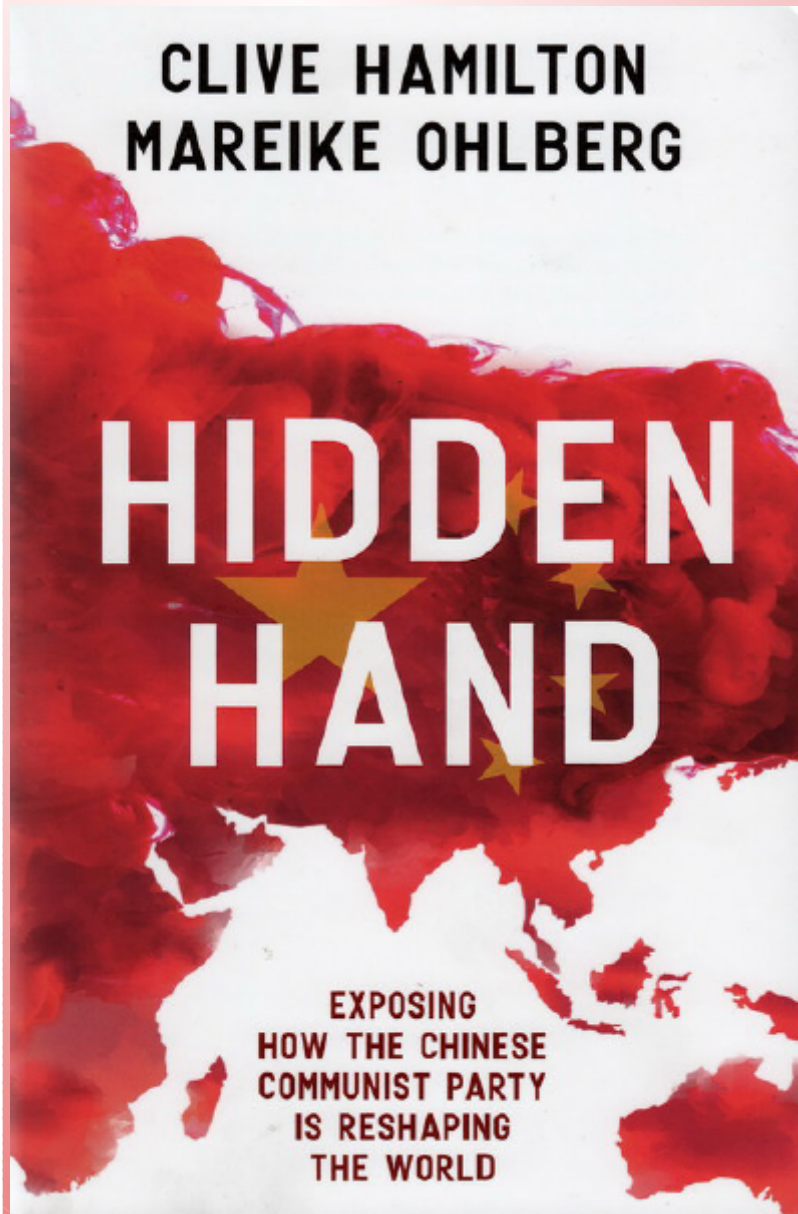


Cat's Eye Weekly

alias *The Ferret*

No. 133

18th September 2020



Inside:

When hope is all you have

How China is changing the world

Shanghai: Building the Jewel of Asia

Lockdown: A short story

Summer & Winter Tales

Why there are further pandemics to come

Fallout from Covid-19

OzChild: Children Australia

Saigon Sunset Chapter 4

Pet Medical Crisis

The Animal Re-homing service

<http://users.tpg.com.au/genetree/catseye7.html>

Email: genetree@tpg.com.au



Any excuse for stirring up the universe

*Edited by
Graham Price*

Once was weekly now highly irregular in more ways than one

HIGHLIGHTS

**Building the
Jewel of
Asia**



**OzChild
Kids**



**The Animal
Rehoming
Service**



**Mercury
O'Proud
political
correspondent**



The editor's desk

Some people have called the Covid-19 pandemic 'a war', but although it is full of stress and anxiety for many, it is not a war. We are not surrounded by barbed-wire; there is not going to be a knock on the door that will result in being dragged away to an unknown destination, never to return; we haven't been forced into the total darkness of a dungeon or prison cell as many have been in past times, or even today as in Russia, North Korea, Iran or China. It is restrictive for many, especially those with very young children, but it is not a war, nor does it have the results of a war. We haven't had our freedom taken away from us like our young academic, Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert*, who has been in Iran's stinking low-life prison for two years at Evin and recently moved to a desert hellhole at Qarchak to serve out her sentence of 10 years. It's not a war, it's a contingency — a contingency that has to be controlled. Don't call it a war or the result of a war. It is not. Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, Krakow-Plasow, Ravensbrook, or any of the other 44,000 transit, labour, or concentration death camps throughout Europe controlled by the Nazis were the result of a war. * See page 3.

Gratitude! Such a word has great meaning for humankind. Being grateful for small things that occur each day is building up a sense of happiness or contentment. Some folk seem to have forgotten this very necessary attitude toward well-being. Cultivate it and reap the rewards.

The way of things. I was somewhat amused to find a private secondary college here in Melbourne had moved with the times, titling all students – staff included – as Mx, which immediately reminded me of the transport company FedX and Melbourne's recent free newspaper Mx, which of course was gender neutral, or was it?. Then there's the motorcycle spare parts company MX, and one could go on. Mx is usually pronounced Mixs or Muxs, which reminds me of the rabbits disease, Myxomatosis. If you wish to pronounce it as Mex, then that reminds me of Ginger Meggs, the larrikin comic book character of my Australian childhood. Oh my. What this change is doing, of course, is challenging the 'anachronistic' titles Mr, Mrs, and that one with perhaps a not necessarily implied sadness associated with it—Miss. But why use the letter M at all? People do have names. Though in all of this, I do wonder what now becomes of the magical and scintillating French titles Mademoiselle, Madame, and Monsieur?

And what is your attitude toward the word 'belief'? People often say "I believe, or, it is my belief..." But wouldn't it be more to the point to say "My understanding is...." Not so set in concrete! So, let's be open to new discoveries because as time has emboldened us, all things change.

And finally, for the most fragile amongst us, those who are not coping too well with this sudden lockdown imposed upon us, do seek out help — reach out into the care of those around you. It won't last forever. Nothing does. In the meantime seek connections via the internet, the telephone, the iPhone. Keep connected, and as long as you are connected then that's all that matters. There is always someone there for you.

Humans are like dust covers on books — they don't last forever. Cherish them while you may.

**Feedback to Cat's Eye Weekly
is always welcome.
Click onto my purrfect nose!**





When hope is all you have



Dr Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who may not look the same if and when she is returned to Australia.

She was in Iran to attend a conference arranged by the University of Religions and Denominations at Qom, a city south of Iran's capital, Tehran. You would think that would have been enough to establish her as a dedicated researcher. After all, you don't get these invitations unless you are well known to the organisers.

Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who had graduated from Melbourne University, was arrested by Iran's Revolutionary Guard in September 2018 on a charge of spying. Spying at what and spying for whom has never been established. However, Australia is seen by Iran as to be too close politically and militarily to America, and this factor may well have influenced Iran authorities in arresting Kylie Moore-Gilbert. Dr Moore-Gilbert was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in one of Iran's worst jails, Evin prison. Sources state that the conditions inside Evin prison are horrendous, which include strip searches every time a prisoner is moved, blindfolds used when being transferred from cell to cell and where screams of inmates may be heard continuously through the night. Dr Moore-Gilbert has no human rights while in detention and the psychological trauma she is no doubt experiencing would be devastating.

All she has is hope — hope that somehow the Australian government may find some way of having her released through diplomatic channels. The likelihood of that happening is minute because she has now been transferred to the hellhole prison at Qarchack, which is a desert complex well away from the capital, Tehran. Apparently, this move was carried out as a punishment, but punishment for what?

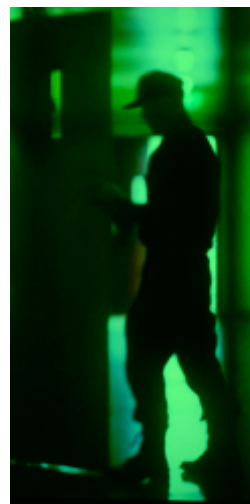
Dr. Majid Rafizadeh, a native speaker of both Arabic and Persian languages and a world renowned political scientist, recently reported on Iran's prisons. "Last week, wrestling champion Navid Afkari, was given a death sentence along with 74 lashes His two brothers were also arrested; Vahid Afkari was given a prison sentence of 54 years and 74 lashes, and Habib Afkari received 27 years and 74 lashes. Navid Afkari had smuggled out a letter, which read in part: 'For around 50 days I had to endure the most horrendous physical and psychological tortures . . . They would place a plastic bag on my head and torture me until I suffocated to the very brink of death. They also poured alcohol into my nose.' "

Dr Majid Rafizadeh went on: "The Iranian regime has significantly ratcheted up its human rights violations. The United Nations and the European Union, which preach about human rights, completely turn a blind eye to the regime's abuses. According to a recent report by Amnesty International released on September 2, various branches of Iran's government, including the judiciary system, law enforcement and the Ministry of Intelligence, are involved in these abuses and crimes.

"The report stated: 'Iran's police, intelligence and security forces, and prison officials have committed, with the complicity of judges and prosecutors, a catalogue of shocking human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, against those detained.' "

Amnesty International also reports: 'The organization's research found that victims were frequently hooded or blindfolded; punched, kicked and flogged; beaten with sticks, rubber hose-pipes, knives, batons and cables; suspended or forced into holding painful stress positions for prolonged periods; deprived of sufficient food and potable water; placed in prolonged solitary confinement, sometimes for weeks or even months; and denied medical care for injuries sustained during the protests or as a result of torture.'

Dr Kylie Moore-Gilbert is the author of numerous articles on the Middle East — in particular the Arab Spring — and one article in particular, may have been used as an excuse by Iran to imprison her. She wrote about an uprising in a neighbouring country to Iran in 2011 to which Iranian officials may have taken offence, though this is uncertain. Other scholars consider there was no harm to Iran in her article. Diplomatic channels appear not to be working, in that she has been in prison for almost two years. All she clings to is hope — hope that one day soon she will be released from this grave injustice to her body, mind and soul. •





How China is changing the world

The book everyone should be reading

Clive Hamilton is Professor at Charles Sturt University in Western Australia, who has held visiting academic positions at Oxford and Yale. Mareike Ohlberg is a researcher of China based in Berlin. She has an MA in East Asian Studies from Columbia University and a PhD in Chinese Studies from the University of Heidelberg. Together, they have researched deeply into the threat that comes from the Chinese Communist Party in its attempt to dominate and subdue other nations, whether East or West. The threat is very real, make no mistake about that. The age of old empires may well be over, but the age of new empires is well past beginning.

China is building a new empire throughout the world, though the ruling power — the Chinese Communist Party — would refute that. Their version of China's expansion is simply engaging in goodwill and giving a helping hand to countries that need it by building roads, bridges, ports and other infrastructure. But it is not as simple as that and China's "good intentions" come at a price — that price being freedom and independence.

This book has woken a sleeping world and translations apart from German and English, are now in preparation, mainly into Swedish, Italian, Dutch and Korean. Hamilton and Ohlberg don't deal in fiction, they deal in proof. They show how the manipulation of numerous Western universities is being carried out by the CCP in Beijing; how the Confucius Institutes are a soft-power infiltration into Western universities.

The selection of staff at these institutes within Western universities is decided by the CCP, and professors feel pressure to build good relations with them, while at the same time the CCP staff keep a watchful eye on anything that goes against Beijing policy. In 2013 the University of Sydney (*Hidden Hand* pp228-233) was accused of cancelling a visit by the Dalai Lama to avoid "damaging its ties with China, including the funding it received for its Confucius Institute. When the event was pushed off-campus, and use of the university's logo forbidden, vice chancellor Michael Spence said it was 'in the best interests of researchers across the university'".

In 2018, in Melbourne, Victoria University cancelled the screening of a documentary critical of Confucius Institutes. (*Hidden Hand* p230) "The university was warned of an impending problem by the director of the campus's Confucius Institute, Professor Colin Clark, and the university caved in when the Chinese consulate applied pressure. When it was contacted by the film's promoter, the university lied, claiming that the theatre had been double-booked and no other was available. On the scheduled day, a number of suitable rooms were empty".

"When the Chinese side was negotiating an agreement for a Confucius Institute at Stanford University, it tried to exclude all discussion of sensitive issues like Tibet." Stanford refused. "Chinese embassies and consulates frequently attempt direct interference in Western Universities. In 2018 the University of Salamanca in Spain cancelled its Taiwan Cultural Week after the Chinese embassy complained that the representative of Taiwan had been referred to as 'ambassador'. . . Chinese students are another pressure point on campuses. At the seminal 2015 United Front Work Conference, Xi Jinping described Chinese students studying abroad as one of the 'three new focuses' of united front work. Anxious to prevent them being 'infected' with Western ideas, the CCP makes extensive efforts to keep them in line. Many students are loosely organised through Chinese Students and Scholars Associations."

