentioned that the other night at the opera. It’s another good reason for you to give in and to say that you’ll marry me,” he told her.

“I . . . ,” Eddie faltered.

“I thought it was you,” the Captain said suddenly.

“What?”

“I thought it was you who had been shot.”

“I thought it was Catharine.”

“I would have been terribly disappointed if something had happened to you before you become Mrs Anderson-Brock,” he told her.

“Captain, I can’t.”

“Please call me Thomas.”

Eddie shook her head.

“Could you at least say that you’ll think about it?”

“About calling you Thomas?” Eddie asked, trying to avoid the question.

“No, could you think about marrying me.”

She reached up to touch his face. His cheek was hot and felt slightly damp.

“I’ll think about it,” she promised, not wanting to hurt the feelings of the man who had helped to save Catharine’s life.

“Spiffy,” he whispered.

The Captain stayed twisted around in the front seat so that he could keep looking at Edwina. She allowed him to hold her hand as she nibbled on her biscuit. Catharine started muttering that they would all be dead soon if someone did not relieve Father Cronin of his driving duties.

◇ ◈ ◈ ◈ ◈ ◈ ◇

“It’s a minor miracle that he’s still alive,” Father Cronin said when they arrived at the veterinary practice and handed the dog over to the care of Dr Hardy.

“Well a major miracle would be more useful,” Catharine said. “I suppose it’s too late for you to arrange something.”

“I’m very sorry Lady Darling, major miracles are few and far between these days. The last one occurred almost two thousand years ago.”

“Oh really,” Catharine snapped, in an even more irritated tone of voice than before. “A man stood up and spoke about what he believed in. Then a group of men with too much influence, too much power and only average levels of

intelligence decided they didn't like him, that they would bully him and that they would kill him. Father, that's not a miracle, that happens every day."

"Most men don't come back three days later," the priest pointed out.

"I suppose that is reasonably impressive," Catharine conceded.

A few minutes later Charlie arrived.

"How did you make it here so fast?" Charlie asked. "You must have been driving like a bat out of hell," he accused the Captain.

"Not me old chap," the Captain said, smiling.

"Sorry Father," Charlie sheepishly apologised. "How's the dog doing?" he asked quickly in an effort to change the subject.

Dr Hardy shook his head and looked up from the table.

"The bullet didn't do very much damage but I think that he's lost too much blood to pull through," the older man declared.

Charlie ran outside. When he returned he was carrying Cleo.

"I thought that she was asleep in the motor car," Eddie said.

"She was," Charlie told her before turning to the veterinarian. "Here, can she help?"

◇ ◈ ◈ ◈ ◈ ◈ ◇

Hardy gently patted the greyhound's chest, which, thanks to a successful blood

transfusion, was once again rising and falling rhythmically. The Captain described the dog's recent bravery to his old friend Hardy. The veterinarian was very impressed with the dog's celebrated speed and Catharine took a few minutes to explain that it was all due to the double suspension gallop.

"What's his name?" Hardy asked, as he kept patting the dog and checked his wound dressing.

"He doesn't have one," Eddie told him with a hint of irritation in her voice.

"Of course he has a name," Catharine corrected.

"Really?" Eddie asked.

"His name is Larry," Catharine said.

"Larry," Eddie repeated harshly. "You have a dog for almost six weeks, he follows you absolutely everywhere, he saves your life and all you can do in return is call him Larry."

"I like the name Larry," Catharine said defensively. "Besides," she continued, "Lazarus is so formal."

Eddie was not a woman who normally gambled but she would have, without any hesitation at all, bet a pound, perhaps two, that Catharine was crying.

They were all standing there, looking at Larry and Cleo, when James and Douglas both walked into the surgery.

"How did you find us?" Eddie asked, surprised to see them.

"You're not the only one who is able to play private investigator old girl," James said as he took off his jacket and tossed it onto a chair. "After Catharine called and told me you were all on your way to Parliament House, Douglas and I drove into town straight away. When we realised you weren't there, we went

over to The Australia Hotel, to see if the Captain had gone back to his room and if he had any news. A very helpful clerk at the registration desk told us that the Captain had been in, but only briefly, to make an urgent telephone call to Dr George Hardy. We promptly looked up Dr Hardy's address and here we are."

"Here you are," Eddie said, impressed with his impromptu detective work.

"What was happening at Parliament House when you were there?" Charlie asked.

"You'll be pleased to know that the police finally turned up," Douglas told everyone. "Although there was not very much for them to do when they arrived."

"What do you mean?" the Captain asked.

"Apart from one dead man on the footpath just outside the gates, and a few people who had stopped to see what was going on, there was no one there," he told them.

Eddie and Catharine looked at each other at the mention of a man lying dead on the pavement outside Parliament House, but neither of them said anything.

"What about those men from the New Guard," Charlie asked. "Were they still there when you arrived?"

"No. Their job had been done for them so they must have decided that they didn't need to wait around," Douglas guessed.

"What do you mean their job had been done for them?" Eddie asked.

"Just that," James said, in a very matter of fact way. "The New Guard wanted to see Lang out of the way and, just before five o'clock this afternoon, the Premier received a letter from the Governor relieving him of his duties."

"What?" Catharine cried.

"I don't believe it!" Eddie gasped. "After everything that we've been through.

After everything that we've done to try and protect the Premier, you're telling us that he's been sacked?"

James lit a cigarette: "Sorry, old girl."

"What about the dead man near the gates?" Catharine asked quietly as she played with Larry's ears.

Eddie tensed visibly but everyone else was too busy absorbing the news, that Philip Game had dismissed Jack Lang, to notice her reaction to Catharine's question.

"There were a couple of coppers there," Douglas said, "and I overheard one of them say that, with a single shot straight through the heart, the bloke was nothing but a chalk outline on cheap concrete before he even hit the ground."

"Really?" Eddie asked, trying to sound disinterested.

"I don't know if we'll find out any more than that though because everyone was more worried about the story of Lang."

"Even the reporter who was there, walked right past the police cordoning off the corpse, and straight up to Lang," James told them.

"Really?" Catharine asked.

"I wonder how the Big Fella is doing, now he's lost his job," Charlie said.

"I think he's doing much better now than he was twenty-four hours ago," James suggested as he stubbed out his cigarette. "As he was leaving Parliament he told the reporter: 'I am no longer Premier, but a free man'."

Epilogue

Saturday, 14th May 1932

Newtown, Sydney

"I'm still angry that a woman has been able to get away with murdering her husband," Eddie fumed.

"Oh, I don't know darling," said Catharine, as she swung her legs up onto the lounge so that she could sit back more comfortably. "I find it all quite encouraging."

"I'm very angry," Eddie insisted.

"You don't think that you're being just a little bit hypocritical?" Catharine asked.

Cleo was fast asleep under Charlie's desk. Larry also slept, his head resting on an outrageously expensive tapestry cushion that Catharine had bought for him that morning.

"I wonder how the investigation into the murder of that man outside Parliament House is going," Eddie said.

"I haven't seen anything in the newspapers about it," Catharine told her.

"Neither have I," said Eddie, who had recently starting reading the newspapers again, and had been keeping a keen look out for any information on a man who was gunned down, on Macquarie Street, the day that Jack Lang had been dismissed from office.

"I don't think there will be too much of a fuss darling," Catharine said. "No witnesses have come forward, no clues have been found and there is certainly

enough happening across Sydney at the moment to keep the police busy on other things."

Eddie was not convinced.

"Do perk up darling," Catharine said. "There's no one banging on the door of detective headquarters demanding a killer be found. In fact the man was such a crouton I don't think that anyone will even notice that he's no longer around."
"A crouton?" Eddie asked.
"Oh darling, cretin is such an ugly word."

The familiar sound of the front door bell came through into Charlie's office. Eddie was lost in her own thoughts, and neither of the dogs seemed interested, so Catharine went to the window and peered through the curtains.

"Your Captain is here," she said.
"Why is he suddenly my Captain?" Eddie asked peevishly.
"Oh, I don't know," Catharine said as she shrugged. "Perhaps it's because he keeps turning up to see you."

Eddie folded her arms.

"I'm actually starting to think that the Captain is rather sweet. Although James doesn't like him," Catharine told her.
"Doesn't he?" Eddie asked.
"No, but then James is such a sullen creature I don't believe that he actually likes anybody."
"Then I don't like the Captain either," Eddie declared.

“Don’t you?”

“Well, certainly not enough to risk sacrificing my independence.”

Catharine tapped her foot: “Come on Eddie,” she pleaded, “it’s terribly hot out there and he seems to be struggling with the largest bouquet of flowers that I’ve ever seen. Should I let him in?”

“Oh, I suppose so,” Eddie relented, “but only on the condition that he isn’t bringing any news of thefts, or secret messages or murders.”

“Poor darling,” Catharine said sympathetically. “Have you really had enough of being a private investigator?”

“I don’t know,” Eddie said, frowning. “If someone asked for my help, someone who had no one else to turn to, then of course I would take on another case, but . . .”

“But what?”

“What would you do?” Eddie asked, deflecting Catharine’s question.

“I’m not sure,” Catharine admitted slowly. “I could help, maybe, if I had nothing else on.”

Eddie and Catharine sat there, reflecting on everything that had happened to them in the last couple of months. Their excursion into the world of fascism, and the political chaos which had underpinned the city for so long, had been dangerous but it had given them the opportunity to make a difference to the world that they lived in. They had also, very briefly, been able to come out from the shadows of their male siblings and to escape lives that were tinted with loneliness and dominated by routine.

Their thoughts were interrupted by the sound of the Captain ringing the front bell again. Catharine went to answer the door while Eddie went to the kitchen to make some coffee.

When the telephone rang, Catharine abruptly cut the Captain off mid-sentence and left him standing in the doorway. Eddie ignored the shrill whistling of the kettle and abandoned her task of setting out a tray of cups and saucers. Both women ran into the front room. Catharine sat on the floor next to Larry, to reassure the dog and to pull at his ears. She looked up expectantly at Eddie.

Eddie, trying to catch her breath, answered the telephone: “Good morning, Jones and Darling Investigators.”

A THEORETICALLY INFORMED CRITICAL REFLECTION

THE EXEGESIS

> So what is the exegesis? That's a good question and like all good questions there is not a consensus on the answer.
>
> Vahri McKenzie
>
> "Postgraduate Creative Writing in Australian Universities"
>
> *Limina*
>
> Special Edition 2007, p. 21

This thesis explores the changing representations of class, gender and some of the ethical questions attendant on the act of murder, in Australian crime fiction from 1830 to 1980. These explorations have been conducted through: an original creative work, *Blood on their Hands*, an historical crime novel set in Sydney during the Great Depression; and an accompanying theoretically informed critical reflection or, as it is often referred to, an exegesis.

The idea of an original creative work, in the form of a novel, was one with which I felt very comfortable. The walls of my small flat are lined with bookcases where novels, my favourite literary form, jostle for space on crowded shelves. Some of these novels have cloth covers with embossed print but most are hardbacks wearing jackets displaying bold fonts and bright colours. There are numerous paperbacks, the majority of which have retained their crisp cardboard covers although some are so creased and weathered from multiple readings their titles are almost illegible. Popular fiction and some more serious examples of literary fiction sit side-by-side, completely unaware of the canons and the critical theories that would see them segregated in the more formal

environment of an academic library. First editions are stored casually alongside modern reprints. A handful of rare volumes hide behind their siblings, shielded from dust and light. Fragile texts lie sideways, on top of more sturdy books, as if they were sleeping. Several slim volumes of poetry and a few plays fill small crevices that occasionally appear at the end of a row. Reference books, and an eclectic collection of text books, are sequestered in their own bookcase. Novels, however, dominate the collection.

The task I had set myself, though significant in scale and scope, was essentially a straightforward one. I would write a detective novel, a carefully crafted text conforming to the well-established conventions of a traditional piece of crime fiction and which had a beginning, middle and end. As an historical crime novel set during the Great Depression the work, to ensure that real events, people and places were presented as accurately as possible, would also need to conform to the rules of a number of academic disciplines including: economics; history; political science; and sociology. The resulting story would demonstrate my ability to structure a crime driven plot, present a setting, create various characters and utilise language effectively. A story that could be placed on a shelf in my collection or on a shelf in a book store or at a library.

In contrast, the exegesis was a type of written expression I knew of rather than knew about. Writing a theoretically informed critical reflection, which would provide an academic anchor for my original creative work, of the type required for a research higher degree was a challenging step into unfamiliar terrain. Investigations into the expectations of the exegesis were complicated because, while there is some agreement on the *purpose* of the exegesis, there is no consensus on the final *product* that an exegesis should generate (McKenzie, 2007, p. 21).

The purpose of the exegesis is generally perceived as being twofold. Firstly, the submission of a critical analysis and discussion, presenting the results of a detailed investigation into a particular aspect of writing, alongside a creative work "goes some way toward dispelling the cloud of doubt hovering over creative writing in the academy" (McKenzie, 2007, p. 24). Secondly, an exegesis acknowledges that a doctoral program is a form of apprenticeship that allows developing writers to research their craft and take advantage of the opportunities only a research higher degree can provide (Harper, 2003, p. 16).

The exegesis facilitates "opportunities for exciting innovation and invention" but also creates "considerable space for uncertainty" (Brien, 2004). This uncertainty surrounds the various elements of the exegesis such as the structure and style of the document and how the document relates to the creative work. It is this relationship which is vital for the overall success of a creative thesis because the "exegesis is not a critique of the [creative] work, but sits alongside it" (Arnold, 2005, p. 41). The novel and exegesis are bound by a literary marriage that supports Pierre Macherey's observation that: "In short, a book never arrives unaccompanied: it is a figure against a background of other formations, depending on them rather than contrasting with them" (1966/2006, p. 61).

Despite the almost universally acknowledged importance of the exegesis there are no standard checklists or templates for students and their supervisors. Even the size of the exegesis varies dramatically between creative writing programs, with Australian institutions offering research higher degrees in creative writing requiring between 20,000 and 50,000 words of the total thesis to be dedicated to the critical component (Carey, et al, 2008). This level of uncertainty concerning the exegesis has generated numerous problems for students. The

most significant problem is connecting the creative and critical components, which sees some students “push thoughts of the exegesis aside and then in the second or third year of study it becomes an afterthought” (Kroll, 2004). This is in contrast to the advice I received, and followed, about the need to work on the exegesis and the original creative work concurrently.

One survey of students, who had recently completed a research higher degree in creative writing, revealed two extreme views. At one end of the continuum the exegesis was considered to be a “completely intrinsic part of the total project” while at the other end of the scale the exegesis was felt to be a “waste of time” and an unnecessary hurdle to qualify for a degree (Brien, 2004). These attitudes reflect Josie Arnold’s belief that the relationship between creative production and academic research are, together, accepted as knowledge “yet the academic element is too often regarded as a legitimising component” (2005, p. 38).

These views did not provide a solid shape for my specific understanding of the exegesis and dictate what I was required to produce but they did help to clarify one important aspect of my thesis: I did not want to be in a position where I would one day reflect on my experiences as a doctoral candidate and declare that approximately 30% of my efforts were a “waste of time”.

In addition to my concerns about what type of exegesis I would produce, I was also concerned that every word dedicated to the theoretical component was one less word allocated to the original creative work. Writing “I” statements also made me feel uncomfortable, generating an unease that the exegesis would dissolve into a self-indulgent piece focussing on me and not my work. There was also the issue of ensuring the exegesis was a reflection on the original

creative work and not an extension of it because there is a risk, for the novelist, that “the exegesis may become part of the fiction” (Perry, 1999, p. 115).

These concerns were mitigated by the idea that “good theoretical writing should embody ideas *and* strive for style” (Bleakley, 2000, p. 12). This statement reassured me that I could produce a document that was reliable, readable and would enhance my original creative work. A reassurance reinforced by my decision that the product of my exegesis would present a series of sections concentrating on the genre of crime fiction and my novel, *Blood on their Hands*, as an example of crime fiction. These sections: articulate the inspiration for the original creative work; detail how my novel can be clearly located within the crime fiction genre; present the results of my investigation into the changing representations of class, gender and the ethical questions attendant on the act of murder in Australian crime fiction; and outline the writing processes I adopted to produce my novel. This break down allowed me to focus my effort on understanding the purpose of the exegesis within the context of a research higher degree. In particular, it allowed me to work towards not only the specific requirements of my University but also the broader “expectations of the academy” (Arnold, 2005, p. 37).

(Figure 1: The Exegesis Work Cycle)

The process adopted to achieve these goals, outlined in Figure 1: The Exegesis Work Cycle, above, entailed the sequential stages of plan, research, write, review and synthesise with the original creative work. The result is an original creative work, which can be easily identified as a detective novel, and a theoretically informed critical reflection that makes a contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the crime fiction genre. Together, these two elements form a thesis which Jeri Kroll would describe as a “hybrid creature with a claw firmly embedded in two bodies - the arts and academia” (2004).

THE INSPIRATION FOR THE ORIGINAL CREATIVE WORK

Extraordinary Events

> Mr [William Somerset] Maugham goes on, at least half seriously, to predict the day when the police novel will be studied in the colleges, when aspirants for doctoral degrees will shuttle the oceans and haunt the world's great libraries to conduct personal research expeditions into the lives and sources of the masters of the art.
>
> Howard Haycraft
>
> *Murder for Pleasure:*
>
> *the life and times of the detective story*
>
> 1941/1974, p. viii

The original creative work, *Blood on their Hands*, takes place in Sydney, Australia over a five-week period, from early April to mid-May, in 1932. Despite the triumph of the recent opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the city is gripped by economic crisis and political turmoil. Crime, evictions, fascism, scandal and unemployment all jostle for headlines within *The Bulletin*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and other newspapers of the day.

Against this background Charles (Charlie) Jones has been forced, like many other Australians during the Great Depression, to travel in order to find work. In Charlie's absence his sister Edwina (Eddie) Jones and her unlikely companion Lady Catharine Darling decide to secretly run his private investigator agency.

The two women accept their first case and, despite the apparent simplicity of the task, start planning their approach to the investigation of thefts from the poor box of a local church with enthusiasm. Eddie's and Catharine's sense of excitement very quickly dissolves into a sense of fear. The case is complicated by a dead body, a series of obscure clues and the uncovering of a fascist plot to kidnap Premier Jack Lang: a plot that could result in either the dismissal of the New South Wales (NSW) Government or the start of a civil war. The dangerous race to try and save the life of the man known as the 'Big Fella' has begun.

The inspiration for this original creative work is a combination of fact and fiction. The facts of the extraordinary events that took place in NSW in the early months of 1932 and the fiction produced by some of the more prominent crime fiction writers of the 19th and 20th centuries. These two sources of inspiration are discussed below.

