

ADAM MORRIS

(Student Number 21074841)

**“Bird with a Broken Leg”
and
“Whiteness and Australian Fiction”**

**This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of
The University of Western Australia**

**School of Humanities
(English and Cultural Studies)**

2016

Abstract

This thesis explores the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, with particular attention to the concept of whiteness.

The novel, *Bird with a Broken Leg*, surveys the interaction of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians through the prism of the prison system. Using mainly the narrative viewpoint of (white) prison workers, the novel follows Carson, a young Indigenous man, as he traverses the white-dominated world of his Western Australian environment, being incarcerated time and time again and having to deal with a world which gives him very little control over his own destiny. The novel follows in a tradition of Australian social justice works and highlights the issue of whiteness which is explored in the accompanying exegetical essay.

This essay, "Whiteness and Australian Fiction", looks at Australia's recent literary past and the way particular novels have sparked public discussion through challenging, criticising and revealing uncomfortable truths about modern Australian reality. The essay demonstrates that whiteness has been a major issue in many of these works, and that social justice novels of this kind have led to progressive changes in fostering a more contemplative and compassionate Australian society.

Both essay and novel speak to the power of storytelling as an influence regarding the possibility of reconciliation within a fractured society.

DECLARATION

This thesis does not contain work that I have published,
nor work under review for publication.

CONTENTS

Bird with a Broken Leg	5
In	10
Out	83
Shake It All About	152
Whiteness and Australian Fiction	228
Chapter 1	229
Chapter 2	242
Chapter 3	257
Bibliography	286

Bird with a Broken Leg

for Ann Morris

There was no room for the cheeky niggers in the world the settlers were making - cheeky niggers usually had short and unhappy lives or they rotted slowly in penal institutions.

- Henry Reynolds, *Frontier*

Chikininni

Chikininni was the first bird. A once young, but now very old bird. Chikininni was strong and powerful and had been to every horizon. She was first one bird, but after a time became two, then three, then four and so on until Chikininni became many birds.

One day Chikininni looked around and saw herself as so many birds she became confused. When she breathed in she became more birds, when she breathed out, more still. When Chikininni held her breath, more again.

Trying to escape, Chikininni would fly up into the sky but each time she flew she would multiply. When she stood still, she multiplied even more. When Chikininni slept, she woke as a thousand fold more birds than when she first closed her eyes. When she tried to stay awake she became so tired she would collapse and wake yet again as many more birds.

One day Chikininni awoke and all she could see in everyone direction were strong, beautiful jet black birds. A teeming mass of silken feathers, broad beaks and beady eyes stretching out to every horizon.

One day Snake came to visit Chikininni. He moved unseen and steady, through the sea of birds, twisting through the thin forest of legs beneath the canopy of their fresh flush feathers. Chikininni could track his path as he moved towards her by the movement of the birds he was disturbing.

"Chikininni," asked Snake, finally reaching her. "What the fuck are we going to do with all these birds?"

Chikininni didn't answer. Being so old, she no longer remembered the name she had been given. The name she had been when she first appeared. Thinking Snake was talking to someone else, Chikininni flew up into the sky leaving a trail of birds falling from her onto the earth. As she flew higher and higher, the trail grew longer and longer, littering out over and across the land an endless winding and unraveling tail. As she turned in the sky and headed for what she thought to be the closest horizon, she looked back

and saw Snake from far away, moving from bird to bird, swallowing them up as he went along.

IN

Daniel

"The Mac is perfect, brother, that thing is just a machine. When they made that there, they made something that just went beyond anything else. But the powers that be you see, they didn't want the Mac out there being perfect, and the same time the Mac was doing its thing, the PC was doing its thing. But no one knew what the fuck was what with any of the them 'cause people were just dumb cunts, we're talking early eighties maybe even the late seventies, some of them early machines went back to the seventies, they had computers the size of whole rooms that now, you could wear on your little finger. I saw that on SBS. Mad cunts. So nobody knew the difference between the Mac and the PC, they looked like computers to most people. But the PC people knew and the Mac people knew, but when the Mac people tried to convince all the dumb cunts why the Mac was better, the people couldn't understand. 'Cause the Mac was perfect, you see what I'm saying, the Mac was too much, but when some cunt got up and said here's the PC, does the same job, costs half as much, that's what everyone understood. It's cheaper, it's going to cost me less money. They don't think it must not be worth as much, they just think it's cheaper and a part of them thinks that's good. And if you go down now to any computer shop, you see them everywhere, at the markets, in the shops, you can up go to any one of those computers nerds that sit up there, that own those shops, you ask any of them why the sign out the front of the shop is called PC World or PC Land or PC Universe or whatever it's called, but it'll always be PC something. And he'll tell you, and I swear this is straight up, he'll tell you if you ask, if you ask why is it not called Mac World or Mac land or Mac Universe, they'll tell you straight up. Macs don't break."

Daniel had to get out. He couldn't take much more. Much more of these stories. Carson was a big motherfucker. Confident and smart. Daniel knew if it came to it, Carson would tear him to pieces. Completely dominate and destroy him. He was good to talk to you when you got him on his own, or if you managed to steer all the chat in some positive direction, but it was getting hard on the mind being in here for Daniel. He had graduated art school with his bachelor of fine arts and walked away with a half decent portfolio, half etchings, half water colour, a little bit of leather work. He hadn't stood

out at Curtin at all. It was regarded as the best place to go or at least one of the best places to go for painters. At least that's what he was told, but then he met Stan, the bizarre old English atheist who taught the advanced class, he told him that Curtin was nothing but a glorified TAFE and the quality of art produced by its students was embarrassing. Stan also reckoned he had a Master's degree from Princeton, was an interrogator for the British army in the mid-sixties and was in possession of an impenetrable mind.

Daniel didn't know what was true. He had trotted out for a year after he graduated, went to live in Melbourne, tried to find the scene. Couldn't break into it. Couldn't even find it, let alone tap into it. It all seemed like a strange pretence. Sitting in the art room now, in the prison, he'd remember all the lazy Melbourne girls with bad manners that he tried to sleep with. A lost generation learning their technique from biopics about Jackson Pollock and Jean Michel Basquiat. He'd been trying for nearly ten years now and he was about to give up, but he didn't know what else to do. He'd just have to take his place among the others. Maybe in a few hundred years they might discover some of his leather work and someone somewhere would see it for what it was, what he meant it to be. And they'll hold it high and other people of the same persuasion will smile and nod and say that's definitely a classic Meredith from the early 21st century.

Daniel saw two prisoners pass by the art room door, they were effeminate, walked close to each other, nearly hand in hand.

"Those cunts like it up the arse, sir."

The room burst into laughter, an iron, Russian laughter. Carson couldn't stay quiet for long, not when he had the room. Four men all pretending not to be listening while he's talking, all pretending to be lost in their paintings - all laugh at the same time, everyone was listening to every word, same as Daniel. Usually no-one wants to reveal too much. Only what they want to put out there. A strange self-applied clamp on the human spirit. A clamp held onto tight with both hands. But laughter could snap it loose.

"Hey Carson, come on man." Daniel looked up casually at Carson who was still laughing, enjoying holding the floor.

"Hey sir, I'm sorry but them faggots walk around like they faggots so there's nothing impolite 'bout me saying they take it up the arse, that's their natural state, in a way that's like a compliment, that's like me saying, 'hey sir, you're a great artist'...."

"Carson ... man," Daniel attempted to hold back the others with half a soft smile.

"No you are, come on now, don't be shy sir, you've showed us a few moves, we all know, you've strutted a little bit, there's no shame in letting people know what you got...."

"Carson, I'm not sure if they would want everyone to know in the prison." Daniel thought about walking slowly to the classroom door, maybe just stare out into the courtyard, that might break his rhythm.

"You know what they said to my uncle Eddie?" Carson said.

Carson started laughing again, his voice going up in pitch. "Sir on my life I swear they said they'd jack each other off and throw their- " Carson made a flicking motion with his hand "- all over the walls of the cell. And they said they do it all night, so these must be some horny faggots sir. You know how you been when you haven't been at it for a while sir, you're charging, like a big fucking turkey, feathers out, screeching at the world. So imagine those two cunts, two big fucking turkeys gobbling each other...." Carson couldn't get the words out, he bent over laughing, the room followed him.

Daniel tried to hold himself together, he got up slowly and headed for the door.

"Sir, sir, come on, Uncle Eddie heard them talking to another bloke on their wing, they said to this one bloke, young fella just new in, they said, 'Here, come here, we got your hole'. I mean sir, how would you feel if you come in here and two blokes like that are in your face, up in your arse sir?"

The chorus followed.

"Carson...." Daniel turned back to Carson, he was running out of moves.

"These cunts are rapist faggots as well sir. They'd grab hold of you, they'd be putting it in both holes, make a spit roast out of you."