The University of California: "After the Dalai Lama visited in 2017, the Chinese government informed the university it would refuse to fund scholars who wished to study there. . . An executive training program at the University of Maryland was reportedly suspended after a speech by the Dalai Lama on campus in 2013, and again after Yang Shuping's 2017 graduation speech. . . Many universities in the West have shown by their actions (*Hidden Hand* p237) that they are not committed to academic freedom, and often do not understand what it is."

News media: All Chinese language media in Australia and other Western countries is effectively controlled by the CCP in Beijing. There are a few exceptions, those being "Mingjing News, Epoch Times, New Tang Dynasty TV. (*Hidden Hand* p177)." Numerous independent media companies in the West have been taken over by CCP backed business people, where





any criticism of CCP policies is excluded. **Even LinkedIn** has been associated with Beijing influence when in “December 2018 [LinkedIn] blocked the account of dissident Fengsuo Zho, informing him that while we strongly support freedom of expression, we recognised when we launched that we would need to adhere to the requirements of the Chinese government in order to operate in China. In the same month LinkedIn also blocked the account of Briton Peter Humphreys, a corporate-fraud investigator imprisoned in China for what he said were false charges and who was forced to make a televised confession.”



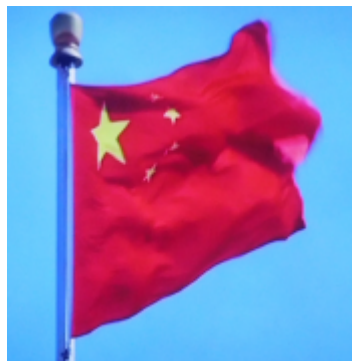
Hamilton and Ohlberg find interesting influences of CCP-backed propaganda on YouTube, Twitter, and other social media sites such as WeChat. On Twitter, in particular “paid ads are also used on Twitter to promote China’s political system and the CCP’s line on Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and other sensitive topics. . . On YouTube, Party-state media have posted clips in formats mean to appeal to younger watchers . . . the fact that the CCP has been using these platforms while simultaneously blocking them in China is another example of how it exploits the openness of democracies. (*Hidden Hand* p173) ”.

Trolls: “The CCP also mobilises a vast cohort of internet trolls on Western social media, known colloquially as the ‘50 cent army’. Many of these are government employees masquerading as private citizens. The best estimate we have is that these 50-centers generate 450 million comments on social media each year”.

China Watch: This is a supplement that is inserted into Western newspapers and controlled by the CCP. Among the newspapers, past and present, which have inserted this supplement reads like a who’s who of the industry when newspapers were [and still are] struggling to stay in the black (*Hidden Hand* p175): “*The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *Le Figaro*, *El Pais* and *Handelsblatt*, among others.” We’re surprised that *The Guardian* wasn’t mentioned, but then it’s not that important as a newspaper.

China goes further: Not content with organising Chinese language media in Western countries and promoting media inserts in Western newspapers, the CCP is intent on going deeper. “In 2014 the influential American business magazine *Forbes* was bought by a Hong-Kong based investment consortium . . . In 2017 a regular column in *Forbes* by Anders Corr was terminated after he wrote an article about the influence of tycoon Ronny Chan in the Asia Society’s Hong Kong branch . . . In 2015 “the Alibaba Group acquired Hong Kong’s venerable *South China Morning Post*. It was revealed in 2018 that Alibaba’s CEO, Jack Ma, a revered figure in China, was a longstanding member of the CCP.” (*Hidden Hand* p180). *South China Morning Post* now gives a platform to a growing number of pro-CCP voices.

There’s worse to come: The People’s Liberation Army of China collaborates with Western universities. (*Hidden Hand* pp155-156). “Forensic research by Alex Joske has uncovered the extensive network of collaboration between researchers in Western universities and scientists linked to China’s military. He found that since 2007 the PLA has sent more than 2500 military scientists and engineers to study abroad, in the process developing research relationships with hundreds of top scientists across the globe. The highest number are to be found in the Five Eyes nations (the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), along with Germany and Singapore. Western scientists had written hundreds of scientific papers with Chinese military scientists. Some [Chinese military scientists] claim to be from the Zhengzhou Information Science and Technology Institute, which, judging by the number of publications in which it’s cited, is one of the world’s leading centres of computer science and communications engineering . . . It’s scientists have published, at times in collaboration with US researchers, over 900 papers in major science journals, including the prestigious *Physical Review Letters*, one of the world’s top physics journals, and *The Computer Journal*, published by Oxford University. Yet, the Zhengzhou Information Science and Technology Institute does not exist. It has no website, no phone number and no buildings. It does have a post office box in Henan province’s capital city, Zhengzhou, but that’s about it. The name is in fact a cover for the university that trains China’s military hackers and signals intelligence officers, the People’s Liberation Army Information Engineering University, which is based in Zhengzhou . . . which is in effect its cyberwarfare training school.”



Looking for trouble: “Scientists at Australian universities also have research collaborations with leading Chinese weapons and defence-systems manufacturers, such as the Aviation Industry Corporation of China, the major supplier of military aircraft to the PLA Air Force, and the China Electronics Technology Group Corporation, primarily a military research organisation”.

Theft: “In August 2018 it was reported that 1.5 million medical records had been stolen from the Singapore government’s health database, in an attack experts believe came from state-based hackers in China . . . The Singapore theft followed a massive hack in the US in 2014 that sucked up the records of 4.5 million patients across 206 hospitals, and another in 2015 that saw up to 80 million records stolen from a health insurer . . . That same year [2014]



the medical records of an unspecified number of Australian soldiers, including special forces operating overseas, were sent to China by a health contractor that also has facilities in Guangdong. The medical records of current and future, political, military and public service leaders are likely now in the hands of China's intelligence services."

Huawei: "A 2005 RAND report noted that China's military is believed to be the company's political patron as well as an important customer . . . In 2018 Huawei equipment was implicated in the theft of confidential information from the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa . . . As one employee in Shenzhen is reported to have said, 'The state wants to use Huawei, and it can use it if it wants.' In Poland in January 2019, Huawei employee Wang Weijing was arrested on suspicion of spying for China . . . But with understanding spreading of the risks of dealing with Huawei, prestigious universities have been cutting their ties. Oxford University, Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of California, Berkeley, have announced they will no longer accept funding from Huawei."

Belt and Road strategy: "As of 2019 over sixty countries, accounting for two-thirds of the world's population, had signed on to the BRI or intended to do so. (*Hidden Hand* pp115-118). Across Eurasia, Indochina and Southeast Asia, Chinese state-owned and state-liked companies are investing in roads, ports, airports, railways, energy networks and dams. Ports are particularly valued because of China's dependence on sea trade, and also for their strategic function, in times of peace as well as conflict . . . 40 per cent of the Philippines' national electricity network was sold to the giant state-owned State Grid Corporation of China . . . State Grid also owns a large share of the electricity networks **in the Australian states of Victoria and South Australia** . . . In Europe, Chinese companies now own airports, seaports and wind farms across nine countries. (They also own the tyre-maker Pirelli, the Swiss agrichemicals company Syngenta, a large slice of Daimler, a slew of office towers in London's financial hubs, and thirteen professional soccer teams.) All or part of the ports of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Zeebrugge are Chinese-owned. The state owned China Ocean Shipping Company owns the major Greek port of Piraeus and has a majority share in the Spanish port-management firm Noatum, and so controls the ports of Bilbao and Valencia. . . China also has a growing naval presence in the Mediterranean".

Exporting communism: (*Hidden Hand* pp185-204). "The Party, especially under Xi Jinping, was not content to allow traditional culture to be disinterred without making itself the legitimate custodian of culture. The *Party* would decide what is authentic Chinese culture so that there could be no culture outside politics. The CCP's 'Culture Going Global' strategy, set out in documents emerging from Party Congress starting in 2011 and ramped up under Xi Jinping, is designed to export not Chinese culture, but 'red culture'; in other words, CCP values. As the *People's Daily* put it, 'Building leadership power over culture is one of the CCP's cultural missions.' In a 2017 article Liu Runwei—former deputy editor-in-chief of *Qiushi*, the flagship journal of the CCP's Central Committee—made a distinction between 'traditional Chinese culture' and revolutionary 'socialist advanced culture'. Liu, also president of the Chinese Red Culture Research Association, wrote that the former must succumb to the latter"

Hidden Hand is a large paperback of 425 pages. The extensive list of notes takes up 113 pages. In an afterword, Hamilton and Ohlberg ponder how the West should respond to [China's] threats to individual freedom and human rights. "Democracies won't be able to change China, but they can defend their most important institutions . . . All must draw upon the strengths of open societies while simultaneously addressing their weaknesses. Countries will be required to accept the short-term costs that will come with the end of unrestrained engagement with China. And better coordination among allies is vital".

"The CCP prefers to operate in the shadows, and sunlight is often the best disinfectant. The responsibility for shedding light on the Party's activities lies with the news media, government agencies, scholars and political leaders. Of these, the media ought to be at the forefront. Free speech and a free media are the enemies of the Chinese Communist Party and must be protected at all costs . . . Scholars, too, must step up, because the very idea of the university is under threat".

Paul Monk,* writing in *The Weekend Australian* July 4-5 2020, states "In short, *Hidden Hand* is a work of scholarship, not a rash polemic, as hostile critics asserted of *Silent Invasion*. It should inform debate in this country . . . It should be required reading for our diplomats, intelligence analysts, military officers and businesspeople — to say nothing of premiers and former prime ministers. Hopefully, Chinese and Japanese language versions will follow the Korean one. A documentary film or TV series would be a good follow-up".

And there is more, much more. Considering the stealth of China's infiltration into the South Pacific region, this book should find itself on the shelves of every secondary school library in Australia and New Zealand. But will this important book find itself on the shelves of every Australian and NZ university library? That question needs to be answered. •

*Paul Monk was head of the China desk in the Defence Intelligence Organisation in 1994-95. He is the author of 10 books, including *Thunder from the Silent Zone: Rethinking China* (2005) and *Dictators and Dangerous Ideas* (2018).

Hidden Hand

By Clive Hamilton & Mareike Ohlberg

Our copy from *The Avenue Bookshop* SAUD32.99

Also available through Dymocks and Booktopia

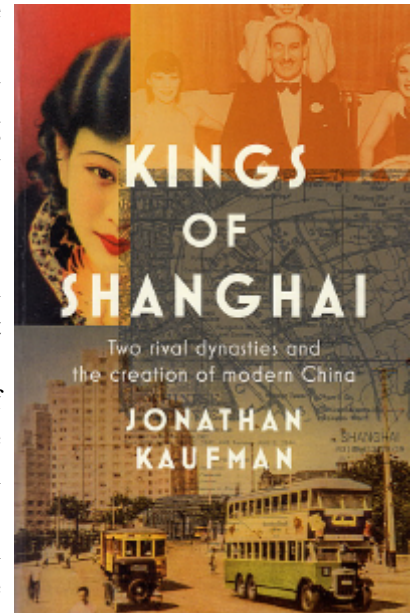


Building the Jewel of Asia

So, who really built Shanghai? Who turned it from a swamp into the glittering and swinging city of the 1920s? The Americans, the Chinese, French, British or who? Historian, Jonathan Kaufman, makes it very plain that the largest influence in building Shanghai's stunning infrastructure in its early days, was not mainly due to the efforts of any of the above mentioned, but to a handful of Jewish merchants originally from Baghdad.

The book *Kings of Shanghai*, reads like an adventure novel with the Jewish families, Sassoon and Kadoorie, dominating the landscape of not only Baghdad, but also of Bombay and Shanghai.

After settling in Bombay from Bhagdad and enjoying the luxury of associating with the British colonial rulers, David Sassoon built up an empire of trade with Britain and other European countries and also with China where, in competition with the giant firm of Jardine, Matheson & Co, he supplied opium to the Chinese. Sassoon even bankrolled the future King of England. Eventually, David's grandson Victor Sassoon, controlled so much of Shanghai's international establishment that he undoubtedly became the Sassoon family's most successful entrepreneur. Partially crippled due to an air force plane crash during WWI, Victor managed quite cheerfully with the help of a walking stick and sometimes, crutches. That didn't prevent him having a sex life, and during his time in Shanghai he had an affair with the somewhat bohemian writer, Emily Hahn. Victor was also fond of taking nude photographs of some of his female friends.



Victor Sassoon with friends

A product of Harrow and Cambridge, Victor was knighted by the British for his works of charity in Bombay. Victor moved in Royal circles when he was in Britain and while in India had become one of the largest employers. He built hospitals and schools. *Kings of Shanghai* p115: "His staff boasted that, in public, the British governor-general often walked behind Victor Sassoon". But despite his wealth and position, certain British officials still looked at Victor with disdain, considering him and his wealthy family as upstarts.

Nevertheless, Shanghai, already under much of the Sassoons grip, became Victor's prime target. Along with the Jewish Kadoorie family, the Sassoons became the greatest landowners and entrepreneurs that Shanghai had ever seen. *Kings of Shanghai* p117-118: "Victor bought the most prominent site on the Bund, a full city block, at the intersection of Nanjing Road and the waterfront, and began construction of a new family headquarters, to be known as Sassoon House. It would be nine stories tall with a copper tower on top—fifty feet taller than the current tallest building, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, a few blocks down the Bund and far grander than the Kadoories' recently completed Majestic Hotel a mile away . . . It would carry the name Marco Polo used for China: Cathay".