At 5.00pm on Friday, 13 May 1932 the Governor of NSW, His Excellency Sir Philip Game dismissed the Premier of NSW, The Honourable Jack Lang (Cain, 2005, p. 310). The factors contributing to the crisis, which resulted in the sacking of the Government of NSW, are part of a complex chain of events that began four decades prior to Lang's election as Premier on 4 November 1930[1] (Hogan, 2006, p. 179).

At the Constitutional Conventions that took place in the lead up to Federation in 1901, the Colonies agreed to submit their lucrative customs and excise revenues to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth would administer these monies, returning 75% to the States and retaining 25% for its own operations. This ratio was short lived and by 1913 the States were receiving less than 40%

[1] John Thomas (Jack) Lang served two, non-consecutive, terms as Premier of NSW: 17 June 1925-18 October 1927 and 4 November 1930-13 May 1932 (Hogan, 2006, p. 179).

of all tariff revenue submitted to the Commonwealth (Cain, 2005, pp. 5, 14). The change in revenue allocation resulted in an increase in financial pressure upon the States to deliver services and to repay debts. The capacity to service debts was a concern for all State Treasuries. These debts, which had become a heavy burden, especially for the smaller States, had been incurred by the Colonial Governments to build essential infrastructure to support a growing population such as "railways, post offices, water reticulation and telephone systems" (Cain, 2005, p. 4). Borrowings continued into the new century and while NSW was prospering in the early 1900s, this situation altered dramatically with the outbreak of war in 1914.

World War I brought about suffering on an unprecedented scale and it produced phenomenal levels of debt. When hostilities ceased in 1918 Australia owed £90 million (approximately $6.3 billion in 2010 terms[2]), monies that had been borrowed to cover the expenses of "billeting, feeding, equipping and transporting the young Australians sent to the killing fields of Gallipoli and France" (Stone, 2005, p. 17). When the Wall Street Stock Market crashed, just over a decade later in October 1929, repaying the capital in addition to making interest payments started to cripple the country. Unemployment rates in Australia reached 30% (Macintyre, 1986/2001, p. 253), as an Australian worker lost their job every two minutes, and over 10% of the population - almost 708,000 thousand people - were registered food dole recipients (Stone, 2005, pp. 212, 375).

In 1930 Otto Niemeyer, a Director of the Bank of England, arrived in Australia to provide economic advice which resulted in the Melbourne Agreement, a plan which was based on cuts to spending on "wages, salaries, pensions and social

[2] Australia moved from the Australian Pound to the Australian Dollar in 1966. The conversions of 1932 prices into 2010 terms are based on conversions made in Gerald Stone's *1932: a hell of a year* (2005).

services by 20%" (Clark in Cathcart, 1993, p. 592) to "see to it that Australia met its overseas interest payments on due date, without regard to the suffering and misery it would cause" (Lang, 1970, p. 89). Claiming full interest payments from Australia, £13 million ($910 million) annually just from NSW (Cain, 2005, p. 276), would generate unbearable hardship for those Australians already having difficulty surviving the effects of the Great Depression. Yet Britain would not negotiate on the issue of loan repayments, despite having negotiated a deal[3] to fund her debts to the United States which included: a suspension of interest payments for three years; a reduction in the interest rate from 5% to 3%; and the distribution of required payments over a period of 62 years (Lang, 1962, p. 358).

The young country, still testing the boundaries of Federation, was polarised. On one side of the debate were those loyal to their new nation and who felt that the loss of so many lives during the Great War was sufficient payment to Britain and that "a moratorium of foreign debts, together with reductions in interest rates and a currency devaluation" was a reasonable request (Hogan, 2006, pp. 192-193). There were also those who felt their loyalty belonged to the King rather than the recently formed Commonwealth of Australia and they lobbied passionately for all debts to be paid, with a young Robert Menzies declaring in 1931 that: "Rather than that Australia should fail to pay her honest debts to her bondholders, I would prefer to see every man, woman and child in Australia die of starvation in the next six months" (Menzies in Gibson, 1931/1983, p. 21).

As the NSW Government continued to try and salvage its economy, the Commonwealth Government, led by Prime Minister Joseph Lyons, was working to compel the States to meet the obligations of the Melbourne Agreement and

[3] Belgium, Italy and France all negotiated deals, similar to Britain's, to service their own debts (Lang, 1962, p. 358).

introduced *The Financial Agreements Enforcement Act 1932*. This legislation imposed "in effect, a garnishee order on [NSW] bank balances and when completed would leave the State Treasury completely destitute of money" (Lang, 1970, p. 186). Jack Lang's response was unprecedented. NSW Treasury officials withdrew £750,000 ($52.5 million) from the Bank of New South Wales and a further £400,000 ($28 million) from the Commercial Bank (Stone, 2005, p. 180). This move prevented the Commonwealth from taking control of NSW cash holdings and handing these monies over to Britain but it exacerbated an already desperate situation and the "sudden transition to a cash economy tested bureaucratic ingenuity to its limits" (Stone, 2005, p. 200).

These were only two of the shots fired in the war between Lyons and Lang. The New Guard, a prominent, ultra-conservative paramilitary organisation of the day, believed Lang's open defiance of Lyons and the Crown was part of a broader strategy to "foist socialisation on the people" (Campbell, 1965, p. 72) and, as the organisation boasted nearly 100,000 members (Stone, 2005, p. 107), the New Guard outnumbered the NSW Police by 60 to one and were prepared to "politely detain [the police] in their own lockups" had they "been so unwise as to be unpleasant" and offered any resistance to the New Guard's activities (Campbell, 1965, p. 73).

In public the New Guard's activities included large-scale rallies, military drills in rural and urban parks as well as attempts to violently silence those sympathetic to the State Government (Moore, 2005b, pp. 58, 62-69). The New Guard regularly challenged the Premier's authority, their most famous effort being when Captain Francis de Groot stopped Lang from opening the Sydney Harbour Bridge: de Groot charged forward, on a borrowed horse, and slashed the ceremonial ribbon with his sword to open the Bridge "in the name of the decent

citizens of New South Wales" (Wright, 2006, p. 91). In private, the New Guard plotted to kidnap the Premier and his Cabinet, and hold them in the old Berrima Gaol until a new State Government was formed (Lang, 1970, pp. 177-181).

This crisis, and the atmosphere it created, generate an ideal setting for a piece of crime fiction that examines how characters in fictional worlds reflect on the social worlds within which they are produced and enact some of the major anxieties of those social worlds. The writing of an historical piece also presents itself as of contemporary relevance because the inter-War period in Sydney was particularly turbulent due to the Great Depression, an economic threat not entirely removed from the current world situation. This approach capitalises on one of the most important ideas of historical fiction that, though set in the past, such fiction "emphasises themes that pertain back to the present" (Johnson, 2002).

Integrating a fictional story into a factual account also provided opportunities to explore how we "approached so closely to bloodshed and revolution" (Nock in Moore, 1989, p. 164). The original creative work also highlights the dismissal of Premier Jack Lang in May 1932, an event that has been overshadowed by the dismissal of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in November 1973. These constitutional crises are set firmly in Australia's past but such dismissals are also a present threat. In 2010 the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, admitted to seeking advice from the Solicitor-General on enacting special reserve powers to dissolve the Government of the day. This advice was sought in response to widespread criticisms of the Premier and Cabinet of NSW and the numerous public calls for the Government to be sacked throughout 2009 (Hall & Robins, 2010), similar to the public demands to dismiss the Lang Government in 1932.

The perfect vehicle for creatively engaging with these extraordinary events was a crime novel, a type of fiction that I have been reading for many years.

> For me, as for many others, the reading of detective fiction is an addiction like tobacco or alcohol.
>
> W.H. Auden
>
> *Harper's Magazine*
>
> May 1948, p. 406

The summer before I started high school I saw the film version of *The Big Sleep* (1946) starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall and directed by Howard Hawks. A few days after I had seen the film I started reading the Raymond Chandler (1888-1959) novel of the same title, featuring his famous detective Philip Marlowe, and was transfixed by the second paragraph:

> The main hallway of the Sternwood place was two stories high. Over the entrance doors, which would have let in a troop of Indian elephants, there was a broad stained-glass panel showing a knight in dark armour rescuing a lady who was tied to a tree and didn't have any clothes on but some very long and convenient hair. The knight had pushed the visor of his helmet back to be sociable, and he was fiddling with the knots on the ropes that tied the lady to the tree and not getting anywhere. I stood there and thought that if I lived in the house, I would sooner or later have to climb up there and help him. He didn't seem to be really trying (Chandler, 1939/1970, p. 9).

John Scaggs argues that this passage indicates the main protagonist, Philip Marlowe, is an idealised figure, a knight of romance relocated onto the mean streets of mid-20th century Los Angeles (2005, p. 62). A relocation Susan Roland refers to as the "secular form of the divinely sanctioned knight errant on a quest for metaphysical justice" (2001, p. 139).

Like many young people I looked for adventure and escape in books, a search realised with Raymond Chandler and his contemporaries Carroll John Daly (1889-1958), Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961) and James M. Cain (1892-1977). On the escapism scale these men with their stories of tough talking detectives taking on murderers and other criminals, law enforcement officers and the occasional femme fatale, were a sharp upgrade from C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) and the *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950). The slick film adaptations of these hardboiled and noir novels certainly dominated my dreams far longer than the 1979 animated production of Lewis' classic children's books.

I also sought refuge in the works of Thorne Smith (1892-1934), an American writer of the 1920s and 1930s[4], who brought together a unique combination of comedy, crime, fantasy, magical realism and pathos. Smith only wrote one traditional crime novel, *Did She Fall?* (1930), but many of his characters in his other works were very comfortable dabbling on the wrong side of the law. These usually solid, middle-class, if slightly eccentric citizens navigate impossible situations, love, lust and the occasional dog. Smith also had a gift for description and taking something as ordinary as a woman's ear and transforming it into a critical element of a story, as the following passage from *The Stray Lamb* (1929) clearly demonstrates:

[4] Thorne Smith also has one publishing credit listed in the 1940s. Thorne Smith's last novel, *The Passionate Witch* (1941), was published posthumously and is largely the work of the writer Norman H. Matson (1893–1965).

> An unqualified fact. The object at which Mr Lamb was gazing with such rapt attention was nothing more nor less than an ear. A small pink ear. A perky shred of an ear. And this ear in turn was ornamenting a small sleek head. Exceedingly black hair, closely trimmed - a severe yet successful bob, becoming only to about one woman in a thousand (Smith, 1929, p. 7).

After reading the works written by the pioneers of the hardboiled and roman noir traditions, and the more comedic works of Thorne Smith, I looked to other American authors such as Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) who, in the mid-1800s, became the father of the modern detective story. Ellery Queen, the pseudonym of Frederic Dannay (1905-1982) and his cousin Manfred B. Lee (1905-1971) (Symons, 1992/1993, p. 127) also provided entertainment with numerous crime fiction novels and short story collections as well as education with critical essays on the genre and dozens of crime fiction anthologies.

This led me to read the works, and watch the vast array of film adaptations, of British crime writers including Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) who introduced one of the world's most famous fictional detectives, Sherlock Holmes, in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). I also started to systematically make my way through the works of Agatha Christie (1890-1976) and Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957) who began their crime fiction writing careers in the years between the two World Wars and who went on to become important contributors to the genre.

Such an introduction to crime fiction is not an unusual one. The American and British authors identified above have penned some of the most famous stories, in what are now considered classic settings, to fall within the genre. In addition,

these writers have created some of the most iconic characters to grace a page and subsequently appear on both large and small screens: a rich combination of amateur and professional sleuths with their witty dialogue, sharp one-liners and vast array of idiosyncrasies. More recently I discovered the great diversity of Australian authors who have filled numerous shelves with very inventive, and often very humorous, examples of crime fiction. From the works, produced in the 1800s and the early years of Federation, by Guy Boothby (1867-1905) and Fergus Hume (1859-1932) to the more sophisticated stories, which began to appear in the middle of the 20th century by writers such as Pat Flower (1914-1977) and Jon Cleary (1917-2010).

In between reading about murderers, blackmailers and thieves, and the men and women who bring such criminals to account, I have also studied works that would be generally described as classic texts or serious literature. Writers as diverse as Herman Melville (1819-1891), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), Miles Franklin (1879-1954), George Orwell (1903-1950) and Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) have all had a profound impact on how I see and understand the world around me. The works of these men and women have provided perfect combinations of beauty and brilliance. Their narratives, however, do not often result in happy endings.

The novels and short stories of these men and women have routinely frustrated me because, while I understand the philosophical frameworks that these writers were operating within, I believe that the characters are too often treated unfairly in the final pages. For example, at the end of *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) Frederick Henry “left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain” after his son is stillborn and “Mrs Henry” becomes “very ill” and dies (Hemingway, 1929/2004, pp. 292-293). Another example appears on the last

page of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) when Winston Smith “gazed up at the enormous face” and he realised that he “loved Big Brother” (Orwell, 1949/1989, p. 311).

The subject matter of crime fiction does not easily facilitate a fairytale finish. I continue to read these novels, however, for the reassurance that the concluding chapter will show that justice, be it legal, natural or social, has usually been done and because I know from “previous experience and from certain cultural conventions associated with this genre that ultimately the mystery will be fully explained” (Zunshine, 2006, p. 122). As a reader of crime fiction, I can also take comfort in the knowledge that in the majority of works within the genre, punishment is only meted out to the ‘bad characters’ that have broken society’s moral or legal laws. The ‘good characters’ may experience hardships and may suffer but they generally prevail and their adventures continue either in my imagination or, dependent upon sales figures, in another novel.

My original creative work, *Blood on their Hands*, merges fact and fiction. It has been written to imaginatively recreate the events in Sydney in early 1932 and has also been written in response to some of the crime fiction writers discussed briefly above, and their works, which have had such a significant influence upon what I enjoy reading and enjoy writing. The decision to write a novel as part of a research higher degree process was made to allow me to contribute to the crime fiction genre academically and artistically.

An Overview of Crime Fiction from Antiquity to Modern Times

> EXTRAORDINARY MURDERS - This morning, about three o'clock, the inhabitants of the Quartier St. Roch were roused from sleep by a succession of terrific shrieks, issuing, apparently, from the fourth story of a house in the Rue Morgue.
>
> Edgar Allan Poe
>
> *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*
>
> 1841/1975, p. 147

Crime fiction is often considered to be a relatively recent literary development, an idea reflected in the way in which many critical texts track the genre from the 1700s to the modern day. This is a logical approach as it was during the 18th century that crime fiction first started to gain widespread popularity. This popularity increased dramatically in the 19th century due, in part, to "an unprecedented growth in literacy and an explosion in print" (Fenstermaker, 1994, p. 9). The genre continues to be very popular today with nearly one in every three new books published in English falling within the crime fiction category (Knight, 2010, p. xi). Crime fiction has, however, been with us since antiquity.

Some of the earliest crime stories can be found in the Old Testament: Cain is

condemned for murdering his brother Abel (Genesis, 4: 5-11); and Daniel set up one of the earliest recorded sting operations when he sprinkled ashes on the Temple floor, before it was sealed, to prove that priests were taking the people's food offerings and not the statue of the Dragon Bel (Daniel, 14: 11-21). Another example of early crime fiction is *Oedipus the King*, a play that was first performed around 430BC, which "draws together all the central characteristics and formal elements of a detective story, including a mystery surrounding a murder, a closed circle of suspects, and the gradual uncovering of a hidden past" (Scaggs, 2005, pp. 9-11). These early tales were designed to help establish a common ethical framework for how we should live with one another and to inform us that there are consequences when the rules of that framework are broken. Such teachings are still evident in many contemporary crime stories but the genre has grown to become much more than a moral light over the last few thousand years.

The most significant changes in the crime fiction genre began with the work of the American author Edgar Allan Poe in the mid-1800s. Born in Boston in 1809, Poe had a very controversial personal life: he struggled to manage his finances; he was a failed soldier (Ackroyd, 2008, pp. 27, 43); a heavy gambler; a heavier drinker; he married his 13-year-old first cousin, Virginia Clemm, in 1835; and he died in mysterious circumstances in Baltimore in 1849 (Quinn, 1941/1998, pp. 109, 303, 220, 641). Poe was, however, also a gifted cryptographer (Rosenheim, 1989, p. 375) and an outstanding writer. He produced many newspaper articles and pieces of literary criticism and wrote beautiful poetry, elegant essays and he completely reworked crime fiction thus creating a new framework for the genre, which all crime fiction writers since have enthusiastically embraced. Poe's contributions to crime fiction were so important that in her essay for *The Omnibus of Crime* Dorothy L. Sayers wrote

that: “Poe produced five tales[5], in which the general principles of the detective-story were laid down for ever” (1928/1947, p. 72).

Crime fiction has generated a rich collection of very different examples of short stories, novels and plays. Such a vast array of material has created one of the more significant challenges in researching crime fiction. This is the difficulty of definition, highlighted by Charles J. Rzepka who has written that: “detective fiction may seem like a tidy and well-defined topic, but it offers difficult problems of generic designation and narrative analysis” (2005, p. 1). The endeavours to overcome this challenge are clearly visible in the wide variety of definitions attempting to confine the genre into a single, neat category.

There are many arguments against splitting crime fiction into distinct categories, including a strong warning about placing a “straitjacket” on the genre (Scaggs, 2005, p. 2). Despite my understanding of these arguments, a personal belief that compartmentalising the outcomes of a creative activity is counter-intuitive, and a reluctance to be drawn into some of the broader debates surrounding ideas of genre, one of the first products of my research for this thesis was the construction of a chart to overcome some of the difficulties of defining crime fiction. I felt that such a chart would assist in resolving some of the confusion of so many crime fiction terms, quite a few of which are applied inconsistently, and that this work to help clarify crime fiction would also assist in providing parameters for, and assist in guiding the structure of, my novel.

