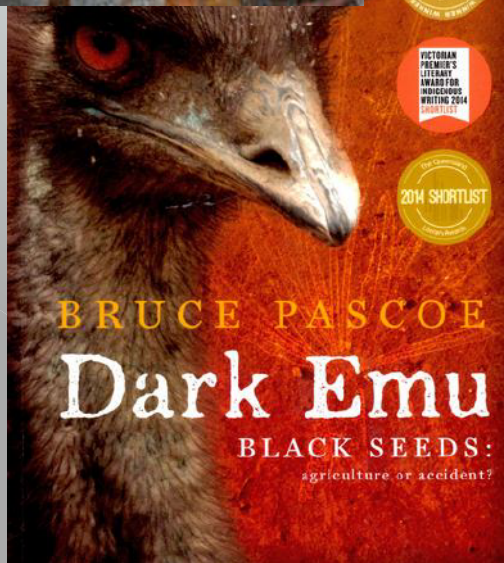
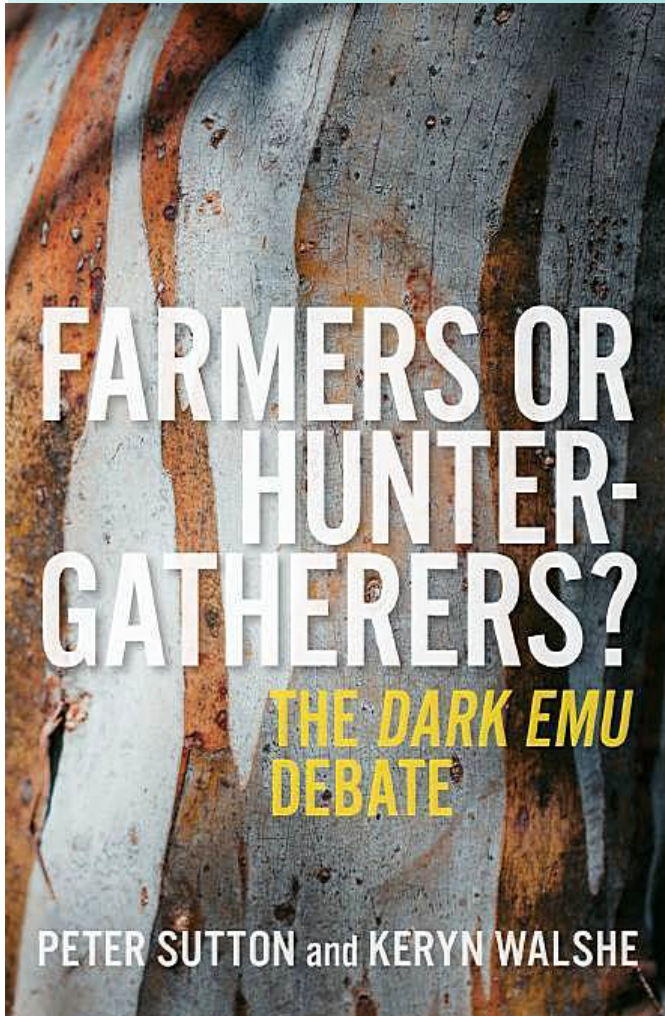


Cat's Eye Weekly

alias *The Ferret*

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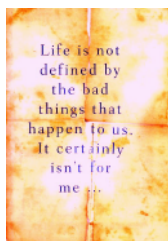
Any excuse for stirring up the universe

*Edited by
Graham Price*

Once was weekly now highly irregular in more ways than one

HIGHLIGHTS

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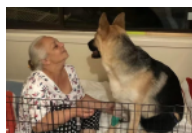
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The editor's desk

On the 30th of August 2021, a caller to the 3AW radio talk-back show rang in to complain that due to the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions the trams in Melbourne were running five minutes late because they didn't wish to be too early. Oh dear! During World War II, people had to wait five years or more to get out of concentration camps — if they were lucky to have survived that long. Millions didn't. Friends of mine, who have become a wonderful credit to Australia, waited in a crowded refugee camp for ten years before being granted asylum in Australia. The modern world, it seems, demands **instant** delivery, **instant** response. A generation or two seems to have fallen into the trap of instant activity, instant everything. Please don't fall into this trap.

Medical centres in Victoria are shutting down due to fast spreading Covid-19 infections. Nurses, doctors, other medical staff are exhausted — run off their feet, working up to 16 hours a day, looking after Covid patients, fending off angry relatives and others who come to visit. The general public seems to have no idea of what hospital staff are going through. Impatience seems to rule the scene in numerous venues. The ambulance service is overwhelmed with calls for attendance to folk, having had vaccinations and experiencing slight side-effects, who are considering the need for hospitalisation. There are delays, not only within the ambulance service, but online and via telephone for help from the Department of Health Services and other government departments. People are feeling frustration within a system that is overloading and bursting at the seams. It is a lesson for present and future governments that public services require a complete overhaul — new hospitals need to be built, ambulance services to be expanded, internet and telephone services upgraded — because the next pandemic to hit may well be more dangerous than the present one. We should not be so naive to think that this is a one off. Meanwhile, my friends and neighbours are handling things well, knowing that there is an outcome to all of this that will lead to a better awareness of what it means to be human. In particular, I know certain children who are quite positive during the lockdown and are thinking of other people during these trying times. There's a reason behind that.

The medieval Taliban. Men who make decisions to evacuate away from a war zone, leaving defenceless women to fend for themselves, should question the ethics of their actions. Admittedly, Afghanistan has always been an almost surreal and difficult situation, but when two American generals come out in opposition to their president and state that a certain proportion of troops should have remained, then we have to question the advice that President Biden was given by those close to him.

The women of Kabul had experienced a fresh breeze blowing into their lives over many years; a lifting of dress rules such as burqas and hijabs; the freedom to leave home without a male relative beside them each time, but more important was access to education. These freedoms that are accepted in all democratic countries are now being modified or removed by the ruling Taliban. The Taliban is there to impose Sharia law and to enforce rulings from strict Hadith writings of earlier centuries. The women of Kabul and others throughout Afghanistan can expect a return to medieval days. They will be there simply for the production of children and the pleasure of men. Any promises that the Taliban made to the international community regarding women's rights, are like jackals whistling in the wind. But dictatorial Russia and China have no care about that — both countries have moved in with lucrative 'gifts', expecting to gain generously from Afghanistan's rich mineral deposits. •

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





When the real bad things come

A Certain Light

Surviving a plane crash when your body is broken and your mind is in utter terror, and the nagging thought comes ‘what have I done to deserve this?’ And you are all alone with your frightening, burning thoughts.

The doctor’s notebook reads: “A 34-year-old patient was transferred to Royal Perth Hospital after sustaining 60% TBSA [total body surface area] full-thickness burns in a plane crash . . . Escharotomies of the lower limbs and left hand were attempted at a local hospital prior to transfer. On presentation to RPH there were circumferential full-thickness burns to both legs and the whole of the left upper limb, and patchy full-and partial-thickness burns to the back and abdomen. Traumatic injuries included fractures of the vertebral body of L1 and left transverse process of L2, and traumatic pancreatitis.

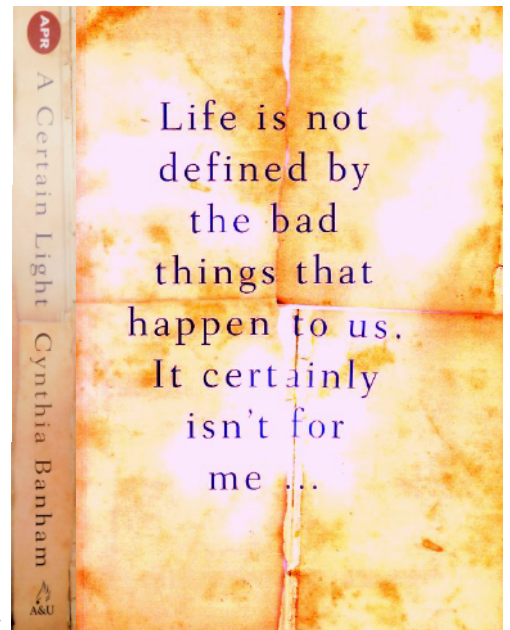
“The patient’s feet and left hand were pale, cold and ischemic, therefore complete escharotomies, fasciotomies and vigorous burns scrubbing and lavage were [performed] urgently in theatre. Gram’s stain of tissue showed mixed bacteria and intravenous (IV) meropenem was started empirically. The patient was transferred to the intensive care unit, but developed signs of progressive wound sepsis with new expanding areas of necrosis, a vesiculo-bullous rash extending past burnt tissue and progressive myonecrosis; requiring multiple extensive debridements on days 2 and 3 post-admission, including left above knee and right below knee amputations.”

60 per cent of her body surface was completely burnt, gone. The patient, Cynthia Banham, has written *A Certain Light* — a memoir to her young son — when at the time of commencement of writing he had just turned three on the 17th February 2015. The plane crash occurred in Indonesia 2007. The surgeon who eventually treated Cynthia was Dr. Fiona Wood, who while Cynthia was being medivac’d out of Indonesia to Perth, Australia, was flying to Indonesia to treat other victims of the airline crash. When she returned from Indonesia she saw Cynthia when other doctors had taken the dressings down to change them.

‘I smelt you from the hall . . . something is wrong . . .!’ ‘Fiona took down my dressings again and says my flesh was melting. ‘It was a flesh-eating infection, your skin melted under my touch.’ If Fiona hadn’t have walked in, hadn’t taken down my dressings at that moment, I would have died then too . . . [simply one of several almost deaths]. Fiona had to keep two teams of doctors all working at the same time [in theatre] because the infection was eating me up so fast they couldn’t keep up with it.”

To save her life, and to put it bluntly, the surgeons chopped off both her legs — one below the knee and one above the knee. There was no choice. Either that or die. Physiotherapists later referred to Cynthia’s residual limbs as ‘stumps’, but she refuses to call them that, instead referring to them as her ‘leg rest’. At times she thought there was nothing much left of her. Cynthia Banham—solicitor turned journalist, world traveller, covering terrorist bombings in Tanzania; loving Nepal, Tibet, Iraq, was suddenly no longer that person. “At what point would they remove so much of me that I would cease to be human?” Cynthia writes about survival, regardless of what the odds are against you. Surviving from what was close to being a vegetable, Cynthia determined the massive trauma she had gone through was not going to beat her.