"Victor recruited the manager of the Cathay from the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay, the general manager of the hotel company from Claridge's in London, the general manager of the Cathay's nightclub from Berlin, adding a dash of Weimar Germany spice and decadence".



Elly Kadoorie with his sons, Lawrence (left) and Horace.

Victor built another hotel, the Metropole, containing apartment and business premises: Grosvenor House, Embankment House, Cathay Mansions and Hamilton House. "All with regal British names. Together they offered tenants 1,000 air-conditioned bedrooms and suites—some spread over three levels . . . by 1935 Victor had recouped his entire investment in Shanghai alone, worth 87 million Yuan, or \$460 million in today's dollars. To his property empire, Victor now added textile mills, timber trading, shipyards, the Shanghai bus company, auto dealers, storage services, and a brewery."

Meanwhile, the Kadoories had not been idle. Elly Kadoorie, after building up a considerable portion of Shanghai, had decided that Hong Kong might be a safer bet and began selling up much of his property—to which Victor Sassoon quickly bought. Both families were now associated with not only Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces, but also with the rising



Communists. Victor came to know, quite intimately, Sun Yat-sen and Madame Sun — also Zhou Enlai.

The Sassoons and the Kadoories also built up Hong Kong, in particular Elly Kadoorie who helped set up China Light and Power which lit up Hong Kong. His son, Horace, illuminated poor Chinese villagers' homes in the New Territories and gave them micro-loans to set up their own businesses. Horace was also involved in seeking a better class of pig for the farmers from abroad.

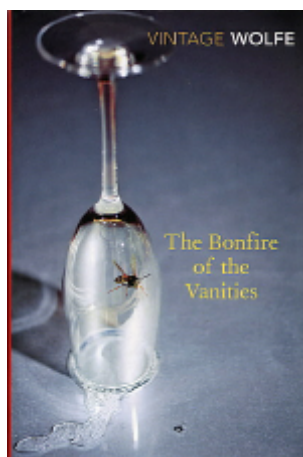
Dark days came with the Japanese invasion when the Kadoories were incarcerated in an internment camp at Stanley, Hong Kong, with the exception of Horace who was back in Shanghai at the time. Horace was more or less tolerated by the Japanese even though he was under 'house arrest'. Victor Sassoon was in India helping to raise money for wounded British soldiers. By the end of the war there were 18,000 Jewish refugees from Europe in Shanghai, mainly due to the efforts of Horace Kadoorie and a Chinese businessman and diplomat, Ho Feng-Shan.

Jonathan Kaufman has written a fascinating historical yarn about the Jewish merchants who were mainly responsible for the building of Shanghai — and Hong Kong — along with British bureaucrats and businessmen. So grand and forward looking were the Sassoons and the Kadoories that even when the Communists took over in 1949, their high officials recognised the importance of the infrastructure in place and efforts have been made — during later years to restore much of the older and exotic buildings of the colonial period. Naturally, mistakes were made throughout the early decades. Alongside the glittering International Settlement during the late 1800s and early 1900s, thousands of Chinese were living in poverty, virtually ignored by the international community. •



The Bund in Shanghai in the 1930s

Kings of Shanghai by Jonathan Kaufman
Little Brown, London paperback \$AUD 32.99
Our copy from *The Avenue Bookshop*
Also available through **Dymocks and Booktopia**



The Bonfire of the Vanities

If you are a politically correct person, a progressive elite, or one of the new 'woke' individuals, you will not like this book. In fact, you will hate it for its honesty. However, if you are open-minded and enjoy freedom of expression, this novel by Tom Wolfe will delight no end. I never thought that I would enjoy a novel about New York — let alone one set in Harlem and The Bronx — but this book is absolutely hilarious. Wolfe takes aim at so-called white privilege, so-called black power whereby the majority of police and city officials are black, brown or similar. Wolfe rips apart the justice system, the whole police department, religiosity, the clever whites of Wall Street. Written for the 1980s, but extremely relevant for the 2020s, this 720 page of explosive gunpowder will slam you back in your chair with 'This is sooooo good. I don't believe anyone could write like this!' Pure Wolfe.

Available at Dymocks
Vintage Random House paperback, \$AUD 14.99



Lockdown

A short story by Graham Price

Kate looked at the upside down river cruising its muddy waters to the sea and thought that the world's most livable city, as it was said of recent times, wasn't so. What nut thought of that, she considered? Oh well, compared to other cities the old Yarra of Melbourne wasn't polluted all that much, but on a dull winter's day it sort of merged with the state of one's mind — insipid, pea soupish, thick as . . . the cloth mask on her face was irritating, but necessary because of Covid health restrictions.

She alighted from the train with three others at Flinders Street. Restrictions had kept the numbers down to near zero. The station was deserted with only a cleaner, two station staff, and oh God . . . two police officers over there wearing sky blue face masks. The short, stubby female constable came toward her, pistol holster rocking crazily and hanging so low on her right leg that Kate thought looked rather comical . . . any further down the leg and a kid in a pram could snatch the 40 calibre pistol, or an AFL footballer could swiftly punt kick it right out of its holster . . . Keystone Cops were they? The taller senior constable male stood back, hands behind his bum.

Shorty stared at her. "Good morning. What is your reason for being here?"

Kate shivered a little. "I can't get toner supplies within my own suburb, so have to go to Officeworks at Queen Vic for a pick-up."

"Some identification, please . . . a drivers licence?"

Kate froze. Oh, the bitch would have to ask that! She took the licence out of her wallet and handed it over.

Shorty looked at the piece of plastic. "You live in Glen Iris! You're well outside the required five kilometre restricted zone."

Kate glanced at the male cop for some sign of sympathy, but he was looking at a young couple who were entering the station. "I live in Prahran. Been there just over a year."

Shorty screwed up her nose and unconsciously tapped her fingers along the butt of the 40 calibre pistol with her free hand. "That's an offence, you know — not changing the address on your licence!"

Oh sugar, thought Kate. I've had it now. "Sorry. I forgot about it. Meant to do it the other week, but got busy."

Kate thought that the cop seemed to be chewing her cud like a Jersey cow and was a little red in the face. She could lose a bit of weight, too, or was it all that heavy gear hanging around her gut? Shorty seemed to firm her feet on the concrete, as if getting ready to make a move. "What other identification have you got?"

Kate swallowed and rooted through her wallet. Several plastic cards fell onto the floor. She bent to pick them up and realised that even in the cold station she was perspiring. Bloody bitch! Why is she so aggressive? She pulled out a folded piece of paper from her wallet. "Here's a prescription from my doctor made out to my Prahran address. Will that bloody-well do?"

Shorty seemed to be running out of patience. "No need to be rude. Just doing my job." Kate stared at the shiny handcuffs at the side of the thick black belt around the officer's waist. They looked enormous and bloody dangerous, too. This was fast getting out of hand. The bitch wanted to arrest her . . . wanted to slam her into the back of a paddy wagon and chuck her into a police station for a grilling! That's what they seemed to be doing these days under this crazy government lock-down. Kate fumbled in her wallet again for some more identification, but she didn't think she had anything else. The cards fell onto the concrete again. She was flustered . . . didn't know what to do. Shorty took a menacing step toward her. She's bloody-well going to arrest me! Kate stepped back, holding her hands up in protest.

The male senior constable also stepped forward. They're both coming for me . . . hell . . . I've got to get out of here! But the senior constable stooped down and picked up the cards. He handed them to Kate whose hands were shaking.

"There you are, ma'am. The doctor's prescription is quite adequate. Now, don't forget to have your address changed as soon as possible. Enjoy your day."

He turned away and Shorty followed him. Kate stared at them as they walked toward the exit. Shorty looked back at her once and Kate was certain that if Shorty came across her again, it would be curtains.

Trams were running up Swanston Street, but she thought she'd walk — get a take-a-way coffee, though she could do with a swift shot or two of brandy. She could already feel it tingling down her throat. She turned the collar of her coat up and pulled her beret firmly onto her head. The face mask was irritating her.



Queen Vic was all but deserted. She walked through blurred shadows down to Officeworks to collect the printer toner she'd ordered online, and received it with a minimum of fuss. No Keystone Cops around, thank God. The confrontation had shaken her up somewhat. What was this country coming to? Bloody dictators.

Stepping out of the gloom of Queen Vic's closed shop fronts, she saw the footpaths empty of humans. The city looked like that old nuclear film *On the Beach*, when Melbourne was the last city, almost barren of movement . . . a cold grey swat of lifeless buildings with no illumination. Normally, the footpaths of Swanston Street would be flooded with university students, Chinese mostly, some Indians, some Indonesians and Malaysians, all humming about their business, laughing and enjoying their time in Melbourne. Now, almost everything was dead. Would it ever come back to normal again? Hmm, might be better to pop over to Melbourne Central Station to catch her train home. Didn't wish to run into Shorty ever again.

There were only three people on the platform. Damn, she thought, she'd forgotten that she'd have to change trains at Flinders Street. Oh well, just have to hurry and hope that Shorty and her boss were elsewhere. She found that she was shivering again.

She had to wait more than twenty minutes for a train. There was some disruption on the track. She was getting more annoyed. But changing at Flinders Street was no problem and she scurried down the steps onto the platform, hoping against all hope that Shorty wasn't about. There were two Protective Service Officers on the platform, but they ignored her. She was standing in the cold with the wind whipping at her coat and snapping the sides of her slacks. Damn winter . . . damn Covid business . . . damn nosey police officers. She felt exhausted and she definitely would have a shot or two of brandy when she arrived home. Her train swung into view within minutes and she stepped aboard, trying to avoid touching anything, but there was no one in the carriage and she didn't think there were many others within the train. People were obeying the law and staying home. But there were more police officers at Prahran as the train pulled in. She was shaking. Not again!

A police sergeant waved her on; it seemed they were only interested in people traveling further out of the five kilometre restriction zone. She expelled a good strong breath of air through her mask and headed for home.

She struggled with the key into her front door lock. She was becoming more annoyed than ever and savagely shook the door handle. The lock eventually clicked and she entered the flat. At last, all that bloody strain simply for some toner for her printer! This working from home business was getting to her. She slammed the door behind her, dragged the mask off and threw it to the floor. Shouldn't do that, she thought, but what the hell. Pick it up later. She needed that brandy.

She was pouring a good serve into a glass when Dougall, the Scottish terrier, came rushing into the kitchen. He ran around her, tongue lolling, eyes sparkling, huffing somewhat. Short tail vibrating.

"Oh, you're such a dear. Love you!" She picked him up and headed for the living room, completely forgetting about the brandy. She settled him beside her on the leather couch and flicked on the remote. The TV screen bloomed white, then colour and a news presenter appeared, talking about the Covid crisis. Suddenly, she remembered the brandy, but the iPhone in her slacks pocket began to buzz. She took it out. Oh, her son, Stephen!

"How's it going, Steve!"

"Just come off duty. Had to arrest a woman who wasn't wearing a mask and wouldn't give any details. She even went to slap my colleague Alice, but I grabbed her hand. How was your day?"

"Oh, fine. Nothing going on down here as usual. When are you coming over?"

"Can't, mum. You know the regs."

"Yes, I forgot."

They talked for a while until Stephen said he had to go. Kate put the phone down on the occasional table and thought. You silly git. Shorty was only doing what she was required to do by law. You bloody-well over-reacted. Get a grip on yourself. The dog looked up at her and gave a small woof. She laughed. "I think I've become a bit stir crazy. Wanna go for a walk, Dougall?" •

Wire

Women's Information Referral Exchange

One in three calls WIRE receives from women are related to family violence. Wire: 372 Spencer Street, West Melbourne 3003. Telephone Support Service Line 1300 134 130 Mon-Fri 9.00-5.00. <http://www.wire.org.au/>



Summer & Winter Tales

A short story by Graham Price

She struggled to hold the red umbrella from the wind that was gusting strongly, with the rain slanting down on her legs and feet. Evelyn then noticed the shop on her left with a small alcove into the doorway and a blue protective awning above — The Wise Owl Bookshop. A little shelter, she thought. She slipped into the alcove. The shop was closed and there was a grey cat huddled beside the door. The cat was wet as the rain continued to hit the lower part of the door. She crouched down. “Oh, you poor darling, this will keep us dry.” She positioned the umbrella so that it covered both of them . . . she wasn’t sure how long she could remain in a crouching position, especially with the new shoes she was wearing. The cat looked up at her and mewed . . . it touched her leg with its paw.

“Oh, did your naughty owner leave you out here all alone? Not very nice, is it?” The cat looked up at her and mewed again. The wind tried to tear the umbrella from her. “Well, my little ball of fluff, I’ll just have to wait here with you until things clear up. Cuddle up now.”

She heard some movement behind her and the door opened a crack.

The door opened further. “There you are Misty, how did you manage . . . oh, hello!”

Evelyn stood up and turned. He was about forty years of age, much the same height as her — an angular, reasonably handsome face with hazel eyes that seemed full of questions.

“I was just sheltering from the rain,” she said, “together with your cat. What lovely eyes she has.”

“It’s a he.”

“But the name!”

He smiled then. “My daughter Virginia named him, and in these days of gender equality, does it matter? You look a little wet. You’d better come in and dry off . . . this weather has turned rather foul. Usually, I’d stay open till four on a Saturday, but because of this dreadful weather, well, hardly anyone about.”

“Thank you. I would be looking rather ragged by the time I got home. Thank you for your kind offer.”

“Come through to the parlour. You’re just in time for some tea.”