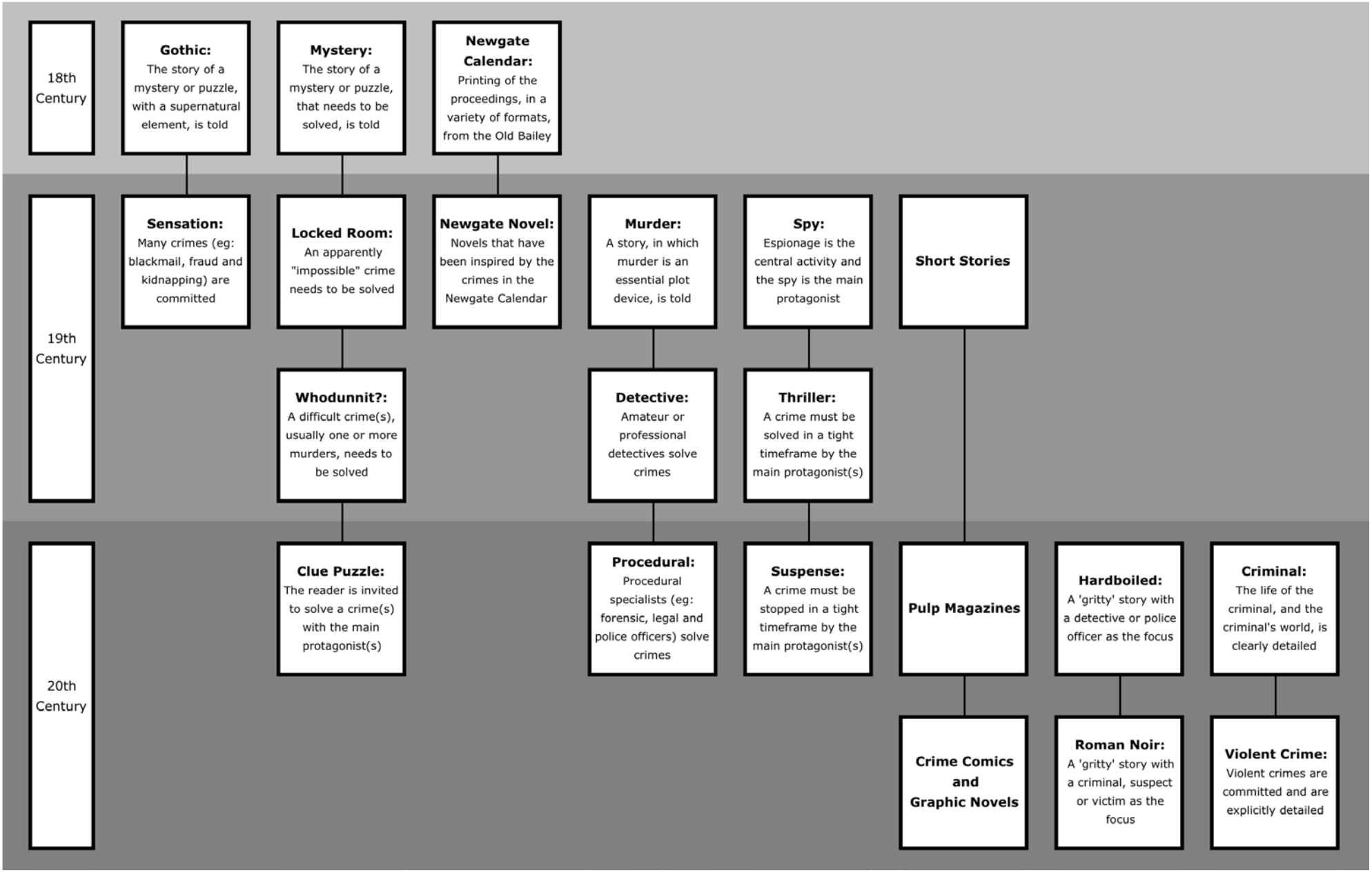
In addition, I believed that it was important to create common understanding

[5] The five tales, written by Edgar Allan Poe and identified by Dorothy L. Sayers as laying the foundation for all modern detective stories, are: *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841); *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt* (1842); *The Gold Bug* (1843); *The Purloined Letter* (1844); and *Thou Art the Man* (1844).

because there is no escape from the fact that the vast majority of authors and critics who have talked about, or written about, crime fiction have utilised crime fiction terminology and have identified different sub-genres. Certainly the genre itself is partial to applying labels with many novels featuring covers that claim: ‘the new thriller’; ‘the latest detective story’; and ‘a great mystery’ among other boasts.

The result of my work to unpack crime fiction is Figure 2: Taxonomy of Crime Fiction, below, which is essentially a consolidation of commonly used crime fiction terminology and a reduction of long and complex definitions into short and straightforward descriptions. This chart utilises three horizontal bands to highlight the three key eras of the genre’s development: the 18th; 19th; and 20th centuries. The chart also deploys a series of 18 boxes, each of which looks at one of the many sub-genres of crime fiction.

Some crime fiction texts will slot neatly into one of the boxes on display but there will always be instances where the lines are blurred. For example, a police procedural may be written in the hardboiled style, a forensic procedural may be considered violent crime while the original creative work for this thesis could be easily allocated to two boxes and be considered a detective novel and a suspense novel. Some of the sub-genres identified could be split further with the thriller being classified more specifically as a legal thriller, political thriller, religious thriller or any one of the other popular types of thriller. The detective novel can also be split further to accommodate the distinctions between amateur and professional detectives. Classification can be further complicated by overlaps that occur between genres that can be seen in the numerous plots and settings that have identified many crime novels as either romances or Westerns.



(Figure 2: Taxonomy of Crime Fiction)

The paragraphs below provide a brief account of each of crime fiction's main sub-genres and also outline how my own crime novel can be located within this very large, and very diverse, area of fiction.

Gothic Fiction and the Mystery

In the 18th century the mystery story increased in popularity alongside gothic fiction, which is sometimes referred to as horror or paranormal fiction. These early tales, of which Horace Walpole's (1717-1797) gothic *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and William Godwin's (1756-1836) celebrated mystery *Caleb Williams* (1794) are the first known true examples of these two sub-genres, are very different from modern crime novels. They do, however, provide some insights into how crime fiction has grown into the genre it is today as they provide early sketches of characters and stories which would become outlines for later writers to flesh out into the complex personalities and plots that became common in the 20th century.

The Newgate Calendar and the Newgate Novel

The *Newgate Calendar*, or *The Malefactors' Bloody Register*, was a publication that emerged in the mid-18th century and provided accounts of the crimes and the trials of celebrated criminals of the day (Pykett, 2003/2006, p. 20). The *Calendar* was "sold in unprecedented numbers" (Grovier, 2008, p. xvi) demonstrating that a fascination with crime is not a recent phenomenon. As well as buying the *Calendar*, people paid entry fees to watch trials (Emsley, et al, 2010) and enormous crowds of up to 100,000 gathered on hanging days (Gatrell, 1996, p. 57). Some of those who attended executions would purchase an expensive seat from one of the "pew operators" who made a living out of "the carnival atmosphere created by hangings" (Grovier, 2008, p. xvi). In a world before cinema, television and the Internet people sought out the stories of criminals, and their executions, as entertainment with Sarah Redmond noting

“the similarity between the scaffold and the theatre” (2007, p. 8).

Out of the *Newgate Calendar* came the Newgate novel, the authors of which took their leading characters and plot lines from the *Calendar*. This sub-genre remains popular today, as shown by the ever increasing market for books detailing actual crimes, described by Jean Murley as a “juggernaut in publishing” (2008, p. 44) which: entertains; informs; and serves as a “scale model of modern society” (Seltzer, 2008, p. 11). The Newgate novel has a long and rich history but the true crime text is a comparatively recent phenomenon with the first significant example of a true crime work being Truman Capote’s (1924-1984) *In Cold Blood* (1965). This sub-genre reveals a public interest in historical murderers and contemporary killers with dozens of volumes available about men as diverse as Jack the Ripper, who terrorised Victorian London, and Ted Bundy, the man who has become “the poster boy for serial murder” (Rule, 1980/2000, p. 541).

Sensation Fiction

Sensation fiction was first seen in the 19th century and is rarely found in book form today, although it is frequently seen in modern media such as the daytime television serial. This sub-genre, which has an important place in crime fiction’s history, first gained prominence with works from British authors including: *The Woman in White* (1859) by Wilkie Collins (1824-1889); *East Lynne* (1861) by Ellen Wood (1814-1887); and *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) by Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1837-1915). Sensation novels, with their complicated plot lines of “bigamy, adultery, seduction, fraud, forgery, blackmail, kidnapping and, sometimes, murder” (Pykett, 2003/2006, p. 33) were very popular, especially with women (Wynne, 2001, p. 5). This sub-genre is particularly useful in understanding the importance of crime fiction because it demonstrates how the genre as a whole has the capacity to tap into the social fears of the day. Today,

violent death, the key incident in many modern crime novels, generates great fear in our society. For the first readers of sensation novels it was fraud and forgery, and those crimes threatening personal reputations and the class system, which generated “cultural anxieties” (Pykett, 2003/2006, p. 19).

The Locked Room and the ‘Whodunnit?’

The sub-genre known as the locked room deals with those crimes which are apparently impossible to solve, such as Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841). In contrast the ‘whodunnit?’ focuses on those crimes that are very difficult to solve, such as Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone* (1868). The word ‘whodunnit?’ is a term sometimes used to describe all forms of crime fiction and is often used to describe a clue puzzle. Yet there is a clear distinction between the two terms resulting in two different sub-genres. A ‘whodunnit?’ is a story where the crime is designed to be solved by the central protagonist, leaving the reader impressed with the crime solver’s outstanding deductive abilities. In contrast a clue puzzle, discussed in more detail below, is set up as a form of competition between the lead character and the consumer of crime fiction, as the crime in the story is designed to be solved by both the central protagonist and the reader.

Murder Stories

Murder stories, as the sub-genre name suggests, tell stories where murders take place but the efforts of a clearly identified amateur or professional detective, police officer or forensic officer are notably absent. While these tales do not focus on solving a crime, it is a crime - usually murder, which is critical to the text. For example, in Charles Dickens’ (1812-1870) work *Great Expectations*, which was first published in book form in 1861, the maidservant Molly is forced to face trial for murder and so gives up her daughter Estella. Miss Havisham takes on the young Estella, which is an important part of the

plot because this relocation, and the subsequent way in which the child is raised, constructs Estella's interactions with Pip, the novel's central protagonist. Although the story of the murder does not dominate the text, without the committing of this crime *Great Expectations* would lack some of the complexities generated by this type of criminal act.

Detective Stories

Detective stories provide the timeless format, familiar to many readers today, which follow the exploits of amateur and professional detectives: from cerebral sleuths who can solve a crime in their living room over a cup of tea to weapon wielding heroes who track down villains on foot in darkened alleyways. The detective story also crosses over into other sub-genres. For example, Agatha Christie's collection of Miss Marple stories are also clue puzzles and Dashiell Hammett's stories about an Operative for the Continental Detective Agency are also hardboiled. The original creative work for this thesis can be located in the sub-genre of the detective story because both protagonists, Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling, take on the role of amateur detective to solve the murder of Robert Snook.

Spy Stories

Authors from America and Britain have also worked to create a very popular sub-genre of crime fiction: the spy story (Seed, 2003/2006, pp. 115-131). The first true spy novel titled, not very imaginatively, *The Spy* was written by American author James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) in 1821. The spy sub-genre, which explores various nations' "international standing, cultural values, governmental system, and so on" (Seed, 2003/2006, p. 131), reached maturity with the efforts of Britain's Ian Fleming (1908-1964) and the creation of James Bond, "Her Majesty's most ruthless and suave secret agent" (Bond & Sheedy, 2007, p. 74), who made his fictional debut in *Casino Royale* in 1953.

The Thriller and the Suspense

Another sub-genre is the thriller where a crime must be solved in a tight timeframe. These stories aim to "carry the reader along by using pace and surprise to outweigh any inherent improbabilities of plot" (Glover, 2003/2006, p. 137). The term thriller can be split into a wide variety of forms including: action; conspiracy; science fiction; legal; military; paranormal; political; psychological; and religious. The suspense story is very similar to the thriller in that a crime must be prevented in a tight timeframe such as John Buchan's (1875-1940) *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) in which the hero, Richard Hannay, must prevent important military secrets from being taken out of England by German spies. The original creative work for this thesis is a detective story but it can also be identified as a suspense story as Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling work to prevent the kidnapping of Jack Lang.

The Clue Puzzle

The clue puzzle, often referred to as cozy crime fiction or traditional crime fiction, is synonymous with the crime fiction that was produced between World War I and World War II. This period is often considered to be the genre's Golden Age. This era was one in which murder became the central crime, displacing offences such as fraud and forgery, and detection moved from an intuitional approach to a rational one (Knight, 2003/2006, pp. 77-78). This era also witnessed the "rapid displacement of the short story as the primary venue of detection in favour of the short, one-volume novel" (Rzepka, 2005, p. 154).

With over two billion books in print, Agatha Christie is one of the greatest champions of the clue puzzle, although her puzzles are notoriously difficult to solve and her focus on who, how and why is presented in a way which "permits no emotional engagement with the characters" (Symons, 1992/1993, p. 102). Christie's first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, was originally published in

1921 and the woman who would become a “crucial figure” of the genre (Knight, 2003/2006, p. 81) went on to write approximately 70 novels in addition to novellas, short stories and plays. Two of Christie’s compatriots, Dorothy L. Sayers and Margery Allingham (1904-1966), are names also closely identified with the Golden Age with Sayers having introduced her most famous character, Lord Peter Wimsey, in *Whose Body?* (1923) and Allingham first presenting her popular protagonist Albert Campion in *The Crime at Black Dudley* (1929). Closer to Australia, Ngaio Marsh (1895-1982) of New Zealand, who began her writing career in the 1930s with *A Man Lay Dead* (1934) and continued writing until the 1980s, also made significant contributions to the clue puzzle.

The Procedural

Like the thriller, there are numerous forms for the crime fiction procedural, a type of story where procedural specialists including forensic scientists, legal practitioners and police officers solve crimes. The forensic procedural became popular during the late 20th century and focuses on scientific specialists solving crimes, such as: Patricia Cornwell’s (1956-) Dr Kay Scarpetta who first appeared in 1990 in *Post-mortem*; or Kathy Reichs’ (1950-) series, which started in 1997 with *Déjà Dead*, featuring Dr Temperance (Tempe) Brennan.

Legal procedurals, also known as courtroom dramas, focus on the efforts of legal practitioners with John Grisham (1955-) delivering some of the more famous examples of this sub-genre since his first novel *A Time to Kill* (1989).

The police procedural focuses on police officers solving crimes. Some of the more notable examples include the novels by P.D. James (1920-) that document the career of Commander Adam Dalgliesh, the policeman and poet, who first appeared in *Cover Her Face* (1962). Another, very successful, police procedural series came from the pen of Ed McBain, pseudonym of Evan Hunter

(1926-2005), who wrote works which, between 1956 and 2005, followed the cases of the police officers from the 87th Precinct in New York City.

Hardboiled

As British authors defined and refined many crime fiction sub-genres, across the Atlantic two of the most significant developments in America were the emergence of the hardboiled and the roman noir. These sub-genres are so similar they are very often confused. Both feature powerful language, with a vernacular style of narrative (Moody, 2003/2006, p. 233) and traditionally include greed, murder, tough men and beautiful women. Hardboiled focuses on the detective or the police officer. This style of detective made a point of "denigrating the formal puzzle element, along with the shallow characterisations and implausible conjunctions of events that it seemed to demand" (Rzepka, 2005, pp. 179-180). Charles J. Rzepka has written that these operatives, such as Carroll John Daly's Race Williams and Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlow, work in a "world polluted by self-interest and full of challenges and snares, in which no one is to be trusted and all must be tested" (p. 180).

Roman Noir

Roman noir focuses on the criminal, suspect or victim such as insurance salesman Walter Huff, who manages to be all three in James M. Cain's *Double Indemnity* which first appeared, in serial form, in 1936. The hardboiled and roman noir sub-genres are interesting because, unlike suspense stories that complement thriller stories, hardboiled and roman noir have inspired works in *reaction* to this style of writing rather than in *sympathy* with it. For example, the hardboiled and roman noir sub-genres, with their focus on white masculinity, have helped to inspire feminist crime fiction, such as Marele Day's (1947-) Claudia Valentine detective series that began with *The Life and Crimes*

of Harry Lavender (1988), in addition to lesbian crime fiction such as Claire McNab's (1940-) Carol Ashton police procedural series that started with *Lessons in Murder* (1988).

Criminal Stories and Violent Crime

Works within the criminal sub-genre are presented from the criminal's point of view such as Mario Puzo's (1920-1999) *The Godfather* (1969). The sub-genre of violent crime explicitly details how crimes are committed. Examples include the works of James Ellroy (1948-) who writes with a "preoccupation with serial murder and sexual mutilation" (Glover, 2003/2006, p. 148) and Thomas Harris (1940-) who "unleashed Dr Hannibal Lecter upon an unsuspecting public" (Glover, 2003/2006, p. 135) in *Red Dragon* (1981).

The taxonomy above provides an overview of crime fiction, those texts that demonstrate the occurrence, or at least suspicion, of a crime (Cole, 2004, p. 11) and which feature an agent of detection or sleuth (Beasley, 2009, p. 274). This classification system, a synthesis of my research into crime fiction's sub-genres, is not meant to constrict the genre or the people reading it. It is designed to acknowledge different types of crime fiction and to provide a useful visual aid for understanding the largest genre fiction has to offer. Some novels can be easily, and exclusively, identified with a particular sub-genre but the shades of grey of the chart were deliberately selected to represent the capacity for a single story to be slotted into more than one category. When I first started work on this project I found it incredibly frustrating that I could not create a black and white world and force all of the short stories and all of the novels within crime fiction into clearly defined categories. Now that I have had time to reflect on the process of drawing up this chart, I think it is quite fitting that the genre itself should be crime fiction's greatest unsolved case.

> By the critic and the professedly literary person the detective story is apt to be dismissed contemptuously as outside the pale of literature, to be conceived of as a type of work produced by half-educated and wholly incompetent writers for consumption by office boys, factory girls, and other persons devoid of culture and literary taste.
>
> R. Austin Freeman
>
> "The Art of the Detective Story"
>
> *The Art of the Mystery Story*
>
> 1924/1947, p. 7

A contemporary of R. Austin Freeman, Edmund Wilson, wrote: "reading detective stories is simply a kind of vice that, for silliness and minor harmfulness, ranks somewhere between crossword puzzles and smoking" (1944/1947, p. 395). The words of Freeman and Wilson, put down on paper in the early 20th century, are as relevant now as they were when they were first written. At the beginning of the 21st century Cathy Cole observed: "crime novels are housed in their own section in many bookshops, separated from literary novels much as you'd keep a child with measles away from the rest of the class" (2004, p. 116). More recently the awarding of Australia's most prestigious prize for literature, The Miles Franklin Award, to Peter Temple (1946-) for his crime novel *Truth* (2009) sparked a cutting comment from John Sutherland. The former chairman of the judges for the Commonwealth of Nation's most famous, as well as richest, literary award, suggested submitting a crime novel for the Booker Prize would be: "like putting a donkey into the Grand National" (2010).

These views of crime fiction are foregrounded in my novel when Catharine Darling in conversation with her brother James Longfoot, who in public is an English Lecturer at the University of Sydney while in private is a writer of romantic and sensation novels, says: “Unless, of course, publishing entertaining fiction is part of your plan to make academic study more relevant” (p. 98).