The room exploded again. It was particularly bad this morning. It was a different tone every day, but today was particularly bad. It didn't matter where you went in the prison, it was always the same, the same vibe in the air. Except for unit six.

Unit six was the tamp unit. The Bone Yard. The unit for those that needed protection from the other prisoners. Home to a demented cast of pedophiles, informants, mental retards and space cadets. Home to the loneliest, lost and saddest faces in a world filled with lost and sad faces. Other than unit six, the rest of the prison remained the

same. Same serious shit, same banter and lots of stories. War stories, love stories, drink stories, cop stories, drug stories, murder stories, women stories, pity stories, death stories, party stories, flogging stories. Even though today was bad it was a long way away from being the worst. Daniel had been here for nearly three years and he'd heard some horror in his time.

Daniel turned and gave Carson a friendly glance. He was pretty much powerless in here. He didn't have the authority of a guard and would feel ridiculous if he did. Yelling at people, shouting at grown men. But the culture fed itself. It was the guards' fault, it was the prisoners' fault. They had turned each other into the worst possible versions of themselves.

Carson was one of the more intelligent ones he'd ever seen since he started. The smart ones stood out. He noticed that for some reason, the smarter ones were all usually taller than the others. Strong and powerfully minded. Intelligent and thinking. Most prisoners were fucking morons. That was the honest truth. It wasn't their fault, no-one had taught them any better.

That was the first thing that struck Daniel when he first started working. All the prisoners seemed so confident. They all probably had enormous dicks he thought, that was probably half the problem. Too small and you turn into Jack the Ripper or Adolf Hitler, too big and you end up in jail doing three years for aggravated assault. A good Buddhist-sized one was better, the middle way, surely that had a lot to do with things.

But these guys, no matter how big their dicks, the truth was most of them were borderline retarded. Not a shred of guilt. All simply tuned and slightly angry and ready to get out and go back to "work". They were simpletons. All of them except the murderers and the rare ones like Carson. He had the words, the skills, the quickness of mind. The bastard could even paint.

"Is it dry yet?" Daniel asked Carson, walking over to where he was working.

"I think it's nearly there, you know," Carson brushed the side of the canvas with a cloth he was holding. He touched the top of the small table fan he had blowing on the drying paint.

"I'm just waiting for this here to turn a nearly ruby red caramel type, cause when I put that same colour on down here, I left it behind in the cell, remember last Monday when I came in and forgot to bring it back even though I promised I would

bring it back when you let me have it on Friday. Well anyway I would've painted straight over it, cause the part of the emu that's supposed to be set against the ground looked like fucking chocolate, but that extra day in the cell, just that morning, I had it set against the wall just under the sink and cause we're facing the East in 3, that sun just came up at the right time when I had that painting just sitting right in a sweet spot, I swear sir it was an accident, but it was fortunate cause the sun, he just came right up boy and hit that painting hard straight through our little window and turned it a little bit more like dirt and a little bit less like shit."

The transformation always amazed Daniel. Carson could slide in and out of it at will. Daniel liked to listen to him talk about his painting. He had a lot of potential in him. He was painting a picture for the upcoming art exhibition in the old Fremantle Jail. He had painted the outline of an Emu with the organs of the bird still visible. Daniel had seen a few of the painters do similar styled work, not many. Most were doing odd triptychs set in the one canvas where they mixed two landscape paintings sandwiching a starry night. It was an unusual design but for some reason it had caught on. Daniel thought it looked like it caught on around about 1974.

"How much you think I can put on it sir?"

"You put what you feel is right man, obviously if you're going to put a massive figure on it it's not going to sell."

"You see right there, that's not a straight answer. You're telling me to put what I feel is right and then you say straight away don't put too much on it cause it won't sell, give me a straight answer sir, at least them faggots out there are honest you know."

Daniel just stared down at the canvas slowly drying on the table. Carson was going really close today, he was making him work, making him earn his money.

"Give us a number sir?" Carson asked again.

"I'm not giving you a number."

"Give us a number."

"What do you think it's worth putting on there?" asked Daniel.

"Sir, you're asking me what I think it's worth - I'll tell you straight up, that's a forty six thousand dollar painting right there."

The room giggled again as the rest of them laughed and encouraged Carson on. Giggling white teeth, grinning behind paintbrushes. They were all doubled over or had their heads thrown back. It was a childish laugh, a good childish laugh.

"If you want to put that price on it, put that price on it," said Daniel, stone-faced.

"You serious?" asked Carson; he was considering it.

"If that's what you feel," said Daniel.

"But you don't think it'll sell?"

"You never know who's going walk in that door but I've never seen anything go for over two thousand, but you never know, if that's what you honestly think it's worth." Daniel walked away from the table and sat back down behind the desk in the small room.

He was bored out of his brain. A wasted youth heading towards a wasted middle age. He was smoking pot again, sometimes three times a week, sitting at home watching Masterchef and getting the munchies. That's not how Picasso did it or Kandinsky did it or fucking anybody did it. He was closer to giving up than he'd ever been in his life. He felt his life was already over even though he was still in his twenties. What had gone wrong?

"Maybe 38 on it sir," Carson called straight-faced from the back of the room.

A guard stepped into the room, he was doing his rounds. He was a strange one. Daniel knew he was different from most of them. He seemed to be Belgian, or French. He just walked with a bit more class than the English guys that made up most of the officers.

"Carson," the guard called him by his first name, he must work in 3, maybe Carson had gotten to him as well.

"You have to go to Assessments. You're supposed to be there now."

"They told me to come straight to Education and they were going to call me up, I told 'em I had an appointment and even had the slip," Caron took the slip out of his tracksuit pants.

"They told me to come straight to Education or they'd take my TV away, sir."

This comment was met with a few knowing nods from the other prisoners. They were following him there as well.

"Well, let's go," said the guard, revealing a little more accent. If only he talked a bit more Daniel could work out where he was from and impress him with his ear

for dialects. Daniel liked to do that. He was a cricket umpire when he was about fourteen and he worked for eight dollars a game. He met another umpire there who was a tall black fourteen year old with a French accent. Daniel guessed he was from Mauritius as there was a black Mauritian man teaching at his school. The fourteen year old Mauritian was very impressed, Daniel had felt very cool about the whole thing. A cool black Mauritian liking him and thinking he was alright.

Carson went about packing up his station and placed his painting carefully over the far side of the room under a small heat lamp. He stepped back and took in the Emu once more, he adjusted the heat lamp slightly.

"Sir, can I leave that with you? I might not be back 'till this afternoon, maybe even tomorrow."

"No worries man."

"'Cause it's worth thirty-eight thousand now sir, that's more than most of these cunts up in here have seen for a while, someone might get killed over that there painting." Carson walked to the door.

The group hollered their goodbyes, the guard was out of the room wearing his sunglasses outside standing in the sun. Daniel though he looked a bit like a UN diplomat, maybe a Spanish one. A citizen of the world. Carson bumbled backwards out the door, putting on his jacket in the entrance way.

"Hey sir, them two faggots said when it dries after they've been throwing it around the room, it dries like tinsel, I kid you not sir." Howls of laughter and disgust followed.

"That's why unit six is called tinsel town sir."

Daniel turned and was now faced with the cackles from the room. They would be easier now. Now that Carson was gone.

Dean

Dean was in for the third time. He'd been picked up after getting caught with a days' worth of collections he was doing for a bunch turning over meth just south of Rockingham. They told him they made more money taking houses off people than they did selling the gear. Once they got in over their heads and couldn't pay the twenty or thirty grand they owed, they'd put their houses up for sale to avoid getting themselves murdered. The crew calling in the debt also had a legitimate real estate company on the side which they used to quickly move in and buy the house for a hundred odd grand below the market price. The silly pricks in debt were so scared of having their wives gang-raped they'd give up the house for whatever they could get, pay off their debt and more often than not score some more meth on top.

On the day he got picked up, Dean had spent most of the day in Leda "rattling the tin". The first house he went to had a bloke inside who owed just over twenty grand; when Dean burst in he was in the middle of cooking his breakfast. Dean was told to pick up at least five thousand off him and was told to let him know about it if he didn't have it. The poor prick only had three hundred bucks so Dean made an example of him the way they told him to. He kept hitting him in the guts until he shit himself and then left him lying in a ball in the corner of the kitchen. That was the usual, nothing round the chops, they had to be able to hide it from their families if they were going to sell the house without any dramas. If the women in their lives ever knew they were getting visits from people like Dean, they'd go mad with fear and call the cops.

Dean told him he'd be back next week and left the house with three hundred bucks in his pocket. He got picked up later that afternoon after four other house visits. Someone had tipped off the cops, maybe a neighbour or a postman, or who knew. When he walked out of the last house there was a collection of plainclothes D's and a bunch of regular maggots all yelling at him to get on the ground, keep his hands raised blah blah blah. He had fifteen thousand on him and no answers. It was enough to get him remanded for at least a couple of months.