On the slow and utterly painful road to some kind of recovery, it occurred to Cynthia that previous folk in her family had been through trauma. Returning home to Canberra in 2015 she was checking out stored boxes. Among them was a small box containing her Italian grandparents’ papers. She discovered that after the Italian armistice in 1943 her grandfather Alfredo — at the age of nineteen — had been captured by German soldiers and sent to POW camp in Austria/Germany for two years and sentenced to forced labour. She also discovered that her great aunt Amelia was a hero who smuggled food to the camp under the noses of the Germans and sacrificed her virginity to a German commander so as to continue to support the prisoners. There were photographs in the box — one was the entrance to a POW camp, and the entrance appeared to be Auschwitz, though it turned out to be another.





Cynthia had found a poem in the old box — a poem written by an unknown author, which described conditions in the camp. Part of it reads:

with calluses on your hands
broken shoes on your feet
lost and without love
foreign children who pass
why do you deny us a smile
when will it be over
this wicked stubbornness
and a steamed machine
that will take us home
we want our homes
and a hug from mum

Researching further, Cynthia discovered that Amelia had died in America at the age of 42, of brain and lung cancer, the same age as Cynthia when she began to research Amelia's life. Amelia had 'accidentally' fallen for work in a restaurant which was run by an Italian Mafia boss. His cruelty to her meant that her life rapidly went downhill. She suffered numerous beatings that were so bad she had to be hospitalised. Cynthia, with her severe burns and loss of legs, considered that Amelia had suffered more than she.

Cynthia's partner, Michael, stood by her during her days of utter despair and her thoughts about not recovering her former life. She was never going to be her former self — never going to be the same body because there were large chunks of her that were unrecognisable. In spite of all that she had been through, Cynthia said to Michael "I've been having a bit of bad luck." One of the most fabulous understatements of the century! A bit of bad luck! Michael's faith in Cynthia was strong and it wasn't all that long until he said to her mind, body and soul: "Marry me!"

And the little boy who has come from this union knows so deep within his heart that he has the best mother and father in the universe. •

A Certain Light By Cynthia Banham
Allen & Unwin large paperback
\$AUD32.99



The end of Garuda flight 200, 7th March 2007 at Yogyakarta airport
Picture credit Alamy.com



Dark Emu or a light foxing?

Considerable controversy has arisen since the publishing of Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu* in 2014 — the account of how our Aboriginal society was not simply hunter gatherers, but was involved in some kind of light farming, even to the extent of building hayricks and dams.

The book took off with tremendous acceptance — mostly within the white and semi-white communities in the cities, and boosted by social media as proof that the early ancestors of this land were simply not only hunter gatherers but farmers. Bruce Pascoe relied much upon records of the 18th and 19th century written by white farmers and white historians. Within the more Northern and regional aboriginal communities, however, there was some doubt about this new direction. But this was easily dismissed. Here was ground breaking 'evidence' that our Indigenous people were more than simply hunters and gatherers of berries and other vegetation.

A spanner in the works has arrived with the publishing of Peter Sutton and Keryn Walshe's *Farmers or Hunter-Gatherers? The Dark Emu debate* — Melbourne University Press. Professor Sutton is a social anthropologist and linguist who has worked consistently with outback Aborigines. Keryn Walshe is an archeologist with over 35 years of experience working at Australian Indigenous heritage sites. Their book is a forensic critique of *Dark Emu*, with conclusions that Pascoe's thesis is very short on real evidence and that as Pascoe has relied mostly upon white settler evidence, there are major flaws in his book. Sutton and Walshe concentrate more upon Indigenous activities, and in particular, the spiritual/dreaming aspects of native life, which influences the Indigenous social and nomad lifestyle. Sutton and Walshe consider that once this lifestyle was settled, there was no further need for the Indigenous people to look further.

Numerous Aboriginal leaders were not particularly thrilled with *Dark Emu*. It appeared to some that it was more a book slanted toward the white readers of Australia and did little for Indigenous recognition.

Aboriginal human rights advocate, Dr. Hannah McGlade, whose ancestors worked for white farmers, considered that Pascoe's book was "clearly . . . not very truthful or accurate."

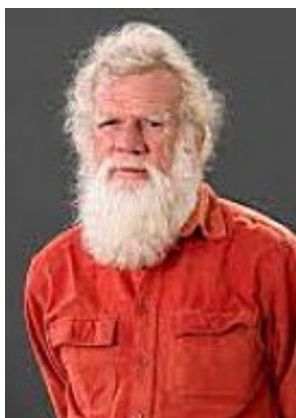
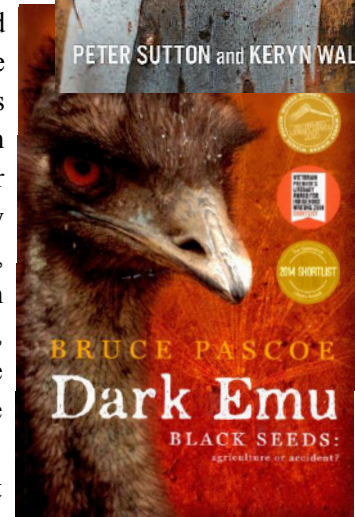
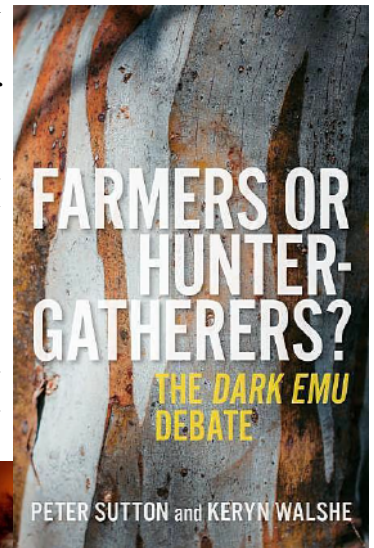
Victoria Grieve-Williams, adjunct professor at RMIT University and Warrimaay historian, recently stated, concerning Sutton & Walshe's publication: "The book too is a defence of Aboriginal people as hunters and gatherers; as

nomads; as a dignified and highly intelligent, spiritual people, who don't need to be and have no wish to be farmers or horticulturalists . . . There are many people scrambling for a semblance of cover, including high-level politicians, many journalists and sundry social media self-styled experts, many of whom, it is easy to suspect, have not read either book."

However, the academic Professor Marcia Langton, recently said that *Dark Emu* was the most important book on Australia, which should be read by every Australian. Beyond that, Langton has refused to comment.

Which brings us to one of Australia's greatest historians — Professor Geoffrey Blainey. "Concerning Pascoe's *Dark Emu* and his most recent *Young Dark emu for Children* . . . Both [books] omit the Torres Strait Islanders . . . The vivid map for children is the more inaccurate . . . As for the skilled hunter-gatherers themselves, Pascoe calls them 'primitives' haplessly wandering across the face of the Earth. He goes out of his way to omit the success stories of these nomadic people. Thus he tells us about Donald Thomson, a distinguished Australian anthropologist, but ignore's Thomson's famous account of nomadic life in Arnhem Land and

the logic and ingenuity of the seasonal movements of its people. For young students Thomson's story would be fascinating."



Bruce Pascoe

Image Spectator.com.au



Pascoe also omits telling his young readers how fire was a basic in their way of life: from warmth during winter, to cooking, to light during dark evenings. And, as Blainey comments: “For manufacturing many of their implements and weapons [for] hunting by day and fishing by night. Its smoke was used as a means of communication and an insect repellent at night.” Blainey also berates Pascoe for no mention of Mungo Lady and Mungo Man — the oldest known people found in 1968 and 1974. “Schools are increasingly taught another version of history: A version which downgrades the Mungo people. Students are instructed to believe that Aboriginals were not nomadic but pioneers who lived permanently in the solid dwellings of townships that might hold up to 1000 people. They allegedly grew their own food and stored it in large granaries and little underground storehouses and were so masterly in coping with varied climates that their happy little townships flourished ‘in every corner’ of the continent. Indeed even in the deserts. Bruce Pascoe, originally a schoolteacher, is the populariser of this recent revolution in understanding Australian history. In mistakenly contending that Aboriginals invented an early form of agriculture he extends praise to scholars in whom he relies. His popularity arises partly from the public’s illusion that he is really an Aboriginal historian who knows almost instinctively how his ancestors thought.”

Bruce Pascoe responded to some of the criticism by saying “We’re looking at the same facts and having a difference of opinion. That’s not a bad thing. I think Aboriginal people have been wanting to have this discussion for 250 years, so I think it can only be positive.”

Nevertheless, as Warraimaay historian Victoria Grieve-Williams stated: “There are many people scrambling for a semblance of cover, including high-level politicians, many journalists and sundry social media self-styled experts, many of whom, it is easy to suspect, have not read either book.” Both books should reside in all libraries and schools, side by side. •

Footnote: On 11th September 2021, Bruce Pascoe wrote a reply in *The Saturday Age*, which did not criticise *Farmers or Hunter Gatherers? The Dark Emu Debate*, but simply stated that there had been some criticism of his book *Dark Emu*. He wrote: “When I read the book *Farmers or Hunter Gatherers? The Dark Emu Debate* . . . which claims to repudiate [*Dark Emu*], I was amazed how frequently the writers agreed with me.” •

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





Review: Klara and The Sun

By Kazuo Ishiguro

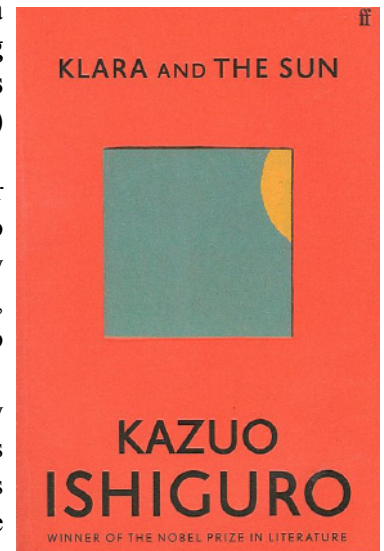
Ishiguro puts us into a world not so very far away from us in time — a technological world where machines are more finely developed. Among these machines are humanised robots that are used mainly as companions for unwell teenagers. Klara is one that waits in the window of the robot (AF) store to be chosen as a companion.

Klara is kept alive by the power of the Sun, hence being selected with AF Rose for a turn in the window on a regular basis. Klara is special. She has feelings and responds to human interaction. Klara often knows what is going to occur in a human's life, before they do. Eventually, Klara is bought by a 14-year-old girl named Josie, together with her mother, Christine. Josie suffers from what appears to be an unknown sickness and Klara is there to give comfort and support through teenage years and perhaps beyond.

The world that Klara and Josie live in is strange, somewhat superior in technology than today, but all the trappings of the 21st Century are there in exciting and ominous revelations. Can Klara feel and understand happiness and love? It seems so, and is Josie's illness allied to — or caused by — this modern brave new world of technology? These are questions that are dealt with by Ishiguro as he weaves what turns out to be a gentle thriller. The interaction of the robot Klara, with humans, is carefully explored with fiction that almost makes you sit on the edge of your chair. There are deep mysteries here, even to possible genetic altering of children with their parents' consent. As time moves on, Klara's dependence on the Sun grows immensely; she attempts to explore the attributes of the Sun and finds that the Sun has enemies. It becomes Klara's quest to help the Sun as the Sun has helped her. This leads to some unusual complications.