In addition to the literary scholars who have spoken out against popular fiction some of the greatest names within crime fiction have themselves castigated the genre. Arthur Conan Doyle killed Sherlock Holmes in *The Final Problem* in 1894 because he declared, in a letter to his mother, that the character took: “his mind from better things” (Doyle in Lellenberg, et al, 1891/2008, p. 300). Holmes was only revived because of public demand, the fiscal incentive that came with being offered “an unprecedented 100 pounds per thousand words” (Lycett, 2007, p. 282) and a growing irritation with his imitators including Australian writers Guy Boothby and E.W. Hornung (1866-1921) (Lycett, 2007, p. 283). Dorothy L. Sayers, despite her work to legitimise crime fiction, also wrote there: “certainly does seem a possibility that the detective story will some time come to an end, simply because the public will have learnt all the tricks” (1928/1947, p. 108).

These observations document a long-standing divide between highbrow and lowbrow texts and reinforce the view that, until the mid-20th century, “popular fiction was either ignored in academia or treated with contempt, a snobbishness that infected left-wing and right-wing scholars” (Bloom, 2008, p. 13). Crime fiction is still not consistently considered worthy of the same level of attention as serious literature deemed to be of a higher quality but some of the barriers, outlined below, which segregate high and low literature are slowly being dismantled and many crime fiction works now co-exist with what is often regarded as the more serious fiction found on the lists of established literary

canons (Freier, 2004, p. 190). One of the most significant barriers to the academic investigation of crime fiction is the sheer quantity of crime fiction that is produced. As already identified, crime fiction is the largest genre fiction has to offer with a third of all new titles released each year qualifying as crime fiction. In fact, as early as the 1920s, it was felt that:

> It is impossible to keep track of all the detective-stories produced to-day. Book upon book, magazine upon magazine pour out from the Press, crammed with murders, thefts, arsons, frauds, conspiracies, problems, puzzles, mysteries, thrills, maniacs, crooks, poisoners, forgers, garrotters, police, spies, secret-service men, detectives, until it seems that half the world must be engaged in setting riddles for the other half to solve (Sayers, 1928/1947, p. 95).

In addition to the new crime fiction works published each year, there are numerous re-entries into the crime fiction market with some of the genre's most iconic titles, such as works by Arthur Conan Doyle and Dorothy L. Sayers, continuously in print since their first publication (Redmond, 2009, p. 316 and Kenney, 1991, p. 19). All of these factors have combined to send a message that crime fiction is not very valuable because it is so easily available. This has led to one of the major challenges, which contributors to the study of crime fiction now face and that is the sheer volume of the "twentieth century's most successful fictional formula" (Plain, 2008, p. 3).

As crime fiction flooded the publishing market it was "not long before newer novelists (and their backlists) dominated the fiction market to the neglect of classics . . . 'cheap' became a synonym for 'nasty' and 'popular' for 'mass-

produced'" (Bloom, 2008, p. 80). The method of production, for this vast amount of material, is usually dependent upon cheap paper and soft covers: volumes, which are not destined, like quality hard covers or leather clad books, to be handed down to the next generation. This is, however, slowly starting to change and quality limited edition crime fiction volumes are available from the Folio Society while Everyman's Library continues to publish quality hard covers with dust jackets. Some mainstream publishers are also contributing to this trend with Harper Collins recently reprinting, in hard cover, some of Agatha Christie's works that are facsimiles of the first editions and Pan Macmillan recently reprinting, also in hard cover, Matthew Reilly's (1974-) works with matching glossy black dust jackets. It is interesting to note that this is happening against the background of the phenomenon of online publishing.

Many cover designs have also contributed to a poor appraisal of the crime fiction genre. A completely naked woman on the cover of a classic text, such as the beautiful black and white photograph on the 2004 paperback edition of Michael Ondaajte's (1943-) *The English Patient* (1992), is art. An almost naked woman on a crime fiction title, however, is not widely considered as art because sex is so openly utilised to sell crime fiction, and other types of popular fiction, "with erotically suggestive and scantily clad 'dames' on their gaudy covers" (Bloom, 2008, p. 86). Yet, in the last few years, these covers have attracted academic attention in Australia as they are seen to represent an "enduring publishing heritage" (Johnson-Woods, 2004a, p. 16).

Between the covers of crime novels there is the content, which also draws criticism. Indeed, "good specimens of the art are much rarer than good serious novels" (Chandler, 1944/1947, p. 223). Certainly the amount of crime fiction published increases the likelihood of the reading public being presented with works that are not as slick as some of crime fiction's more celebrated titles and

may suffer from writing “that is crude and slovenly” (Symons, 1992/1993, p. 16). The way in which crime fiction is executed is unquestioningly open to criticism but no fault can be found with the basic structure of the crime novel because: “There is one respect, at least, in which the detective-story has an advantage over every other kind of novel. It possesses an Aristotelian perfection of beginning, middle, and end” (Sayers, 1928/1947, p. 101).

One of the more spurious accusations cast at crime fiction by its critics is that murder stories “might provide a real-life murderer with an idea or even a pattern for his crime” (James, 2009, p. 165). This is not a logical argument, however, given that crime fiction “hardly provides a reliable model since the murderer is always found out” (James, 2009, p. 165). Furthermore, “literary fiction allows us to experience social situations vicariously, thus allowing for personal consideration of response and action” (Mar & Oatley, 2008, p. 183). This potentially mitigates thoughts of needing to murder a disagreeable neighbour, a spiteful supervisor or an unfaithful spouse because crime fiction allows us “to experiment in a controlled and safe manner, with intentions, emotions, and emotion-evoking situations that would be impossible and often highly undesirable in the real world” (Mar & Oatley, 2008, p. 183). Essentially, crime fiction provides us with numerous opportunities to experience the planning, and the praxis, of murder: all without the inconvenience of being caught, arrested, tried and then sent to prison.

The most significant barrier to the academic acceptability of crime fiction is the snobbishness that is routinely directed to popular fiction, identified by Clive Bloom (2008, p. 13). This snobbishness is not limited to comments directed at crime fiction but can also be seen within the genre itself as devotees of some sub-genres direct criticism at the devotees of other sub-genres. The most notable feud is between the hardboiled stories of the post-War years and the

clue puzzles of the Golden Age with proponents of the former declaring that the latter produced detective stories which were dominated by snobbery and which featured an overall lack of social concern (Skrebels, 2006, p. 6). Crime fiction writer and critic, P.D. James, notes that while such allegations may be valid, the writers of the Golden Age were producing fiction for a period "in which social divisions were clearly understood and generally accepted since they seemed an immutable part of the natural order" (2009, p. 167). The portrayal of such divisions, however, was not the exclusive domain of crime writers and the literary treatment of the lower classes was not always oppressive. As James correctly points out: "In general, the butler didn't do it" (2009, p. 169).

Such snobbishness is even found within sub-genres. The rivalry between fans of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler can be intense. I made the mistake of mentioning Chandler's name to my tour guide while on a Hammett Walking Tour in San Francisco and was told: "Chandler wasn't tough. Hammett was tough, he led the life, he worked for Pinkerton's. The closest Chandler got to real crime was a night in the slammer for a drink driving charge. Hammett was the first hardboiled man" (D. Herron, personal communication, December 3, 2006). I thought of mentioning that Carroll John Daly was actually the pioneer of the hardboiled tradition but nobody likes a pushy tourist.

The academics who do explore crime fiction are often drawn to the major developments of the genre that have occurred in Britain and America, creating a situation where Australian contributions are not ignored but are often neglected. It is worthwhile to note some of the specifically Australian focused research in the area of crime fiction has taken the form of author biographies. These biographies include works focussing on Mary Fortune (c.1833-c.1910) such as Lucy Sussex's *The Fortunes of Mary Fortune* (1989) and Nicola Bowes' *Criminal Nation: the crime fiction of Mary Helena Fortune* (2008) and

biographies of Arthur Upfield (1890-1964) including Jessica Hawke's *Follow My Dust!: a biography of Arthur Upfield* (1957) and Travis Lindsey's *Arthur William Upfield: a biography* (2005). This, too, is starting to change with creative writing research higher degrees looking at crime fiction more broadly such as Wendy Laing's *Severance Packages: a crime paranormal novel and exegesis* (2004), Caroline Simpson's *Lesbian Detective Fiction: the outsider within* (2008) and Carolyn Beasley's *The Fingerprint Thief: a crime novel and exegesis* (2009).

Some of the more detailed works available which document the different aspects of crime fiction and the genre's international development include Julian Symons' revised edition of *Bloody Murder* (1992), Cathy Cole's *Private Dicks and Feisty Chicks* (2004) and Charles J. Rzepka's *Detective Fiction* (2005). These works reference some examples of Australian texts but do not focus exclusively upon them. The most complete picture of the history of Australian crime fiction remains Stephen Knight's classic work *Continent of Mystery: a thematic history of Australian crime fiction* (1997).

These critical full-length texts are complemented by "thousands of carefully argued, well-researched, elegantly written studies of the crime genre available and awaiting further comment" (Priestman, 2003/2006, p. 1). The writers of many of these efforts to academically engage with crime fiction are yet to be more broadly recognised as serious researchers in the field of crime fiction are still faced with an overall lack of scholarly interest. This lack of interest, which has been highlighted by Stephen Knight, can be seen in the fact that crime fiction does not enjoy the same level of academic activity, such as conferences, which other literary genres regularly enjoy (2004, p. x). Interest in crime fiction is increasing though and there are more and more opportunities to present papers on the genre, which are being facilitated through the conferences

conducted by various popular culture associations. Another area of academic activity, the scholarly peer-reviewed journal, has also failed to generate widespread and long lasting support for this genre. The international journal *Clues: a journal of detection* is published biannually but does not focus exclusively on the crime fiction novel, instead extending its coverage to film and television as well as non-fiction and the Australian journal *Mean Streets: a quarterly journal of crime, mystery and detection* only managed 17 issues between 1990 and 1996.

Laura Marcus suggests that the barriers to crime fiction, discussed briefly above, are being pulled down by the genre itself which, when analysed, works to "secure and to trouble literary borders and boundaries, including the distinction between high and low literature and the divide between modernist and post-modernist fiction" (2003/2006, pp. 245-246). It should also be noted that crime fiction also provides a wealth of material for those studying disciplines other than literature, such as semiotics as highlighted by Roland Barthes when he asked: "Who would not be touched by a text whose declared 'subject' is death?" (1985/1986, p. 86).

Crime fiction also deserves academic investigation because "only the most literal of literary minds would dispute the claim that fictional characters help shape the way we think of ourselves, and hence help us articulate more clearly what it means to be human" (Galgut, 2002, p. 190). Crime fiction focuses on what it means to be human, and how complex humans are, because stories of murders, and the men and women who solve them, comment on what drives some people to take a life and what drives others to avenge that life which is lost.

It is also important to remember that at the centre of every crime novel is a

problem that is solved:

> [N]ot by luck or divine intervention, but by human ingenuity, human intelligence and human courage. It confirms our hope that, despite some evidence to the contrary, we live in a beneficent and moral universe in which problems can be solved by rational means and peace and order restored from communal or personal disruption and chaos (James, 2009, p. 174).

Literature “puts us in touch with human values and dilemmas” (Klages, 2006, p. 10). A crime fiction text may be printed on cheap paper and feature a gaudy cover but the pages within can document and discuss the entire continuum of human activity and emotion. Crime fiction, particularly those texts that deal with murder, more actively than any other type of fiction articulates human values and dilemmas.

I heard the servants talking of a corpse - is he dead?

Henry Savery

Quintus Servinton

1830/1962, p. 249

The first novel published in Australia was *Quintus Servinton* (1830), a crime story by Henry Savery (1791-1842). This elaborately told tale of fraud and misfortune was originally published anonymously in three volumes in Hobart Town before being reprinted, in a single volume that identified the author, in 1832 in London. There are claims within the preface, written by Savery, that the work is a biography, qualified by a disclaimer that reads: "Not by this, however, is it pretended to be said that all the occurrences it details, happened precisely" (Savery, 1830/1962, p. xxxiii). Some critics have overlooked this work (eg: Loder, 1994) while others (eg: Morris Miller, 1958 and Hadgraft, 1962) have given the text serious attention. Savery's efforts, however, remain largely ignored and his novel is often dismissed, with one book reviewer "more attracted by the quality of the paper . . . [than the] story" (Morris Miller, 1958, p. 2). The passage of 150 years saw the publication of Peter Corris' (1942-) first novel, a story of betrayal and murder, *The Dying Trade* (1980). The differences between *Quintus Servinton* and *The Dying Trade* reveal significant shifts in how crime fiction is written, and read, in Australia.

Before *Quintus Servinton* appeared there was a range of crime fiction stories that were produced in Australia in a variety of forms including pamphlets, distributed by small independent publishers, such as Thomas E. Wells' (1782-

1833) text *Michael Howe: the last and worst of the bushrangers of Van Diemen's Land* (1818). The main form for crime fiction in colonial Australia, however, was the short story, the majority of which were about: bushrangers; convicts; entrepreneurs; emancipists; free settlers; miners; squatters; detectives; and police. The many stories written in Australia during the 1800s could be found in the popular journals and newspapers of the day, such as: *The Bulletin*; the *Australian Journal*; *The Australian Town*; *The Australasian*; *The Boomerang*; the *Country Journal*; *The Lone Hand*; and *The Queenslander* (Gelder & Weaver, 2007, p. 1).

The efforts of Australian crime fiction writers, during the pre-Federation period, contributed to the creation of a base that assisted in the phenomenal growth of crime fiction. At the beginning of the 21st century, the crime fiction genre accounted for approximately 8% of all book sales in Australia (Nielson BookScan Australia, 2009).

To cite all of the crime fiction published by Australians here would detract from the focus of this thesis and merely replicate bibliographies (eg: Loder, 1994) and reading lists already available through book clubs and libraries. So, instead of providing a mechanistic identification or a traditional historical account of crime fiction, the depth and diversity of Australian engagements with this genre will be highlighted utilising the Taxonomy of Crime Fiction, developed specifically for this thesis, which is depicted in Figure 2, on page 346 above.

Gothic Fiction and the Mystery

Gothic fiction began in Britain and was further explored as a sub-genre by American writers before being imported into Australia in the mid-1800s. As Ken Gelder and Rachael Weaver point out, the sub-genre "quickly developed a set of distinctive local characteristics" (2007, p. 2) which included tales of violence

directed at the Aboriginal people, and its ghostly consequences, such as Ernest Favenc's (1845-1908) *Doomed* (1899). Another example of an Australian gothic writer is Rosa Campbell Praed (1851-1935) who produced a story of "the one respectable flesh-curdling horror of which Australia can boast" (1891/2007, p. 117): *The Bunyip*. These and many other early Australian writers were perfectly placed to play on the fears of paranormal elements and the fears of a new continent with its hostile, and largely unknown, environments. As the colonies grew, so too did the appetite of the colonists for crime fiction. The demand for crime fiction was met by numerous authors writing mystery stories, many of which were about the law enforcers that would inform the police procedural. Two of the better-known works, from the 19th century, include William Burrows' (1830-n.d.) *The Adventures of a Mounted Trooper in the Australian Constabulary* (1859) and Mary Fortune's stories for *The Detective's Album*, a serial that appeared in the *Australian Journal* from 1868 to 1908.

The Newgate Calendar and the Newgate Novel

The most obvious Australian re-interpretations of *The Newgate Calendar* and the development of the Newgate novel are the bushranger stories. Henry Kingsley's (1830-1876) *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* (1859) is an adventure story featuring bushrangers while Rolf Boldrewood, the pen name of Thomas Alexander Browne (1826-1915), presented a work focusing on the bushranger's activities in *Robbery Under Arms* (1888). The popularity of these titles, neither of which has ever been out of print, and other bushranger tales indicate the "readiness with which the Australian crime novel accepts the viewpoint of the criminal and outlines with sympathy the wrongs committed against him - occasionally her" (Knight, 1997, p. 50). Certainly sufficient sympathy was generated for the famous bushranger Ned Kelly with approximately 4,000 people attending his hanging on 11 November 1880 (Old Melbourne Gaol, n.d.).

In line with a rising international interest in true crime, Australia has produced many accounts of real criminals and their crimes, from Frank Hardy's (1917-1994) *Power Without Glory* (1950) to John Silvester's (n.d.-) and Andrew Rule's (1957-) *Leadbelly: inside Australia's underworld* (2004), that compete for shelf space with their fictional counterparts. Even being related to a criminal is attracting curiosity. Genealogists would once cover up the 'hated stain' of a convict past and, while this is still true for some in the upper-class, there are many in the working and middle classes who are celebrating their criminal heritage and 'convict chic' (Tranter & Donoghue, 2003, p. 555).

Sensation Fiction

The successes experienced by Australia's early crime fiction writers were predominately locally based. This changed with Fergus Hume's novel *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, which was first published in 1886. The story of an illegitimate child, a fear of family scandal and a murder in Melbourne, went on to become an international bestseller with 750,000 copies sold in Fergus Hume's lifetime alone (Caterson, 1999, p. v). Guy Boothby's works which detail the exploits of the occultist, Dr Nikola, also told sensational tales about blackmail, kidnapping and other crimes in a series of five works: *A Bid for Fortune, or Dr Nikola's Vendetta* (1895); *Dr Nikola Returns* (1896); *The Lust of Hate* (1898); *Dr Nikola's Experiment with Three Short Stories* (1899); and *Farewell Nikola* (1901).

The Locked Room and the 'Whodunnit?'

In addition to being Australia's most successful sensation novel, *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886) is also Australia's most famous locked room story, as the murder was committed inside a hansom cab and the assassin had "escaped without leaving a trace behind him" (Hume, 1886/1888, p. 1). After his first success Fergus Hume wrote dozens of 'whodunnits?' including *Madame Midas*

(1888) which highlights Australian mining life during the late 19th century.

Murder Stories

The most famous murder story to be produced in Australia is Marcus Clarke's (1846-1881) *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1874). In this classic novel the central protagonist, the young Rufus Dawes, is convicted for a murder that he did not commit and is subsequently sentenced to transportation. In much the same way that murder is an essential plot device in *Great Expectations* (1861) the murder of Lord Bellasis, in *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1874), facilitates a story that does not, like the majority of crime stories, focus on solving a murder. This work does, however, rely heavily upon the act of murder for its setting and its structure and, in this case, also provides an early example of a piece of crime fiction being used to highlight social and moral issues as much of the text describes the terrible conditions of convict life during the days of Australia as a penal settlement.