He sat in the Reception area of the prison. The place where you hand in your mobile phone and your wristwatch and they give you a bunch of shit in return. He was sitting naked in a large empty holding cell sealed off with an automated glass door. The only thing in the cell was a long metal bench which ran the length of the side wall and had holes drilled in from end to end. From where he sat he could see out into the main processing area, the same guards who ran it last time he was in were still here. Sitting in the same seats. Staring into the same computers with the same stupid looks on their faces.

They had one wily-looking prisoner helping them out this time, someone Dean hadn't seen before. He seemed to be doing all the work. Tall skinny fella, psoriasis all over his arms and neck which was starting to creep up around his face. The two officers sat behind a desk ignoring him as he went back and forth filling Dean's bag with his wardrobe and basics. T-shirts, undies, pairs of socks, track pants, outdoor floppy hat, work shorts, razors, shaving stick, tooth brush. All of them green. All of them shit.

He wondered where he was going to be put. He knew he'd be in 7 for a few days while they figured out where to place him. They should have his record still on file. The last time he was in he'd raised a bit of hell, not too much to get him sent down the back but enough to let 'em know he wasn't fucking around. You had to put a bit of fear into the guards if you didn't want to be fucked with. Not too much but just enough so they keep their distance. He knew a few boys who were doing a stretch but it always took about a week before you could work out where everyone was.

"There you go mate, should be all there." The glass door to the cell swung open slowly and the prisoner with the bad skin walked in and handed over a half full plastic bag.

"If you can sign that slip there and tear off the bit at the end to keep for yourself," he handed Dean a pen.

Dean took the bag and the pen off him, he looked harmless enough.

"Who are you?" Dean asked him while he went through the bag making sure everything was there.

"Corry, mate." Corry scratched the inside of his elbow as he spoke.

"First time in?" asked Dean, meeting him in the eye.

"Yeah been in about nine months now."

"What'd you do?"

"I'd rather not say."

"Really?"

"I'm sorry," Corry shrugged to himself, again scratching at his elbow.

"Don't be sorry mate, just don't fucking do it again." Dean thought there was no way they'd put a pedo on Reception. He knew they had them cooking the food now and then, but surely not at Reception.

"Good job here, hey?" Dean asked him, trying to get a little more.

"Not too bad, keeps me busy you know?"

"You know Freddie Stevens or Jake Stevens, they still here?"

"Freddie I never heard of, but Jake's here." Corry took a step backwards towards the cell door. Dean stood up pulling his undies on.

"Where they have Jake?" Dean asked, looking Corry in the eye.

"I don't know," Corry took another step out of the cell, pretending to give Dean his privacy.

"Is he in 5? The last I heard, the cunt managed to get himself in 5," Dean sat back down, pulling on his socks and track suit pants.

"Yeah, I don't know, sorry mate."

"I bet you're in 5?" Dean strapped up his velcro shoes and reached into the bag for a t-shirt.

5 was the self service unit for trusted prisoners. You could cook your own food, have your own shower, be left alone to your own devices. You weren't trusted enough to be let out but you were trusted enough to scramble a few eggs and microwave your own bacon.

"You know how I know you're in 5?" Dean asked.

"No," Corry actually didn't.

"Cause I've been here before and I know they give this jobs to cunts who are in 5 and who know how to behave themselves." Dean stood up, tucked his t-shirt into his pants and stepped towards Corry.

"Is he in 5 or not?"

"Yes." Corry was looking at the floor.

Dean sat back down on the bench and went through his bag, taking out his floppy hat and prison issue sunglasses.

"Fish and chips tonight?" Dean asked, tying a rough knot in the top of his bag. "They're still doing fish and chips on Fridays or what?"

Corry wasn't listening, he stepped out of the cell and closed the glass door behind him, sealing Dean in, he walked himself back towards the supply stack thinking of all the possibilities that might come up now between himself and Jake. He might have fucked up.

"Hey Corry," Dean was calling from inside the holding cell waving the signed form as he walked away, "don't forget your paperwork mate."

Patrice

Patrice had just booked two nights away at a small chalet down south, past Williams on the Albany Highway, another sixty odd kilometres, turn left, drive for another half hour and they'd be there. Small wood fire heated shacks. A couple's retreat. The south west of Western Australia was as good as the South of France for Patrice. He liked the big wide country roads. Riding through France was taking your life in your hands but here you could relax on the road, stretch out. It was a good country.

When he first arrived in Perth he moved to Beechboro. A mid-range suburb. It was what his wife and himself could afford without going too much into debt. Compared to the house they had left in Toulouse, the Beechboro home was a palace. Patrice did three shifts a week in the prison. The drive in was pretty ugly. Tonkin Highway at the best of times was only just bearable. In winter it was better in the morning, you drove in the dark so you didn't have to look at it.

The job was just alright. The early commute meant he missed the morning traffic and if he went really early he could use his free gym membership before work. On top of that he had nearly half of every week off. He was looking at another job though, there were plenty in Perth. It seemed anybody could do anything.

His wife was homesick, she wanted to move back to France. Since they'd emigrated she had gone back every six months. Always something, a wedding, a baby, her father getting sick. It was costing nearly five thousand each time she went home. It was like paying school fees. Each time he went to the airport to drop her off, he wasn't sure she'd make it back. They were happy but Australia had taken its toll on her. She was tough and braved it, but he wasn't sure if she'd stick it out, if she'd stick him out. Even when he knew she was coming back and went to pick her up at the airport, he wasn't ever completely sure until she walked out of the arrivals gate. Right now, all he knew was that he had her for another six months, it was a big gamble.

"Hey my brother," Patrice heard Carson calling to another prisoner who was approaching from a distance down the path. He had just picked him up from the art room and they were on their way to Assessments. Assessments took care of the

prisoners' security rating and tried to set them on the right path to get them out as quickly as possible into a minimum security prison. Carson hadn't said a word to him since they left Education. He could be friendly enough back in the unit, but the prisoners had to be careful. Too much friendliness towards the guards in these open spaces could be risky. They never knew who was watching them. In their wing it was a little more relaxed but it still took a long time to get close to any of them. Out here in the courtyard, it was as if they didn't even know each other at all.

"Haaaaaay," the long call came back from down the path. He was a big one. Maybe 6' 3", he looked around one hundred and twenty kilos. He had a loose singlet on with his jumper draped over his shoulder. Patrice hadn't seen him here before, this one would be hard to miss. Must be a new one. Patrice saw the arm of the big one rise high and slow above his head. That was how they did it. Arm outstretched, a slow hand in the air, tilted slightly on its side, a couple of fingers out straight, a couple more pointing down, thumb out to the side.

"Boss, boss, that's my brother," said Carson "there he is, my brother, naaah," Carson hollered down to the big one.

Patrice could see the smile on the big one's face as he got closer. He was young, maybe twenty but it was hard to tell with his size. Patrice slowed his walk and prepared for a little chat. If he wanted to he could give the order to the other prisoner to move off the path and order Carson to keep a straight line directly to Assessments. But there was no point. Nobody wanted aggravation. He didn't say anything, just slowed down and eventually stopped. He watched as the big one and Carson met on the footpath. Their hands locked at mid-chest as if they were about to arm wrestle.

Patrice wanted a cigarette. He had stopped smoking in a bid to convince his wife he was sacrificing as well. He was suffering like she was. He knew he'd be here for another minute or two, he loved smoking, particularly out in the sunshine. It made him feel like Clint Eastwood. Patrice placed his fingers to his lips and breathed in the hot dry air, pretending to smoke. He remembered a line from a French novel he had read years ago. Something about the confidence a man gets from smoking a cigarette or holding a steering wheel in his hands. Mind you, thought Patrice, that French writer was killed in a car crash, too much confidence perhaps.

"Brother, fucking what took you so long?" asked Carson to the big one.

The big one shrugged and hissed, cocking his head to one side as he did, "those fuckin' cunts, my brother, they just fucking me around."

"You placed in?" asked Carson.

"They got me over in unit two there?"

"Where you been now?" Carson asked.

"Over at Gardens there," the big one pointed with his head where he had just come from, "they got a job there waiting for me, Traineeship."

"Organised, only a day in and level one already, hey?" Carson smiled and they grabbed hands again, drawing each other in.

"Alright my brother, come see me when you can, we'll get you over to 3, good boys there."

Carson began to wind it up. Patrice knew he was probably thinking the same as himself.

"Where you going?" asked the big one.

"Assessments brother, need to drop my security rating, get the fuck out of here."

"You leaving soon or what?"

"Nah not for a while my brother, still be a little bit yet, we'll get you settled, don't you worry."

They both started laughing again and swapped positions on the path, they began to walk slowly backwards away from each other. Patrice watched as the big one turned slowly around and placed his tracksuit jumper over his head to give him some shade. He walked down the path towards unit two looking like a boxer on his way to a prize-fight.

Patrice followed as Carson ambled up towards Assessments. He swayed a little in his walk, had a bounce, one step just seem to pour into the next. He looked happy. Patrice never understood it. He lit another imaginary smoke off a friend's lighter and inhaled deeply.