Ishiguro weaves an enchanting story of a changing world at conflict with another that wishes to remain much the same with fields, flowers, sun, wind and rain. One keeps asking throughout the book 'What eventually happens to Klara, Josie and her boyfriend William, and the Sun? And what does it mean to love?' •

Klara and The Sun, by Kazuo Ishiguro
Faber large paperback



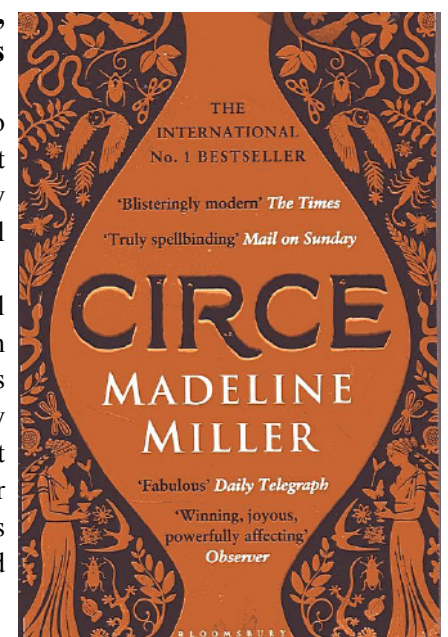
Review: Circe. A re-invention of the classics

Another tale of the Sun, with the daughter of Helios, Lord of the Sun, being strongly feminist and upsetting the balance of the heavenly gods of the Titans and the Olympians, based on Homer's *Odessey*.

Circe will not be put down. She is a minor goddess and therefore subject to the rule of her elders, but Circe finds subtle powers within herself that she was not aware of and puts these to use, which initially cause some mayhem in the heavenly kingdoms, but turn out to be useful in combating negative influences within the mortal world.

Madeline Miller weaves a wondrous spectacle of the immortal and the mortal worlds, each which impinges on the other. Gods and goddesses associating with mortals and vice versa, much to each others peril. It is a wild ride, spellbinding in its brilliance of poetic prose as power plays are carried out within the various heavenly halls of the gods. Circe is banished to an island, where she becomes aware of her latent powers while being immersed with nature. And it all unfolds from there. This minor goddess becomes a powerful force for femininity, takes risks, experiences numerous heartbreaks, finds strength. A novel for our times: enchanting, sensuous and spellbinding.

Bloomsbury paperback. Dymocks \$AUD19.99





The flaws in human beings

Several decades ago I was struck down by what was a severely damaged nerve in the left of my neck. My doctor of the time immediately sent me to a neurosurgeon who wasn't keen on sticking the knife in at the time, but who advised that it would take certain pills and six months to heal. The next opinion I sort was a sports physiotherapist, who again advised pills to cope and at least 12 months before complete recovery.

Not satisfied with these explanations I visited a Chinese acupuncturist and massage therapist, who within the space of five weeks brought the neck back to normal function. So, why had not the two previously highly qualified practitioners been able to see beyond their own learning and experience, or did it merely come down to the fact that all human beings are flawed? Of course, the psychopaths out there will disagree with that.

A convicted paedophile up before a magistrates' court for attempting to take away a four-year-old girl from a park, had his case dismissed by a magistrate because of 'difficulties' and cultural differences, and previously another magistrate had only ordered 300 hours of community service for earlier offences involving little boys. Over a period of two years several magistrates handled cases concerning this man, but nowhere, it seems, was any psychological counselling advised. Noise!

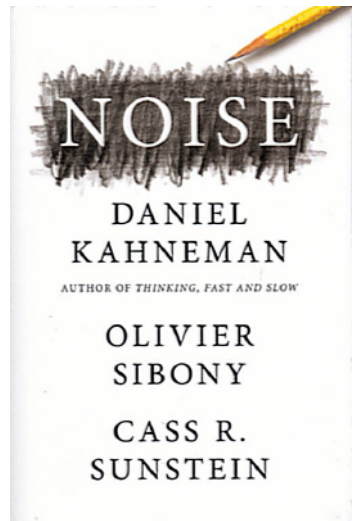
Judgments, made in all sincerity, but wrong numerous times. Bad judgments lead to a bad society — a fragmented society struggling with what is right and wrong. Why? Magistrates and judges make judgments, politicians make judgments, council bureaucrats make judgments, teachers make judgments, professors of universities make judgments, but that doesn't mean to say they are correct. Even forensic science data has been wrongly identified at times due to human judgments. Wrong people have been convicted due to errors of judgment. And with the rise in numbers within collective groups making judgments, errors are often magnified. Group mind takes on a specific ideology which is not necessarily correct or useful and magnifies it, so that within certain areas of society it then becomes the "sacred" belief. Which is how conspiracy theories often take flight and embed themselves deep in the mind of humanity.

It should be recognised that much human judgment is flawed. *Noise* pp94-99: "Noise in individual judgment is bad enough. But group decision making adds another layer to the problem. Groups can go in all sorts of directions, depending in part on factors that should be irrelevant . . . Because of the dynamics among group members . . . the level of noise can be high . . . We have pointed to the wisdom of crowds: if you take a large group of people and ask them a question, there is a good chance that the average answer will be very close to the target. . . . But what happens if people are listening to one another? You might well think that their doing so is likely to help. After all, people can learn from one another and thus figure out what is right. Under favourable circumstances, in which people share what they know, deliberating groups can indeed do well. But independence is a prerequisite for the wisdom of crowds. If people are not making their own judgments and are relying instead on what other people think, crowds might not be so wise after all . . . The irony is that while multiple independent opinions, properly aggregated, can be strikingly accurate, even a little social influence can produce a kind of herding that undermines the wisdom of crowds."

Medical noise: *Noise* pp275-276. "A study of pneumonia diagnoses by radiologists, for instance, found significant Noise. Much of it came from differences in skill. More specifically, 'variation in skill can explain 44% of the variation in diagnostic decisions.'"

"On the question of whether a breast lesion was cancerous, one study found only 'fair' agreement among pathologists . . . The level of noise in medicine is very low. But in some areas that are highly technical, doctors are far from noise-free. Whether a patient will be diagnosed with a serious disease, such as cancer, might depend on a kind of lottery, determined by the particular doctor that she will see."

Noise by Daniel Kahneman - Professor Psychology Princetown University, Olivier Sibony - Professor of Strategy & Business Policy at HEC Paris, and Cass R. Sunstein - Professor at Harvard, where he is founder and director of 'Program on Behavioural Economics and Public Policy.'



William Collins, paperback, 450 plus pages with references

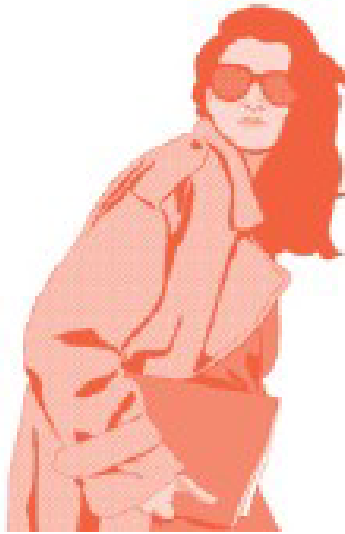
Published May 2021

Dymocks \$AUS34.99



Mercury O’Proud

Political correspondent



A special report on CCP China

The China conundrum: Vietnam doesn’t trust China, remembering too well China’s incursions into its territory in past times. But clever China has a way around that. China’s financial and economic incursion into Cambodia has secured an almost unbreakable bond between those two countries, which encapsulates Vietnam’s borders. Cambodia, next door to Vietnam, is beholden to China for much infrastructure of recent years.

In addition, China has poached a relationship with Vietnam’s neighbour Laos with the help of building a railway from Laos’ capital, Vientiane, to the Chinese border and eventually further into China *connecting up with Beijing*. Great for China, but in time what would this mean for Laos? More Chinese infiltration! Change of culture? Importation of Chinese infrastructure, Chinese business overwhelming local business? What largely rural Laos is at present may well not be Laos in the future. In a sense, Vietnam is now surrounded by countries sympathetic to the ruling Communist junta of China, with only Thailand standing out as the one separate country — for the time being.

China’s special *Belt and Road Initiative* — to which the Victorian Labor State Government recently had on its most wished list (and has never revealed details to the Victorian public) — works exceedingly well in favour of the Chinese Communist Party’s expansionist programme, which is to infiltrate as many countries as it can bearing much needed finance and infrastructure, and when those countries cannot pay back the loan, China smiles and takes back its gifts with either straight-forward ownership or forced political appeasement by the country that can no longer pay. Hence, that country and numerous others also caught in the CCP spider’s web, continue to sully United Nations meetings with their biased votes in favour of the CCP of China — *because they have no other choice*. Which, is also what we have seen lately with the World Health Organisation kowtowing to China in regard to the Covid-19 release. **Remember WHO’s original statement on Covid? No, it didn’t come out of China.** Simple, isn’t it! Who would have thought back then in 1947 when war was on between the Nationalists of China and the Communists of China, that we would one day be looking at a dictatorial regime that once promised peace and equality, but is now hell bent on persecuting any country that does not agree with its policies and Marxist ideology and covers up its sins of the past where millions of Chinese forcibly died under its rule. Vietnam is well to be concerned, as are other countries close by such as Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, even Indonesia.

The CCP is engaged in imposing its sovereignty upon almost any island or atoll within the so-called South China Sea. The fact that the South China Sea is simply a name for a sea lapping the shores of numerous countries is taken out of context by China, considering that it is now claimed singularly by China as her own. And as such, any atoll, or small uninhabited island within that area, is seen by China as belonging to that mainland, to be used for any purpose they desire, but foremost as recent history has proven, military purposes where docking wharves are built for warships and recently built airfields are for fighter jets and bombers. — *in particular* long range. China is not at war, nor is there any threat of war against it, so why all the aggression and threats that China has been carrying out of recent times to nations geographically close to her and now others not so close? All this from a supposed peaceful country looking out for its friends with *Belt and Road Initiatives*. A conundrum? Not really, for China’s ruling Communist Party has clever expansionist plans. For some people it is considered that Christianity will overcome the world; for others it is Islam, but for China, it is a much simpler approach from a growing bastion of strength: hand out help to smaller countries which always requires acknowledgement of one kind or another. But the hand that is offering help has an ingrained ulterior motive — the spread of Communist philosophy throughout the world, which the government of Victoria appears not to be concerned about.