The cat scampered inside and Evelyn closed the door. The shop was small, but tightly packed with shelves of books. She’d passed by numerous times and had always promised herself that she would call in and browse, but time being what it was and with an eagerness to get home, she never did. Besides, she had her favourite bookshop on High Street where she could sit with coffee and cake to read. There was something different about this shop; her regularly visited was large and efficient, very bright, this was small with what seemed to be a certain warm untidiness about it. She was even sure that she could see dust on one of the shelves. The light was subdued with the electric lighting being turned off, so what was coming through the front windows cast a bleak paleness upon the books . . . kind of spooky, she thought. Dickens would have loved it. She could imagine Pip sitting on one of the wooden chairs, leafing through the book that was all about him — *Great Expectations* — with a withered looking Miss Havesham sitting behind the desk, writing with a quill into a formidable brass-edged diary. For a moment, she imagined that she saw those piercing grey eyes, but then they vanished.

The man said something inaudible, which startled her out of her dream. And she walked through the short passageway into the parlour. Surprisingly, it was tidy and clean, the furnishings were of soft colours with one wall papered over. She looked closely, the wallpaper was a light lemon shade with trees, shrubs and flowers, around which tiny cats and dogs played again and again. There was what appeared to be a small kitchen at the rear and at the side a timber stairway with wrought iron railing running up, no doubt to living quarters. The building was ancient. She thought perhaps 1870s — solid stone facade, some granite on foundations and edges, red brick outer side-walls, but sturdy timber and smooth plaster within High decorated ceilings, long windows almost floor to ceiling, an air of ageless architectural grandeur. What had it



been before it became a bookshop? A grocery perhaps, no, it would have to have been more upmarket than that . . . something such as millinery — a tailor's perhaps? Or had it had numerous retailers of much variety since its foundation? Whatever, it would originally have been owned and run by a live-in family, being of three levels. An interesting history, perhaps?

"Help yourself to a seat, Miss er . . ."

"Evelyn Hughes," she said, selecting the soft brocade-covered one near an open fireplace which was blazing away, with crackling sparks flying fiercely now and then behind the brass fire screen. Cosy, she thought, stretching her hands out toward the tiled warmth.

"Welsh ancestors, no doubt," he said, "much as mine are. I'm Robert Lewis." He disappeared into the kitchen.

"Mmm, I guess so." The cat came up to her, sat by her feet and gave another tiny mew. "Do you have a towel handy?" she called out.

"Yes." He re-entered after a moment with a scarlet coloured bath towel and handed it to her.

"It's not for me. If it's all right with you, I'll give your cat a rub down."

He laughed. "Fine by me. You like animals?"

"Always. Had cats and even a dog as a child, but none since moving up here." She placed the towel on her knees, popped the cat on top, and proceeded to gently wipe down the furry creature.

"You should get yourself one. Must see how the jug is going."

Misty purred and began kneading his paws into the towel. "Loving this aren't you, my little sweet?"

"He'll want you to do that always. He's a Russian Blue, you know." said a young voice coming from the stairway.

Evelyn turned to see a girl with long wavy auburn hair and brown eyes, about eight years of age, standing on the lower step.

"Oh hello, you must be Virginia!"

The girl came toward her. "I am. You're not doing that quite right. You have to rub down from the head to the tail, not all over willy nilly."

"My, you've probably had more experience than me. Do you want to finish?"

The girl stood close. "No, if you just be gentle with him, that's fine. He's very sensitive, you know."

"He seems to be enjoying it."

Virginia nodded, her auburn hair falling in front of her face. She brushed it back. "Yes, he must like you, otherwise . . . who are you, anyway?"

Her father came in with a tray of tea and biscuits. "The lady's name is Evelyn Hughes, Virginia, and she very kindly protected Misty from all that horrible wind and rain with her umbrella. So, we are giving her thanks by inviting her in for afternoon tea. Would you like some biscuits, or perhaps there is some cake left over from your birthday yesterday?"

"Oh," said Evelyn, "Happy Birthday! So, now you are, what . . . nine, eight?"

"I'm eight, and thank you for the wishes. Would you like to see what daddy bought for my birthday?"

Evelyn finished rubbing the cat down and placed him on the carpet. She folded the towel and placed it to one side. "I would . . . I most certainly would. Are you going to give me a clue, or will it be a surprise?"

"A surprise! A surprise!" chuckled Virginia. "I won't be a moment."

Robert laughed and began to pour the tea. "She was so excited when she undid the wrapping and saw what it was. It wasn't an easy choice . . . she's long past dolls and childish games . . . so, I thought, because she's so smart . . . oh well,



let her show it, that will please her very much. It looks as if you have won a heart. You said earlier, that you'd moved up here, from where might that have been?"

"Tasmania. I'd always endured Hobart's cold winters with some sort of courage, but Melbourne's seem to be just as freezing."

"Tell me about it! I'd prefer it a little warmer, even if to entice more customers in. Do you work around here somewhere? Milk, sugar?"

"Milk thanks, no sugar. Yes, walking distance. I'm a graphic designer with Barlows. We sometimes do book covers."

He nodded, taking his tea black with one sugar. He was watching her carefully, probably not yet thirty, perhaps about twenty-seven, fair curly hair, brown eyes . . . a handsome if not beautiful face. "Yes, Cowan Sheridan's last book cover was done by them. Very apt. I'm sure it helped his sales figures."

She took a sip of her tea. "That was one of mine."

He put down his cup. "Really! So, I'm sitting next to a celebrity."

She laughed and nearly spilt her tea. "Oh no, nothing like that. But, yes, I did think it worked for me, and him as well. Have you met him?"

He munched into a biscuit. "No, I don't move in those circles. Life has taken on a quieter tone for me, since . . . well, since Susan went."

"I don't follow."

"My wife passed away four years ago. Cancer . . . it wasn't easy toward the end, and it was difficult trying to shield Virginia from the downside of it. Well, the bookshop simply took over . . . I suppose I buried myself in my work. I so love books. I guess it was a natural enough transition going from the depths of grief into loving and selling books. They so often deal with death and grieving and then often, quite often, moving on into light."

"Oh, I . . . um, sorry."

"Well," he said. "Eat up, there's plenty more biscuits where these came from."

Virginia ran down the stairs clutching a parcel.

"Look," she said, kneeling on the floor and placing the object on the small occasional table. She unwrapped it. Evelyn raised her eyebrows. "A Notebook computer! Oh, that's very clever of your father, Virginia. And what do you plan to use it for?"

Virginia looked up at Evelyn, rolled her head to one side and smiled. "I write little stories. Now, I can print them out and give them to my friends. May I send one to you?"

"Yes, you may. I will give you my address. You know, Virginia, I write stories too."

"Oh, really! Are you published?"

"Yes, indeed. Your father may have my book of short stories in his shop."

Robert put his cup down with a loud clatter onto the saucer. "Hughes . . . why, of course . . . *Summer & Winter Tales!* Why didn't I realise that?"

Evelyn laughed. "You had no reason to think that a wet bedraggled stranger and a teller of short tales was one and the same."

Virginia had dashed off into the bookshop.

Robert rubbed his chin with his right hand. "I expect she knows exactly where it is . . . you know, Evelyn, for an eight-year-old . . . well, sometimes I think she has the mind of one who is twelve or more."



“She’s lovely.”

“Yes . . . without her my life would be somewhat forlorn.”

“You’re very fortunate as a single father that your work and domestic life is contained within one building.”

“Yes, I’m grateful for that. The shop is doing well. I have a select clientele for whom I regularly buy in certain genre books — they are my bread and butter, and then there are the passers-by, who sometimes come in droves during better weather than this. But the shop gets too crammed on busy days; I was thinking of smashing down the connecting wall and extending into this room. There are plenty of rooms upstairs, so it wouldn’t really matter to lose this parlour.”

“Might need to consult an architect for that. These old buildings have hidden reinforcements where you wouldn’t expect them to be.”

“You know something about buildings?”

Evelyn carefully sipped her tea and hesitated before answering. “My late husband was an architect.”

Robert looked startled. “If you don’t mind me saying so, you look so . . . so young to be, ah . . . to be a widow.”

“Well,” she laughed, “thank you for that, but I will be thirty-three next week.”

“Ha, so you are a Leo sign, just the same as Virginia!”

She shrugged. “Looks like it.”

Virginia came rushing back with the book in her hand. “There was only this one left.”

“Let me see,” said Robert. “Oh yes, second edition too. I think I have sold twenty or more copies. What do you think, Virginia, if we ask nicely perhaps Evelyn will sign a few copies for us? I’ll have to order more. In fact I could do a special window arrangement for *Summer & Winter Tales*.”

“Goody, fancy us having a real writer in our home! Please say yes, Evelyn!”

“Well, you have me here as your guest, so I’d be very pleased to sign firstly this copy, and then any copies that your father might order in for the next time I visit.”

Virginia jumped a little, bouncing up and down on her feet. “Yes, come again, come again. I could bring my school friends around to meet you.”

Robert smiled and shook his head “Not so fast, Virginia. We’ve only just met Evelyn. I’m sure she will need some time to consider things. Besides, *Summer & Winter Tales* is not a children’s book.”

“But Evelyn could write one for us, couldn’t you?”

Evelyn reached out for Virginia’s hand. “Yes, possibly, about an eight-year-old girl who receives a magic computer for her birthday and who, upon opening it up finds it full of stellar beings from another world. Yes, I think I could write that. But, you’re a story writer, Virginia . . . you could do that . . . just think what magic is inside your new Notebook! You could write it up for your friends, and one day, Virginia, you will have a book of your own to display in your father’s bookshop.”

“Yes,” said Virginia, “I will, I will. And I will call it *The Wizard Cat of the Magic Notebook!*”

And, dear readers, that’s exactly what happened. Three months later Evelyn Hughes and Robert Lewis were married, with a little story teller as their flower girl. Then, nine years after that a children’s book display appeared in the window of The Wise Owl Bookshop with signed copies from the author, Virginia Lewis. The book was on the children’s best seller list with its dust jacket designed by Evelyn Hughes-Lewis. Oh, and the book’s name? Why, *The Wizard Cat of the Magic Notebook*, of course. And curled up in the corner of the window next to an illustrated page of one of the books was a little grey cat, with its blue eyes half closed and its paws curled gently around its whiskers. And if cats could smile, this one certainly was. •



Why there are further pandemics to come

In terms of human expansion the world is becoming smaller. Communities are closer together than ever before and with massive globalisation occurring, disease is far easier to spread. The continuing deforestation of land, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, South America and Africa, leads to wild animals moving closer in contact to humans.

Wild animal diseases can jump from animal to animal and in certain conditions may then jump to humans, as did the Coronavirus 19. The human immune system has little protection from such potent viruses. Population density and fast movement around the planet by plane and ship are dynamic contributors in spreading corona-like diseases so fast that humanity is shocked and finds the speed of transmission difficult to comprehend. Modern, super-technical living has brought us closer to the danger of contamination and population curtailment.

Humans have brought much of this upon themselves. As mentioned above, deforestation, cramped urban living, bring rodents and other animals into urban areas in contact with domestic animals such as cows, pigs, chickens where they can spread disease. Deforestation has caused many predators to come close to extinction in some lands, which then allows other disease-ridden animals — which otherwise would have been kept under control — to roam free. Humanity has interfered with nature to the point of almost no return. Humanity does not learn from the past. It's not simply one virus out there threatening humanity, it is thousands upon thousands and the majority of humans do not seem to be able to comprehend that fact. Most of these viruses do not spread to humans, but if conditions are suitable they will. Viruses are always evolving — one might say that they are clever little tricks, they contain DNA, which allows them to change to suit various situations so that they may attach themselves to the unwary human. Let's not kid ourselves. Some of these viruses cause serious organ failure and traumatic death.

Gerald Murnane, in his novel of 1979, *A Lifetime on Clouds*, has one character portraying the future as: "If anything can save Australia the move back to the land can do it . . . we haven't got much time left." The book is a comical, slightly ribald satire on Australian suburban life and religious authority. There are numerous paragraphs where the knife of truth goes deep, and that saying by one of Murnane's characters has considerable truth in it. Diversify urban living and certain virus' won't have as great a power upon the population. Even so, control this current one and others will follow. The verdict from scientists is, yes, there will be more to follow within your lifetime and mine. To reduce harm, there will need to be massive changes in the way we live both on the bureaucratic level and the personal level. Tough questions need to be asked. •

Fallout from Covid-19

Tension, anxiety, are real in this Covid-19 age, but why is much of it so real? Is it because we feel helpless against the rules and regulations that have enfolded us of recent times? Or does this anxiety go far deeper? Is it mainly a result of an earlier life living on clover, of life up to now with little restrictions upon our freedom of movement and activity, coupled with an inability to understand our inner resources?

Let's face it, Australia and New Zealand in particular, have lived a life of absolute free movement anywhere throughout the world in modern times. We have enjoyed peaceful participation in all that the world has to offer in terms of physical enjoyment, theatre, opera, the arts, you name it: it was ours for the simple act of hopping on a plane.

Great art, inspiring architecture, visions of ecstatic countryside seen not only for the first time, but re-visited again and again in Europe, Britain, Asia, the Americas, all wrapped up for us in a golden bowl and for the taking, to give our heart pleasure. And life at home, with the best that super-swift technology could give us; our considerable leisure soothed by this exciting speed blasting technology — which previous generations had no hope in Hades of accessing — and our ease of lifestyle that was perhaps the envy of the world, is often the reason why immigrants clamour for entry.