Debbie

"Debbie, get a hold of his feet."

Graham was shouting now, he had his knee on the back of his neck. The prisoner had kicked up and nearly got loose, just missing her face with his shoes. Debbie could feel the sweat fill up inside her plastic gloves, her heart racing away as she struggled to control his feet. Graham had told her about this one, told her how he'd punched out one of the female officers the last time he was in the lockup. He was moaning something terrible on the floor, had no shirt on. She didn't know if they picked him up like this or if they'd pulled it off him. He was making sounds like a child, like a little boy crying for help, he didn't seem the way Graham had described him. He didn't seem so dangerous. Not now anyway.

"You hold still, you hear me, do not fucking move or we'll go again."

Debbie had his legs held on the ground; she was kneeling on the back of his ankles now, just like they taught her at the academy. The room was filling up with officers, must be about a dozen in here now, too many, thought Debbie. She remembered the old Kiwi sergeant who drilled them about these kind of situations. He told her too many officers in one spot can make things worse. Too many bodies, too much chaos, not enough room to swing the bat.

She had her whole weight on his ankles now, she gripped his calves with her hands, his big loose jeans were starting to fall down around his backside. She could feel his flesh underneath the jeans, he was trying to kick a little, but she had him, he was fat, he kept struggling. Graham was whispering something into his ear. He groaned out a response. One of the others had a hold of the handcuffs that held his hands behind his back. She could see the officer was pulling on them, they were pretty high now above his back. They wouldn't want to go any higher. He let out another loud moan, bucked his belly off the floor, she could see inside his mouth, pressed against the floor as he moaned out again. He looked like he was trying to move his body up to follow his hands.

"Right, you've been warned enough fucking times."

Graham gave the signal, Debbie let go immediately, she knew she had about two seconds. Everyone stepped back a few spaces and Graham hit the Taser again.

Debbie had lost count how many times it was now. She could hear the clicking of the gun as it rippled through him. She watched as he wriggled a little on the ground, the guttural moan coming up, the same one that always comes up whenever someone's getting the current.

"You fucking maggot cunts," came the call from the cell behind them.

They'd picked up both of them together, the other one had gone in quiet, it was his uncle on the floor. He could hear everything going on out here, he could hear the click of the Taser and the terrible moaning.

"You fucking lousy bunch of fucking dog cunts," he was kicking at the door from inside of the cell.

Graham hit him again and began screaming past Debbie into the cell behind her. "You fucking settle or you'll be next you little cunt."

"Fuck you," a roar came back through the door in response.

Debbie looked at the white wall clock just above the lock up desk. 2:50 in the morning, she'd be here a while yet before she could get home.

Maybe her sister was right.

Ariel

Ariel was disgusted with himself. He had cracked 120 kilos. He weighed in at the gym locker room where the officers trained. 120. He thought it really was a prerequisite of his job to stay somewhat in shape. Here he was giving out life advice and the intelligent living speech and sitting in at a dollar twenty.

He squashed into his office chair, his fat swelling up his shirt and spilling out over his pants. Who on earth would listen to him for advice. He was a public servant, middle of the road, talking to these fucking retards all day long. Going over the same bullshit every day. The grand plan. All of these cock-heads had one. All he did was sit and listen to visions of un-built empires and soon-to-be-reclaimed golden opportunities.

All he could think about was food, his lovely, uncomplicated, pleasurable food. He had stopped caring about much else maybe four years ago. He counted up he had seen nearly a thousand of them in his time at the prison. Many of them he had seen more than once. Years later one of them would return to jail for the second or third time and sit in front of him and start telling him the same story. The tyre store they were going to open with their cousin who lived in Geraldton, the rec centre they needed for the kids in the northern suburbs. They were the ones that were going to finally start one, open it up for the kids in the neighbourhood. Run it right. The detailing business. The newsagency. The petrol station. One of them even said he wanted to learn Chinese so he could get a job in a restaurant.

They were all starting to blur together and he just couldn't care anymore, he had heard too much. Now, all he had was the memory of his breakfast and the anticipation of his lunch and dinner. That's what got him through the day. The feel of his gut rolling over his trousers made him feel as if he wanted to take a Stanley knife and shred slices of flesh from his body. One hundred and twenty kilos. He was bigger than Charles Barkley. He remembered Charles Barkley, the basketball player who was only six foot one and weighed sixteen American stones. Maybe eighteen. He tipped over 110 at the height of his basketball career and here was Ariel, sitting under fluorescent lights, three inches shorter and ten kilos heavier than Charles fucking Barkley. The Round Mound of Rebound. That's what they called him when

he played for Philadelphia. Ariel wondered what the people round here were calling him.

He was listening to another one tell him his thoughts on the future. These guys hadn't thought past this afternoon, let alone the year after next. They were just like animals. Week to week, moment to moment. He had lived on a Kibbutz in Israel for God's sake. This was not who he was. He was a strong man with a strong heart. He should be doing research at his age, serious research. He had to get out of this prison. Out of the system. The work was nothing, nothing at all. He was lazy. He'd become a lazy fat man. It was unbearable. But it was easy.

Nearly thirteen hundred a week clear, for fuck all. He thought again of the breakfast he had that morning. It was the only thing that got him out of bed. That and the thirteen hundred. Two poached eggs, a little malt vinegar in the hot water, wait until it started to simmer, then another minute, put the spoon in and get the water swirling. Seven times around got it at a good pace, enough time to crack two eggs in separately. He'd watch them swirl into big soft white tear drops as he stood stooped over the stove.

He'd be in the dark in the kitchen except for the small light that was hooked up to the extractor fan. That was the only light he had left. He had a four row titanium plated light fixture from IKEA but all the globes had blown and he had to go back out to IKEA to get the replacements. He hadn't had the motivation to go. He knew he probably wouldn't until the light in the extractor fan blew. He knew nothing about extractor fan lights but he reckoned that could be a few years on account of how little it was.

Most of his cooking was done before the sun went down anyway. Ariel thought having darkness in the kitchen might keep him out of it for a while. He could do with that. While the eggs were turning over themselves, swirling in the hot water, he had some sourdough pushed down in his toaster. His mother had bought him a new toaster about three birthdays ago. It had laid under his bed for the past three years. He had no idea why she bought him another toaster when she knew he had one that worked. Once he finally plugged it in he realised he was being an arsehole. It was great toaster, great settings, had a cage attachment you could toast waffles on, amazing stuff. Also she bought him a new kettle at the same time.

Boiled the water in half the time, used less energy. When his mother asked him about why he was still using his old toaster he got defensive and said something about the absurdity of gift-giving. He was pathetic. At the time his mother took it in her stride. Nodded, smiled and said nothing. He was a real arsehole alright. But now an arsehole with a nice toaster and a fast kettle.

The sour dough popped. Ariel spread butter over the bread. He had two strips of smoked salmon ready to go straight on, then the poached eggs and the hollandaise sauce from a batch he had made at the start of the week which he kept in the fridge in an old ice cream container. He chopped some spring onions, cracked some black pepper and poured himself a thick black coffee.

He remembered thinking about it and planning it all before he went to bed the night before.

His head hit the pillow and he was a little drunk from the Pinot he'd ripped into, he went halfway through a second bottle by the time he finished his dinner. He had made an enormous mushroom pasta with cream and white wine and had eaten about four serves' worth, washing back the pinot and watching YouTube videos of Stephen Hawking talking about worm holes. When he finally relented and went to bed he put the electric blanket on three. He left the electric blanket on all year round, even during summer, he read somewhere that the heat could make him lose weight in his sleep. When he hit the sack he looked at the time on his phone, it was just after one in the morning, he'd have about four hours sleep before the alarm went off. He sat listening to his breathing, he could hear himself wheeze as he inhaled, his belly felt round and full, full of mushrooms and wine and cream.

The prison was too horrible to think about the next day. He had a few hours ahead to himself, hopefully the heat would help with the mushrooms and the cream. He never usually went past two on the electric blanket, two was very hot, three was madness, particularly in January. He was hell bent on it. He lay drifting off, the heat rising through his back, he could feel the cream curdle away gently in his stomach, the pains stabbing him in his chest were probably the indigestion from the booze. He thought about poaching some eggs in the morning and finishing off that hollandaise in the fridge. His eyes half-open, his mouth sticky and murmuring as he drifted off into warm full drunkenness.

He woke about three thirty in the morning. He had cooked himself on the electric blanket, he was baked, dehydrated, with a sharp pain running through his head. He ran his hands over his belly, it still felt full. The salt and booze and heat had all slow cooked him from the inside. He rolled out of the bed. He felt dry, cracked, exhausted. Same as most nights. He went out into the kitchen and took a long drink of water, trying to rehydrate himself. He had two hours before he had to leave for work.

"Cause I got to make my own way, I can't be relying on nobody you see."