What all nations now have to ask is, what is the CCP doing for peaceful purposes? Very little, it seems. You have to ask: ‘Why are so many universities within China connected to military organisations and why — with these military connections — are many of these universities delving into cyber activities and chemical/biological research?’ The sensible



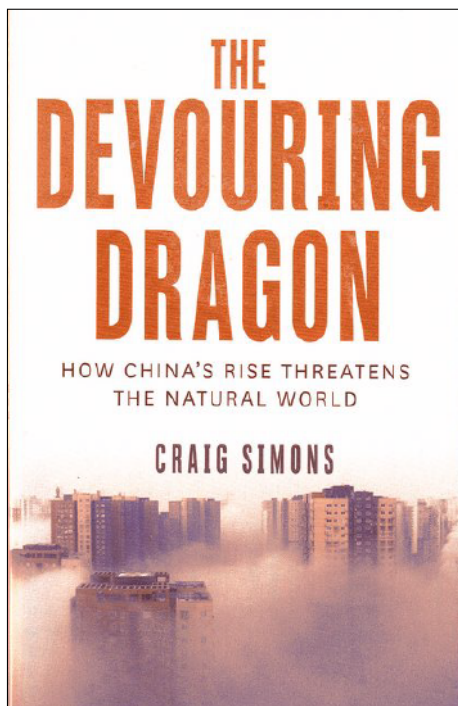
answer to this is ‘Because that is what the Communist Party of China endorses.’ This is what the CCP wishes so as to gain superiority over all other nations.

The recent disappearance of high profile Chinese business people and new political restrictions on the residents of Hong Kong, together with China’s statements that it will eventually take over Taiwan, should send shudders of chills down the spines of all democratic nations. The CCP’s bold cyber spy activities, trade restrictions, virology laboratory experiments (with connections to the military), and major arms expansionism send a message that something terribly wrong has occurred within the psyche of the CCP of China in recent years.

The rise of Xi Jinping — who is setting himself up for total lifetime dictatorial leadership — has changed the game and it is all about firm control of the citizens of China. Once there was Mao’s Little Red Book of thoughts which all were required to read, now Xi Jinping has arranged his own dictatorial personality cult for school children. Into the national curriculum has been slipped ‘Xi Jinping thought’. School books now include the CCP’s ‘achievements’ in its so-called role in poverty, together with anecdotes that illustrate the rise of the one party’s expansion, with Xi Jinping now named as Grandpa Xi Jinping, who oversees and cares about children’s education. It simply boils down to indoctrination at an early age, so that a generation of children grow up with a certain mind-set. Jing Xuan Teng, reporting from Beijing, mentions several parents on social media sprouting: “Brainwashing starts from childhood,” and “Can we refuse this?”

Regarding Covid-19, Chinese defector Wei Jingsheng, explodes the cover-ups at Wuhan in a new book ‘What Really Happened in Wuhan.’ Wei was incarcerated in Chinese jails for 18 years because he criticised the regime. Now 70, he informs that the party sealed information that should have been released to other nations, and that when there were certain information leaks about the Wuhan Virology Laboratory, intelligence agencies had not taken them seriously, similar to when warnings were given about 9/11, they also were not taken seriously.

Unless there is a firm stance by the majority of nations, the CCP will continue with its aggressive push to make it No.1 in the world, regardless of any ethics and to the detriment of the Chinese people. •



From the publishers: The pace of development in China is astonishing, and this development is assaulting the natural world at an alarming rate. In a few short years, China has become the planet’s largest market for endangered wildlife, its top importer of tropical trees, and its biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. China’s rapid economic growth also has impacts on nations worldwide: in Brazil, farmers clear swathes of the Amazon to plant soybeans for the Chinese market; in India poachers hunt tigers and elephants to feed Chinese demand, and in the United States, clouds of mercury and ozone drift earthward after trans-Pacific jet-stream journeys.

This insightful book looks at how an ascending China has rapidly surpassed the United States and Europe as the planet’s worst polluting superpower. It argues that China’s most important 21st century legacy will be determined not by jobs, corporate profits, or political alliances, but by how quickly its growth degrades the global environment — and whether it can stem the damage.

**Scribe Publications,
Paperback 289 pages
\$AUD29.95**

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/>

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Warning: This story contains graphic descriptions of life in a concentration camp. The story is based on true events; except for two historical persons, the names of all parties are fictitious.

Where hope lingers

A short story by Graham Price

It was April 15, 1945. Hilda stared at the British soldiers swarming out of their steaming tanks and large trucks with flapping canvas sides — their eyes bright and glistening, some of them heavily tanned, others with rosy cheeks as if they were new recruits to the war. There had been an officer in a jeep before, but now there was further activity. None of her fellow prisoners had that same look. All were pale and looked like partially invisible ghosts. She ran an emaciated hand across her forehead. Could it be true? They were liberated at last! Pray that it be.

She'd long dreamed of these cavalier soldiers, coming to rescue her not in armoured vehicles but on prancing horses with long glistening swords down at their side. A First Lieutenant jumped down from the armoured tank that came to halt at the gates, shouldering a light machine gun and offering her a bar of chocolate. She grasped it greedily. Her small brother, Erich, staggered toward the soldier, mouth wide open and thin arms reaching out. The soldier picked him up easily — Erich was all skin and bone, head shaven so that his skull looked similar to the corpses lying around the yard near the gates. The soldier shook his head, tears falling down his cheeks as he smoothed the top of Erich's head.

"You do stink somewhat, little boy, but we'll fix that for you. Chocolate?"

Erich mouthed something that the Lieutenant did not understand. He gently lowered the boy to the ground, fearing the child might break upon touching the surface.

"We all stink here at Bergen-Belsen," said Hilda in reasonably good English. After all, she had been to the Montessori school in years past, before all of this evil transportation and degradation by the Nazis.

A Corporal medic came up. "Sir, you need to keep your distance. This place will be full of typhus and typhoid. Look at all these dead people lying around!"

"Oh, what the hell, soldier. If the war hasn't killed me yet, surely these people won't kill me off. Let's have some compassion around here, aye?"

Hilda shivered. It was cold; early Spring, though the day was clear with only a few grey clouds above. She'd grown used to the cold, the biting winds over the last couple of years. Grown used to the rats running around the open huts, grown used to the lack of food, with family and relatives dying before her eyes. What else could possibly harm her? She licked the chocolate, careful not to bite into it, fearful for a reaction from being starved for so long. She knew that much, at least. Her seven-year-old brother, Erich, still did not speak, but looked sullenly at the crowd of people staggering out of the gates, crying, panting, stumbling in their haste to view their liberators and take from them what they could. Hilda pulled her brother out of the way. More soldiers were handing out rations to the multitude of grasping hands. Hilda stood back. What was the hurry? She hadn't eaten a decent meal in months, nothing given within the past 48 hours, except some watery soup the night before last that made her bowels excrete in a hurry. Like Erich, she was wasted — thin and bony, her ribs if she took off her worn and ragged top, would show clearly. Her hip bones were sharp, almost piercing her thin and translucent skin. At fourteen years of age, she could be taken for an old lady.

The Lieutenant was still standing there. "Well, what's your name, little girl?"

"Hilda Berger. My mother was Esther and my father Hanns. My elder brother, Abraham, was with us until last month, but all are gone now . . . all are gone. They died here in this rubbish dump." There was no emotion on her face as she said that. It was simply a fact and facts had to be dealt with and then dismissed immediately in a concentration camp, otherwise one would go mad.

"Hilda! That's my grandmother's name. What a coincidence. Okay, I have to go now, but I'll return. You look after that brother of yours and we'll see about making you both more comfortable. But there are many such as you . . . there are many . . . far too many." and he turned away trying to hide the swelling within his eyes, and climbed up into his tank. It turned on its caterpillar tracks, making puffs of smoke in the cold air and heavy grooves in the mud, and roared away.

A khaki coloured ambulance stood there, its passenger medics overwhelmed by the sights before them, knowing that by themselves they could do nothing to make things better. It would take hundreds of staff to be flown in with thousands of new clothes for the inmates. Already, the people of Britain with their own suffering and shortages were donating blouses, shirts, dresses, trousers, coats and shoes. Some even added hats, thinking that with the coming spring and summer months, these would be a blessing for the survivors. No one, during the inspection of Bergen-Belsen dared to touch or even think of distributing the piles of clothes and shoes found numerously heaped in the sheds, left behind by diseased and dead inmates. These would stay until photographed and eventually either kept for posterity as a record, or gathered up and burnt.



It would take a massive movement of catering staff to arrive to begin feeding the several thousand of those who were still alive, and that would need to be done slowly. None of them would be used to rich food and would simply vomit it back up or excrete it through a continuing diarrhoea for days on end. A huge medic team was already on the way with field operating surgeries, life giving drugs, and the latest diagnostic machines. Bergen-Belsen was relieved at last.

Hilda woke as dawn was creeping through the camp, its fingers penetrating the huts with an icy feeling. She didn't mind. It was better than the vicious snow they'd had to put up with for several winters. It had even come to the point where some of the inmates ate it, simply for something to fill their empty but bloated bellies. She'd had second thoughts about coming back to the hut to sleep, because the dead were still there. Over two-thirds of the hut's inmates were gone. Typhoid, typhus, tuberculosis? She didn't know. The smell was overpowering, but she had lived with it for so long that it didn't seem to matter. It was everywhere you went, it penetrated the camp like some heavy miasma from the underworld. Despite the rations they had consumed, more had died during the night, but the skeleton of the woman on the bunk next to her shakily moved and uttered some breathless noise. Erich woke on the bunk beside her and blinked. She caressed his face. No adverse reactions during the night. They were still there and now there was hope . . . hope that somehow they might be allowed to go back to their town in the Netherlands and live a normal life again. That is, if it was still there. She'd heard the bombers night after night, not so far away, and then the thunder claps as they released their bombs, over and over. Erich sat up, rubbing his eyes. He smiled at her and she thought it was something so wonderful to see, for he had not smiled in months, or was it years? She could not remember. She gave him a drink from the reconstituted milk she had been given. There was some tinned meat that she thought might have been beef, but she needed to be careful with that. It might be too rich for their stomachs. The British had been good to them, though it was still not enough. She wondered how it would have been if the Russians had got there first, would they have been so kind? She had heard rumours of their savagery when they reached German villages, raping the women and young girls, but of course that was simply the German guards talk just to scare them, wasn't it? There were Russian prisoners of war in another section of the camp, but she had never met any of them. Would they be any better off than her companions? Probably not, and perhaps treated even worse than the Jews.