Detective Stories

Detective stories in Australia tell tales about amateur detectives like: journalist, turned detective, David Stuart, in Francis Adams' (1862-1893) *The Murder of Madeline Brown* (1887); John Boswell's (n.d.-1974) freelance photographer Chris Kent, who takes on the role of detective in *The Blue Pheasant* (1958) and *Lost Girl* (1959); and Geoff de Fraga's (1913-1978) Peter Cardiman, another journalist, turned detective who solves murders, with the assistance of a former fiancé and his Siamese cat in *Murder at the Cookout* (1968) and *Murder by Wash of Light* (1970). These detective stories also tell tales about a wide range of professional private investigators such as the young Chinese woman, Gaff Lee, created by W.T. Stewart (n.d.-n.d.) who first appeared in *Gaff Lee, Detective No. 1* (1940) and Elizabeth Backhouse's (1917-) Steve Gillman, an American working in Australia, who featured in *The Mists Came Down* (1959).

The original creative work for this thesis will contribute to this body of Australian detective stories in that Eddie Jones, a seamstress, and Catharine Darling, a socialite, become amateur detectives as they work together to solve the murder of Robert Snook. When Eddie's brother, Charlie Jones, becomes involved in the case, and as the investigative skills of Eddie and Catharine begin to improve, professional private investigator elements are added to the novel. This combination of amateur and professional detectives exploits the idea that: "The amateur and the professional detective start at opposite poles when it comes to probing a mystery" (Batchelor, 1936, p. 74). This idea can also be seen in Denzil Batchelor's (1906-1969) *The Test Match Murder* (1936) that sees amateur detectives Owen and Latimer Brownlow and professional detective Inspector Odgers try and find out who killed John Franklyn, a batsman on the English Test Cricket Team, who was murdered in front of a crowd of thousands at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Spy Stories

Like the gothic sub-genre, the spy sub-genre was also imported into Australia from America and Britain but it soon developed a uniquely Australian style and tone. These stories of international intrigue include: Nicholas Rich's (n.d.-) protagonist Adam Hood, who first appeared in *The Blane Document* (1972); and Peter Corris' feature character Ray Crawley, a man who works for the Federal Security Agency "after a stint in the army, via a few unproductive and alcoholic years in journalism" (Corris, 1991, p. 2).

The Thriller and the Suspense

The thriller was established as a popular form of crime fiction in Australia with the publication of, what Stephen Knight refers to as, the squatter thrillers (1997, p. 38) of which Charles Rowcroft's (1798-1856) *Tales of the Colonies, or the adventures of an emigrant* (1843) is one of the first true examples. In the

late 1950s the idea of the Australian thriller would change with Pat Flower's first novel *Wax Flowers for Gloria* in 1958. Flower would go on to write over a dozen works, complex thrillers which feature strong psychological elements that threatened to "displace police detection" (Knight, 1997, p. 89). Only a few years after Flower's first novel Patricia Carlon (1927-2002) published her first thriller *Circle of Fear* (1961), this story, set in England, was followed by many more thrillers and suspense novels set in Australia. Today, one of the names synonymous with the thriller sub-genre, in Australia, is Matthew Reilly whose works have become standard entries on bestseller lists since the publication of his second novel *Ice Station* (1998).

My novel is a detective story but is also a suspense story and will thus sit alongside other Australian suspense stories like Patricia Carlon's *The Whispering Wall* (1969). In this novel Sarah Oatland, paralysed by a stroke and unable to communicate, overhears a plot to commit a murder that she decides to try and stop. This premise builds the suspense in a similar way to the suspense that is built in *Blood on their Hands* by the efforts of Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling as they work to prevent the kidnapping of Jack Lang.

The Clue Puzzle

The clue puzzle differs from crime fiction's other sub-genres, not only in form and function but also in its facilitation of successful women as characters and as writers. The dominance of the clue puzzle by women, both abroad and in Australia, cannot be denied. As the Golden Age came to a close in Britain there were Australian women working to exploit the popularity of the clue puzzle including: Jean Spender (1901-1970) with her many novels including *The Charge is Murder* (1933) and *Death Comes in the Night* (1938); June Wright (1919-) who launched her writing career with her prize-winning novel *Murder in the Telephone Exchange* (1948) and produced a new work every few years until

Make-Up for Murder (1966); and Elizabeth Antill (1909-1997) who contributed to the continuation of the clue puzzle's popularity in Australia with *Murder in the Mid-Atlantic* (1950) and *Death on the Barrier Reef* (1952). Kerry Greenwood (1954-) has also produced a number of clue puzzle titles featuring the incredibly elegant Phryne Fisher. These works reside outside the scope of this thesis as the first book in the series, *Cocaine Blues*, was not published until 1989. It is important to note these novels, however, as the Honourable Phryne Fisher is based in Sydney's rival city, Melbourne, and the timeframe is similar to that of *Blood on their Hands*. There are a few features within my own novel, including types of characters and plot structure, which echo some of the elements of the clue puzzle. As the second murder committed in *Blood on their Hands* is not solved, however, the work cannot be classified in this sub-genre.

The Procedural

The forensic procedural came to prominence in the early 1900s with R. Austin Freeman's (1862-1943) Dr John Thorndyke a detective who is a specialist in "Medical Jurisprudence and Toxicology" (Freeman, 1907/2005, p. 150). The popularity of this type of procedural increased dramatically during the late 20th century. This thesis covers a period, 1830-1980, which predates the widespread popularity of the forensic procedural in Australia but it is worth noting that Australian authors such as Gabrielle Lord (1946-) and Kathryn Fox (1966-) have made significant contributions to this sub-genre. Another, relatively recent, development in Australian crime fiction is the legal procedural. Some lawyers do feature in Australian crime novels, such as Stephen Cameron in Estelle Thompson's (1930-) *The Lawyer and the Carpenter* (1963), but the concept of a lawyer as the primary investigator is one that has, only lately, been adopted by writers such as Sydney Bauer (1968-), who continues to add to her series about David Cavanaugh a Boston based criminal defence attorney, and Peter Temple with his Melbourne based Jack Irish novels.

The most significant contribution of Australian crime fiction to the procedural is the development of the police procedural. One of the better-known names of Australian crime fiction, Arthur Upfield, was responsible for creating one of the genre's most famous characters. Napoleon Bonaparte, or Bony, a Detective Inspector specialising in homicide, was first presented to readers in *The Barrakee Mystery* (1929). Bony, the university educated half-Aboriginal and half-European detective enabled Upfield to establish, and then maintain, a place as a popular crime fiction author until the final Napoleon Bonaparte novel, *The Lake Frome Monster*, appeared in 1966. There has been some criticism directed at Upfield for his literary treatment of the Aboriginal people and of women (eg: Pollak & MacNabb, 2002, p. 9) but through Napoleon Bonaparte, Upfield assisted in establishing the idea of a competent police officer investigating complex crimes in a combination of city and outback settings. This, now common component of detective fiction, has been reinforced by numerous authors since Upfield began writing and has helped to make the sub-genre of the police procedural one of the more popular forms of crime fiction today.

As Arthur Upfield was writing stories against the backdrop of the magic and the monotony of the Australian bush, Anne Neville Goyder (1887-1966) and Margot Goyder (1896-1975) were writing, under the pseudonym Margot Neville, stories set on Australia's eastern seaboard. The sisters had collaborated on many written works, most notably romance stories, before they turned to crime fiction with *Murder in Rockwater* (1945). This story of control, love and murder introduced the frequently recurring characters of Detective Inspector Grogan and Detective Sergeant Manning. It was also the first of nearly two-dozen collaborative efforts resulting in crime novels set predominantly in Sydney and the surrounding areas. The duo was so popular some of their titles were serialised in the *Australian Women's Weekly* and they continued publishing as a team until their final novel, *Head on the Sill*, appeared in 1966.

Jon Cleary wrote across many genres but is most closely associated with crime fiction because of his creation of the Sydney-based homicide detective Scobie Malone who first appeared in *The High Commissioner* (1966). The main protagonist of 20 novels Malone is unusual because he is so ordinary. Such ordinariness is a result of Malone being a man of integrity, with a wife, three children and a very comfortable home life. This is a sharp contrast to the life of the loner typically seen in novels written in the hardboiled style that generally concentrates on "the character of the detective in a plot normally characterised by violence and betrayal" (Scaggs, 2005, p. 28). Malone's regular promotions are testament to his willingness to conform to the legal system unlike many of fiction's private detectives who bend rules and break laws, thus highlighting the different approaches between men who can rely on a regular pay cheque, if they catch a criminal or not, and men who are dependant upon solving a case to claim cash from their clients in order to survive.

Hardboiled

Carter Brown, the most famous pseudonym of Alan Yates (1923-1985), took a hardboiled approach to many of his stories by focusing on his lead character and their interactions with often bad, but always beautiful, women. Littered across the pages of these incredibly popular books is a vast array of blackmailers, ex-husbands, gamblers, gangsters, informants, murderers, thugs, slow men, fast women and great one-liners. In many ways the writer who is best known as Carter Brown personifies what is commonly referred to as pulp fiction, having published almost three hundred short novels on cheap paper with colourful, sexually suggestive covers between the release of his first stories in the early 1950s and the publication of his last novellas in 1984 (Loder, 1994, pp. 33-44).

One of the most prolific modern Australian authors, a man who is often referred

to as the godfather of Australian crime fiction, Peter Corris has written over 50 crime novels in addition to other fiction and non-fiction works. Corris introduced readers to private investigator Cliff Hardy in his first crime fiction novel *The Dying Trade* (1980). The crime fiction novels written by Corris include over thirty first-person narratives featuring Hardy, a character who allows the hardboiled tradition to sit as comfortably on the streets of Sydney as it does on the streets of Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco.

Roman Noir

Developed in America, roman noir continues to be dominated by American writers. This is slowly starting to change, as evidenced by the coining of the term 'kanga noir' (May, 2007) which has been used to describe Australian noir works such as Peter Temple's critically acclaimed novel *The Broken Shore* (2005).

Criminal Stories and Violent Crime

In addition to the early criminal stories that focused on the bushranger, Australian crime fiction has seen, over the last few decades, the publishing of works that focus on more sinister criminals. These stories include Ray Mooney's (1945-) sociopath Johnny Morgan in *A Green Light* (1988) and Robert Barrett's (c.1942-) nice guy turned psychopath, Bob Davis (Davo), in *Davo's Little Something* (1992). Australian authors have made contributions to the sub-genre of violent crime but they are yet to produce the high levels of graphic violence that can be seen in the works of American writers such as Bret Easton Ellis (1964-) and British writers such as Mo Hayder (1962-).

Complicating the debates surrounding the classification of crime fiction are questions of what should and should not be identified as Australian crime fiction. For example, Arthur Upfield was born in England but his Napoleon

Bonaparte novels predominately feature uniquely Australian bush settings (Loder, 1994, pp. 230-236). Miles Franklin was born in Australia but her only crime fiction work, *Bring the Monkey* (1933), is set entirely on a large country estate in England. Regardless of how broadly or narrowly Australian crime fiction is defined there is an enormous reservoir of titles to explore. From the early tales of bunyips and bushrangers to Peter Corris' hardboiled stories of tough men living tough lives.

Both creators and consumers of crime fiction in Australia have changed dramatically between the publication of *Quintus Servinton* in 1830 and *The Dying Trade* in 1980. This reflects Lee Wright's assertion that: "The kind of mysteries that are published at any given time faithfully reflects the kind of mysteries most people want to read at that time" (1946/1947, p. 287). As the genre has changed, crime fiction novels have documented a variety of social changes including changing ideas of class and gender.

Dramatised within the original creative work, and now to be addressed in more critically reflective terms here in the exegesis, are explorations into issues of class and gender in Australian crime fiction. These discussions draw parallels between the era in which the novel is set and the present day and are contextualised within an investigation of the nature and history of Australian crime fiction and some of its key ideological engagements. Issues surrounding the ethical questions attendant on the act of murder, in particular the motivation to put murders into print because to do so raises important moral questions and not just because they are necessary to push a story along, are also explored in the following chapters.

REPRESENTATIONAL CHANGES WITHIN AUSTRALIAN CRIME FICTION, 1830-1980

The Changing Representations of Class

> I pushed my old Falcon along the sculptured divided highway which wound up to the tasteful mansions and shaven lawns. Mercs and Jags slipped out of driveways. The only other under-ten-thousand-dollar drivers I saw were in a police Holden and they were probably there to see that the white lines on the road weren't getting dirty.
>
> Peter Corris
>
> *The Dying Trade*
>
> 1980, p. 2

As previously stated, this thesis explores the changing representations of class, gender and some of the ethical questions attendant on the act of murder in Australian crime fiction over a 150 year period: 1830-1980. The year 1830 was selected as the starting point for a brief survey of Australian crime fiction because this was the year in which Australia's first novel, Henry Savery's *Quintus Servinton*, was originally published.

The decision to track some of the changes in Australian crime fiction until 1980, and not beyond, was based on multiple factors. Firstly, as acknowledged, the crime fiction genre is the largest genre within the fiction market and from a purely logistical perspective a cap had to be set on the amount of material that could be covered adequately in the space available. Secondly, 1980 was the

year in which *The Dying Trade*, the first crime novel from Peter Corris, was originally published, setting a new standard for crime fiction in Australia. Finally, these two points provided logical beginning and end points for a neat 150 year period[6]: points which would contain my work and ensure the task was manageable while also allowing my efforts to be able to capture the majority of changes within Australian crime fiction, from its colonial days to the late 20th century.

This thesis seeks to extend the exploration of class issues in Australian crime fiction through the original creative work via the conflict between the two main protagonists: Miss Eddie Jones, a working-class seamstress; and Lady Catharine Darling, an upper-class socialite. In addition to this conflict, class issues, in particular class mobility, are dramatised through the changing views of these two women towards each other, as well as their own social standing. Setting my novel in the inter-War years has facilitated these (re)enactments, as class-consciousness was more obvious in Australia at that time than in the early 21st century. Class issues are deliberately engaged with in *Blood on their Hands* to capture the views on the class system that can be seen within Australian crime fiction, between 1830 and 1980, and because class has been identified as one of the key social ideas presented within crime fiction as it has "shaped the genre's central protagonist and audience expectations" (Rzepka, 2005, p. 4).

The class system has been readily accepted by many crime fiction authors who have produced "socially enclosed" novels where the "lower classes, especially professional criminals, play very minor roles" (Knight, 2003/2006, p. 78). This approach changed during the Golden Age, which saw many criminals as traitors to their own class (Knight, 2003/2006, p. 82). More recently the class system has been challenged by the concept of class mobility with characters moving

[6] Some references are made to Australian works published after 1980, however these are limited and serve only to highlight more recent, but very important, changes in the areas of class and gender.

out of poverty to the middle or upper echelons of society (Mizejewski, 2004, pp. 4-5). It does need to be noted, however, that: “Class-consciousness is the strongest at the borders between classes, and occasionally a character in a novel will remark on the importance of having broken through the barrier between classes, most often between the working-class and the lower-middle-class” (Oleksiw, 1988, p. 583). Efforts to achieve class mobility can be militated against by gender though as seen in M. McDonnell Bodkin’s (1850-1933) character Dora Myrl who, despite being a mathematics specialist and medical doctor, is forced to find work as a telephone girl and lady journalist (Bodkin, 1900, pp. 5-6) until she becomes *Dora Myrl: the lady detective* (1900).

One of the more obvious examples of an Australian writer keeping his working-class characters in their place is found in Fergus Hume’s *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886). In this work it is discovered that a young woman, raised in the slums of Melbourne, is actually the child of a very wealthy and well-respected member of Melbourne society. Yet the child, Miss Rawlins, is denied the knowledge of her parentage because Brian Fitzgerald and Duncan Calton “came to the conclusion that it would be no use to reveal to Sal Rawlins the fact that she was Mark Frettleby’s daughter . . . while her bringing up unfitted her for the position” (Hume, 1886/1888, p. 229).

Works promoting the maintenance of society through the retention of social divides would continue to be written, and to be accepted, with class lines being at their most distinct during the genre’s Golden Age. The concept of class would, however, be attacked in the early 1930s by Miles Franklin in a cleverly crafted crime novel, *Bring the Monkey* (1933), where ideas of class are openly mocked, perhaps as a result of Franklin’s downward mobility as a young woman which impacted on many of her social views (Roe, 1981, pp. 574-576). In *Bring the Monkey* (1933) the lives of the middle and upper classes are described as

“an artistic struggle to escape from the drabness of carrying respectability too far” (Franklin, 1933, p. 62). Some of Franklin’s observations are quite playful, such as in the following quote, which appears after it is realised a blue diamond has been stolen and must be looked for:

> Protest against the suggestion of personal search arose. Such things couldn’t be at a private house-party among the best people; such things simply weren’t done - weren’t cricket. Tattingwood Hall was not a seaside hotel for American Tourists (Franklin, 1933, p. 78).

A few decades after these comments were made Carter Brown also criticised ideas of class. The works of Brown lack the complex characterisation, forensic detail and tight plots and sub-plots that are now standard elements for many crime novels. They do, however, provide interesting class insights because the differences between those who have money and those who do not are stark yet these descriptions are not awkward or out of place. The wealthy have lots of cash as evidenced by: personal staff; expensive cars; and Cape Cod style homes, the type that has a “flagged driveway, trim lawns, and shrubs that knew their place” (Brown, 1968, p. 19). Meanwhile, the poor are relegated to more ordinary lifestyles and cheap Scotch.

The many works of Margot Neville, despite some differences in physical setting, would return to traditional ideas of class lines from the mid-1940s through to the mid-1960s. The stories written by Neville have a strong orientation towards the upper classes. Wealthy women are beautiful, they have thick hair and they are often suntanned in contrast to the maids who are just “thin and stringy” (Neville, 1945, p. 16) while the social setting of these stories “remains within the elite of professional and moneyed people” (Knight, 1997, p. 83).

Some of the more interesting comments on class in Australian crime fiction come from Jon Cleary's Scobie Malone stories. The solving of a wide variety of crimes exposes detectives to people in all levels of society. Malone is no exception, although he is slightly more obvious in his distaste of class-conscious individuals than his many colleagues, as he is a man who:

> [W]ouldn't have gone beyond K-mart if allowed by his wife and daughters, who was a life member of Fletcher Jones and Gowings, thought labels, especially if worn on the outside, were like birdshit, something that should be scrubbed off (Cleary, 2002/2003, p. 11).

Identifying a character's social level is a common feature in crime fiction (Knight, 2004, p. 37) and has been explored in *Blood on their Hands* through the conflict between Eddie and Catharine. Eddie Jones is from a working-class background and has grown up surrounded by poverty. A young, single woman Eddie works as a seamstress and lives with her brother Charlie, a private investigator, in an area that combines residential use with retail and light industry on Sydney's city fringe. Living with Eddie and Charlie are two boarders. Using a boarding house to reinforce the financial struggles of the working-class is seen in many crime fiction works from Fergus Hume's pre-Federation *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886) to post-World War II novels such as June Wright's *Murder in the Telephone Exchange* (1948) and Mark McShane's (1930-) *Ill Met by a Fish Shop on George Street* (1969). My novel seeks to recreate the class situation seen in boarding houses and operates to draw attention to the still obvious disparities of class in Australian society, bringing to the reader's attention that class lines are still a serious social issue.