We had it so good, but at the same time we had it so soft. So soft that it never gave us the fortitude that would be required in a time panic. If you were there during the the 9/11 twin towers collapse in New York, you would have known what real panic was. Your heart would almost have stopped. You would have been filled with the utmost fear. It was something that you were not prepared for. But you survived. You came out of it knowing a certain truth, that nothing can ever again guarantee you peace or survival, except that you remain true to what lies deep within — the core and strength that all human beings carry, and the knowledge that *all things change*.

Life is a seesaw. First one way up, then one way down. That is expected. In earlier decades life was centred around the home and there were not all that many reasons for leaving it. In our time the home is seen by many as a base — most activities now take place outside the home. Is this wrong? Have we been living a life of distractions outside the home to the neglect of nurturing that within? Have we been relying upon so-called life supports outside of the home that, in reality, are



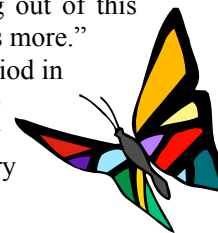
void of substance and in fact may well be as thin as a coating of dew upon the grass on a winter's day? That's a difficult question to answer.

Should not this time be looked upon as a time of re-generation — a time of re-adjustment, re-learning? There is opportunity here with so many folk more or less 'locked-up' at home to ask themselves "Who am I . . . really! Just who am I?" And to use that question to ponder, wonder and realise that there is more to one than just body and mind. During life many things are forced upon us. Learning to behave in our mother's presence as a child was 'forced' upon us, otherwise we would not have grown to understand that there are some things one may do and others that one may not. School was forced upon us, otherwise we would not have been educated. Certain laws were forced upon us that we may have an orderly society — that the road rules were to be obeyed so as to prevent chaos on the highways. Perhaps the word 'forced' is anathema to many these days, but it is a fact of life.

Coming toward a stage of metamorphosis during its lifetime, the caterpillar is more or less forced into a cocoon — it has no choice for that is nature's way. The decision is not the caterpillar's to argue against. Sam Anderson, a staff writer for *The New York Times Magazine*, considers that many during this crisis are living in cocoons, but at the same time they are in the process of emerging from those cocoons as changed persons . . . more self-reliant, more understanding. They are building new structures of life. A metamorphoses is taking place.

The home is then no longer simply a base from which people come and go . . . the home has become a haven. There has been time for conversation, time for books, there has been time for meditation . . . time for questioning one's role as a human being . . . time for giving up selfishness and time for caring for others. There are stories coming out of this Covid-19 lockdown of people becoming more creative; some taking up art for the first time, sculpture, creative writing; others looking a little deeper and indulging in an online course in philosophy, psychology, sociology, and more. The number of available online courses is endless. Those who have the room for it have taken up gardening for the first time in their life. Others who normally survive on take-aways, deliveroo, uber deliveries, have turned to learning how to cook. There is a massive surge in how-to-do-it enquiries. Life is being shaken up, re-arranged. Many who have always worked in an office and who are now working from home, vow that they will never return to work in an office building, or if they do it will be limited to only one or two days a week. The home is now the haven. Numerous neighbours are talking to each other for the first time. In spite of the negative aspects that many are experiencing, there is some overwhelming good coming out of this enforced lockdown and when it is all over, or under control, many will be saying to themselves "Less is more."

In time the caterpillar emerges from its cocoon — changed, newly transformed after a long period in total darkness. A metamorphoses has taken place. The waiting has been well worth it and sheer brilliance now takes wings in the form of a butterfly. It is an explosion of life! An environmental miracle. But only because there was a time of restriction. Without that, the caterpillar may well have gone on with its dreary life, simply leading a mundane existence chomping upon leaves until its final days. •



Functional Family Therapy

Functional Family Therapy supports families who have been affected by an adolescent behaving in an aggressive way within the home.

Functional Family Therapy is a family intervention program that supports adolescents with behavioural problems. The program has supported many adolescents and their families in various multiethnic and Indigenous cultural contexts globally.

Who are we supporting with Functional Family Therapy?

Functional Family Therapy supports families who may not otherwise engage with a service and the model aims to engage young people and family members, providing an alternative to punitive approaches. The Functional Family Therapy program supports young people between 11-18 years who are exhibiting aggressive and in certain cases violent behaviour, as well as substance misuse.

How are services delivered?

Functional Family Therapy is conducted in a home-based or clinical-based environment and delivered across five separate phases, with intervention typically spanning 3-5 months.

The program is facilitated by experienced and suitably qualified therapists who help identify strengths and challenges within the family behaviours, developing effective strategies for changing them within the family system. **Check with OzChild to discover if this service is available in your state.**

OzChild National Support Office, PO Box 1312, Level 3, 150 Albert Road South Melbourne VIC 3205

Phone: [+613 9695 2200](tel:+61396952200) **Fax:** [+613 9696 0507](tel:+61396960507) **Email:** hello@ozchild.org.au



The Animal Rehoming Service

For further information, please log onto <http://www.tars.org.au/> The Animal Rehoming Service Inc. is a registered charity. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. (ABN: 51 275 837 567)



Lexi is a 6 year old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and micro-chipped 34kg female Labrador, who's looking for a loving home.

She's a very loving, sweet natured and playful girl who'd thrive as a treasured member of the family. She'd suit an all-adult home or one with older, dog friendly children.

Lexi hasn't been walked as regularly as she used to, but she'll lose her excess kilos with increased activity. She loves her daily walks and time playing with other dogs at the park.

Lexi's great with other dogs and would suit a home with a desexed male dog for company. (A home with another Lab would be great!) She chases cats. She enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, but currently sleeps undercover outdoors. We're looking for a family who'll allow her to sleep indoors. Lexi's adoption fee is \$600 Microchip Number: 900012001125404 Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709 If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Taylors Hill based, but we



Calvin is an 11 year old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and micro-chipped 6kg male Maltese x Shih Tzu, who's looking for a loving home.

He's a sweet natured and perky little boy who loves human company and would suit an all adult home or one with gentle, dog savvy teenagers. Calvin loves his daily walks and is an active little boy. He'll growl and carry on at larger dogs, but is fine with smaller ones. A home with another small dog would be ideal. Otherwise one with an experienced dog owner who's home during the day, including beyond the Covid-19 period, would be great.

He enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Regular grooming would also be required. Calvin's adoption fee is \$750 Microchip Number: 982009106440454 Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709 If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (East Brighton based, but we go to you, provided you're within roughly 5-10km).

Maggie is an 18 month old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and micro-chipped 28kg female Labrador, who's looking for a loving home.

She's a sweet-natured, active and sometimes mischievous girl who loves human company and would greatly enjoy being an integral part of the family. An all-adult home or one with dog-friendly teenagers would suit. She enjoys her daily walks and time at the park, so an active family would also be required.

Maggie's usually great with other dogs, so we're after a home with an active, desexed, medium to large compatible male dog for company. (She's also lived with cats.) She's on a hypoallergenic diet which helps control her food allergies and keeps her skin, coat and gut lovely and healthy.

She enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Maggie's adoption fee is \$900. Microchip Number: 956000006152805 Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709 If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Doreen based, but we go to you).



Re-advertised: I'm still looking for a loving home!



Chief is a 7 year old desexed, vaccinated, wormed and micro-chipped 18kg male English Staffordshire Terrier who's looking for a loving home.

He's an active, loving and loyal boy who would love to be a treasured member of the family. He would suit an all-adult home or one with dog savvy teenagers.

Chief would also either suit being an only dog or having a desexed female dog for company. He's not good with cats.

An experienced owner who can further socialise him would be great, as would someone who's home during the day, either working from home (beyond the Covid19 period) or a retired but active person.

He enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Chief's adoption fee is \$350. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Sunshine West based, but we go to you).



We are now much loved in our new home and very grateful to TARS Inc. Such a new lease of life!



Pet medical crisis

from Jennifer Hunt

Boots Back on track for his 15 year old best mate.

'Boots' has been hit with some awful health concerns lately. The 7 year old has been on CBD oil to help reduce the swelling in his lymph glands which caused him to lose a great deal of weight. Estelle whose young son owns 'Boots' the Chinese Crested dog has grown up with the young man.

Due to Estelle being on a disability pension her budget is very tight so she reached out for the help of PMC via our website and we have been able to assist with the cost of the medication and also for the urgent need for tooth extraction. "Boots belongs to my son. My son loves his dog they have grown up together.

For the sake of my son I did everything that I could to save Boots life and nurse him back to health." Estelle told us.

Thanks to the Veterinary team at the Castlemaine practice who helped this case, as they often do, 'Boots' has now a new lease on life and pain free.

Have you had your pets teeth checked? So often can be a death sentence when left too long. Please share our cases where you can so we can help more owners in necessitous circumstances. •



"Bluey'- Dane cross is irreplaceable to his dad.

'Bluey' is only 11 months old and has contacted the deadly disease called parvo. Richard is on a disability pension and the value his Great Dane cross adds to his life is beyond measure.

Richard suffers health and mental issues and is unable to work, so his 'Bluey' boy is vital to his well being. "He is my life" Richard said.

Unable to pay for the treatment of 'Bluey' PMC were contacted to help with management with the outstanding vet team at Benetook veterinary clinic in Mildura.

Pet Medical Crisis donated our maximum, and with the vet offering a payment plan now 'Bluey' can be saved and get back to his dad to care and keep his safe. Thanks to the [Benetook Veterinary Clinic](#) for the great work and all of you for following please share where you can. •



Pet Medical Crisis

A not for profit fund to save pets whose owners cannot afford their emergency care.

www.petmedicalcrisis.com.au

Email: petmedicalcrisis@gmail.com

PMC is now on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PetMedicalCrisis/>

Also, a walking harness — 'Dog-A-Long' — is available to assist your dog to become more mobile — supports dogs with hind leg problems associated with ageing, arthritis, hip & spinal problems. For suitability check with your Vet.



Saigon Sunset

A saga in several episodes by Graham Price

Chapter four

The story so far: It is 1959 and widower, James KcKinnon, with his three children Michelle sixteen, Samantha thirteen, and Jules eleven, have recently settled in Saigon having arrived from Kuala Lumpur in Malaya. James is with Asia Barr, a company that excels in buying up rubber plantations and other likely mining investments throughout South-East Asia. James has employed a French governess, Charmaine Curtaine, to attend to his children, but is encouraged to send Michelle to a prestige school in Saigon named the Nguyen Académie. Michelle is excited by the prospect and not quite by accident the family is introduced to the English teacher — the elegant Vietnamese-French Phuong Duval at the market place in Cholon. Also entering the scene at Cholon and being introduced to the family is an inspector of the secret French Sûreté, Claude Bastein. James is at first suspicious of the inspector's intentions, but then comes to accept the big man as a friend. Arrangements are made for a dinner at James' French colonial home in Saigon, with invitations to both the inspector and Phuong Duval. The inspector is attacked by a Viet Cong sympathiser, Phan Van Kim, with intentions of kidnapping him in return for Kim's imprisoned cousin Phan Van Dong, but the inspector turns the tables and Kim is incarcerated, awaiting possible torture. Meanwhile, other members of the Cong are close by, with intentions of attacking American aid transports.

Bishop Jean-Baptiste Lacroix looked down upon his Sunday morning congregation at the Saigon Cathedral, which was so recently blessed from the Vatican with the exclusive name of Notre Dame. The coolness of the Cathedral was a welcome relief to the heat outside and the building was packed with hardly an empty space to be seen. Jean-Baptiste was a popular priest within his community. His sermons were often written down and sometimes appeared in the local newspapers. Politicians knew him as a man not to be messed with. The Bishop oversaw an immensely large population of Saigon and he was well aware of his own influence in the city, in particular with the ruling President Nho Dinh Diem and his relatives.

From the lectern where he stood, he noted General Dao Hu Loc and his beautiful wife Trinh, sitting not far from Phuong Duval, the English teacher at the *Nguyen Académie*, who was sitting in the front pews beside. . . oh, what was her name? Charmaine something. . . the French governess to the newly arrived British people from Malaya. The Bishop was a wiry man, almost six feet in height, an angular face with heavy eyebrows and intense blue eyes. He had developed a manner of appearing to stare directly into the very heart and soul of anyone who took his gaze. In his ecclesiastical gowns he seemed much larger, indeed a formidable figure was this vicar of Christ who became the absolute centre-point within the sacred building during a Sunday service. All eyes were focused upon this splendid vision in green and gold before them. It was not difficult for some in the congregation to believe that here was Christ in person. His eyelids flickered suddenly as he noticed further back in the pews, the Inspector of the Sûreté, Claude Bastein, whom he knew wasn't Catholic. What was he doing here? A convert, perhaps? That was laughable. That would never happen.

He waited while the choir boys sang through the last verse of *Panis Angelicus*, sweeping his strong blue eyes back and forth over the congregation as the exotic sounds of the boy sopranos reached his ears. So devotional, so mystical, so heavenly! It was as if the angels had descended upon the Cathedral that very morning with their love and caresses. He was immensely relaxed and ready, as always, to give out his sermon direct from his God. I am the instrument, he mused, I am the instrument of The Most High.