He was still talking. Ariel had shut down, he was counting the hours until lunch. He had a meatball sandwich he had made this morning before he came in, just after the Eggs Benedict. He actually had a miniature one just after he finished the eggs, he put the last of the hollandaise over a couple of meatballs, delicious. He was listening to this man tell him about how he was going to buy his own car and pull a mobile wood fired pizza oven behind it on a trailer, traveling round the state going to the Royal Shows and all the country fairs.

"Everyone likes pizza," he kept saying.

He was about fifty odd, long thick hair, greying dirty beard, look liked he dipped himself in ash before he came in. Another wasted one, a horrible, horrible man. Ariel had looked him up before their meeting. He was on the Network Offender Management System or NOMS as it was known throughout the prison. He was a pedophile. He had woken up his five year old grand-daughter in the middle of the night when she was at his house for a sleep-over and pulled himself off into her mouth. Ariel had read hundreds of these. Victim statements, impact reports, the whole lot, half of them were mind-numbingly boring or just plain stupid, like one of these idiots doing an armed robbery at his local bottle shop without a mask or another selling dope out of his car outside a police station. Some were disturbing though, like this one in front of him now, and some, if he was honest, turned him on a bit.

He read the report of a rapist who went and visited his ex-wife and ended up pushing her face down on the kitchen table. The rapist got four years. Ariel remembered talking to him and recalled him describing how, before they fucked on the table, she had sucked him off before he barely got through the front door and

told him how much she missed him and wanted him back. He'd said they fucked like animals that night and the next morning three detectives were knocking on his door taking him in for an interview. Ariel thought he understood that one.

"They been making pizzas for about a thousand years, you know, it's only supposed to have three ingredients on it."

Ariel saw through the office window, which lead out to the corridor, the French guard Patrice walking down with another one. He was young, maybe mid-twenties, thin and muscular. He walked strong and confident. Ariel looked at the clock, it was getting on. He could wrap this up and start the paperwork and then go have an early lunch.

"People say it's in the dough but I reckon it's the sauce, you know, you gotta make it from romas, not those shit tomatoes they sell you in Coles, you gotta get up to Wanneroo there and buy the good Roma tomatoes, by the crateful you know, I've got a cousin who works out of- "

"Turnbull," Ariel interrupted, "let's leave it there for now, we'll schedule you in again in another two weeks and go through some of the procedural things you might be expected to come into contact with once you're out, and then we'll go from there, OK?"

"Yeah no worries, I appreciate your time, just can you call my unit next time cause they've got some fucking monkeys turning keys up there at the moment, one new young cunt in particular. I nearly didn't make it down today. I ended up arguing with this little boy and I had to explain to him the difference between a scheduled movement and a routine movement. If it wasn't for Mr Chalmers who stepped in and corrected him, I could've ended up with a charge. Mr Chalmers been on the wing now for nearly thirty years, he's still a fucking cunt, but he's alright, you know."

"I don't have anything to do with calling people down, Turnbull," said Ariel, "but if I have you scheduled to be here and you're not, then usually one of the girls in the office will pick it up, they keep me up to speed with all of my appointments, so if there's a drama they'll usually sort it out."

"It's just that I want to do the right thing is all, I mean this is my assessment here, I don't want you thinking that I'm just not turning up, I want to get out of here, make a change for myself, and I don't want that falling down cause of some

little cunt there with not even a star on his shoulder, not even one star on his shoulder, the new ones walk around with just a fucking piece of gold cardboard. It's a bit harsh I think personally, but we all make our choices...." Turnbull drifted off, Ariel wasn't listening, just waiting for him to stop talking so he could get him out of the office. They both were silent, Ariel looking across at Turnbull. Both of them with little idea what to do next, both waiting for the other. Ariel was waiting for more to come out of his mouth, more about pizzas, about the screws. Ariel kept thinking of that poor little granddaughter.

"One more, Ariel."

Both Turnbull and Ariel turned to the door; Patrice had knocked gently, seeing the stalemate in the room.

"Send him in Patrice, we're finished."

Dean

"What is this?" Dean looked down at the paperwork in front of him.

"It's the safety course."

"This is bullshit, mate."

"I know."

"You're going to make us do it anyway?"

"I'm not making you do it, the prison's making me run you through it, if you don't want to do it you're free to leave but they'll just reschedule you down again and keep sending you back until you complete it."

"Fucking hell mate, this is just bullshit."

"Look believe me, I understand, but you can't get a level one job if you don't do the safety course."

"What's level one worth now?"

"Fifty three dollars a week."

"For fuck's sake?"

"Look it's just something we have to do, just think of it like an induction."

"Fifty three dollars a week?" Dean spat out the last word.

"Yeah, it's not very generous I know."

"I earn that in ten minutes on the outside."

"Well, let's just get it over with and you boys can all get out of here?"

"Fifty three bucks a week, these cunts are taking the piss."

"Shall we do it?"

Dean looked around at the others who were all sitting silent on their plastic chairs. "Yeah right-oh, let's do it, fuck 'em."

"Alright then, well if everyone turns to page three in their booklets where it talks about risk minimisation in the workplace and how it relates to safety, what do you think should be the ideal incident target each month? So we've either got A) fifteen, B) zero or C) ten percent of the total work force?"

Aleisha

She had on her tight grey pants, she ran her fingers down them slowly. She had beautiful long legs. The smalls flecks of black teeming through the grey seemed to make them look longer and slimmer. They were a high fit, came just beneath her belly button. She was looking very good. Her tummy was as flat as it had ever been, the gear worked wonders, the Tabata had helped too. She ran her hands again up over her thighs and onto her belly, her black skivvy clung tight and sat strong against the pants. She looked down at her breasts, they were high and full under her shirt, not too big, not too small, just fucking right.

"That's why I pay so much money for clothes, you fat shit," she thought to herself.

The backs of her hands were still smooth. Her mother had told her to moisturise every day.

"Keep your hands young, otherwise they'll give you away."

They were smooth alright, her olive skin helped it along, some of the paler girls she knew looked like pieces of pork, especially on hot days. Pork with acrylic nails and finger polish. Patchy, sweaty and pock-marked, and generally fucked from too many white wines and serves of soft cheese. She tapped her fingernails against the desk. She wondered if this was the most beautiful she was ever going to be in her life. She was hot. She knew it. But she also knew there'd be a time in her life, some point, some peak that she'd never be able to see, not until it had long passed, where she would be well and truly on the downswing of her good looks. If this was as beautiful as she was ever going to be, it was pretty damn good.

Her mum had aged well. Okay at least. She dressed good too, but not as well as she had once. She watched the skin on her mum's face grow loose over the years. Her mother had a chin that sagged a touch. Just hung heavy enough to see it. When she'd see her mum in the morning it was hardly noticeable but late at night, especially after a few drinks, you couldn't miss it. Late at night, sitting on the couch with a glass of wine, her mum would look like a little frog ready to balloon out her jowls and start croaking. She wouldn't let that happen to her. She'd have Botox when the time came. It was a different world now, a different world altogether.

She looked at the clock. He said he'd be here already. He wasn't usually late, he was usually right on time. He was pretty good to her, she'd been letting him come over to her house now for about three months. It was getting to the stage where he stopped asking her to pay for it anymore. She'd fuck him. Fuck him good too. She'd make the noises and treat him a little rough if he wasn't getting into it. He was nicer than her husband. Had a much better body. She made him shower before she let him in the bed. She remembered sitting in the bedroom waiting for him to come out. He'd always be singing in there as he washed away.

She didn't know what he was singing, she wasn't really listening though either. He lay on her about a week's worth just for herself. She first started out only on the weekends, but after a few months it stretched out to Mondays and Thursdays and then it wasn't that hard to fill in Tuesdays and Wednesdays as well. She could get about six day's worth with what Carson left her and along with what her husband bought her each week, she'd be set for seven days. Her husband thought she only used it on Saturday nights. He wasn't that smart. Carson wasn't too bright either but he was a good fuck. Long body, abs, full head of hair, the whole lot. He was black too, but Abo black not Kobe black. But he was sweet and clean. At least after the shower anyway.

The first time he came over to the house it was straight enough, just some tongues, she played with his cock a little, they were standing in the kitchen. He was a lot taller than she was. He put his hands down her pants. By the time they were nearly through it, she was biting into his face and clawing at him and he was with her all the way. The week after that he was on time for sure. She teased him a little again, still paid him up front. Before he left she sucked him off on the lounge room floor and he started fingering her while she did it. After that it was every week without fail and about a month later he stopped taking her money altogether. He'd come over, they'd drink a bit, fuck for an hour, he'd lay some gear on her and leave.

She looked over at the door. She could hear him knocking. She checked her face in the mirror and fixed her hair, pushing up the edges above her ears to give herself a little more. She was feeling a bit edgy today and would love to get straight into it but she had to be careful. She couldn't act like a freak. He had told her that's

what he liked about her; she was different to some of the others. He told her she had class.