A British army Captain stood in the doorway with a clipboard and called for those able to move to come outside for an inspection. Hilda shivered. The remembrances of previous inspections in the camp by the SS and some Nazi medical personnel came back to her like a thunderbolt. She froze. But Erich had begun to move, so she caught up with him, took him by the hand and went outside. The sun was shining. Inmates were coming out of the huts, those who could walk, many simply staggering along being as brave as they could be. They had spent years being starved, tortured, kept like pigs in a swill, so what was a broken kind of stagger along the mud to them? Nothing! They could even smile, and from some of them would come a laugh and a song or two. They were living in different times, which hit them like a wave from the sea, washed over them and gave them some cleansing which they had not known for years. And there was a voice somewhere in the crowd reciting passages from the *Torah*, which was taken up by others so that it became a chant. And slowly, some of the stronger ones began to sing and dance.

Hilda and Erich had moved to the front of the crowd where the Captain and several soldiers were situated. They were attempting to record names and dates, but it seemed an impossible task while the crowd was still rejoicing. Eventually the army personnel began to pack up. The Captain held a loudspeaker and addressed the crowd. "I'm sorry that we do not have further rations at the moment. My army has moved on and is penetrating further into Germany. It will not be long before the Nazi regime will surrender and everyone will be free; not only yourselves, but those in Dachau and Auschwitz and all over. We are getting closer to Berlin each day. If you will be patient, we will be bringing you more help, more rations, more medicines. This may take a few days, a week or two, but it will come my friends. It will come."

There was a roar of cheering, which surprised some of the inmates themselves in their weakened condition. Men and women, freed from being separated for years, looked at each others ragged and gaunt faces and saw only angelic images before them. Some recognised men or women they had known previously and rushed to embrace. We have survived. We can be re-born. We are not slaves any longer. As Moses led the children out of Egypt under the thumb of Pharaoh, so we too are relieved. Rejoice!

The Captain was speaking again. "Well good luck. I know that some of you have broken into the SS quarters and taken all their food and drink, and that's fine. That's what you had to do, but I implore you all, not to take this too far. We need some form of rule and regulation, so please enjoy the freedom that you have, but be satisfied in the knowledge that further help is coming to you. And, please know that you are free to leave the camp for walks if you wish . . . go to the local villagers . . . talk to the people there, because they were just as trapped and afraid as you have been. That's all for now. I have to join my fellows on the road to Berlin. *Auf Wiedersehen, meine Freunde.*"

The Lance-Corporal interpreter looked at the Captain and shrugged his shoulders. Well, that was it. Better get a move on.



Hilda thought that it would be a good thing to go out and see the farmlands around the camp. She would like to find other children out there who had not been incarcerated and see how they had fared during the war. She now had enough rations to last for almost a week, if she and Erich were careful. Fortunately, she had been given a canvas bag by the Lieutenant which she slung over her shoulder, thus keeping the rations safe from other people. The strap dug into what was left of her shoulder flesh and hurt, but she was determined to have it that way. We might all be Jews, she thought, but desperation makes thieves of all men, and women too. She wasn't about to give up her rations for those who had used all theirs up.

A man, somewhat more fleshy than the others, came up to her. "Are you Anne?" he asked.

She hesitated. His face was dark and pock-marked, his beard grown long and grey, but as most, he had a shaven head. She did not know who he was and clasped the bag to her breast. "No, I am Hilda."

"Ah," he said. Hilda Berger is it? I thought you might have been Anne Frank. You look very much like her, and I think you knew her, didn't you? You were often taken for twins. I've seen you together, with that little brother of yours."

Hilda shrank before the man. "Don't you know?"

"What is it I do not know?"

"Anne and her parents are no longer alive. How is it that you do not know that? Who are you?"

The man crumpled to the ground and began to sob. He rocked back and forth, wailing. Hilda stepped back, confused. If he had known her in the past and also Anne, how come he was so ignorant of what had occurred? She could not stand the noise, took Erich by the hand and walked away. Whoever he was, it would have to wait. I don't need this kind of interruption into my new freedom. Already, she was beginning to dream of a new life for her and Erich, when they would go back to their old town in the Netherlands, and begin their lives again. And Erich could go to the Montessori school.

"What have you got in that bag?" said the thin dark-haired woman as she snatched at Hilda's arm. She was tall, but like all the inmates, clothed in rags, no shoes. Her feet stood splayed in the mud like rotten leaves.

"It's none of your business," said Hilda, tearing herself away from the woman. "Are you a witch? Go away."

"Rations is it? Rations is what you got in that bag, eh? Let me have them little girl. You don't need them, you're half dead already by the looks of you. Won't be long for you and this dirty little kid beside you."

"They're not yours. You're a thief and a stinking one at that. Go away before I hit you."

"Ha ha, a fiery one, are you, indeed? Full of shit. Let's have that bag little girl, because you'll be dead before the night is out."

It was then that Erich launched himself upon the woman's bare ankle and sank his sharp teeth in with all the strength that was left to him. The woman screamed, tried to shake him off but she could not. He drew blood and she kicked against him and backed away, when another woman close by turned and came to help. She was much shorter than the first woman, but her presence was something fierce and foreboding. She smacked the first woman on the face. "Get away, you foul pig, sow or whatever you are. You are filth to think you can take from children. Get away!"

The tall woman slunk away, limping on her right leg. Erich had done a good job with his teeth. Hilda couldn't help herself, she had to laugh. It was a crazy scene and could only happen in a concentration camp.

"Are you alright?" asked the shorter woman, who somehow had been given a new pair of overalls by the liberators. Hilda stared at her, delighting in the clean overalls that the woman wore with pride. "I'm Elise, and I see you admiring my new clothes. Oh, I have not had such in three years. Nothing but that ugly striped prison uniform. And I have boots for the first time, can you believe it? I shall treasure all of this until the rest of my days. It is so much better than dresses and dainty shoes, don't you think? And so, my little darling, is this your brother, the very brave one who bites with a vengeance? What are your names, my dear?"

Hilda didn't know what to make of this sudden rescue. Was she simply exchanging one witch for another? But she relaxed, thinking that it might not be so bad if she made friends. One needed friends in a concentration camp.

"I'm Hilda Berger and my brother is Erich. We are the only one's left out of our family, though I think there might be an uncle and aunt of mine still alive somewhere in one of the camps. I hope so."

The woman stepped forward and hugged Hilda. "My name's Elise. Are you alright?" Hilda flinched, then relaxed. Perhaps she needed this person as a friend?

"Oh, you have suffered more than most. They took my husband to Auschwitz. I fear the worst. And it was probably fortunate that I was not pregnant at the time, otherwise . . . well, you know . . ."

Hilda nodded. She did know. She knew very well. Her mother had been six months pregnant.

It took a few days before they had gathered enough strength to leave the camp with permission — almost a week, even. The day began with cool winds and slightly grey skies, but then cleared somewhat. Hilda, Erich and Elise walking down the laneway, looking with wonder at the farmlands around them, marvelling in the bird life that surrounded their vision. It was all too much. They stopped numerous times, simply breathing in the cool Spring air of green trees and neat fields bordered with flowers. They'd seen nothing like it in years. Their exhaustion almost too much for them at times. The lane-ways were



reasonably quiet, the British fighting machine had gone on, ferociously pushing itself closer to Berlin. There had been news in the camp. Some men had procured a short-wave radio, undoubtedly taken from the SS quarters, which when turned into the BBC, gave encouraging reports of the allied progress. It would soon be over . . . a few weeks, no more!

"I think" said Elise, "We had better turn back, otherwise we will not have the strength to get back to camp. We have overstated our ability." They were sitting on a grassy area close to the road, recovering from their walk. It had all been too much for their bodies to cope with so they rose wearily and turned back. They would sleep the night away as no other night before them.

There was some confusion in the camp when they arrived. Hilda stared at the man in the neat SS uniform, snugly wrapped in his military overcoat, who was surrounded by several British soldiers. It was the camp commandant, Herr Kramer. So, they had brought him back to face his tormented people, or had he come willingly? Perhaps, perhaps not. Elise, by her side, hissed and spat into the ground. But the military group ignored them and proceeded down through the huts on their inspection.

Perhaps you will find the bones of Anne, almost shouted Hilda — my dear friend, Anne Frank! But there would be no bones, only ashes. And the tears came, because she knew that no one, even the highest in the land, could never resurrect her little friend or her family. Did Anne ever exist? Was it all a dream, or some nightmare of her own making? Bring her back, and she shouted at the retreating figures: "Bring her back, bring her back! Oh please, bring my Anne back to me!" And she fell to the ground, shuddering and crying. "Oh please, someone, bring her back to me!"

And Elise, almost clean and feeling fresh in her new overalls, knelt in the mud beside Hilda, taking her into her arms and crying with her. Erich stood, staring into the horizon, watching the jackboots of the SS commandant disappearing in the distance and something clicked in his mind. Something dark and dreadful began to emerge and he really didn't know what it was. It was a cloud that seemed to be bursting with some kind of vengeance. Erich turned to look at his sister and Elise there in the mud and he knew that somehow he would help them in their journey to a better life, even if it meant some danger to himself.

The early evening sun cast its lengthening shadows on the poplars in the front garden of the small Federation house in Prahran, Victoria. The slightly silver-haired woman was watching a late afternoon news programme about the 1958 visit by the British Queen Mother to Australia. The black and white television set flickered and the prime minister, Sir Robert Menzies' head warped out of shape on the screen. Other bodies went into a zig-zag fashion. Hilda sighed and rose to turn off the set. She must ask Josef to fix the antenna when he had time. Bare feet padded on the cool linoleum in the hallway behind her and a child appeared holding a colouring book. She ran into the room and sat on the sofa beside the woman. "Mother, look what I have drawn? Do you like it? It's our family."

"Oh, I do like that, Elise. I see you have all of us, your mum and dad, and your brother little Nathan. But you've left out Oscar our puppy — he's part of our family too."

"Yes, I wasn't sure how to draw him, but I will and I'll show you soon."

"That's fine, Elise, you can do it."

"And . . . and I can draw his little house, too."

"His kennel, yes that would be lovely."

Elise wandered into the hall. "You know, mum, Oscar should have his own room inside. His little house might be cold at nights."

"I'm sure he's comfortable in his kennel, my darling. It's very sheltered under the verandah."

"But mum, he's so alone out there!"

Hilda heard the child pattering down the hallway. So alone, she thought . . . yes, we'd all been so alone in the old days. So alone with our thoughts of survival! I suppose we could bring Oscar in at nights, what with autumn on the wane. The sun was becoming lower in the sky — its intensity diminishing. Soon the leaves would begin to fall. I could make up a small mattress and blanket by the fire. That would be sensible. He'd like that.