"As Jesus sacrificed himself on the Cross, so must we, my beloved friends in these troubled times, look forward to making sacrifices. Sacrifices not only of economics, finance, but sacrifices of the mind and body. For some within our midst would lead us in directions of corruption and malice." He stared down at the General. "There are moves afoot, in this beloved country of ours, to attempt to preserve old ways that are no longer generous to our land and its future. We have reached a milestone, a crossroads, if you will, where only the strong and the faithful will survive. And only our faith will carry us through. Many demons are among us; many will seek to overthrow our consciences, but my beloved brothers and sisters, we must stand firm in the faith of our Lord. These are times that will test our faith, test our reliance."

It was then that something very strange occurred. A flash of light, perhaps sunlight directed off a building or the windscreen of a car hit a slightly cracked stained glass window beside him. He was covered in multi-coloured beams of light. The congregation gasped and then murmured among themselves as the spectacle of light reached his mitre, turning it from



white to gold. The congregation turned to silence and awe. It was a sign—a miracle. Jean-Baptiste was aware that something had occurred within the Cathedral, but was puzzled. He stopped speaking for a moment, then realised that he was bathed in this rainbow of light. So, that was it? Well, he thought, might as well make use of it. He smiled at the congregation and crossed his hands in front of his heart.

And so the sermon continued, with all eyes fastened upon this charismatic figure before them — this vicar of Christ who filled them with hope at the same time as he filled them with fear. But all they were aware of that day was his magnificence, his superlative phrases that could have only come direct from God himself. And the congregation filed out into the bright sunlight knowing that the Angels of Heaven had been among them that Sunday morning. Some gathered around the new statue of the Blessed Virgin, marvelling at the immense size and delicate contours of the statue, blessed by the Vatican in honour of the sister Cathedral in France, the most sacred Notre Dame. The day was featherweight, such a lightness of being, as the people streamed out of the Cathedral. And, as Jean-Baptiste Lacroix, the priest of eternal visions, shook the hand of the last person to leave, Inspector Claude Bastein looked back and wondered. A politician in the making! Or if not, then a prince among men. Or even, a presidential candidate! He waited until Charmaine and Phuong came out, catching their attention.

“My goodness, Inspector, it’s rather a surprise to see you here,” said Charmaine, shielding her eyes from the mid-day sun.

“Good morning Charmaine, and Miss Duval. I make it a practice to move about the city. I’d heard that your Bishop was an excellent speaker, not only on faith but often on politics. And yes, he certainly gave me a lot to think about. Now, would you ladies like to come over to the Café Papillon for some tea and pastries?”

Charmaine unzipped her handbag and took out a pair of sunglasses. “Well, I do have to get back and organise lunch for Mr. McKinnon and the children. Perhaps Miss Duval might oblige you?”

Phuong shook her head. “It’s very kind of you, Inspector. Perhaps some other time, but the sermon went longer than expected and my chauffeur is waiting for me.”

Charmaine turned away, then looked back at the Inspector. “Miss Duval was taking me home in her car, but perhaps. . . . perhaps you would like to come for lunch. That is, if you have your car here. I’m sure Mr. McKinnon wouldn’t mind, in fact he would be rather pleased to see you. There is something he wishes to discuss. Phuong, do you mind?”

“Of course not.” Phuong offered her gloved hand to the Inspector and moved away. “I’ll be in touch, Charmaine.”

“This way,” said Claude, taking Charmaine by the elbow. “Just over here.”

The Peugeot arrived at the McKinnon home within fifteen minutes, snaking its way through the torrent of bicycles, pedicabs and the little Renault taxis. Hearing the wheels crunching on the pebbled driveway, James poked his head out. He was surprised to see Claude Bastein holding open the passenger door for Charmaine and then escorting her to the front door.

Over lunch the men discussed the recent hold up of the McKinnons by the small team of Viet Cong.

“Are you sure they weren’t the Cao Dai?” said Claude, tasting the light white

James gave a small sigh. “No, they were interested in American supply trucks; besides, I have a leave of pass given to me by their leader, a woman. Definitely Cong.”

The inspector raised his eyebrows. “Really! I’d be interested to know what she looks like. Could you describe her for me after lunch, and perhaps draw a picture?”

“Yes, she was very striking. Beautiful, in fact. I don’t understand why women get involved in all this fighting.”

“Family connections, perhaps . . . and the trucks . . . you saw none?”

“No. Perhaps they were diverted . . . some intelligence received maybe concerning the ambush? I didn’t know the Americans had supply trucks here.”

“They would have come from Bien Hoa, the airfield. Medical supplies, crates of canned food, tons of it.”

James put down his fork. “And weapons, ammunition?”

“What gives you that idea, my friend?”

“I don’t see why the Cong would be interested in those trucks unless there were munitions in them.”

Claude adjusted his napkin. “There is no evidence of that. The Cong and the Minh have need of medical supplies and food. So easy to arrange an ambush simply for that purpose.”

Then why,” said James, pointing his finger, “as it seems to be, were the trucks diverted?”

The inspector shrugged. “Like I said, the insurgents have need of other things than arms. Much they obtain from the villagers, but any extra via ambush would be welcomed with joy, no doubt. I think, James, that your imagination is running away with you. The American aid program is vast, and we are very thankful for it.”

There was a lull in the conversation and James was considering thoughtfully, when Charmaine spoke above the tick-ticking of the ceiling fan.



“James, tell Claude about the plantation.”

James leant back in his chair. “Oh yes, something not quite right up there. The books square up and the plantation is in good condition, but to my mind the workers seem to be nothing but slaves. One of your compatriots, a Pierre Marchand, is the owner. I didn’t like him much, but that’s an aside. Some of his workers had cuts and bruises on them, so I’m certain they had been beaten. Marchand’s 2IC, a Chinese name of Chun Li, was walking about with this heavy stick, as also was his Vietnamese assistant. You should have your people investigate that place, Claude.”

“Marchand, you say? I wonder if it is the same Captain Marchand interned by the Japanese during the last war, who became a collaborator and betrayed many of our countrymen? If it is, I’d like to bring him to justice, but sad to say French law no longer applies here and I doubt if my Vietnamese friends would be interested in him. All the same, thanks for that James. I shall make some enquiries.”

James had a half smile on his face. “Ah, but if he sells up and returns to France . . . and if it is the same man, then you have got him under French law. Would you like me to take another visit, to see what else I may find out about this strange person? After all, Asia Barr is still considering whether to buy or not. Personally, I don’t think we should be involved in what appears to be a callous operation with local people being exploited, but I could string it out for a while so as to obtain more information.”

Claude nodded. “In the meantime, I’ll see what I can find out about him through our records. I’ll contact Paris to see what they have on him. Yes, from what you have told me, I feel very strongly in my bones that it is the same man. Some of my friends were handed over to the Japanese for execution because of him. And now, I am wondering how he managed to get his hands on a rubber plantation. With the help of the occupation Japanese, perhaps? Rewards for collaborators were given in many strange ways. But, if that is so, why didn’t the pre war owners claim it back in 1945?”

“Seems I have opened a fat can of worms, eh?” said James.

“Indeed you have, my friend . . . indeed you have. By the way, where are your children?”

Charmaine spoke up. “Oh, they’ve gone to a birthday party for one of Jules’s school friends. I don’t expect we’ll see them back until about 4.00.”

“Well,” said Claude, “It’s been a delightful lunch, James and Charmaine, but I must travel on. Thank you so much, and don’t worry; if Marchand is the person I think he is, I will bring him to justice. Oh, and yes, I may take you up on your offer to return and spy out the land for me. *Au revoir, mon amie.*”

Charmaine rose from her chair. “I’ll see you out, Inspector.”

At the door as he was taking his leave, Claude turned to Charmaine. “If you feel so inclined, would you do me the honour of having dinner and dance at The Continental one evening?”

Somehow, in her mind, she had been waiting for this, so it was not unexpected. But at the same time she did something also unexpected of herself. She touched him on the shoulder and kissed him lightly on his cheek. Not only did her action surprise him, but it also left her with a strange feeling.

“My pleasure. That would be so delightful.”

He almost staggered down the steps. “Thank you. I’ll be in touch. *Vous êtes belle* Charmaine.”

She closed the door against the heat, watching the green Peugeot turn out of the drive. Her heart was thumping. So, it was out there at last, a committal, a trust, which would lead—where? She was of two minds between two men, but where really did her heart lie? She had recently come to a resolution that she might take on James and his children for a lifetime, up one rung of the ladder from governess to wife and mother — which is probably what he needed her to be — but now this startling change of events clung to her like a bee clings to the nectar of a new born rose. And that nectar was indeed so sweet.

Phan Van Kim rested in the low canvas bed in the home of a distant relative within the village 20 kilometres from Saigon . . . having been rescued from the hospital due to the secret intervention of a middle ranking Vietnamese police officer from the Sûreté prison in Saigon. He was free! He was out of that rat trap of a prison where he knew no day from night, or week from week. What he had endured whilst in chains, was not speakable and apart from casual references to the torture he had endured, he was not willing to elaborate. But as he rested, his mind went over and over how Chu Lam Long and his men had successfully rescued him from that hospital, all of it being the plan to get him out of the Sûreté prison headquarters.

She had come to him, Cuc his eternal love, on the night of his freedom, but he was weak and had suffered much. He barely recognised her, but was grateful for her presence as he slipped in and out of consciousness. That cell in Saigon came back at him . . . flooded his mind . . . when that large Chinese with the electric prongs attached onto Kim’s flesh, and who kept asking questions, the answers if he did not like, then . . . zap. . . zap! On and on again until Kim blacked out.

But now, with the smoothness of her hand upon his brow, it all faded away.



"You are safe, my love," he heard her gentle voice whispering to him. "There is no harm. There is only peace and love. It will be some time for you to retain your strength, but that will come . . . that will come. Oh, my sweet, what have they done to you!"

He lifted his head, somewhat confused as to where he was, not aware of his surroundings, but feeling the touch of her upon his forehead. Was he really free from torture?

"Where . . . where am I?"

Cuc, who had been nestling close to his bedside, now leant over and kissed him on his cheek.

"You are safe, my darling. You are rescued. But you must sleep to regain your strength."

He coughed, so heavily that she thought it would be necessary to call for a Viet Cong medic, but then it subsided and she held his head and gently lowered it to the straw pillow.

"Oh, my love, my love . . . I'm here. I'm here. Sleep now, for in sleep you will heal. It is best. Sleep now."

And he drifted away, with the soft, gentle touch of her hand upon his brow . . . and then, there he was running through the rice paddies naked as a child, jumping onto the water buffalo and riding along under the blue Vietnam skies . . . swimming in the cool canals . . . laughing with the other children as they chased the chickens and pigs, and then admonished by parents, but ending up giggling much of the night, all the same. "Oh mother!" he cried out suddenly, and his head suddenly fell into the arms of Cuc, who somewhat startled, could only look at the stillness and peace upon his face as she slowly closed his eyelids. It was an automatic reaction and she was really not aware of it. She stared at the calm face before her and then, lowering her head deeply onto his chest, felt herself breaking into pieces: "Oh no . . . no . . . **no!**"

The children returned to the house around 4.30. "How was the party?" said James, as he sat in his lounge room smoking a pipe.

"Fabulous," said Jules, "and guess what, papa, Miss Duval was there. I think I'm in love with her, she's such a beautiful person."

"Hmm, to be in love is a very serious thing, Jules. First of all, you need to know a tremendous lot about the person you say you are in love with. And secondly, you have to ascertain whether that person feels the same as you do. So, really, it's a life and death question. Well then, are you committed to marrying Miss Duval and paying for her upkeep? With what I give you for your weekly allowance, I really can't see that happening. Besides, where would you live with your bride, my dear son? You cannot bring her here."

Jules looked somewhat crestfallen. "It's just that, oh, I don't know . . . she's so much like . . . well, like mother was before . . . before . . ." And he broke into tears, ran to his father and clung to him. Samantha was standing in the doorway watching this scenario. She bit her lower lip and turned away. Yes, she missed her mother, but Jules had no right to carry on like that, a sooky baby. When I am older, she thought, I will show them all that you don't need to be sooky. No way. You have to stand up just like Charmaine does and be yourself. She ran up the stairs to her room, slammed the door and threw herself on the bed. Someone had turned the ceiling fan on and it was tick ticking slowly under the ceiling. The little lizards — she'd called them geckos in Malaya — were chasing each other along the white ceiling. Upside down, she thought. You're crazy running upside down. Did they have sex, she wondered. That's what daddy and Miss Duval want, isn't it, she thought. And Charmaine and that policeman. I don't like him much, she thought, and then recanted. Shouldn't think like that. But what if he takes Charmaine away from us? They might go back to France and leave us here . . . where will that leave us? Oh glory be, things are so complicated. She got up and looked out of the window. The businesses were beginning to close and streams of white clothed officials popped into the streets, some hailing pedicabs, some with their own Vietnamese chauffeurs. Oh, it was so hot. The books on her dressing table beckoned. *Charlotte's Web* stared up at her. All about the pig which became friendly with a spider. Ahhh, a bit creepy, she thought, with visions of the pig being readied for the chopping block. Was it saved? She couldn't remember. She needed something more uplifting; perhaps she could re-read *Alice in Wonderland*. Yes, that might take her mind off things — dear Alice, who stood up to the Red Queen. No sooky babies there.