" 'Bout fucking time Cars."

"Baby, Baby, Baby."

"You said one o'clock."

"Leisha baby them streets is murder," Carson took her gently in his arms. "It's a different world out there," Carson giggled as he talked, he seemed to like playing gangster for her.

"I missed you." She wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling up towards him, she felt his strength as he carried her weight effortlessly. She pushed her tongue into his mouth and pressed her body into his.

"You missed more than that, hey?" said Carson.

"I missed all of it Cars."

They kissed a little more, she pulled back away from him and put his hand between her legs. She stood back from him a little, not letting him get too close, she grinded for him, staring up at him as she did, she wanted to get at him, the sooner the better.

"Leish, what are you teasing me for?" Carson spoke low, looking down at her, her breasts sighing up and down as she stared at him.

"I want to see how much you want it," she said, moving herself faster.

"How much do you want it, Leish, hey?"

"You know I want it baby."

"No doubt."

She saw that look come over his eyes. That look men get when it all kicks in, when nothing else in the world matters a shit once that switch gets flipped. When all sense of control is handed over to billions of years of jungle fucking and baby making. The same look that's in the eyes of the dog and the monkey and rabbit and the bull. The look that comes with wide-eyed intoxication and ends in a delirious sexual collection of animal pleasure and purpose. That was the look he was giving her now. She had him again, she'd be alright for another week.

She lay in the bed staring at the ceiling. Her husband had insisted in putting in the fan on the roof without the light attached 'cause it was going to save them some money.

"We have the lamps already, Aleisha," he kept saying over and over, like the big fat spastic that he was.

The fan with the lights attached was about twenty dollars more than the one without, but he wouldn't spring for them. "We have the lamps already for fuck's sake, how many lights do we need?"

Fat fucking shit of a man. Carson was having another shower. He was singing again. He kept talking back out from the shower at her as she lay on the bed. Sing for a bit, say something, then go back singing. Her husband would do it too, call out from the bathroom, except he wouldn't be singing, he'd just keep on talking and talking and talking. Usually about money.

She could never understand what he was talking about, he'd drive her crazy. At least Carson didn't expect an answer, he was happy enough to keep on singing. He hadn't lasted long today. Seemed like it was over in five minutes but he was taking forever in that shower.

She couldn't wait.

Ariel

"And then what happened?"

Ariel was sitting with Carson for the second time. He had come in late last week with not much time left in the day. Ariel wasn't feeling well this morning, he'd demolished a cheesecake late last night. Kiwi and lemon. They were less than ten dollars on special for the big ones now, how did anyone stand a chance? He started percolating the coffee at about midnight and cut himself some heavy slices. He was watching a Korean kid play the drums on YouTube, maybe five years old. He had about four cups of coffee before he ran out of cake and started on the cigars his brother-in-law had brought him back from Malaysia.

He sat up smoking until two in the morning. The Korean kid was good. The coffee meant he couldn't sleep when he finally fell into bed, he rolled and turned for a few hours, maybe got half an hour before the alarm went off at five. When he dragged himself out of bed he could taste the cigar smoke still locked in his mouth. Cigar smoke and strong coffee with just a flutter of kiwi and cream cheese.

"Well I had this cunt's car, this XR6, beautiful Subaru, this thing was too lovely, blue trim on yellow, looked like a rally car and shiny brother, very shiny."

"Now the car belonged to the victim?" asked Ariel.

"Well that depends on what you mean by victim, how would it be if you had someone that came to see you for three months, you know, got some work done with you, take up your time and then told you afterwards, three months down the road, that you weren't getting paid?"

Ariel looked at his face, he actually expected an answer.

"But you were in the woman's car," said Ariel.

"No, no, no I was in my car and I've got the paper work to say it was my car...."

"Your car Carson, that you had signed over to your name under duress."

"No duress about it, she was into me for thousands and me being me, I said there was no problem with paying me when she could, all the rest of it 'cause we had a good relationship you know, we were getting close and then I was going to her place, which is not something that you'd normally do, people come to me if

they need me, I don't be chasing cunts round, but we had a special relationship, so, the exception was made. "

"Why was the exception made?" Ariel knew exactly why the exception was made, he had read the case report, but he wanted details, something specific.

"You chalk it up sometimes that's all, you can't be chasing people for money all the time so sometimes you chalk it up, listen, big man, the exception gets made all the time, truth be told."

Ariel was a little disappointed.

"But you took her car."

"Forty grams," said Carson leaning forward, "that's a shit load you know, I got fellas I got to pay and them boys don't fuck around, they only come to your house once if you know what I'm saying."

"But she says she'd already paid for it," said Ariel, trying to sound casual.

"Now listen, I step out of the shower, this wadji's sitting there huddled over the bedside table and has my money rolled up, thinks she's in the movies you know, my money rolled up, doing lines off the bedside table."

"But you were there to sell her drugs," said Ariel.

"But I hadn't sold her nothing yet. You see that's what I'm saying. She'd been into my clothes when I was in the shower and started helping herself before we did any of that."

"And that was why you took the car?"

"After I come out and see this one been through my clothes and is there helping herself, then what I thought we had, changed, 'cause there was always that respect there you see, she had a bit of class this one, until she started dipping in."

"And then what happened?"

"Well I'll tell you straight up, I lost my fucking mind. I was still standing there in a fucking towel, in her husband's towel, had his initials on it and everything, strange scene. But anyway I just come out the shower and I'm standing there looking at this woman hose up gear off the dresser and I see little bags that I packed that morning all lined up like she was ready to do all of them one after the other. I was fucking wild so then we got into it and I stood there shouting at her and she starts saying "I couldn't wait, I couldn't wait", and she starts off like it's cool, like it's

all good, then she clocks me and sees I'm ready to lose it and then she starts walking over towards me on her knees 'cause she was bent over the dresser you know and I'm watching her come at me and she's heading for my towel. You can see her coming for it and she's got a bit of gear on her nose there, you can see it as she's coming towards me on her knees trying to go for my cock and I just knew this had to fucking change straight away."

"And that's when you took the car?"

"Well first she pulls me on the bed with her and fucks the life out of me, and she thought we was making up so she was going at it like she was on fire. Jamming she was, she put a hold on my balls at one stage I thought she was trying to get juice out of them, not like that but yeah fuck it was pretty full on. By the time we'd nearly finished she was so amped up she wanted to keep going and they get a bit stronger you know, once they're charging, so when I tried to get her off, 'cause in my head I was still thinking about the whole situation and I had my eye on her car 'cause I knew she wouldn't have that kind of money no chance, so I'm trying to get her off and she's holding me down and she starts slapping me across the face and biting into me, shouting, telling me how she wants me to fuck her this way and that way, so we go again and between you and me she's a beautiful woman and the biting and the slapping and what not got me going a bit so we both gave it a bit more and that just set her off the deep end so by the time we'd finished we'd ripped into each other something wild boy."

Ariel could feel himself growing in his pants. He had to get some new ones, there wasn't even room in these ones to get an erection without it hurting. He imagined the small amount of blood squeezing itself into his hard-on as it crushed against the flesh of his thigh and the tight cheap cotton of his pants.

"And then you took the car?" asked Ariel. "Or was there anything else?"

"Well then I played it cool, I told her she could take only one little bag today and I'll be back tomorrow with some more for her the next day."

"Why the next day?"

"Well I had to go and get the form from the rego office, I couldn't get her to sign it over unless I had the paperwork, so the next day I went down to the place there just before 9:30 and I was standing in line with a few others who were lining

up outside, doors open, I'm straight in, grabbed the transfer of ownership paper from the rack in the front there, didn't have to take a ticket or nothing, walked out the door, the line of people were all now lining up at the machine where you press a number depending on what you need to do, I walked straight out, was at her place by ten and that was that. She was crying but she signed the papers.

"I threw her another little bag kinda as a goodbye you know, she was crying saying she was sorry, begging me not to take the car. She had my pants down again, my cousin's outside waiting in his car, she had me put her on the kitchen counter and had me inside her and she was still crying about the car and that but moaning too 'cause we were going at it but I wasn't really into it you know. I'll be honest I felt a little bit bad for her, she seemed pretty fucked up but I didn't want to stay, my cousin was waiting and I told him I wouldn't be long...."

"So you left?" asked Ariel.

"Well not straight away, I gave her a couple of fucks and that was it. I knew if I didn't I'd be there all day and she'd be crawling all over me and I'd never get out. I took the keys with me, told her not to call me again and not to follow me outside, I gave her another little bag on top of the other one, just to keep her busy, she was half happy half sad, she still had her pants down and was fingering herself telling me stay and finish her off, pretty wild scene you know. I just left, jumped in the Subaru and my cousin followed me home."

"And why did you keep the car for as long as you did?" Ariel leaned back in his chair, that was the end of the sex talk, he resigned himself to that and adjusted his pants under the desk pulling a bit of his thigh to the left to free himself up.