In sharp contrast to Eddie Jones, Lady Catharine Darling is from a background

of privilege and wealth. A couple of years older than Eddie, Catharine has never needed to be in paid employment but feels trapped in her unhappy marriage to Sir George Darling. To avoid the scandal of a divorce, Catharine has recently moved in with her older brother James, a former army officer now working as an academic at the University of Sydney, who has a large and well-appointed home in an exclusive waterfront suburb.

The use of clothing, within my novel, to help identify class differences may appear to be a superficial approach to a complex subject but it is one that allows the reader to immediately recognise the different worlds in which, despite residing in the same city, the two women live. Eddie wears a dilapidated plain black house dress in the novel's opening pages (p. 4) and her best clothes are thin and worn. She feels the cold, even on a warm day and: "Although Eddie was not ashamed of what she had become as a result of the latest world economic crisis, she was slightly annoyed that Catharine and the weather had conspired to make it so obvious" (p. 40). This does, however, work in Eddie's favour on occasion, allowing her to blend into the background when she is following one of the New Guard's couriers who: "did not see her, or if he did, he did not take any notice of the woman wearing a cheap dress and carrying an old fashioned purse" (p. 57).

Catharine wears different clothes in every scene. Her elaborate wardrobe is laden with luxurious fabrics, furs and the labels of some of the most famous designers of the time. This reinforces the fact that fashion in fiction is "the perfect vehicle through which to express wealth and leisure (Aindow, 2009, 35). Towards the end of the novel Catharine makes an effort to close the gap that separates her from Eddie by buying her a beautiful dress to wear to the opera. The differences between them, however, are still there and highlighted by the fact that Catharine does not think to give Eddie a purse or shoes to

match her new gown (p. 268). As Eddie's clothes provide her with anonymity, Catharine's have the capacity to provide timely distractions. For example, when she goes to the City Morgue to rescue her brother Douglas, and: "The morgue attendant couldn't speak. He had never seen anyone so beautiful. [He] had a vague idea she had asked him a question but he could not remember what it was" (p. 176). Fashion also facilitates, within my novel, a discussion that draws attention to the still existent class inequalities in present day Australia.

The living spaces of the two women also serve to provide a fundamental, if slightly obvious, way to clarify how differently these women experience Sydney in 1932. Eddie lives in an old terrace with thin walls (p. 11), creaking timber boards (p. 20) and a fireplace "bricked up the previous winter because it had been more economical to cut off a cold draft than to buy more fuel" (p. 20). A dramatically different environment from Catharine's residence, a space that is littered with furniture imported from Vienna, original pieces of art, opulent linens (p. 38) and rare antiques (p. 92).

One of the more defining elements of the class system, the division of labour, is also engaged with in the original creative work enabling my novel to utilise history to reflect on ongoing concerns. My novel's first engagement with the division of labour is when Eddie and Catharine attend Father Cronin's church. Both women are disguised as cleaners yet Catharine is allowed to arrange flowers while Eddie has to scrub the floor (p. 48). Later in the novel the division of labour is not as extreme but it is still evident as Catharine provides a diversion while Eddie breaks into a boarding house and searches one of the rooms (p. 113).

There are numerous other differences between Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling, which reinforce their class identifications and relate to the many class

differences that are still obvious in Australian society today. Money is mentioned several times highlighting the sharp contrast between Eddie who works as a seamstress and Catharine who is independently wealthy, while: Eddie considers drinking instant coffee a treat but Catharine drinks the best champagne; Eddie is reliant upon public transportation while Catharine experiences greater freedom driving her own motor car; Eddie writes with a pencil and Catharine uses a fountain pen; and Eddie, despite being hungry, does not feel comfortable asking for anything from the menu at Pearson's Fish Café (p. 74) while Catharine, bored with food, braces herself for yet another formal afternoon tea at Government House (p. 258).

These differences between Eddie and Catharine, based on social standing, also highlight how class background has impacted on a character's ability, as constructed by many crime fiction writers, to solve a crime (Knight, 2004, p. 15). This is seen throughout my original creative work: it is Catharine who convinces Eddie's friend at the Postmaster-General's Department to help them (p. 62); Catharine who obtains an appointment at Hardy Bros which provides more details about the poison thallium (p. 139); and Catharine who, through her circle of friends, tracks down the owner of the name Anderson-Brock (p. 187). Eddie acknowledges this privileged access to information, and the ability to fund an investigation, when James Longfoot poses the question:

> "Tell me," James said. "Why did you ask for my sister's help?"
>
> "I guess I . . . ," Eddie paused, she was embarrassed but wanted to be truthful with James. "I guess that, while I knew I wanted to be a private investigator, I also knew that investigating a case, any type of case, is expensive and I couldn't afford to conduct an investigation on my own."

> "That's a relief," he said. "I was worried that you were relying on her intellect and people skills" (p. 231).

Eddie and Catharine also experience shifts in how they perceive their own social standing. Eddie's takes the form of feeling more confident that she is defined by her abilities instead of her class and so rejects a proposal of marriage that would elevate her to a higher social status. In a juxtaposition to Edwina's experience, Catharine's shift takes the form of the realisation that it is many of the members of her social tier, in particular those members of the New Guard and the Fascist Legion who professed to be the guardians of the traditional social order, who are the ones who hold values and exhibit behaviours she has always believed to be common or vulgar.

The class system is still important for many crime fiction authors but this importance has diminished as class lines continue to blur and social mobility increases, despite the still "obvious material differences" within Australian society today (Graetz & McAllister, 1994, p. 199). This steady reduction on the emphasis on class, from colonial days to the late 20th century, can be seen in the body of Australian crime fiction and this is reflected in my own novel.

As the changing representations of class in Australian crime fiction have been explored in the original creative work, so too, have the changing representations of gender.

> Because detective fiction follows rather than parallels social reality, the genre's inherent conservatism upholds power and privilege in the name of law and justice as it validates readers' visions of a safe and ordered world. In such a world view, criminals and women are put in their proper, secondary places.
>
> Kathleen Gregory Klein
>
> *The Woman Detective: gender and genre*
>
> 1988/1995, p. 1

My novel, *Blood on their Hands*, seeks to recapitulate the changing representations of gender in crime fiction, by compressing 150 years of progress in the area of gender equality in Australian crime fiction into a five-week period within the original creative work. This is achieved through Eddie Jones' and Catharine Darling's personal and professional development as private investigators. The two women begin investigating the two cases within *Blood on their Hands* with hesitation and by making mistakes, hallmarks of the early stereotype of female detectives waiting for a man to rescue them in a man's world of crime and crime-fighting. At the conclusion of the novel, however, Eddie and Catharine have transformed into the brave and competent women detectives that are commonplace in crime fiction today.

Changes in the representations of gender, within the genre of crime fiction, are a reflection of, and reaction to, changing roles of women in society. In *Crime Fiction 1800-2000* (2004) Stephen Knight explains how early examples of crime

fiction made “central the female experience of powerlessness and oppression” (p. 19) and women were exploited to “make the best of citizens and the worst of criminals” (p. 25).

Women began to appear, with some regularity, as detectives during the mid-1860s. It is important to note, however, that despite this development Stephen Knight’s analysis of these early texts shows female characters are rarely allowed to finish the job they started as they are displaced by male characters just in time to identify the murderer (2004, p. 40). One example of such dismissal, based on gender, is seen in Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1859) where Marian Halcombe who has “made considerable strides towards uncovering the mysterious plotting of Glyde and Fosco . . . is suddenly removed from the plot by an illness caught in the rain” and is replaced by Walter Hartright (Knight, 2004, p. 40).

Other examples can be seen in those detective stories which feature a marriage plot such as Harlan P. Halsey’s (1839-1898) *The Lady Detective* (1880), published under the pseudonym of Old Sleuth, where the efforts of Kate Goelet, in love with Henry Wilbur, are allowed to fade into the background as the “marriage plot now dominant, the male character is granted control; both the fictional plot and the social reality guarantee his dominance” (Klein, 1988/1995, p. 40).

This pattern can be seen in Australian crime fiction such as June Wright’s *Murder in the Telephone Exchange* (1948) where Sergeant Matheson officially solves the case using clues collected by Maggie Byrnes. Byrnes has a nervous breakdown and Matheson catches the killer, reinforcing Wright’s metanarrative that supports cultural expectations and continues the trend of women not being “allowed to go through to the end” and male characters stepping in to solve a

case in a novel's final pages (Knight, 2004, p. 40).

More contemporary examples of women detectives reveal a different pattern, one described in detail in Kathleen Gregory Klein's *The Woman Detective* (1988), Priscilla Walton's and Manina Jones' *Detective Agency* (1999) and Linda Mizejewski's *Hardboiled and High Heeled* (2004). These works demonstrate the expansion of crime fiction since the 1970s with novels "written by women and centering on the professional woman investigator" (Walton & Jones, 1999, p. 1). The growth of stories about a variety of hard-working women with their various domestic and financial problems has continued and has seen the "number of female-investigator novels published in the United States triple every five years since 1985" (Mizejewski, 2004, p. 19). It has been a similar, if not as extreme, pattern in Australia with an increase in female-investigator novels commencing in the early 1980s and continuing today with authors such as Marele Day and Gabrielle Lord who "explore serious political and social issues" (Morrison, 2006, p. 259) in their work, including issues of gender.

In the early days of crime fiction in Australia, however, women characters were predominately extras or stereotypes. The earliest crime fiction texts in Australia: Thomas Gaspey's (1788-1871) *The History of George Godfrey* (1828); Henry Savery's *Quintus Servinton* (1830); and Charles Rowcroft's *The Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land* (1846) are stories that operate "to a large degree by excluding women or by representing them with an object status" (Knight, 1997, p. 61). Women did, however, experience some equality, and success, in the colonial era as characters and writers. There was the character Mrs Howard, a competent and independent woman, in John Lang's (1816-1864) *Legends of Australia: Frederick Charles Howard* (1842) (Knight, 1997, pp. 62-63). There were also the writers Ellen Davitt, (1812-1879) who wrote the first Australian crime novel penned by a woman *Force and Fraud* (1865) and Mary

Fortune who published over 500 works (Bowes, 2008, p. 1) and “who in so many ways defied the patriarchal values of her time” (Sussex, 2007, p. 455). Yet the exclusion of women from crime fiction would continue to dominate the genre, leading to the criticism of such gender prejudices in the early 1930s by the central protagonist, Ercildoun Carrington, in Miles Franklin’s *Bring the Monkey* (1933), when she said: “the C.I.D. was so efficient that my help was superfluous, and all men prefer people who have less ability than themselves” (p. 140).

Portraying women as less than equal players in crime fiction would continue throughout the Golden Age with Arthur Upfield identifying women as either “comforters” or “shrews” (Upfield, 1956/1981, p. 171). This would be considered offensive to many modern readers but these descriptions provide insight into the past treatment of some groups within society and are not an attempt to promote such treatment. Upfield was also writing during a period when the offering of multiple suspects became a standard that crime fiction writers had to meet. As a result many characters, be they female or male, were presented negatively or as stereotypes because they were being offered to readers as possible murderers needing to be brought to justice.

The dying days of World War II saw the publication of A.E. Martin’s (1885-1955) *The Misplaced Corpse* (1944) featuring Rosie Bosanky who, the publishers claim, is “Australia’s original female private-eye” (Wakefield Press, 1992). Feisty and fashionable, Bosanky provided an early glimpse of what a hardboiled female private investigator would look like and how she would operate. The opportunities given to women in the social world, as a result of being needed for the War effort, would not be uniformly reflected in the fictional world. Within a few years of Martin’s success, women writers would prove they were capable of matching many of their male counterparts in their

depictions of traditional gender roles. For example, in Elizabeth Antill's *Death on the Barrier Reef* (1952), the possibility of the murderer as a 'she' as well as a 'he' is not even considered until one of the murder weapons is discovered to be, a very traditional female tool, a rolling pin (p. 148).

Some of the more dramatic changes in the representation of gender in Australian crime fiction were inspired by the significant social shifts brought about by the post-World War II boom. As "detective fiction follows rather than parallels social reality" (Klein, 1988/1995, p. 1) these changes were not always positive. Women would become increasingly sexualised by writers like Carter Brown with titles such as: *Floozie out of Focus* (1954), *Stripper, You've Sinned* (1956), *Blonde on a Broomstick* (1966) and *The Spanking Girls* (1979) clearly indicating books in which women will be wearing fewer clothes than men, women who "might prove to be only one of the better figments" of Al Wheeler's imagination (Brown, 1968, p. 6). The objectification of women is obvious yet women are essential to every one of Brown's stories and without them his novelettes, which average only 125 pages, would be much shorter.

As Carter Brown produced pulps, Margot Neville also worked to reinforce the social construction of gender. Traditional gender roles in Neville's books are clearly defined as men mix drinks and women pour tea. Such stereotyping can make reading these crime novels today a difficult task but Neville, like many of her contemporaries including Patricia Carlon, Pat Flower, Jean Spender and June Wright, was "working through the period between the mid-thirties and early seventies, that is, after the emergence of [Agatha] Christie and her colleagues and before the recent consciously feminist reworking of the crime novel" (Knight, 1997, p. 81).

It is significant to note that in more recent Australian crime fiction works the

social divisions between males and females are still clear. In soft echoes of the stories of Carter Brown, the men in Peter Corris' novels are tough, they drink, rely on their instincts, they carry guns and know how to use them. Women, in contrast, are often portrayed as needing protection or are created merely to help fill out a scene or assist in pushing a story along. Even women who are constructed as competent and intelligent are often reduced to being objects of desire, including Lily Truscott, Cliff Hardy's "live-out lover" (Corris, 2007, p. 3).

The traditional gender roles of men solving cases, either as cerebral style sleuths in the novels of Jon Cleary or as raw men of action in the novels of Peter Corris, and women being marginalised was challenged in the 1980s with Gabrielle Lord's first novel, *Fortress* (1980). It would not, however, be until 1999 and the publication of *Feeding the Demons* that Lord, now known as Australia's first lady of crime fiction, would produce her most famous protagonist: private investigator Gemma Lincoln. The 1980s and 1990s would also see women step closer to obtaining equality in crime fiction because of the pens of writers such as Marele Day, Kerry Greenwood and Claire McNab.

In the original creative work the changing representations of gender within Australian crime fiction are enacted through changes in Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling as they investigate thefts from the poor box of a local church, the murder of Robert Snook and a kidnapping plot against the Premier of NSW. As the novel progresses, so do Eddie and Catharine. When these women first start trying to solve the criminal cases they have stumbled across, they are typical amateur investigators who begin working for Father Cronin without pay and "without legitimate professional status" (Klein, 1988/1995, p. 143). This amateur status is seen in their desire to hide a body in the first place and their failure to immediately follow up on important clues. For example the women delay identification of A.M. Trembath and they stumble around more like pieces

on a board game than characters on the pages of a crime fiction novel. This is despite Eddie's obvious desire to be a successful private investigator, because: "With Charlie in Bathurst there was suddenly a very real opportunity to solve a crime on her own: to right a wrong and to prove herself in the process" (p. 24).

The very early efforts of Eddie and Catharine are thus designedly restricted to quite basic investigative techniques such as checking the newspapers for information (p. 61) and following up some of the more obvious clues they find (p. 98). As the confidence of the two women grows, however, they become bolder in their attempts to crack the case and they start developing plans (p. 111) and then break into the New Guard's Headquarters (p. 240). At the end of the novel both women are fiercely independent and very determined. Both Eddie and Catharine carry guns and walk into incredibly dangerous situations to fight, very competently, for what they believe in.

Gender issues have also been unpacked in *Blood on their Hands* through some of the supporting characters. Eddie's brother, Charlie, and Catharine's brothers, James and Douglas, make several attempts to take over the investigation - a combination of a sibling responsibility to protect and a sense of male entitlement to seize control. Another male who tries to take control is Captain Anderson-Brock who, having fallen in love with Eddie, "decided that he was going to marry her" (p. 230). He attempts to sell the idea to Eddie when he proposes to her by saying:

> I'm frightfully rich you know. I've been to all the good schools and am reasonably well travelled. I'd also be more than happy to establish Anderson-Brock & Jones Detectives if you wanted to be one of these progressive wives who has a hobby (p. 274).

Eddie likes the Captain enough to go to him for assistance when Catharine is kidnapped, to benefit from his access to weapons (p. 294) and his military experience (p. 296) but is not keen on the idea of marriage: “Well, certainly not enough to risk sacrificing [her] independence” (p. 321).

A more general comment on the attitudes, which have confronted women striving for equal rights with men, is made by the man Eddie encounters at the University of Sydney who thinks to himself: “It all started to go wrong when we gave them the vote. We should have stood our ground when we had the chance” (p. 59). The inclusion of attitudes, such as this, within *Blood on their Hands*, was made easier by choosing to write an historical novel and by selecting a time frame when the divide between men and women was more obvious than it is today. In particular, ideas about the allocation of labour based on gender, can be easily discussed because the timeframe chosen supports questions such as Douglas asking James: “When was the last time you saw a woman working as an undertaker?” (p. 169) and Catharine asking Eddie, about Roslyn Snook: “Why didn’t she go as a nurse if she wanted to go to the Front?” (p. 279).

Another way I have highlighted some of the issues of gender is by reversing the concept of the invisible female and creating the invisible male. This is achieved by presenting men who are indispensible to the text but are essentially anonymous as they are without names and without descriptions, such as “the man’s elongated shadow” in the aisle of St Joseph’s Church (p. 103) while the men watching Jack Lang and Harold McCauley at Pearson’s Fish Café are deliberately non-descript (p. 76) as are the men delivering ammunition to the New Guard’s Headquarters (p. 250).

Gender still plays a key role in crime fiction stories but the genre has grown

“from the brutalities and simplicities of the convict saga to the sexual politics and formal sophistication of the modern feminist mystery” (Knight, 1997, p. 105). This has resulted in an overall improvement in the treatment of women within Australian crime fiction. Eddie and Catharine highlight changes of the representations of gender in Australian crime fiction through their journey, from hesitant amateurs to confident professionals. My novel also deliberately reflects the fact that women today “want to read texts in which women have agency, in which women manage their lives and assert their role in society” (Cole, 2004, p. 25).

Attendant on the changing representations of class and gender in Australian crime fiction that are explored in the original creative work are some of the ethical questions that circulate around the act of murder.