She sighed. The book that had come in the mail the day before was sitting on the mantelpiece above the open fire. She had hesitated from opening it. But now, she knew she must. The package had born the postmark imprint of Israel, and she was quite aware who had sent it. She stared at the book, fingered its cover gently, ran her fingers down the spine and lifted the book to her face, smelling the pungent print and crisp paper and closing her eyes. She saw the face. Anne . . . Anne . . . is it really you? I knew you had written some things, but I was not aware of this. She ran her fingers over the title *The Diary of Anne Frank*, breathing deeply, and she was being taken back, back to those days at Bergen-Belsen before those diseases had taken the Frank family. There was Anne, smiling happily with her sister Margot. "It's not so bad," she had said to Hilda. "We could be in some of those death camps, you know. It's not so bad."



The black telephone rang, its shrill tingling reverberating off the window panes. Hilda walked across to the small occasional table and picked up the receiver. She recognised the voice immediately.

“Erich! Erich!” The line crackled and faded. “Are you there? You’re not very clear.”

“Hello! How . . . how are you? How’s my niece and nephew?”

“I’m fine. We’re all fine. What’s the weather like in Tel Aviv?”

“Very warm, but I didn’t ring to talk about the weather. I have some very good news.” His voice faded, then came back again. There was more crackling on the line. “You remember that SS guard, Geisler?”

“How could I forget her . . . she was the worst.”

“With the help of our para-military group, we’ve managed kidnap her, smuggled her out of Argentina. We’ve got her here in Israel . . . she’ll stand trial for many of those murders.”

Hilda was silent.

“Hilda . . . are you still there?”

“Yes . . . yes . . . that’s good news . . . Josef and I will have a small celebration tonight, just the two of us. When are you getting married?”

“In April. You will both have to come across. Evie’s a real sweetheart. You will be happy with my choice. You knew she is Elise’s niece, didn’t you?”

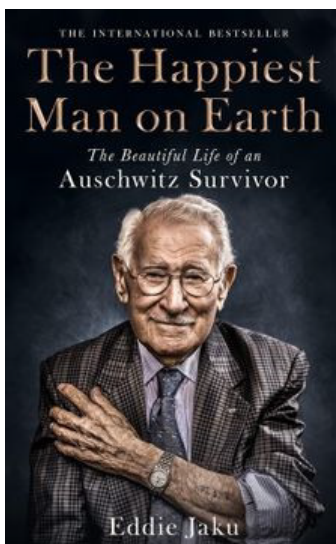
“Ah yes, another lawyer just like you . . . how you have all grown in stature! That’s so perfect. Israel has been good to you. Yes, I think we can manage that; we’ll bring the children over. Please give our love to Evie and Elise.” And she thought. The lives that were destroyed have been re-born.

“I have to go now, Shalom my dearest!”

“Oh, yes . . . Shalom. Love you.” •

Life is beautiful if you make it beautiful

Life can be beautiful if you make it beautiful. It is up to you.



The Happiest Man on Earth
Eddie Jaku
Macmillan Australia
Hardcover \$AUD32.99
Some stores retailing for
\$AUD19.95

Eddie Jaku always considered himself a German first, a Jew second. He was proud of his country. But all of that changed in November 1938, when he was beaten, arrested and taken to a concentration camp. Over the next seven years, Eddie faced unimaginable horrors every day, first in Buchenwald, then in Auschwitz, then on a Nazi death march. He lost family, friends, his country.

Because he survived, Eddie made the vow to smile every day. He pays tribute to those who were lost by telling his story, sharing his wisdom and living his best possible life. He now believes he is the 'happiest man on earth'. Published as Eddie turns 100, this is a powerful, heartbreaking and ultimately hopeful memoir of how happiness can be found even in the darkest of times. *Booktopia*

“Holocaust survivor Eddie Jaku made a vow to smile every day and now believes he is the ‘happiest man on earth’. In his inspirational memoir, he pays tribute to those who were lost by telling his story and sharing his wisdom.” *The Times*

“A reminder of the power of love, kindness and hope . . . A life-affirming story beautifully told.” *Sydney Morning-Herald*

“I’ve never met Eddie Jaku, but having read his book, I feel like I have made a new friend . . . This is a beautiful book by a truly amazing man.” *Daily Telegraph*.

“Eddie looked evil in the eye and met it with joy and kindness . . . [his] philosophy is life-affirming.” *Daily Express*



Pet medical crisis

from Jennifer Hunt

Of recent days, a story unfolds: “When she was advised to get a dog in 2020 to assist her mental health, she had no idea of the challenges that she and her adopted boy 'Rocky' would face. Together they have fought through multiple surgeries for hip dysplasia, infections, pain, walking harnesses, wheelchairs, despair and all the while building a bond no-one could ever break.

Catie's mental health has never been better than when she saw light at the end of this torturous tunnel and they were both out the other side only 4 weeks ago. They had started to walk around the block together, get to the park and socialise — something that had seemed impossible without Rocky. [Clearly someone was watching them because they knew exactly where to find Rocky.]

Catie had modified her bedroom to have her mattress on the floor so her boy doesn't have to jump up to her. Every part of the house is modified to suit her Rocky.

His fussy appetite saw a daily episode of being hand-fed and coerced to eat a little of this . . . maybe something of the other . . . and Catie had just bought him some new food yesterday to try to tempt him.

At 6:20 last night when Catie was in the bathroom, she heard Rocky barking in the garden. Brazen thieves entered her secure back garden and when she came out of the bathroom she heard a car revving loudly and speeding away — and her darling Rocky was gone.

Imagine someone doing this to you? How would you feel? What would you do? Catie called *Pet Medical Crisis* who had helped get Rocky's veterinary care done and supported her along each step of the journey. We let you all know and your response was outstanding! 62,000+ people across Victoria acted immediately. 3AW put out a call at 9pm to spread the word. The media responded immediately. Together we loudly condemned how ANYONE could do such a horrendous and cruel thing to any pet or person.

What transpired for Rocky over the next 10 hours is unknown but when he was dumped back at Catie's house at 04:30 this morning he was soaking wet and.... smelled beautiful. He'd just been washed! Why would these vile people wash him in the early hours of the morning??

To sell or sire him seems the only reasonable explanation. But.... finding out he was weak in his hind legs; Seeing and hearing the social media outrage; reading about his hip dysplasia and that any pups he sired would have the same issue and be traceable to the 'owner'; any reason and any regret is too little, too late.

Catie's relief was overwhelming - as was Rocky's. After exploring his back garden and being dried with 2 lots of towels, he climbed into his bed beside Catie's — recovering from an ordeal they should never have had to face. Please share and THANK YOU TO EVERYONE whose efforts united us all against this evil act. Please ensure your own pets are secure at all times and be on alert for sociopaths preying on vulnerable pet-owners in our community. Thanks to Channel 7.”



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.



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)



Billy is a 7 year old desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 35kg male German Shepherd x, who's looking for a loving home.

He's a gentle, loyal and active boy who would suit an active family, happy to exercise him daily and treat him as one of their own. He loves human company and would suit an all-adult home or one with dog savvy teenagers.

Billy can be a little bit protective of his family when he's on lead, but is otherwise great with other dogs. In fact a home with another medium to large dog would be wonderful. He's not been tested with cats.

If you don't currently have another dog, someone with large breed dog experience who's either working from home permanently or a newly retired, active and strong person would suit. GSD experience would be a bonus!

He enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Regular brushing would be required.

Billy's adoption fee is \$450

Microchip Number: 981000300646019

Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709

If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Wattle Glen based, but we go to you).

Happy Adoption Tale!

Pepper our senior Poodle x Bichon Frise has found a lovely home with retiree Joy. We received this message from her.

'Pepper is doing well and has settled into his new home so easily, it's as though he's always been here. He's accustomed to his two walks a day now and really enjoys going out. He's such a lovely boy with the sweetest nature. I feel so blessed to have him. Joy.' Thanks Joy for adopting him and for putting a smile Pepper's face. It seems like his tail hasn't stopped wagging since he met you!



Readvertised:

Georgie is still looking for a loving home!

Georgie is a 12 year old desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 21kg female Blue Heeler, who's looking for a loving home as her owner has sadly gone into aged care.

She's a very sweet natured, affectionate and active girl who's in excellent condition for her age. (The vet was very impressed with her as well). She loves her daily walks and runs and plays fetch as if she was half her age! She's also a talkative girl who loves human company.

Georgie would suit an all-adult home or one with gentle, experienced, dog loving teenagers. A home where someone's home during the day, either retired but active or someone working from home, would suit. She's usually fine with other dogs but can be territorial when it comes to her own home or personal space, so would suit a home as the sole pet of the family. She enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors.



Georgie's adoption fee is \$400 Microchip Number: 956000002097517 Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709 If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Pearcedale based, but we go to you.)

Readvertised: I'm still looking for a loving home.

***Please only apply if you fit all of the criteria below. Thanks.**

Nully (pronounced like 'woolly') is a 5 year old desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 16kg female Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, who's looking for a loving home. A very experienced dog owner is required. Someone with Wheaten experience would be ideal!

She's a very playful girl who enjoys her daily walks and is also affectionate, but mainly towards people she sees as above her in the pecking order. She would really love to be an integral part of the family, in all-adult home. She's not good with children.



Nully has anxiety as she was attacked as a puppy, so she requires an experienced and patient owner, committed to helping her socialise with other dogs. (She's aggressive towards mainly small dogs unfortunately, having drawn blood twice). She's better when out and about, with larger dogs, Labrador size and upwards. She would suit being the sole pet of the home though, as she prefers not to share and is not good with cats or other small animals either. She enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Regular grooming would be required. She's just had her teeth cleaned.

Nully's adoption fee is \$850 Microchip Number: 956000009516967 Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709 If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Baxter based, but we go to you).



Chapter one may be found on the website: <http://users.tpg.com.au/genetree/catseye7.html>

Pebbles in the Stream

An Australian saga in several episodes by Graham Price
Chapter 2

The long drive back to Melbourne had wearied him. Tom wasn't sure he had that many years of driving left in him. Perhaps he would be confined to running around the suburbs, getting food and requirements when necessary, and perhaps visiting Tina and her husband Joel, until . . . well, until it was time. Any further than that, might be dangerous. He certainly didn't wish to be the cause of someone else's grief. There was too much of that on the roads these days. He'd made a mistake coming into Koo-we-rup and nearly ended on the wrong side of the road.

But he had enjoyed his trip to Penifeld to pay his respects to Caroline, and the surprise of seeing Frances had made it really worthwhile. You only get one chance at it, he thought; grasp the bull by the horns and go for it. He'd done that quite a lot during his life and the bull had never failed him, but even so, he thought, sometimes there were repercussions that surfaced in other's people's lives. He shrugged. Well, can't be helped, they should have seen it coming. They weren't wise enough. But then, some things come at you like a whirlwind without responsibility on anyone's behalf, and the result can only be, acceptance.