Commissar Chu Lam long stared at Cuc with his steely brown eyes. "Are you sure that this is what you wish to do, because once in there is no turning back . . . no comfort of your soft bed . . . no special food, and . . . there will be a separation from your parents. You will not be able to contact any of your relatives in Saigon, but you will be one for the freedom of our beloved country. You give up your life for Ho Chi Minh! You must be dedicated to the cause of our freedom".

Cuc's eyes were moist. She had not long come from the burial of her beloved Kim. There was a fierce hate in her heart for the police and other authorities who had caused his death. That he had been tortured beyond belief, was so evident. She placed her hand upon Long's arm. "I swear that I will uphold the principles of the National Liberation Front that is to be. My uncle trained me in the use of weapons before he, too, was taken in a confrontation with Diem's police. He also fought



against the Japanese and survived. He was a hero. I am ready, just as Kim was ready. I will do anything it takes to avenge his death and destroy the capitalist warmongers.”

Du Trong Linh sauntered over. She leaned her AK47 against the hut. The day was already hot, with the fierce sun bearing down upon them. She seemed a little short of patience. She curled her lower lip, focused her dark eyes upon the newcomer and said: “Not as simple as that. You’ve lived a soft city life full of shit . . . what makes you think you can handle being out in the jungle all day and all night, with little food, little comfort for sleep?”

Cuc felt the strong inquisition that was coming from this Viet Cong person. She was not going to be intimidated by another woman. If it was fine by Commissar Chu for her to join the Cong, then it should be fine by any of the others. Who was this woman, anyway, and why should she interfere? Stuff you, she thought.

Linh stepped forward and pushed Cuc hard, almost knocking her to the ground. “Let’s see if you are strong enough, then! Show me your strength!”

Long moved back. He was not going to interfere between these two young tigers.

Cuc’s response was unexpected. She swung her left leg around, colliding with Linh’s left knee joint and setting her off balance. As Linh was attempting to regain her balance, Cuc closed up on her and slammed her right fist into Linh’s throat. Linh gasped and coughed, attempting to regain her breath. The cadre began to gather around, some whooping, some cheering Linh on. Cuc flipped Linh’s right foot away from her and the second in charge of the cadre fell heavily to the dusty ground. Cuc then slammed her right foot deeply into Linh’s belly, then fell upon her pummeling her with her fists.

“That’s enough!” shouted Long. “Break it!”

Several cadre members grabbed Cuc and pulled her off, but they couldn’t help but laugh. Two others helped Linh up, but she was winded and bleeding slightly. There was a strange smile on her face, and she stood back, panting, trying to regain her breath in the arms of her fellow cadre members. She laughed and shook her head. “Welcome Comrade. Welcome! How . . . how did you . . .?”

Cuc stood back and eyed the victory over her opponent. She grinned. “My uncle!”

Long spat on the ground and laughed. “Never underestimate uncles.”

Unknown to the children and also unknown to Charmaine, James McKinnon had been visiting Phuong Duval at her home after work. There was time, he thought, between leaving the office and attending the evening meal at home, for love. The house was large, too large for her, he thought. The old colonial French villa stood back from a tree lined boulevard, somewhat gracefully aligned with others also of pre 20th century construction. We could be on the outskirts of Paris, he thought, when he first set his eyes on the building . . . except that is, for the climate. He’d parked his Citroen in the semi-circular driveway and entered under the courtesy of the housemaid, Lien, a reasonably tall, sharp faced Vietnamese woman — a widow it seemed with no children. Then there was a gardener, a cook, and a young girl of fifteen or sixteen who helped out with Lien. An orphan, James found out, who had been adopted by Phuong.

“It does her good,” said Phuong, “to do some small domestic chores. Teaches her resilience.”

“And what will you do,” said James, sipping on his whisky, “when some young man comes along and takes her from you?”

Phuong laughed. “Putting the horse before the cart, I think. She’s still very young.”

“Not too young for Vietnam to marry her off. Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen! You know how it is.”

She was silent. She looked at him with her head slightly angled. After a moment she nodded, and sipped her cocktail. “When and if that occurs, I should be somewhat lonely.”

The remark startled him. He was lost for words and looked around the room, at the *avante garde* art, the Parisian motifs, the comfortable and sensual feeling that her well designed living room gave. He stared through the open doors into the garden beyond. It was a haven . . . indeed, a haven that she had been living in for a very long time since the death of her parents, and her company was now a very fine looking teenager . . . an orphan, adopted as one of her own some years back, eleven, twelve was it? Mia, a lovely name indeed. James sighed. If only time could stand still. I could remain like this forever, simply breathing in the atmosphere of Phuong’s presence and her wisdom. This is surely something that has to be. We are of different religions, but surely that can be overcome. Catholic, Protestant, but surely that cannot stand in the way of true love, of definite commitment body and soul?

She was watching him, those deep brown eyes — pools of infinity, he thought. She has such lovely eyes. The whole universe might be there, within. What stars could possibly compete with the sheen of her eyes? A flicker of a smile appeared upon his lips and he nodded ever so slightly at her. She knew his meaning, stood up and came toward him. Nestled beside him on the couch, her hand on his, and their faces touching, Mia came to the door and stopped in her tracks. Yes, she thought. It’s what I want. At long last, a mother and a father to be. At last.



The McKinnon household bustled with activity that night. Sun settling down for the evening and cars parked in the driveway. Stars bright. A moon almost full and beginning to show as the sun set. No wind. It was as if heaven had settled upon that old French mansion that night as the guests settled for dinner. The house was alive. Laughter was bold and at times hilarious. Once again Charmaine had settled her guests in perfect order on the round dining table with James next to Phuong, herself next to the Inspector, Claude Bastein; the South Vietnam General Dao Loc and his wife Trinh next, then Howson Pendlebury and his wife Hilda from the British Embassy, next Vernon Clement Harris and his wife Melody from the American Embassy. Again, a surprise to all was James's boss, Justin Trevallyn with his Vietnamese wife Nguyet down from Hue for a few days. Last of all was a late invite — Bishop Jean-Baptiste Lacroix, as a precursor to the planned forthcoming wedding of James and Phuong. The children, as usual, were upstairs amusing themselves with games, having had an earlier dinner.

Claude Bastein interrupted the dining by dinging on his wine glass. Ding ding ding! "Well, my dear friends, ladies and gentlemen. It behooves me to announce . . . probably as you all know anyway . . . the engagement of James McKinnon to Phuong Duval, so I propose a toast. A toast to James and Phuong, may their lives together be ever blessed and with numerous bountiful children. Ha ha. To James and Phuong!"

"To James and Phuong!"

Charmaine touched Phuong's hand. "What a lovely ring. You must be so happy, my dear."

Phuong brandished her left hand and the expensive diamond engagement ring sparkled in the light. "And you?"

Charmaine grinned. "Oh, don't worry about that, all in order."

They both laughed, clinked their glasses together and laughed some more.

General Dao was speaking in reply to the British attache. "No, there aren't any American military arms being sent to us. And quite sincerely, I say, we don't need them."

Howson Pendlebury from the British Embassy raised his eyebrows. "Well, General, what was that great load of trucks from the airport going up north the other week, eh? Filled with Coke-a-Cola, no doubt?"

"Oh shush," said Melody, "Why do you British have to spoil things with talk about military, if that's what you were getting at?"

"I was simply asking . . . you Yanks seem to be pouring in here like so much heck and no one seems to know why. Last time I looked around there were CIA people everywhere. They're rather easy to pick out, though they pretend to be tourists. That's a real joke. Down in the Givral, the Continental, you name it, darling."

"Oh, do be quiet, Howson." The words came from General Dao's wife, Trinh. "You don't know what you're talking about and you're spoiling this special evening for James and Phuong. Just slow it down, for goodness sakes."

The voice that then spoke was cultured, deep and firm. It was Bishop Jean-Baptiste Lacroix. "My children, this is a time of confusion, let there be no doubt about that. But, we are here not here tonight for confusion, we are here for a celebration. We are invited for the forthcoming celebration of a marriage. It is that which overcomes mere politics or military talk. Indeed, it is an opportunity for each one of us to look inside our hearts and discover who we truly are."

"And *what* we are," said General Dao, raising his glass.

There was an uneasy silence in the room. The guests looked at each other for a sign of sympathy from anyone willing to give it, but there were blank faces. Suddenly, Claude Bastein lifted his glass and began to sing. "*My love loves me, oh the wonders I see. A rainbow shines in my window, my love loves me . . .*" His rich tenor voice rang out above the silence and soon the voices of all joined in, and so it went on with sopranos, bass and tenors lifting upward and onwards and filling the home with stentorian syllables the house had not heard of in a hundred years. There was laughter, there was joy, there was comradeship among the various political ideologies around the table. The Vietnamese waiter poured more wine and rolled his eyes.

Vernon Clement Harris, the American Legation's first secretary, was transfixed by Justin Trevallyn's wife, Nguyet. She was slightly smaller of stature than Phuong and Trinh, but he thought oh how beautiful and how every every movement of hers was so graceful. She knows her attraction, she knows she is someone. He felt drawn to the young Vietnamese woman. Really something, he thought. He fiddled with his glass of red wine, drew in a deep breath and said in his southern drawl: "Mrs. Trevallyn, I understand you are a cousin of the recent Emperor, Bao Dai?"

She looked at him with those deep brown eyes penetrating his. Who is this stupid man? Oh yes, the American Embassy person with his clever blonde wife. She is soooooo stunning though. I wonder what she is doing with such a dimwit man? These Americans are here in their increasing numbers Will there be any room left for us?. I wonder if that man from the British Embassy is correct? Well, either way I guess we should be thankful for the Yanks being here, providing us with so much support and goodies.

She gave a tepid smile. "A distant cousin, fourth I think. I have not seen him for many years, but yes I have had a letter now and then. My father was a great friend of his, they played together as children."

Vernon Harris leant forward. "How did your family take it when the current President, Ngo Dinh Diem, forced him from the throne?"



Nguyet looked startled. “He abdicated.”

“Yes, but it was a staged coué, was it not?”

Justin broke in. “It’s all past history now, Vernon, and we are not interested in raking up old ghosts if you don’t mind. Bao Dai lives a separate life from Vietnam these days, though I suppose he may one day live in the United States with the blessing of your president. Who knows? Everything in this world is in a state of flux and many of us around this table might be shocked if we could see into the future.”

The morning came with a kind of dullness that infiltrated his head. Bloop Bloop! Bloop! Claude Bastein awoke slowly, unsure of where he was or what day it was. Oooh, too much of that delicious French wine last night, he thought, sweet though it was, James McKinnon did seem to have a cellar of great taste. And, he thought, impeccable taste in women as well. He lurched from the bed, attempting to steady himself against the warmth of the wall, but slid off. Some night it had been, and that Bishop, my, my . . . how he had held forth! What a wonder. He should have been on stage, a great actor perhaps! And then it came to him how he himself had taken charge at one moment and sung his heart out. *P’laisir de amour*. Oh lord, he thought, was I drunk? Surely not. McKinnon’s wines were potent. Ah, Charmaine, he thought. It was all because of you . . . you my beloved darling sweet French maid. He fell back onto the bed and began to dream. Charmaine . . . Charmaine, so sweet, so tender, so lovely. And what an organiser! Yes, she would make a good wife and mother, yes indeed. It was time. Vietnam was in crisis and perhaps it was time to leave? He had enjoyed his years with the Sûreté in both Hanoi and Saigon but he was not getting any younger, neither was Charmaine. It was time to do something about it before everything exploded in one’s face. He could see a time coming when the North would exert itself again, regardless of the Geneva decision. The peace talks didn’t appear to be working and Ho Chi Minh was never going to be satisfied with half a country. Time to take Charmaine and go. Woohoo! His head was still throbbing as he reached for his singlet and underpants. Even so, still some unfinished business to attend to. That rubber plantation owner, for one . . . what was his name? Marchand, yes, the name was familiar to him from the past.

But, there was much more on his mind. Charmaine was to be with him that evening at the Continental — that magnificent hotel on the Rue Catinat. It would cost him a few week’s pay, but it was worth it. He saw through the day with routine activities, even sending off to Paris via telegraph an enquiry about Captain Marchand. All in all it had been a dull kind of a day. He’d sat in on a group instruction with the Vietnamese police and the Ministry of Interior concerning information that the guerrillas were forming a group called The National Liberation Front. Otherwise the day had passed by with nothing much but with a heap of paperwork. Incredibly boring.

At seven he picked her up from the McKinnon household in the green Peugeot. “You look so fresh,” he said as she slipped into the car. He was wearing his white sharkskin suit, with a pale blue tie to match and white leather shoes. Charmaine was wearing an off the shoulder evening gown of green satin with matching high heeled shoes.

“Well, it’s slightly cooler now, so there. My, you do look handsome.”

He laughed loudly as he spun the car out of the driveway. The Peugeot purred its way along the boulevard, cocooning the two of them into its French leather interior. When they arrived at the Continental they were ushered into a very special dining area attached to the ballroom. They could hear the music from the band, though somewhat diminished. Light filtered upon them in a delicate shade of ochre, which slightly shadowed their faces, and with the orchestral melodies in the background combined to make this an atmosphere with one purpose — seduction. Around them were couples intensely enjoying the luxury of an environment so designed for love. The stage was set. All they had to do was to relax, let themselves go, and the night was theirs. Claude had booked a bedroom. A bedroom of first class. In his left pocket was a small satin covered box, and he fingered it now and then. Claude raised his glass of Champagne and clinked it with hers. ‘*Enchanté!* To our future!’