He wondered what the girl was doing right now. He thought about selling drugs himself. Where would he possibly find drugs to sell to anyone though, where would he possibly find anyone to sell drugs to. If he did figure it out he'd be smarter than Carson, he'd probably be able to get away with it, probably be able to take some speed himself.

He remembered the time years ago when his friend gave him a handful of Ritalin that he'd stolen off his little brother who was on medication, he remembered not feeling hungry for days. That would be a good life, thought Ariel. A

little dangerous but a good one. He'd be slim, wouldn't have to work so much, get to have sex with women.

"Just out of curiosity, Carson, how long would it take to earn thirteen hundred dollars selling what you were selling?" Ariel heard the words come out of his mouth, they seemed awkward.

"Depends you know, on how hard you were working and that, you could make it in half a day pretty easy, couple of hours if you were pushing it, but you know, if you know the right people you can tee it up and make it in five minutes. It's the same as any other business really. You have to go and get it yourself, you have to let people know that you've got it, which is like advertising, but you can't let the wrong people know that you've got it, otherwise they'll be all over you. And you gotta try and keep it quiet from your family, which is nearly fucking impossible and when they find out they all want it on tick and then you have your own family owing you money and it adds up you know and you owe the people you got it from so you have to be paid, so you can pay who gave it to you and you won't get any more unless you pay for the last bit.

"And the gear, I'm telling you, it's a different universe than moving a bit of weed. I used to only sell weed before. Nearly fifteen ounces a week, which isn't bad, nearly 350 an ounce now so that's good coin. I mean you got to pay for the ounces but you're still making well over a grand a week just selling a bit of smoke. But gear and meth, fuck brother, a whole other universe. No-one has a sense of humour on that side of things. Big money, serious faces all round. Everyone's on edge, everyone's wired and there's loads of dough going every which way. I think I prefer the weed myself, more relaxing. People come around. You can sell it from your house you know. They come in, you have the bucket set up in the laundry there, bags laid out in the kitchen. Play some Xbox, watch a few movies, people come in and out all day. You smoke a bit, sell a bit, some want an ounce some want fifties, twenty fives, but everyone's pretty mellow you know. You make more money the smaller the amounts, but after a while that can get a bit fucking old you know, only so much Gears of War you can get through in a day, and then you end up smoking nearly an ounce a week yourself. Some boys go through an ounce a day, but I never needed that much, but still when you're smoking twelve, fourteen, sixteen hours a

day, even a little at a time, you can easily blow through an ounce. But 1300, yeah selling gear, you could do that in no time at all truth be told."

Ariel took it all in, Carson looking at him with a straight face.

"And what was the plan with the car, Carson, did you really think you'd be able to sell it?"

"I was going to take it to a dealership there down on Scarborough Beach Road, they don't give a fuck what's coming through, them boys. If you've got the paper work they'll take your car, means nothing to them, you could walk onto the car lot with a bag full of money and they'd figure out a way to take it off you."

Arial was leaning forward, the erection in his pants long gone, he liked hearing about how it all worked.

"But Carson, surely that's not just as easy as you're saying."

"My uncle Dessie, may he rest in peace, he went down there 'bout four years ago, had his eye on a Commodore or a VN, I can't remember, it was the car that killed him, I should know what it was, that's no good. He walked on the lot and pointed out what he wanted, it was nearly twenty grand, was secondhand but only a few years old so it looked brand new. Was a kinda burnt orange, spoiler, rims, fuck was it the Commodore or the VN, anyway he says to the salesman, what's the cash price on it, and Dessie looks slick you know, he'd pass for an Italian, has the olive skin, strong nose, looks a bit like a Roman soldier you know, sometimes people think he's a wog. Anyway the salesman says he could really only take a cash payment if he could drive my uncle to his bank and he'd wait in the car while my Uncle Dessie made a cash withdrawal and they could organise it that way.

"Uncle Dessie said he told the salesman he didn't have a bank account anywhere nearby, cause he's there holding a bag in his hands which is all his weed money, Uncle Dessie moved a fair bit back in the day, and the salesman knows he's got the cash on him 'cause Uncle Dessie keeps waving it around every time money gets mentioned. So the salesman says he'll drive my unc to the bank just down the road and he can do an inter-branch bank withdrawal and the salesman said again, he'd wait in the car while Uncle Dessie goes in and gets the money. Then he'd drive them back to the lot and then they'd be able to take the cash, knowing that it came from the bank.

“So my uncle finally works out what's going on, and he plays along and they go to the bank down the road and he's sitting on one of the chairs in the waiting area and he can see out the window the salesman sitting in the car waiting for him. Dessie is in there for about ten minutes and one of the tellers comes up to him and asks if he needs any help and he says he's just waiting for his wife to join him so she offers him a cup of coffee, cause he's waiting at the business teller area there, you know the bit where you see cunts go into the little room and they sit down with one of the bank people and they tell 'em what's what. So Dessie's sitting there waiting and he's drinking a cup of coffee and he's looking out the window and the salesman is just sitting out there waiting for him and it's not my Uncle Dessie's bank and my Uncle Dessie knows it's not his bank and the salesman knows it's not his bank, but there they are anyway, playing the game.

“So he takes his time, finishes his coffee. Goes outside to the salesman who's been waiting now for about fifteen, twenty minutes, Dessie gets back in the car, the salesman asks him straight to his face if everything went alright. My Unc says everything's good. They drive back to the dealership. Dessie gives the cash to the young girl receptionist who counts it all out in front of him and the salesman. Dessie tells him he's in Perth from the country and his car broke down and he wants to drive the new car off the lot immediately. They make him wait another half an hour while they fill in more paperwork. Then they hand him the keys and he's off driving a four-year-old Commodore. So yeah, honestly, I knew there'd be no problem, and if it wasn't for the fact of the accident with my little cousins, may God take care of all them little angels, I would've taken the Subaru down to Scarborough and got rid of it. As it turned out, I had to drive back home, small town funeral you know, especially little fellas, had to pay my respects, so I drive straight there instead 'cause the funeral was the next day.”

“When are you seeing the psych, Carson? We'll we still need a psych report to finish the assessment, are you still seeing Jennifer this afternoon?”

Jennifer

He had a gentle face. He'd brushed his hair this morning. Somehow managed to make it look like he had gel in it. She didn't think gel was on the prison canteen list. She knew they had to be careful with just about everything. She heard the story of the Aboriginals from the Kimberly who had come down to Perth for sentencing and were caught drinking litre-bottles of hair conditioner because one of them had read there was alcohol in it. The officers caught them in one of the cleaning cupboards sitting cross legged, two of them facing each other passing the big plastic bottles back and forth, creamy pink liquid drizzling down through their beards. They both ended up in the infirmary, about four bottles gone between them. The superintendent banned conditioner the next day. She didn't know about the gel. She knew some of them took the condoms from the vending machines and used the lubricant in their hair, maybe that's what he did. She wondered if he did it for her.

"Are you seeing anyone else today Carson?"

"No miss, done Assessments this morning with the big man and after we finish up here, it's back to the unit. I was able to swap my cleaning shift with one of the boys for this here but other than that I'm all free. Fish and chips tonight, then the long weekend ahead. Football game got cancelled on account of what happened yesterday with the two boys in 4. Supposed to be captains, but anyway."

Carson kept his head a low and trailed off scratching the back of his neck. She was always curious at the level of tradition in the prison. Football games on the weekend, fish on Fridays, even had a working chapel on Sundays and she knew a good few of them went down for it. There was comfort in some of it, the way they called her miss, some of the older ones called her ma'am. The young ones like Carson, who she never would have expected it from, always called her miss, like they were back in school, but school in the fifties in some small mid-west American town. Sometimes she expected them to raise their hands before they spoke. They addressed all the male officers as mister or sir or boss. There was a comfort in the formality of it all. Maybe he did do his hair for her.

"Well why don't we start at the funeral, Carson, I think we really need to get a better picture of just what happened in the lead up to all this, I think it's important

if we can put all these events into some kind of context so some of what happened doesn't just exist in a vacuum but comes with its own story. Am I being clear there, or is that a little ambiguous?"

Carson nodded at her, he looked comfortable, she was nodding back at him. His broad shoulders stretched out his tracksuit top, he was a handsome man even in his prison greens. Maybe she shouldn't have used the word "ambiguous", he might not know what it means, she had to be careful, she was always doing things like that.

"Well, what do you want to know?" said Carson, smiling at her, it was a genuine smile, had a warmth to it, she felt like she could be his son, they were about the same age.

"Well, I know you went home for the funeral," she said.

"Three funerals," Carson corrected her.

"Three funerals; I'm sorry."

"That's alright." Carson looked stoic, his shoulders got a little wider as he went on. "Well, I heard on the Monday that what happened happened, so Monday morning we headed straight there, it's a bit of a drive, we tied up a couple of things first and then made the drive."