But he had never accepted the reason why Caroline had gone off with that other man. Money perhaps, better sex? Something perhaps more stable than he could offer her at the time? And he never had closed the door. It was always there in the background, like an octopus reaching its tentacles out toward him, and he wondered if he should slice them off or allow them to entangle him. Confusion. At such times he had pulled the white pebble out and stared at the initial C. If he could turn the clock back! Did she still have the other pebble, perhaps locked away in the back of a drawer somewhere?

Stephanie had come along several years later when he seemed to be fumbling around trying to sort out his life — a top illustrator with Swallow books, and they had seen something of themselves in each other — both somewhat bruised from the world, the parties, the high living. It had been a wild ride for a decade or so, but then the truth had hit — this could not stay as it was, something needs to be settled. And by the time of his first novel, they had married.

When Stephanie was pregnant he had been over the moon — a daughter. And she stole his heart from the beginning and every day of many years as she grew in stature. Then by the time of his sixth novel Tina had met Joel, a sub-editor with *The Independent* newspaper. Tom considered that the man was stuck in a dead-end job, would rise no further than sub-editor, but at the same time perhaps would be an anchor for Tina, so with some reservations he had agreed to the marriage. They would have gone ahead without his permission, anyway. It was a different world. He sometimes laughed over that when the wine had taken over. The new breed, he called them, the new global enterprise. But Tina had branched out, becoming an artist in her own right and leaving Swallow, while her husband slogged away daily within the newspaper world. Somehow, Tina had discovered Tom's earlier relationship with Caroline and had searched for some time online before she discovered the whereabouts of Tom's ex in London.

They met. Tina had organised a meeting at the Felina Art Gallery in London. They were living in Chelsea then, Tom, Stephanie, with Tina joining them during a holiday out from Australia. They were not all that far from where Tom's great great grandfather had been living in one of the mansions at Queen's Elms, Chelsea. Tina, twenty-five and in the full flush of life had looked up Caroline and cheekily asked for a meeting.

As it was still early morning, the gallery just off Oxford Street was almost vacant. It was one of the smaller, but generally popular and successful, galleries in London, one of those often often shored up by a rich benefactor. It was drizzling rain as she closed off her umbrella and left it at the entrance in charge of an assistant — a young almost crew-cropped dark-eyed girl about seventeen. "Five pounds," said the girl."

"Oh, right," said Tina, pulling the banknotes out of her purse and frowning a little.

"It's for expenses, you know."

"I'm sure. Will the umbrella be safe with you? It's a birthday present from my father. I wouldn't want to lose it."

"I've two here already! No problem. Here's your ticket."



The entrance widened into a vast pure white interior. She could see art on the walls and sharp corners where the gallery obviously wound further to other rooms. The pamphlet the girl had given to her indicated that there were over 200 paintings within the gallery, far more than she had expected. As she moved forward she searched the pamphlet for a sign of Caroline's entries. The third page gave her what she wanted — thirteen paintings in the second room. She passed by a row of post-modern art which did nothing for her mood, some of which looked like bent chopsticks or matches in a flood of grey cloud. Turning the corner she paused. There was a very beautiful blonde woman standing in front of a modernistic painting of the Tower of London, which Tina thought was a rather unusual addition to the gallery, but as she moved closer she was drawn to the painting with its rendition of age and medieval vision. It stood out from all the other paintings. She was suddenly back in the 17th Century, with an almost third dimension of viewing. The painting was not only a factual rendition of the Tower but when looked at closely showed some element of savagery around its perimeters. Tina couldn't believe what she was seeing. It was alive! It vibrated with the lives of those who had lived and died in that tower.

How could anyone possible paint that, she wondered? She was staring down the centuries, completely disconnected from the present. The painting drew her on, forcing her down the dark steps and into its interior and there was the guard with his helmet and lance. His face, drawn and firm, sharp eyes staring at her with wonder. Why are you here? Have you come to give sustenance to those imprisoned, or to mourn those recently deceased? The axe, you know, is always sharp and ready.

The blonde-haired woman turned and looked at her. From Tina's father's description she did appear to be Caroline. Tina shook her head slowly and gathered her composure. She smiled as the woman came toward her.

"Caroline?"

"You must be Tina? It's been a long time since . . . well, I never thought . . . I . . . I suppose I should . . . never mind, you are here and that is all that really matters. You do look like him. How is he?"

"Father's well. You seem, ah, you seem younger than I imagined."

Caroline laughed. "Thank you for that, but there are years behind this face that you would rather not see. You are young and you have a whole world before you. I understand that you have inherited your father's literary talents . . . a small but vital book of poems it seems, apart from your art."

Tina blushed. "My first effort, but it didn't sell all that well. I don't think there will be a re-print."

Caroline grasped her hand — soft, but a firm grip. "Oh, but wait, the years may yet prove you wrong. Poets have a way of being reviewed over and over, the same as certain art. I saw you were looking at my *Tower*. Something happened to you, didn't it? I have no idea how it occurred, but I felt myself back in those medieval days when I was painting it. I could even hear the imprisoned screaming. There were the jewels, the beheadings; I think you felt that, didn't you? So, perhaps we are like souls come together for a purpose?"

"You were always so close to him. What happened?"

Caroline turned away. She moved in front of the Tower painting. "We were . . . we were . . ." and then there were tears appearing in her eyes. "I . . . I don't know."

Tina moved forward, reaching for the woman she had only just met. Had she started something that she could not finish?

Mr. Stead tapped his cane onto the desk in front of him "Silence! Some decorum would be appreciated. After all, you are not here for jolly times or dancing or even romancing. So, some quiet if you do not mind. And you, Master Thomas Marshall, if you would be so kind as to turn around and give attention, that would be something in your favour when the end of year report goes to your parents."

Tom turned around from chatting with his friends and smiled at the head teacher. "Yes sir!"

"And," continued Adrian Stead, "I would be very happy indeed if whoever was responsible for bringing in the possum, would desist from these antics. Allsworth! You wouldn't happen to know something about that, would you?"

"No sir," said Harcourt, shifting his feet off the seat in front of him. "I'm not the Pied Piper of Hamelin."

The class laughed.

"Your imagination knows no bounds, Allsworth. The Piper was luring children, not possums. We all know, Allsworth, that you are reasonably good at making reed pipes, so perhaps you do pipe up possums to follow you, eh? You are a lot of miserable specimens, more miserable than what is on the shelves of this classroom in all those glass jars, but it is my task to see you educated to the best of my abilities. Otherwise, your parents will wonder why you are wasting your time here. Don't forget, my little frogs, there's always the razor strop from your father if you fail in your grades."



The class roared with laughter. They knew that Adrian Stead was simply joking. He had brought them so far from early primary almost to secondary, and they loved him for it. He had never laid a hand on any student. If there was punishment to be handed out, it was simply that you stayed back at school for an hour after class, or was forbidden to take part in football or basketball for one week. Adrian Stead was a softie.

“And if it is fine by Master Thomas Marshall who keeps turning around to view a certain young lady behind him, we shall continue with Shakespeare’s rendition of King Lear.”

Caroline felt the blood rushing to her face, because it was she to which the teacher was referring. Tom simply couldn’t help himself. He had to show her off to the class, after all, she was his girl.

Frances, sitting next to Caroline, laughed and prodded Caroline in the chest. “Luvy boy is onto you.”

The air was filled with the sounds of magpies and corellas as they trudged out of the school. An all embracing hot and dry afternoon that seemed to make the eucalyptus weep. It was a dizzy smell that enraptured the children’s lungs, allowing them to breathe easily as they ran each to their own destination. Frances, Caroline and Tom headed for the river. The bird life was abundant and raucous. The children threw their school satchels onto the sand and laid back, staring into the blue sky, with its slight wisps of white cloud.

“Do you reckon Harcourt did it?” said Frances, looking across at Tom whose hand was already woven into that of Caroline’s.

“Sure, who else?”

“He’s mad,” said Frances. “He had that air gun the other day, shooting at birds.”

“Takes after his old man,” said Tom. “Supposed to have been a soldier in the First World War; story is that he captured a machine gun nest almost single handed, then shot all the Germans who were there, one by one. I wonder if they had already surrendered?”

“That’s murder, isn’t it?” said Frances.

“If you two don’t mind! That’s my father you’re talking about. He was a hero! We have medals to prove it.”

“Well,” said Tom, “Medals don’t mean much. You can buy them in the second-hand shops.”

“Go to hell!” spat Caroline, and stalked off, kicking sand in their faces.

“Whew, what’s with her!” said Frances. “Such a bitch! Can’t take the truth, eh?”

Tom stretched out on the sand. “Oh, I don’t know. Sure, it’s a strange family, but I guess no stranger than any of us. This war seems to have brought out the worst in some of us, don’t you think?”

“Well, they’re filthy rich, and I suppose if you have all that property and stuff, you can say anything you like and people will believe it. Going to the dance on Saturday, Tom?”

He took her hand. “Yeh, might as well. Thought it might be with Caroline, but if you’re keen, why not?”

Saturday mornings required Tom to be working in his parents grocery shop in Penifeld. He’d started early, was bagging potatoes into eight pound bags by 7.00 a.m.. Then there was wheat and pollard to be bagged up for the folk who only had a small group of roosters and hens. A rat ran out from under one of the big potato sacks and he watched it searching for some avenue of escape. He let it go. He could have smashed it’s head open with the mallet that was near him, but that wasn’t his style. Let it live to enjoy another day or two, or even perhaps meet with a lover somewhere in the shed at the back of the store. He’d washed his hands, then started on bagging the sugar up into two and four pound bags; salt was next and it was heavier than the sugar, looking small in the one and two pound bags. He yawned. No more, no more for that morning. It was past 8.45 a.m.. already and the store would open at 9.00. He left the back store-room and wandered into the shop, where the smell of strong tea and coffee smacked at his nose. Robur tea, Bushells tea, coffee grounds; mild, semi, and matured cheese on the bench near the cash register. He sliced a small piece of the matured cheese for himself, careful to make it thin enough not to be exposed to his parents. The tang of it on his tongue was a delight. He laughed. He could have eaten the whole cheese block, he reckoned. He so loved that strong matured cheese.

The front door opened. His father entered. “You look as if you’ve been up to something or other?”

Tom took solace from behind the silver cash register “Finished all the bagging up, dad. Saw a rat run out of the potato bags, but couldn’t get to him. Too fast for me. You oughta put some traps in, eh?”

“Huh, might just catch your fingers or toes, aye! Anyway, what about the flour, have you done that?”

Tom flushed. “Oh, I forgot. But I think there’s enough here on the shelves for today. For Monday, well, I don’t know.”



“You don’t know? Tom, I’m paying you to know, to look forward and appreciate the need of the customers tomorrow, the day after and so on. After all, one day all this will be yours.”