The black Packard swung into the circular drive of the Presidential Palace. Bishop Jean-Baptiste Lacroix yawned slightly within the rear compartment. The sun was setting. The night previously at James McKinnon’s had tired him somewhat. Perhaps it was all the red wine? And indeed, what wine it was! The French cuisine had been delicious, so it couldn’t have been that. Now, another dinner with the President and his in-laws. Would he survive the night? He chuckled to himself as the car came to a halt and his Vietnamese driver swung the rear door open for him. “Thank you Duy, no need to wait around, you may take the time for yourself, but be back here by 9.30, if you wouldn’t mind.”

“Yes, my Lord.”

A military aide was waiting for him at the steps. He looked up at the grand building, originally built for a French governor sometime in the 1890s. It stood as time stood, haughty, so provincial, so aware of itself, standing out upon its surroundings as if it was some living creature. It’s grandeur so prominent. Magnificent structure, he thought, but surely too large even for a President. Heading toward Ngo Dinh Diem’s study for a pre-dinner conversation, Jean-Baptiste Lacroix passed by a full length mirror. He glanced at himself, so tall and intensely groomed in his amaranth red piped short cassock,



with the amaranth red sash around his tightly controlled midriff, and the red Zucchetto upon his head, holding down his perfectly groomed black hair with an odd grey sneaking in there. Not that one would notice. No one ever did. *Superior* was the thought that came to his mind, and he gave himself a silent grin before the slick military aide opened the door.

The South Vietnamese President, Ngo Dinh Diem, was seated behind an enormous desk. There seemed to be gold embellishings everywhere. Diem rose, bowed slightly and indicated a seat. The Bishop settled himself into a comfortable chair side-on to the desk.

“Cognac?”

Bishop Jean Baptiste Lacroix nodded and Diem pressed a on button his desk. An aide entered and Diem nodded to the liquor cabinet and gave a sign that the aide seemed to understand. The Bishop received the small glass with thanks and the aide disappeared.

Diem resumed his conversation. “You’ve been dining with the British and Americans?”

“You are very well informed, my dear friend. Are you watching the inspector of the Sûreté as well?”

Diem laughed. He shuffled some papers on his desk. “No no no, he is part of my dedicated police, why would I want to shadow him, a superb investigator?”

Jean Baptiste took a sip of his cognac. “Just wondering. He won’t be here forever, you know, and when he is gone, who and what will you rely upon? There are many within the police who would betray you. That is a fact.”

Diem winced. “And you? It is my understanding that the Vatican is to install a Vietnamese born Bishop very shortly and that I shall be losing a very dear friend. Yes, I am losing many old friends. We are not insignificant folk, you know *Jean Baptiste*. We were both given that Saint’s name at our birth, so we are eternally tied to each other’s destiny. We are spiritual brothers, never to be released from each others lives.”

Jean Baptiste set his teeth upon his lower lip. “That is true my President. We are undoubtedly linked in God’s grace within time as we are able to understand it. We are truly blessed by that providential occurrence. However, I am being called back to Rome next month, and I shall very much miss our special meetings and conversations. I have given a recommendation that the Very Reverend Monsignor Cam Phuc be installed as the new Bishop of our Notre Dame Cathedral here in Saigon. He is a graduate of my old alma mater, *Institute Catholique le Paris*. Very dedicated, very dedicated indeed, and the word is that soon there will be Archbishoprics created throughout our . . . your wonderful country. So, he will be in, ah . . . in a very short time, it would appear . . . the first Archbishop of Saigon.”

“Which distinction, if you had stayed longer, would have fallen directly upon you, would it not! But, if I know the way things work in our faith, your calling back to Rome may well be greatly in your favour?”

Jean Baptiste smiled. He took another sip from his cognac. “I believe our beloved God has something arranged for me.”

“Yes, well, I need Him to do a little more for us here, my dear *Jean Baptiste*, Archbishop, and possibly Cardinal to be in the future, God willing. Now, about the British — we need to put some pressure upon the Vatican, for them in turn to pressure the British. The Brits have done so well in Malaya, virtually wiped out that communist insurgency. Their techniques could be used here. I need them, and I need you to put it to the Vatican for them to become involved. You know, my father was very fond of Malaya where he studied and brought back to Vietnam many principles of the British.”

Jean Baptiste frowned. “I do acknowledge our spiritual bond and the dual blessing upon our birth, but my understanding is that the British do not wish to become involved in our business, and indeed it is not the same kind of situation to what we have here.”

“Well, I need them. The Americans are all very well, but they do not have that finesse and understanding the British have in counter-insurgency measures. Nor, if I may say so, do your French compatriots. I am willing to accept the Americans for what they are, but there are reservations.”

Jean Baptiste’s face went a slight shade of red. “If I may say so, my President, you haven’t been all that clever in controlling your Generals. Some of them have been carrying on with outrageous activities. Your prisons are full of people who should not be there. There seems to have been no distinction between innocence and guilt. There is torture. Families have been broken up . . . torn apart! If you wish to learn something from the British, then you first need to bring the poor village families to some understanding of why you are doing what you are. You can’t simply crush people.”

Ngo slapped his hand down on his desk. “Isn’t that what the North are doing! How can I separate the innocent from the guilty in these villages if I can’t rely upon my Generals? And . . . and . . . don’t you go relying upon what you read in the American press. Most journalists are liars, filthy liars, only out to get a good scoop for their gullible readers.”

Jean Baptiste felt that he might have overstepped himself. He fingered his Episcopal ring. Then he finished off the cognac and lowered his voice. “I’ve told you this before, brother Diem, you need more civilian officers to go into these villages. You need people with humanitarian skills. You need to scour the institutions for those who are educated in



agriculture and sociology — those who have an understanding of the country, so that they may physically go into the villages to teach the people. Your Generals don't have that understanding. They've never had that understanding."

Ngo Dinh Diem glared at the Bishop. "The Generals are difficult to . . . to handle. There are factions among them jostling for superiority. All they are after is superiority! What am I ruling, eh? What in the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary am I ruling? We have this division of North and the South set in cement by Geneva for a time, but how long before the cement crumble's eh? And even here, within our South Vietnam borders I am having to guide the ropes of so many different junkets. So much shit. Not only do I have my Generals to worry about, but there are the Cao Dai separate military, who are kind of under our control at present, but who knows, and that gangster army of Hoa Hoa's, some who admittedly did have positions in my previous cabinet. It's not all that long ago that I crushed the Binh Xuyen who were causing massive trouble here in Saigon. Many are plotting against me, while I am trying to keep them aligned with us but having very limited success. Do you realise the stress they all put me through . . . so many divisions . . . so many groups with different ideas. They don't have that problem in the North where they clamp down on everything. You can't have private armies under Ho Chi Minh's General Giap. Never happen . . . never happen. But here, they're all over the place like demented mobs. And now, even yesterday, I had a visit from that Buddhist monk . . . you know him . . . what his name? Ah, yes, Thich . . . Thich Tri Quang. He said I needed to do something drastic to bring the Buddhist community into harmony with us Catholics. He said we were smothering them, we were beating them to death. The nerve of him! He told me my presidency was not supported by his people and that if there wasn't change, there would be much trouble. As if I have not enough problems without the Buddhists turning against me! I have organised land reforms, what else do they want me to do?"

Jean Baptiste sat the empty cognac glass on the desk. It rested there like a lone sentinel, empty, as vacant as the French army that had left several years previous; the overhead light reflecting through the glass and beaming back at him in various colours of the rainbow. He looked at it for a second or two and some past memory came to his mind. Something trying to tell him . . . what? What was he hearing both from his President and also within himself? The feeling wasn't great . . . something was rumbling down upon him and he didn't like it one bit.

But Diem had somehow strangely relaxed, leant back in his chair and stretched his legs out underneath his desk. He stared at the ceiling and then tapped a pencil on the surface of the desk while throwing his head back and faking a yawn. "We have known each other a very long time, my friend. I haven't always agreed with you, but you must understand that I have a country which is almost in despair to run . . . I have an enemies to defeat . . . enemies who will stop at nothing to destroy our way of life here in Saigon. There has to be rule . . . there has to be order . . . and sometimes innocent people may get hurt. I can't help that. It is the way of things. But get me the British! Use your influence with Pope John to get me the British!"

The Bishop expelled a good deal of his breath. "Awwwhhh . . . I shall do what I can, my brother, but I don't give it all that much chance of success."

A side door opened. And an immediate dislike overwhelmed him. I'm a man of God, he thought, but I cannot help it. I cannot help it. She is so dangerous.

The President's aristocratic sister-in-law, Madame Nhu, stood in the doorway, waiting. Waiting for the President to acknowledge her presence. It didn't take long. He immediately switched from looking at Jean Baptiste and smiled at the vision of beauty before him. The vision spoke. "Diem darling, dinner will be served in ten minutes." That was all she said as she disappeared the way she had come.

And the Roman Catholic Bishop of the sacred Notre Dame Cathedral in Saigon, Jean Baptiste Lacroix, knew in the depths of his being that he was walking into the Lion's den, into the real power behind his friend, President Ngo Dinh Diem — Madame Nhu and her husband Ngo Dinh Nhu, the President's very astute and controlling brother. The power behind the throne, so to speak. He steeled himself for the occasion. •

To be continued

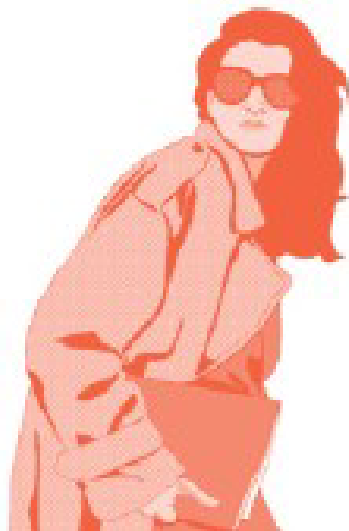
The Council to Homeless Persons

Established in 1972, the Council to Homeless Persons is the peak Victorian body representing individuals and organisations with a stake or interest in homelessness. Our mission is to work towards ending homelessness through leadership in policy, advocacy and sector development.

<http://www.chp.org.au/>

See our Consumer Participation Resource Kit at:

http://www.chp.org.au/public_library/cpkit/index.shtml



Mercury O'Proud

Political correspondent

Well, it's Springtime in Australia and New Zealand, regardless of whether a world-wide pandemic is still raging in most countries. But I'm not here to 'talk' about Covid and whether or not it is being contained. I'm here to give you some facts about the future.

First of all, what this pandemic has brought to the light of day is the fact that we were caught hopping in the fields of Aged Care and in general, the running of health departments. You can bet your boots there will be drastic shake-ups there, particularly in the state of Victoria which was really caught napping with its pants down.

Next is the past (still present in numerous ways) reliance of goods from China. What Covid-19 has highlighted is our dependence upon China for goods. This will change.

Even though it is a two-way street of trade with China, Australia will now begin to manufacture certain necessary goods. The Federal government is already providing assistance and recommendations for that to happen ASAP, and to seek extra trade relations with other countries. What the government is extremely concerned about is that if Australia's sea lanes are cut off, vital security, fuel and armament supplies would be very quickly diminished. Steps are being taken to widen our access to resources. China's reach into the South Pacific and its deployment of military throughout the so-called South China Sea, is not what a friendly government should be doing to its neighbours. The Chinese Communist Party (as distinctive from its average citizens) at the present moment is like a child that has been lightly disciplined and gone into a sulking mood. There is a hardening within the CCP, mainly directed by the leader Xi Jinping, against any form of criticism or even the suggestion of 'why don't you try this?' Everything is repudiated and Western countries are anathema to the CCP. This is a time when only the really dedicated diplomats will survive. Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines are in verbal conflict — so far not militarily — with China's assertion that the whole of the 'South China Sea' belongs to China. The claim is false. Early 17th and 18th century maps disprove that assumption. China's weakness, however, comes from within — from neglected small villages well away from the middle-class city and town life. The other millions — those who are almost forgotten about. And there will come a time!

Yes, Covid-19 will see enormous changes in our way of life, both nationally and internationally. It's all been done before of course, what with the great depression, the wars both WWI and WWII. Solomon, the wise king and preacher of the Hebrews said: "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun." Except that we now view it in a different light. •



Foster Carers

Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) is a specialised foster care program that supports children and young people with complex behaviours. TFCO is based on over thirty years of international evidence and research that improves behaviour in children and young people. As a specialised foster carer you would care for a child or young person of 7-11 years (VIC & QLD) and 7-17 (NSW) in your own home for a period of 9 months. All qualified carers receive a tax-free reimbursement of of \$75,000 per annum (VIC and NSW) and \$65,000 per annum (QLD) to help with the costs associated with supporting a child or young person.

Who can become a specialised carer?

- Anyone over the age of 21.
- Anyone with experience looking after children with complex behaviours.
- Anyone with secure accommodation and appropriate space in the home.
- Race, gender, marital status, employment, sexuality and religion do not affect a person's eligibility to become a carer.



Contact Us

OzChild National Support Office, PO Box 1312, Level 3, 150 Albert Road South Melbourne VIC 3205

Phone: [+613 9695 2200](tel:+61396952200) **Fax:** [+613 9696 0507](tel:+61396960507) **Email:** hello@ozchild.org.au