Some of the Ethical Questions Attendant on the Act of Murder

> Sometimes a well-executed murder clears the air. This observation is in no sense suggestively advanced. But the fact is that in virtually all groups, communities, and gatherings of human beings there are certain members who would be far, far better out of the way . . . Of course life could not continue to muddle along under a regime of murder at random, a system of salutary but unsolicited removals. This cannot be for the simple reason that almost every one of us during the course of his or her life deserves to be murdered at least once.
>
> Thorne Smith
>
> *Did She Fall?*
>
> 1930, p. 1

In addition to contributing to ongoing deliberations on class and gender in Australian crime fiction, this project sought to explore some of the ethical questions attendant on the act of murder which can be raised in crime fiction and thus serve to give the genre an importance beyond mere entertainment. These questions are highlighted through the documentation of the differences between murder, and its traditional purpose as a plot device, and murder because someone presented a risk to society and an ethical decision was made that a person "deserved to die" (Lindsay, 2004/2007, p. 14). Two murders occur in *Blood on their Hands*. The first murder is committed for political and ideological reasons while the second murder is committed to prevent a known

killer from striking again.

In Miles Franklin's *Bring the Monkey* (1933) Ercildoun Carrington states: "I've always loathed murder" (p. 1) and in Elizabeth Antill's *Death on the Barrier Reef* (1952) Sergeant Bull squints out to sea and remarks: "never been able to find an adequate reason for murder myself" (p. 195). Of course readers often have no formal objection to murders taking place and authors have found numerous reasons for one person to kill another because a body is an essential plot device for a murder mystery. Readers also have the capacity to engage with murder in ways that far exceed its function as a mere plot device.

Catherine Cole (2004) talks about "extenuating moral dimensions" (p. 94). This concept relates to how readers can empathise with a murderer's motivation if the victim had been a perpetrator of a sexual or other violent crime, or had taken something of great value such as retirement savings through mismanagement or a loved one through drunkenness (p. 94). Another example Cole offers of acceptable revenge killing can be seen when readers "find themselves celebrating the death of the perpetrator in a police shootout" (p. 114). The concept of ethics in Cole's work is one which encompasses concerns about morality and social responsibility and she argues the genre's very purpose is to: "examine the moral and the ethical, the difference between good and evil" (p. 86).

The idea of murders committed for ethical reasons within crime fiction has been explored by Agatha Christie and, more recently, by Jeff Lindsay (1952-). In Christie's work *Curtain: Poirot's last case* (1975) Hercule Poirot, "a tidy little man, always arranging things, liking things in pairs, liking things square instead of round" (Christie, 1977/2010, p. 256), murders Stephen Norton, a murderer himself. In his confession Poirot declares:

> I am the law! As a young man in the Belgian police force I shot down a desperate criminal who sat on a roof and fired at people below. In a state of emergency martial law is proclaimed. By taking Norton's life, I have saved other lives (Christie, 1975/2002, p. 283).

This novel was first published in 1975 yet Christie wrote it in the early years of World War II and deposited the manuscript into a bank vault with instructions that, upon her death, it should be given to her daughter, Rosalind. It is fascinating that the work which, more seriously than any of her other literary efforts, addresses issues of who should live and who should die was written in anticipation of "being killed in the raids" on London during the Blitz (Christie, 1977/2010, p. 509).

In the opening pages of Jeff Lindsay's *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* (2004) Dexter Morgan, in his role as narrator, explains he has killed before and will kill again. Tonight he will kill Father Donovan a man he kidnaps and takes to a house south of Florida City where he has laid out the exhumed bodies of seven children in a vile display of Father Donovan's victims. The desperate Priest begs:

> "Please," he said. "I couldn't help myself. I just couldn't help myself." . . . "I understand perfectly," I told him, moving very close to his face. The sweat on his cheeks turned to ice. "You see," I said, "I can't help myself, either" (Lindsay, 2004/2007, p. 10).

Dexter goes on to say that: "I am not like Father Donovan, not that kind of monster. I am a very neat monster" and, that by removing someone that has

brutalised and murdered children then, “one small corner of the world is a neater, happier place” (2004/2007, p. 11). The reader is advised, quite emphatically that “Father Donovan deserved to die” (2004/2007, p. 14).

Death figures in most crime fiction, often in the context of implicit interrogations of theories of justice. In many older crime fiction novels the concept of natural justice was dominant. Many murderers, once identified, would take their own lives such as Mr Moreland in Fergus Hume’s *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886) and Mr Birmingham in Denzil Batchelor’s *The Test Match Murder* (1936) while others would be taken by disease such as Lord Tattingwood in Miles Franklin’s *Bring the Monkey* (1933). Those not caught by the net of natural justice were, traditionally, caught by the net of legal justice to face: identification; indictment; trial; and punishment. In Australian crime fiction punishment reflects the Australian legal system with murderers being sentenced to prison or, prior to the abolition of the death penalty[7], judicial hanging. In one scene in my novel Captain Anderson-Brock, in an attempt to reassure Eddie Jones’ concerns about justice, says: “Justice is always done, one way or another” (p. 303).

For those who escape the punishment meted out by legal or natural justice systems there are fictitious serial killers prepared to intervene. In addition to Jeff Lindsay’s books featuring Dexter Morgan, there is: Patrick Bateman of Bret Easton Ellis’ *American Psycho* (1991) who kills those “who engage in extreme and socially damaging acts of excessive and deliberately conspicuous consumption” (Beasley, 2010); and David Klein, in James Ellroy’s *White Jazz* (1992), is a vigilante who is selective in who he kills, choosing to focus on despatching “wrongdoers” (Beasley, 2010). Men such as Poirot, Morgan, Bateman and Klein would not be considered ordinary people, one is an eccentric

[7] The death penalty has been abolished in Australia: in Queensland (1922); in New South Wales (1940); in Tasmania (1968); in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory (1973); in Victoria (1975); in South Australia (1976); and in Western Australia (1984) (Main, 2007, p. 2).

sleuth and the other three are sociopathic monsters. One of the unique contributions to crime fiction of this project is that my crime novel sees two ordinary people, both of whom are women, commit murder utilising two very different, but at least in their minds, equally valid ethical frameworks to justify their crime.

The first of the two men murdered, in *Blood on their Hands*, is Robert Snook who dies in front of Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling. His body, lying on the floor, signals the end of Robert's story but also the beginning of the novel's narrative and the story of Eddie and Catharine. I decided, very early on in the drafting process, that this murder would be committed by Robert Snook's wife, Roslyn, and that: "The means chosen should, of course, be poison" (Orwell, 1946/2000, p. 346). Roslyn poisons Robert because she believes in the New Guard and their goal to depose the Premier of NSW. She sees it as her patriotic duty to prevent her husband, regardless of the cost, from interfering with the plan to kidnap Jack Lang. Murdering her husband also proves to herself, and to others, that gender does not make her incapable of killing for her country.

Eddie and Catharine discover Roslyn murdered her husband but she is not brought to justice. This is not a traditional ending for a crime novel, one where the killer is discovered and promptly arrested, but it is an important ending for three reasons. Firstly, as two dramatically different ethical frameworks underpin the two murders committed in my novel, it was essential that one set of ethical beliefs was not privileged over the other in terms of narrative outcome: as the person responsible for the second murder is not identified, and therefore not punished thus it was not strategic for Roslyn to fall into the hands of the police. Secondly, this tactic also allows the reader to maintain focus on the motive for murder, rather than the activities associated with identifying and prosecuting a murderer. Such an ending also pays homage to Andrew Forrester's (n.d.-n.d.)

work *The Female Detective* (1864), a story where Mrs Quinion, who killed her employer's son, escapes "retribution although not detection" (Klein, 1988/1995, p. 23).

Finally, in my original creative work Robert Snook dies, murdered by his wife because of an ethical framework constructed of ideology, patriotism and politics. Roslyn Snook believes that in taking this one life she is saving others because she feels if Jack Lang is kidnapped then a civil war, if it breaks out, will be short and see a minimal loss of life. The motivation of Roslyn has been crafted to question the social construction of murder and how the definition of murder changes between cultures and contexts. For example, had Australia been in the grip of a civil war and Roslyn had poisoned her husband in an effort to reduce the duration of the conflict, then would her status as a combatant have afforded her a different label to that of murderer?

In the last chapter of *Blood on their Hands* another character also commits murder because an ethical decision is made to take one life to save others, someone presented such a threat to society it was considered unethical to let them live. The concluding pages of my novel sees Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling confront a member of the Fascist Legion of the New Guard, one who had earlier kidnapped Catharine. When Catharine was being held captive she learnt that this man regularly raped and murdered some of the city's most vulnerable women, information that she passed onto Eddie. This man is murdered but in an unusual twist this second murder results in neither the readers nor the characters knowing which of the main female protagonists, Eddie or Catharine, fired the fatal shot. Such a strategy is enlisted to highlight the important role crime fiction can play in engaging with ethical questions.

Jeff McMahan has argued that: "The death of a person who is widely loved and

on whom many others depend will be worse for the survivors than the death of a person who was simply a nuisance" (2002, p. 95). This philosophy is reflected upon by Catharine who, in discussing the man who was gunned down on Macquarie Street, suggests to Eddie she does not "think that anyone will even notice that he's no longer around" (p. 320). That the second murder victim was himself a murderer also serves as a reimagining of Susan Roland's idea of a "secular form of the divinely sanctioned knight errant on a quest for metaphysical justice" (2001, p. 139). Only this time, the knight errant was a woman and her identity cannot be confirmed.

These two murders, both committed for avowed ethical reasons, by ordinary people, presented the most demanding challenges in the drafting, revising and finalising of *Blood on their Hands*. That I had chosen to set my novel in 1932 was helpful, not only for discussions surrounding class and gender, but also for discussions surrounding "who deserved to die" (Lindsay, 2004/2007, p. 14) because this time frame was one where people looked closely at the ethics of killing and if there were morally right reasons to kill another person. Could murder be justified for the greater good? - a very relevant question for a society which had come out of the horrors of World War I and was watching the sharp rise of fascism in the lead up to World War II.

My novel has thus deliberately deployed a range of plot devices, characterisation and dialogue to move readers to reflect on the willingness to, and the reasons for, killing another person. When Eddie, trying to convince Catharine to take on a murder case, asks: "So, do you think he deserved to be murdered?" (p. 17) Catharine chooses to be flippant and, instead of trying to think through an answer for such a difficult question, she looks at Robert Snook's body and says: "Dressed like that he certainly deserved something" (p. 17). This question is the first of many asked in the novel's discussions about

committing murder. The novel does not attempt to define right and wrong reasons to kill, instead it presents two different but equally valid, at least in the minds of the perpetrators, reasons to take a human life: Roslyn believed she was fighting for her country and so takes on the role of political assassinator; while Eddie *or* Catharine was fighting to stop a known killer from striking again. My purpose in adopting this open-ended strategy was to create an Australian crime fiction work paralleling the British and American crime novels in which murderers take lives prompted by ethical frameworks.

The two murders presented in my novel thus challenge readers to explore their own ideas about the value of a human life and the sets of conditions that would be necessary to commit murder for the perceived greater good. This approach is based in axiological ethics, a framework that argues the rightness of an action relates to the consequences of that action (Frankena, 2001, p. 57). Thus, the murder of Robert Snook and of Catharine's kidnapper, are considered right actions because the consequences of those two murders is the saving of the lives of others. This idea is complicated in *Blood on their Hands* because two independent citizens adopt axiological ethics, instead of the state. If, however, readers subscribe to deontological ethics, a framework that argues the ends do not justify the means (Frankena, 2001, p. 137), then neither crime would be considered ethical because, regardless of the fact that many lives might be saved by the taking of just two lives, murder is wrong in an absolute moral sense and cannot be condoned.

The creative work for this thesis has been written to highlight some of the ethical questions attendant on the act of murder. It also seeks to comment on the level of detail called on in describing the committing of murder in fiction. A comparatively recent development within the crime fiction genre has been the use of extremely graphic violence and the emergence of the sub-genre of

violent crime. This approach to crime fiction has been made famous by male authors including Thomas Harris and female authors such as Patricia Cornwell and Mo Hayder: two women who “spare no-one’s sensitivities in their books” (Cole, 2004, p. 102). Julian Symons suggests such violence has always been found within crime fiction, although he does admit that within many of the earlier examples of violent crime novels “very few of the words or phrases would be thought objectionable today” (1992/1993, p. 176).

My original creative work has, for the majority of the text, retreated from the detailed graphic violence of many contemporary crime fiction writers and utilised a style of crime fiction that focuses on the characters solving the crime and not the crime itself. This move is the result of a personal belief that taking a graphic approach to crime fiction can stifle creativity because the focus turns from writing a novel that a reader will engage with and enjoy to writing a novel that will leave a reader feeling shocked and nauseous.

In George Orwell’s essay, *Decline of the English Murder* (1946), he argues against excessive violence and random acts of violence and recalls the time when murders were the: “Products of a stable society where the all-prevailing hypocrisy did at least ensure that crimes as serious as murder should have strong emotions behind them” (Orwell, 1946/2000, p. 348). In *Blood on their Hands* both murderers commit their crimes, not merely to satisfy the needs of the plot or to allow for a reader’s vicarious engagement with graphic revenge killing, but because they were working from ethical platforms and were driven by strong emotions: however these may be judged.

The Processes of Writing:
Learning the Rules of the Detective Novel

> No one, so far as can be recalled, has been tempted to set down codes of behaviour to govern the love story, the Western, or the historical novel. But surrounding the [detective novel] - even in its less rigid shapes - there is an element of sport, of contest between author and reader, not found in other fictional forms that has led inescapably to the propagation of canons of play.
>
> Howard Haycraft
> "The Rules of the Game"
> *The Art of the Mystery Story*
> 1946/1947, p. 187

Many rules have been promulgated for writers of crime novels. Ronald Knox (1888-1957) produced a set of 10 in 1928 which included Rule 3: "Not more than one secret room or passage is allowable"; and Rule 10: "Twin brothers, and doubles generally, must not appear unless we have been duly prepared for them" (1928/1947, pp. 194-196). In the same year S.S. Van Dine (1888-1939) listed 20 rules (1928/1947, pp. 189-193). Some of these rules proved useful for my novel, for example, Van Dine's Rule 7: "There simply must be a corpse in a detective novel, and the deader the corpse the better" which hastened Mr Snook's murder and improved my novel by bringing the action forward to the first chapter. Some rules, however, were broken including Van Dine's Rule 3:

“There must be no love interest” because Captain Anderson-Brock takes great risks for Eddie Jones, I needed to justify these risks and decided that if the Captain was in love, then his actions would be more believable. Knox’s Rule 5: “No Chinaman must figure in the story” was also broken. This rule was not intended to be racist, it was merely a warning against overusing stereotypes but when I discovered that there had been a Chinese Laundry on George Street in 1932 (Sydney Cove Authority, 1998) I decided to integrate a ‘Chinaman’ into my story.

There are many rules for writing crime fiction but there are no rules for reading this genre. People are, generally, free to choose what, where, when, why and how they read crime fiction. There are, however, different appeal factors for readers that have been described as doorways. There are four of these doorways: story; setting; character; and language:

> The *story* doorway beckons those who enjoy reading to find out what happens next. The *setting* doorway opens widest for readers who enjoy being immersed in an evocation of place or time. The doorway of *character* is for readers who enjoy looking at the world through others' eyes. Readers who most appreciate skilful writing enter through the doorway of *language* (Wyatt, 2007).

Story

The opening scenes of my original creative work take place on 6 April 1932, the day Australia received the news that the great race horse, Phar Lap, had died on a ranch just outside of Menlo Park, California in the United States (Reason, 2009, p. 36). The final pages of the novel document events that took place almost six weeks later on 13 May 1932, the day the Governor of NSW, His

Excellency Sir Philip Game, dismissed the Premier of the State, The Honourable Jack Lang (Cain, 2005, p. 310). Both events had a profound impact on Australia and Australians so I decided they would serve as bookends for the action in *Blood on their Hands* to reinforce that the work is an historical novel in addition to being a crime novel. A series of actual events, which occurred between the death of a sporting legend and the dismissal of a Government, were selected to form a scaffold for the story of Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling as they solve their first case. Utilising a calendar, Figure 3: The Timeframe of the Original Creative Work, below, assisted me in maintaining the pace of the novel. This pace builds in the second week of May 1932, and encourages readers who read for the doorway of story to keep reading to find out what happens next.

April 1932							May 1932						
S	**M**	**T**	**W**	**T**	**F**	**S**	**S**	**M**	**T**	**W**	**T**	**F**	**S**
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	39	30	31				

(Figure 3: The Timeframe of the Original Creative Work)

The historical events selected, which are as diverse as police rallies and opera performances, supported a plot that had originated in my imagination but also enhanced the story because “the truth is stranger than fiction” (A. Moore, personal communication, 1 June, 2009). This scaffold also allowed for the gradual additions of setting, characters and language.

Setting

The first line of Mark McShane’s crime novel *Ill Met by a Fish Shop on George*

Street (1969) reads:

> George Street, Sydney, is the Australian equivalent of Oxford Street and Fifth Avenue; or so they say in Sydney. Melbourne and Adelaide say otherwise. London and New York say nothing - they have never heard of George Street (p. 1).

George Street features prominently in my novel, alongside other areas of Sydney. A personal familiarity with modern Sydney, and the city's history, provided a platform for understanding what Australia's oldest city would have been like in the inter-War years. Despite this familiarity a significant amount of investigation, through the careful and time consuming study of old maps and photographs alongside period magazines and newspapers, was required to ensure the historical setting of the novel portrayed Sydney as it was in 1932 and not as it stands today. The historical novelist must maintain a careful balance though because: "The setting should be convincing, yes, and anachronisms are still things to be avoided . . . readers tend to be quite unforgiving of obvious mistakes" (Johnson, 2002), however, readers also:

> Want to believe, but they don't want to be confronted by the awful banality of crime as it is experienced by either real victims or real investigators. Readers of crime fiction don't want too much reality, they want closure (Turnbull, 1999, pp. 56-57).

Ensuring a crime novel's setting is presented as accurately as possible allows readers, who favour the doorway of setting, to believe in what they are reading enough to be entertained without experiencing too much reality. My task in

writing the original creative work was to ensure this doorway was opened to allow people to believe they are in Sydney and also believe they are in another time. More obvious items such as the types of vehicles people drove and the different types of clothing and jewellery that people wore were meticulously researched, as were less conspicuous items such as the brands of coffee which were available in the early 1930s and the shades of lipstick that were popular at the time.