Well, it wasn’t to be. Tom had gone on to High School and majored in English Literature. His parents had eventually resigned themselves that the store would end with them. Tom enjoyed the dances with Frances, and eventually even Caroline as she slowly came back to him. After all, thought Tom, those white pebbles were a sign of commitment and love, which nothing in the universe could ever separate. But Caroline had won an art scholarship, which meant tripping off to Great Britain in 1959. “I will follow you,” said Tom, as they stood before the railings of the SS Orsova looking down at Station pier. “Wait for me. There is a chance for me to come over as a correspondent, if I can twist my boss’s fingers. He reckons my reports are emotional and crowd gathering. Well, so he says. There might be an opening for me in London. Caroline, wait for me.”

The Daily Mail was flourishing and the owner editor considered it was all due to his star reporter, Thomas Marshall. The readership had jumped by almost one third over the past twelve months. James McGregor had raised Tom’s salary substantially, leaving Tom caught between two of the greatest decisions a man could ever face — his newspaper career at home, or his love for Caroline who was still in London making a name for herself in the art world. And there was something else that disturbed him — the letters from London had been staggering longer apart in their reply. Two months now and he had not heard . . . something was up . . . had she found someone else? He’d telephone if he could, but she had never left him a telephone number. He was fortunate that his work in the city was only fifteen minutes drive to Penifeld, so that he remained most nights sleeping at his parents home — a small two-bedroom Federation home on the edge of the town, overlooking Penifeld lake. It had been his grandparents home, chosen initially due to its position among the lustrous fields, set on a low rise above the shining lake. Tom reckoned that the white and black swans that lazily swan in the lake were as old as his paternal grandparents, both gone now and in the cemetery. Many a summer’s night he had sat out under the verandah as a boy, then a youth, and finally a man on his grandfather’s rocking chair, watching the blazing sun gradually lose its luminescence and casting wide distorted shadows over the town. A good place to live, he’d often thought, a good place to be settled and raise children. The town was fed by the farmers all around and the farmers also came to buy produce at Marshall’s store. Almost heaven, thought Tom. But he knew his future was not here, that eventually he would have to leave and write about the world out there — a world that was already teeming with new wars and conflicts. He’d even thought of signing up as a war-correspondent. The strong rope that was tying him to the area was James McGregor. They had formed a bond, a firm partnership, and Tom had become reluctant to break it. It was almost as if they were joined by umbilical cords; they often drank together, ate together, and James had invited Tom to his home on numerous occasions, not only to meet his wife Eleanor, but also to befriend James’ two daughters. Beatrice was nineteen, a sultry dark-eyed beauty about the same height as Tom, who worked in a photographic store in the city. Jennifer was of auburn hair, green eyed, closing on twenty-one, a little shorter than Beatrice, and had curves in all the right places, thought Tom, a stenographer at a law firm, and he knew that he would be invited to the 21st celebrations coming up soon. He was friendly with the two girls and liked being in their company. Jennifer made it very clear to Tom that she was more than simply interested in him, and Tom saw the look on her mother, Avril’s face, and he knew that Avril approved if ever there was to be a match. The problem was that there appeared to be some jealousy by Beatrice, and Tom was not sure he could handle that. Better to cut all ties, perhaps?

Harcourt Allsworth had taken over from his parents as the general manager of the pub in Penifeld. Tom called once in a while when he was home. He knocked down the occasional beer, played darts with some of his companions and watched how Harcourt dealt with the locals. He felt that behind the smile and cheery greetings, Harcourt was another person. Once in a while he would become angry with a customer, grabbing him by an arm and forcibly ejecting the man out of the door. Tom thought that was unnecessary and had raised his eyebrows at Frances, who had been taken on earlier as barmaid by Harcourt’s parents. Frances generally shrugged and went on with her work, checking with the cook to see if meals were ready. She doesn’t wish to be involved, thought Tom, and she’d be better off out of here. She’s far more intelligent than to be working for that mongrel, who was the same blood as that of Caroline. How could two people born of the same parents be so much unlike each other? And he thought, I might write about that one day. It has the age old drama of families torn apart, sometimes reunited, then torn apart again. Then he took his notebook out of his pocked, a pen from inside his jacket, and began to write. When he had finished three pages he wrote in parentheses on the bottom of the last one (“Beginning”)

Caroline closed the letter from Tom and placed it back into its envelope. She’d noted that he didn’t like writing on aerogramme’s, but took the time to source out proper paper and often groovy envelopes. Nothing mean about Tom, she



thought, but so far away and there's no real likelihood of him coming over. He loves his reportage too much. He won't leave, no matter how much I entreat him to come. Why does he ignore my attempts? Perhaps he's found himself another girl, eh? Oh, London, London, you've been so good to me . . . at long last I am able to support myself, and I could support the two of us if he will really come. Shan't be a problem for him to find work with one of the major dailies here. Seems he has outdone almost anyone else in Victoria with his excellence of reporting. But then, there is Brett! How do I feel about him? He thrills me, makes me laugh, takes care of me. So, I am confused? Ah, what would life be without confusion? We're all confused sometime or other.

She leant back from the balcony. Ah, great Chelsea looking over the Thames, swept with an early evening light that bounces generous reflections all over the city. Thank you old Sol, you are there, but graciously minimised. So beautiful, she thought, now that the chill of winter was almost past. It is still a certain greyness, but a colour that impresses with coming growth. I think I can capture this as it is. And she hurried inside to collect easel and canvas. The sinking sun was shining through Westminster, glittering the rooftops, as it had done for centuries, but no one, she thought, has captured this setting as I am about to do. Turner, eat your heart out!

It was her great aunt Van who has given her the chance. Coming out of that colonial country into the mother-land, so green as Vanessa Trengrove had considered her when Caroline first arrived. You are talented, my dear, but talent is useless without dedication, she had said, and Caroline wondered at that. Of course she was dedicated, otherwise she would never have received the scholarship. Oh well, that was then, but it had been fun living with a bohemian aunt, whose mother had been part of the Bloomsbury group. Vanessa's eccentric ways were tied to the past. The present wasn't really her cup of tea, but she had supported Caroline over time until the girl from Australia was able to show at galleries. The excitement at being recognised and written up in monthlies, never fazed Caroline much. Once the heady thrill had died down, and with a little celebration of champagne now and then, she went back to work — ten hours, twelve hours and more, painting, designing, often until the sun was coming up in the morning.

"You look tired," said Brett, "You are over-doing it."

She knocked back the gin and tonic. "It's my way. If you don't like it, you don't have to be here."

He laughed. His blue Scottish eyes shining. "You know I could never do that. But, perhaps you should take more care of yourself. Go to bed more often, and I don't necessarily mean with me."

She called for another gin and tonic. The hovering waiter snapped it up fast and returned with her drink. He queried Brett with a raise of his eyebrows, but Brett shook his head. His whiskey was fine.

Caroline took a sip, sighed, nodded a little and said: "It's my aunt Van's 95th next week. We're having a celebration party and I know you don't approve of some of her old friends, but they lived in another time and place and if you are coming, I'd expect you to be civil to them."

He laughed. "Don't you think they are kind of gypsies, though?"

"Just because they were mostly connected to the Bloomsbury group, doesn't make them gypsies. God Brett, where do you get these ideas from? Besides they've been through numerous epidemics, besieged a depression and a world war that you and I have never really known. Give them some grace and intelligence for Christ's sake."

"Oh ho, getting a little snarky, eh? Well, sure, I like your great aunt. I won't be much trouble, but really Caroline, some of her friends are a little archaic and saturated with strange ideas."

"Oh Brett, I don't know what to do with you. Here you are a successful London real estate broker with an interest in art, but you know, somewhere inside that heart of yours there is a piece of ice, that only shows itself now and then. Just keep that bloody piece of ice well hidden when you come, will you?"

He smiled and reached out to touch her hand. "You know very well, Caroline, that we are opposites, but opposites attract and bear all the burdens of the world. Opposites often have lovely, wonderful children. We should move in together and prove to the world that even when we're annoyed with each other, we still have that thing called love."

She took another sip of her gin and tonic. She smiled deeply. "The man with the silver tongue! You should be in movies! You remind me of someone in my past."

"And that would be?"

"He . . . ah . . . it's none of your business." •

To be continued.



The foster care system is a ticking time bomb – now isn't the time to look away

By Dr Lisa J. Griffiths, Chief Executive Officer, OzChild

The pandemic has many of us feeling like we've lost control, not knowing what the coming days or months will bring. This 'once-in-a-lifetime' feeling for many of us is the everyday reality for children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) across Australia.

In Victoria, the growth in OOHC is the fastest in the nation – a grim reality for the state which has endured the harshest and longest lockdowns. With more than 45,000 children already in OOHC across Australia, an additional 4,500 children are estimated to enter OOHC because of the pandemic – put simply, we do not have enough carers. Covid-19 has placed additional stress on all Australian families, but especially those already experiencing disadvantage. Our most vulnerable children have lost vital, physical touch points with their support network – schools, the Department, and the wider community. Without this safety net, instances of abuse and neglect are slipping through the cracks. Whilst we are all quarantining during lockdowns, we must remember there is no greater isolation than an at-risk child in an unsafe home.

This begs the question – what is expected when restrictions ease? We are bracing for a tidal wave of referrals to OOHC, which we lack the carers and funds to facilitate.

Devastatingly, the increasing number of children needing foster care coincides with carers exiting the system at alarming rates. Last year, 596 Victorian foster care households exited the system, whilst only 354 families commenced care. The OOHC sector is facing a perfect storm and the urgency to recruit more foster carers is at fever pitch. Now is not the time to look away.

Foster care is the backbone of Australia's child protection system but cannot sustain the growing demand. When a care placement isn't available, children in need (and as young as eight) find themselves in residential care. Since the pandemic begun the growth in kids under 12 entering residential care has risen by 45% – but our kids belong in homes, not institutional facilities.

Many people don't realise 1 in 32 Australian children required child protection services last year. There is no question this has a profound impact on our entire community and affects all of us. The pandemic's devastating impact on the sector is only beginning to unfold. If you are in a position to open your heart and home to a child in need, please consider becoming a foster carer today. You can give these kids a brighter future. •

Contact Us

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Motoring Memoirs

1948 Ford Mercury 89M Convertible



Something the lads and gals of the 1950s would have loved to be seen in around town. Imagine swishing around in this, waving to your friends. A 1948 superb convertible, simply oozing luxury and making people jealous!.

This model had a much longer wheelbase than normal and was also available as a station wagon. The engine was displacing 100 brake horse power at 3,800 rpm. It was a 3-speed gearing, which was adequate for those times. The upholstery was of exceptional quality. This particular model was imported from Ohio, USA and totally restored in 1987.