Character

Memorable characters have long been a central component of crime fiction (Symons, 1992/1993, p. 79). Many people have heard of Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot even if they have never read any works by Arthur Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie. The generation of memorable characters for *Blood on their Hands* would enhance my original creative work as well as clearly locate this novel within the existing body of crime fiction. The two main protagonists, Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling, are representative of the extremes of Sydney society during the Great Depression, they are also strong individuals who can be: brave; determined; funny; sarcastic; smart; and occasionally helpless. Such a broad range of characteristics allows readers to identify with these women and their journey from amateur investigators to competent professionals.

Eddie and Catharine are both supported by their siblings. There is Eddie's brother, the retired police officer Charlie, and there are Catharine's two brothers Douglas, a petty criminal, and James, an anxious academic. The conflict, and the reluctant cooperation, between the two women and their brothers facilitate the novel's exploration into the changing representations of class and gender. Also supporting the efforts of Eddie and Catharine are Father Cronin, the Parish Priest of St Joseph's Church who is overly fond of biscuits

and the occasional cup of tea and the hopelessly romantic Captain Thomas Bligh Anderson-Brock.

The idea to introduce the additional support characters of Cleo and Larry, the two greyhounds, came from the works of Dashiell Hammett and Thorne Smith. Hammett created the Schnauzer Asta for *The Thin Man* (1934) while Smith created a number of dogs, such as Dopey in *Turnabout* (1931). Animals also feature in Australian crime fiction from the monkey Percy in Miles Franklin's *Bring the Monkey* (1933) and Geoff de Fraga's Siamese cat Quong in *Murder at the Cookout* (1968) and *Murder by Wash of Light* (1970) to Arthur Upfield's use of various animals, from camels to cockatoos, to help reinforce the uniqueness and remoteness of the Australian bush.

In addition to interesting investigators, crime fiction is also marked by the "memorable villain" (Bloom, 2008, p. 123). In *Blood on their Hands* the villains are the many men who are members of the New Guard and the Fascist Legion who appear throughout the novel. These men, except for Eric Campbell and Francis de Groot, are almost anonymous: there are limited insights into their character; their names are never revealed; and their physical descriptions are deliberately vague. This device was employed to highlight issues of gender and to reinforce a black and white world of good and evil. The 'good characters' are described sufficiently to make them memorable while the 'bad characters' are presented as featureless shadows that are allowed to fade into obscurity.

In addition to fictional characters, some important historical figures of the day appear throughout the text, including: The Honourable Jack Lang; His Excellency Sir Philip Game and his wife Lady Gwendolyn Game; and men of the New Guard such as Colonel Eric Campbell and Captain Francis de Groot. To maintain a high standard of historical accuracy I decided these people would be

portrayed within the confines of what has been documented about their lives during the early months of 1932. All of their appearances, their dialogue and their habits are drawn from primary and secondary sources. For example, Lang did eat his lunch every day at Pearson's Fish Café with his Private Secretary while Campbell and de Groot did stand in the rain to watch the NSW Police Parade on 29th April 1932 (Stone, 2005, pp. 105, 227).

Language

In Errol Flynn's (1909-1959) only crime novel, *Showdown* (1946) he comments on his central protagonist's use of language: "'Stone the Crows! Look at this!' he would bellow. He loved using, and often misusing, strange Australian expressions like that" (1946, p. 15). Language is an important aspect of many crime novels. Within my crime novel much of the action is driven by dialogue, because in many ways the characters tell their own story. It was very important to ensure therefore, that in the same way that attention to detail had been given to the setting, the different language styles adopted had to fit with the individual characters and the time in which these characters lived. This was a complex task, requiring the careful study of novels written and published during the 1930s, because while I wanted the language utilised to be true to the context and setting of the novel, I did not want to alienate modern readers. The final result sees the use of terms such as motor car, the short form for motorised carriage in common use in the 1930s, instead of car while expressions and phrases common today, such as contemporary slang and modern crime fighting terminology, are excluded.

I have also endeavoured to incorporate one of the hallmarks of modern crime fiction: the one-liner. Most of these can be found in the conversations between Eddie and Catharine; they are short, often flippant and occasionally funny. One-liners are also scattered throughout the text to help reinforce the fast pace of

the plot, generate an ironic tone similar to that found in the plays of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), add interest to the dialogue and also mimic some of the playfulness that can be seen in crime novels from the genre's Golden Age.

Drafting and Redrafting:

The Main Drivers of Change

No one but creative writers are entitled to nerves.

Arthur Upfield

An Author Bites the Dust

1948/1980, p. 9

This thesis has set out to explore Australian crime fiction, highlighting some of the key changes in the representations of class and gender while also engaging the reader with some of the ethical questions attendant on the act of murder. The main vehicle for this project is a crime novel and the first few years of my doctoral candidature were consumed with reviewing the existing body of Australian crime fiction works published between 1830 and 1980. So I could discuss these works, and their place in the history of international crime fiction, I also reviewed a diverse range of British and American authors, in particular the leaders of the Golden Age and the hardboiled movement, who have so heavily influenced Australian creators of crime fiction. In addition, I studied many critical texts addressing crime fiction. This helped to transform my general enthusiasm of individual crime fiction works into a deeper academic appreciation and understanding of the genre as a whole.

As well as being a detective novel and a suspense novel, *Blood on their Hands* is also an historical novel, a type of novel that is “set fifty or more years in the past, and one in which the author is writing from research rather than personal experience” (Johnson, 2002). The decision to write an historical piece proved to be a double-edged sword because, while using historical events assisted in

building a scaffold for my original creative work, the level of research required to present these events accurately far exceeded, I believe, the research that I would have needed to undertake for a crime novel with a more contemporary setting.

My commitment to historical accuracy had three motivations. Firstly, having studied history as an undergraduate and having been, metaphorically, beaten over the head with the heavy volumes of Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) and other great historiographers my instinct was that if I could not reference it then I should not write it. This instinct reinforced the observation that the historical novel is at war with itself because “it seeks at the same time both accuracy and illusion” (Lee, 2000). Secondly, there was a fascist plot to kidnap the Premier of NSW that was frighteningly real. I wanted people to believe this because it is an important, but often neglected, part of Australian history. The subject matter had to be handled sensitively though as the direct descendants of the men and women involved in the kidnapping plot are alive today. History is not always kind to its participants but presenting the key players, be they democrats or fascists, as accurately as possible at least allows for a respectful handling of often controversial stories.

Finally, this thesis, in addition to cataloguing some of the changes within Australian crime fiction, argues for the inability to segregate the suspension of disbelief. The suspension of disbelief is an idea that was first explored by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) in *Biographia Literaria* (1817). Writing about the composition of poetry Coleridge suggested that his:

> [E]ndeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance

> of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith (1817/1852, p. 442).

This idea, that we can take a fiction and merge it with a fact, applies to all forms of literature. Readers have the capacity to choose to suspend their disbelief and to believe that what they are reading, when they are reading it, is a true story. Elisa Galgut argues this is possible because there are dossiers, or sets, of beliefs and each person is able to hold multiple dossiers of belief (2002, p. 194). Readers who engage with the characters in my novel may know that Jack Lang lived through the political crisis of 1932, yet those same readers can also believe the action within *Blood on their Hands* and worry that the Premier will be captured and killed by the men of the New Guard if Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling do not intervene in time.

I wanted to take this idea further and argue that while readers may willingly suspend disbelief it is difficult for them to segregate those beliefs. Someone reading my novel may, temporarily at least, believe that Eddie and Catharine are fighting to save the Government of NSW. If I had made obvious errors, however, such as having Governor Game dismiss Premier Lang on the wrong date, a reader may be less willing to believe the fiction alongside the fact because if the fact cannot be trusted then the fiction cannot be trusted either. This is supported by Elisa Galgut who states that: “Of course, the author must do her share too: if the writing is clumsy, or the style dated, or the plot unconvincing, then it will be difficult to suspend disbelief” (2002, p. 194). Sue Turnbull makes the same point a little more bluntly: “Readers can get pretty picky” she writes, “if writers choose to depict a real landscape, they’d better get it right” (1999, p. 57).

Even before I began drafting my novel, I decided I would make every effort to "get it right". Striving for historical accuracy generated numerous changes to the structure and style of the novel. Some of the changes I made were simple. For example, scenes involving motor cars speeding through Sydney streets were simplified because I learnt that the first set of traffic lights were installed, at the intersection of Market and Kent Streets, in October 1933 (Daley, 2008), almost 18 months after the timeframe of my novel. Although it was disappointing that my characters were not able to run the obligatory red light during a chase scene I made a conscious choice to maintain accuracy of the facts to facilitate suspension of disbelief for the fiction.

Other changes were more complex. For example, Eddie and Catharine go to a J.C. Williamson production of *Madama Butterfly*. In the first draft of the novel the visit to the opera took place one week later and the women saw the *Barber of Seville*, an opera studied carefully so that clues could be extracted from its libretto. When the plot required the women to attend the opera a week earlier, I rewrote Chapter 16, "Socialising with Mrs Snook". I could have kept the scene as it was, a reader would have to read a theatre history or scroll through advertisements in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, to discover there was no performance in Sydney of *The Barber of Seville* on 30 April 1932. Not making the relevant changes, however, would have reduced the overall historical integrity of the original creative work.

The bulk of the historical information, used to enhance the detail of my novel, was taken from primary sources including periodicals and newspapers, maps of Sydney and NSW from the early 1930s and photographic images of people and places in Sydney from 1932. These sources informed the description of numerous elements within the text including everyday items such as accessories, clothing and lip gloss (Seib, 2009). The collection materials of

cultural institutions also proved vital, such as customs documents held by the National Archives of Australia (Bayer Products Ltd, 1929) indicating the poison thallium was available in Australia in 1932 and an old coffee tin held by the Powerhouse Museum confirmed that instant coffee was available in Australia from 1920 (Bushell's Minute Pure Coffee, 1920-1935). This detail was supported by secondary sources including biographies, critical texts and general histories.

In addition, specialised data was sourced directly from relevant agencies. For example, weather reports for each day of the period of my novel were requested from, and supplied by, the Bureau of Meteorology. I also sought specialist assistance when I decided Larry should become the fastest greyhound in the world when he made his grand sprint down Macquarie Street. Research was undertaken to find out which dog held the world speed record in 1932. Future Cutlet's record of 28.52 seconds over 500 yards (The British Greyhound Racing Board, 2008) was then given to a mathematician to convert into a speed that could be presented as miles-per-hour. Almost three weeks of work for one paragraph of just 72 words.

I also visited all of the buildings, streets and sites that still exist today, in addition to walking all of the routes described in my novel. I also created some settings including Catharine Darling's bedroom. This was done by finding a lavish art deco bedroom suite, in an antique store's online catalogue, printing it off and then enlarging all of the images and taping these images to my own pieces of furniture. Before I wrote the passages describing Catharine's bedroom I woke up, every day for a week, to burled zebrawood.

There were occasions when I had specific questions that could not be easily answered by primary or secondary sources. In these instances I made contact

with relevant professionals. For example, I contacted T.J. Andrews Funeral Services in Sydney's Newtown to obtain detailed information on hearses in use in the 1930s and how bodies were transported to and from the City Morgue. I also made several calls to the David Jones' Archivist's Office for details on the Department Store's early years. Not all of these efforts were rewarded. When I called a vintage car dealer, to enquire about the size of trunks of early model Packard[8] motor cars, the dealer asked me what sort of Packard I wanted to purchase. I explained that I could not drive, that it was my work on a crime novel, which had generated my need to know if I could fit a corpse into the trunk of a 1930s Packard. This resulted in a very long silence and a, rather loud, disconnection. In lieu of detailed dimensions of trunks for early model Packards, Robert Snook was hidden on the floor in front of the back seat of his vehicle, so the feasibility of such a hiding place could not be questioned.

I knew that The Honourable Paul Keating had been a personal friend of The Honourable Jack Lang so I wrote to Mr Keating's office requesting information I could utilise for my descriptions of Lang in my novel. I explained the many books about Lang discussed his actions while he was in office, commented on his oratory skills and stated he was a tall man but I was looking for additional details, which would allow me to bring Lang to life in my original creative work. My request resulted in one of the highlights of my research, an invitation to have afternoon tea with the former Prime Minister of Australia, a man who retains the high levels of animation and quick-wittedness that made him such a formidable parliamentarian. My conversation with Mr Keating covered many aspects of Lang's character not found in books, such as: how he used his hands in conversation; how he looked at people; and how he commanded the attention of a group, large or small, when he walked into a room.

[8] A Packard was chosen because, in 1939, this was the first type of motor car to feature an air-conditioning system (National Academy of Engineering, 2011).

It sometimes seemed that the amount of historical research being undertaken for the original creative work was clouding the true focus of my project. There were times when I felt I was writing a crime novel alongside a series of short biographies, a political treatise, a review of the Great Depression and a social history. I needed to regularly remind myself to prioritise the ideal of the detective novel to avoid the trap, which some writers fall into, of producing “barely fictionalised textbooks, in which the author's need to cram all of his prodigious research into a single novel overwhelms the plot” (Johnson, 2002). Had I incorporated all of my historical research into my original creative work, the novel would have very easily doubled in length.

Despite the challenges of writing an historical novel there are numerous benefits. There is the excitement that comes with solving a particular problem or locating that elusive detail and there is the satisfaction of producing an historically accurate work that also tells a story and creates engaging characters. One of the greatest benefits of writing an historical novel, however, is that unlike an historical text book fiction allows for bias. One can label the men of the New Guard as fascists and not have to justify it with appropriate and neutral references: Ranke would roll in his grave.

In addition to making changes that ensured the factual components of my novel conformed to the written histories of 1932, I made numerous changes to my original creative work between the first outline and the final draft. These changes were ones that would be considered a normal part of any writing process and were the product of continually working to improve the text. Each draft was read, and subsequently revised, to ensure continuity within, and the pace of, the story. These revisions also addressed the technical aspects of writing, such as: dialogue format; grammar; spelling; and syntax, which would generate a work that would be of the standard expected for a research higher

degree.

The more creative aspects of writing, such as ensuring the specific speech mannerisms of each character were consistent while descriptions of people and places were as evocative as possible, were also regularly assessed and modified to meet the needs of a novel that would be considered to be of publishable quality.

Blood on their Hands is an historical detective novel that allows a reader to believe, for a few hours at least, in Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling and their adventures as much as they believe in the Great Depression and the political crisis of 1932 that brought Australia to the brink of civil war.

CONCLUSION

Crime may indeed repell (*sic*), but - it fascinates, always.

Arthur Gask

The Red Paste Murders

1923, p. 255

Crime fiction is an important part of the Australian literary heritage as well as of our social history. In 1788 colonial Australia was established as a repository for criminals, creating the perfect environment for Australians to write and to read crime fiction. Australia's first significant example of crime fiction, *Quintus Servinton* by Henry Savery, was published in 1830. Looking at one of the few surviving three volume sets of these small, fragile books with their plain brown covers and yellowing pages, it is difficult to imagine that it is the first Australian publication in a genre that would grow to be one of the country's, and one of the world's, most popular.

In 1980 Peter Corris and Gabrielle Lord launched their crime fiction writing careers. These authors assisted in sparking a movement that saw many crime writers aim "for a more literary audience, exploiting genre conventions to explore serious political and social issues" (Morrison, 2006, p. 259). Two of these social issues, class and gender, have been investigated through an original creative work and accompanying theoretically informed critical reflection. In addition, this thesis has discussed some of the ethical questions that circulate around the act of murder.

The plot for *Blood on their Hands* is driven by two different crimes: a series of

thefts from the poor box of St Joseph's Church; and the murder of Robert Snook. As Eddie Jones and Catharine Darling begin their investigations it becomes apparent that these crimes are connected to each other and to a plot to kidnap the Premier of NSW, The Honourable Jack Lang. These criminal acts clearly locate my novel within the crime fiction genre generally and, more specifically, the detective and suspense crime fiction sub-genres.

Throughout my novel ideas of class are explored, primarily, through the two main protagonists Eddie and Catharine and the differences between the two women, which reinforce their class identifications. The class system is still important for many writers producing crime fiction but this importance has declined as class lines blur and social mobility increases. This trend is reflected in the original creative work as Eddie's and Catharine's class-consciousness diminishes, and they experience shifts in how they perceive their own social standing throughout the text. The presentation of these evolving attitudes allows readers to witness, in a single work, how some class values and views have altered over 150 years of Australian crime fiction.

The issue of gender stereotyping is also explored in *Blood on their Hands*. At the story's outset Eddie and Catharine are typical amateur investigators. When the story concludes, however, both women are fiercely independent and very determined, characteristics associated with professional female investigators that are familiar to so many readers today. This transformation thus enacts the expanding roles of women within the genre, specifically the construction of gender in Australian crime fiction between 1830 and 1980.

The original creative work has also utilised a range of plot devices, characterisation and dialogue to engage readers with some of the ethical questions that may be occasioned by the act of murder. The novel offers two

different, but equally compelling if not valid, reasons to take a human life. One murderer believes she is protecting her country while another believes she is stopping a serial killer from striking again. The purpose of this contrasting enactment is to contribute to the Australian body of crime fiction by creating an Australian equivalent for the British and American novels where murderers take lives based on ethical imperatives. The two murders, within *Blood on their Hands*, also seek to encourage readers to consider their views on the right and wrong reasons to take a human life as well as the social construction of murder.

This research is presented with the aim of contributing to the existing scholarship on Australian crime fiction. It is also anticipated that this project may encourage further study into Australian crime fiction, which has often sat in the shadows of the British and the American contributions to this genre. There is certainly sufficient material to draw upon for further investigations, as Australians have adopted crime fiction in its forms of: short story; novel; and play and have readily accepted all of crime fiction's sub-genres. These sub-genres have been identified and defined, in this thesis, as a contribution to the knowledge of crime fiction in Australia and around the world.

This thesis has also sought to engage in discussions on the suspension of disbelief. In particular, this work has highlighted some of the issues that writers of crime novels, which are also historical novels, may face and has looked at some of the benefits of working to maintain historical integrity in crime fiction writing. This project, in addition to enhancing my overall understanding of my craft, has developed my ability to balance the competing demands of writing a good story with an imagined plot line and characters while accurately portraying a series of well-known events and important historical figures.

The books published between the early efforts of Henry Savery and the more

recent works of Peter Corris and Gabrielle Lord tell stories about criminals: that we can despise; that we can admire; that we can feel sorry for; and that we can occasionally identify with. They also tell stories about us: about our large coastal cities and our small bush towns; about how we have transformed since our days as a penal colony; about our social norms and values; and how those norms and values have changed.

This thesis has thus explored the changing representations of class and gender within Australian crime fiction and has also confronted some of the ethical questions occasioned by the act of murder. I have conducted these investigations through my original creative work, *Blood on their Hands*, which sets out to tell not only the story of two murders but also the story of Australian society as refracted through its crime fiction.

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