"How close were you to the boys?"

"Fuck, they was my little fellas you know, excuse my language miss, they was good little boys. A little bit rough around the edges you know, little bit wild, but they had good hearts, if it wasn't for my fuckwit cousin taking them out, but yeah we was close, I used to school 'em up when they was real little, we'd take 'em have a fish, teach them how to blue a bit, that youngest one, he was only..." Carson trailed off again thinking about the detail.

Jennifer didn't want to interrupt him, she let him go through it. After a short while he bounced back in.

"But he was a good little scrapper, he had it in him you know, you could see the way he moved his head, I'd smack him around a little, never hurt him, but we'd have a few blues and he could hold his own, he was good and his little mate, he was alright too, didn't have quite the same fire but they were both good boys. My fuck-head cousin, he was always a fuck-head, we never seen eye to eye but having said

that he had a rough time coming up you know, had a vicious old man, used to fucking put the works on him when he was little, like real little if you know what I'm saying."

Jennifer thought about the last funeral she'd been to, it was her cousin who had fallen off a ladder about five years ago. His wife had him washing windows on the second floor and he landed bad and broke his neck, he was only fifty years old. She remembered buying a new dress for it and running into a whole load of family she hadn't seen for years and hadn't seen since. After the funeral she stopped cleaning the windows of her own house that were high up and eventually she stopped cleaning any of the windows at all, even the ones she could reach standing on the ground. Now when the sun came through at different times of the day you could barely see through one or two of them from all the dirt. The mix of finger prints, smudges and just plain filth made them look yellow in the sun light. One of the sliding doors at the back was so bad she thought the dog might have been licking it, she'd have to get that sorted.

"And what was it like going back home?" she asked.

"Well, it's a lot different you know, some boys move to the city, some do okay, get settled in, some go a bit wild and some boys never leave, you know, and there's not much going on at home so when you get a funeral on everyone's all in the one spot again. The boys that stayed are all still there, the boys that left and did alright come back and the boys that left and didn't do alright still come back too. So everyone's in the mix you know. But come funeral time, everyone's there and there's always things in the air that everyone's getting through, no matter who's been put in the ground, little angels or otherwise, actually the sadder the day, the thicker the air, if you know what I mean miss."

"What did you do when you got there?"

"I went and saw my mum straight up, first things first, she was cut up with the whole thing, the two youngest was in the basketball club she run, she spent hours a week on that for years, teaching 'em how to play, but that was a while ago, she stopped coaching and just took care of the paperwork side of things but she still knew everyone in the club, she'd be the one signing everyone up, she started it about thirty years ago and those little fellas were just another couple of little fellas

in a long, long line. But my mum you know she loved everyone, especially the young 'uns, she had that spark that some women have, just drawn towards the babies, especially the boys. She'd have plenty of time for all of them you know, she'd be on the floor with them, little babies be there and she'd be talking in their ear for hours like they was talking back, reading 'em books, making 'em hold the books themselves, so I went and saw mum first to make sure she was alright."

"Do you ever get used to it, Carson?" Jennifer regretted the question immediately.

"Ever get used to it?" Carson's face lost its animation.

"I'm sorry," Jennifer said quickly.

"You do get used to it miss, it never means nothing to you but you get used to it, you stop being surprised after a while you know."

"I'm sorry Carson," said Jennifer again.

"No shame in it miss."

Jennifer bit her lip, she nodded for him to continue.

"After I checked in with mum, I went around the town a bit. I had the Subaru so I wanted to show it off, the thing was like a wild man, my mum was pretty cut up but she was getting through it like she always does so after I saw her I went up to visit a few cousins, we used to hang out when we was little behind the top pub and for some reason anytime we go for a drink now, we still meet up first out the back. When we was little that's where all the empty kegs were. But the thing with the kegs they'd always have a bit more gas left in them even if they were empty and we used to push a stick down the top of them and they'd squirt out a bit and spray a bit of foam and the smell would be great and we'd lick the tops of the kegs and pretend to be rolling around drunk. There'd be just a little bit of beer in there, foam and that, and you'd smell it and it'd smell like your old man or one of your uncs and we thought we were letting the gas out of full kegs of beer, so we thought we was being cheeky, anyway years later, for some reason we still all meet round the back of the pub before going in, so I drove the Subaru thinking I'd catch up on some of the crew and I pull up next to the beer kegs but I'm the only one there."

"And who were you meeting, Carson?"

"My mate Vincent who still lives at home, runs the garden centre there, we went to school together, played footy when we was young. He was in touch and told me to meet him there with his girlfriend and said he'd try and organise one of her mates to come along."

"But they weren't there when you arrived?"

"No, so I just head inside and waited in there for 'em to turn up."

"Had the pub changed much since you were last home?"

"No, it's just a regular pub you know, bit of carpet on the floor like they used to have at school, couple of taps on the bar. Had the tables spread out around the room so you could get a jug and sit down, a couple of mat runners on the tables, you know the wool ones, just a regular place, nothing fancy."

"And what happened in the bar Carson?"

Len

Len knew it would be another good week. Anytime there was a funeral on he killed it. It was like having Christmas five times a year. He ordered in four extra pallets of Swan and three of Export for the bottle shop. The kegs were stocked good for the taps in the bar. One of them was stealing from him though. One of the young ones. Phil was alright, he'd been in the game for nearly as long as himself. He could trust Phil, you can always trust someone who's broke. Maybe it was his nephew his sister made him hire. Young cunt of a thing. Always fighting, he never booked anything up in the grog book but he always left with a few long necks at the end of every shift. The grog book was a good idea. Len's dad had taught it to him early on, years before Len took over the pub, that must be forty years ago now. The boys on staff didn't get paid until Thursday, most of them were flat broke by Sunday night. Broke and thirsty. It was a credit system. They write up the grog they want in the book, Len gives them a carbon copy showing the amount. At the end of the week some of them had spent nearly half their wages and the envelope they'd get had half the money and was stuffed full of booze receipts.

Len went over the books, he was still making a killing, even if his fuckwit nephew was stealing from him. Maybe he'll ask Phil to keep an eye on him, but then if it is Phil he'd look like a right cunt. Maybe Phil just pretended to be broke, he'd seen that before too. Len closed his ledger and put the big black book back in the office safe. He looked at his watch, half past, he told Phil he'd get behind the bar at half past. Phil was going to court to have it out with his neighbour. He said the neighbour owed him a hundred dollars going back two months so Phil knocked on his door and clocked him straight on the nose, telling him he was the scum of the earth. The scum of the earth called the cops and now Phil had to answer an assault charge. Useless cunts the lot of them.

Len stood up and looked at himself in the small mirror he had hanging in the office. It was a Kalgoorlie Stout commemorative mirror the brewery had sent him years ago. Len hadn't been to Kal for years, terrible shit hole he always thought. Always came back crook. Catching something off somebody. He looked in the mirror, he'd aged well. His hair had turned silver a while back now but he still had it

all. He kept it combed back, like he used to have it when he was in his thirties. Conditioner in the mornings, no shampoo and never rinse it out, that was the key. His red woollen V-neck sat well on him too, he'd lost a little in his shoulders over the years but he had kept a good figure, slim but not scrawny.

He took a Benson and Hedges Special out and let it sit in his mouth awhile as he admired himself in the mirror. He'd done alright. He hadn't flogged himself over the years, his body was in good nick. Could still walk eighteen holes twice a week and afford to pay for a buggy if he wanted one. He'd been lucky with his skin as well, even with all the smoking, he'd wrinkled up a little but not too much. Some of his mates looked fucked in comparison. Half of them shearers, half of them real estate agents, all drunk, fat and fucking stupid. Len never drank too much, always kept an eye on it. That was another key. He'd been working in the game now a long time but he always kept on top of it. Not like some of the others. Len sparked up the cigarette and drew it in, watching himself in the mirror blowing smoke out of his mouth.

"Len," a call came through the office door.

"Coming Phil," Len said, quiet enough not to be heard.

He ran his palms over his hair again slowly, holding the cigarette between his teeth.

"Come on Len, I've got to bail mate," came the call again from the bar.

Len stepped out through the office door, past the ice machine in the short corridor and stepped out behind the public bar. Phil was looking a bit frantic; he was dressed in his best suit for his court appearance and was trying not to get anything on it while he was serving the lunch crowd, although it was still early, more a handful than a crowd at the moment.

"Alright Len, I'll see you when I see you," Phil passed by Len, heading out the back.

"Good luck Phil, call me if you need me." Len was looking at the boys drinking at the near side of the bar.

The bar was shaped like a horseshoe and had long been set up into two camps. The camp on the right side of the bar was for white fellas and the camp on the left side was for black fellas and the spot at the centre was set aside for a couple

of the old boys. It was only Friday and the funeral wasn't until tomorrow morning. They'd give it a fair tickle tonight but the real drinking wouldn't start until tomorrow lunchtime. At the moment there were only a handful of black fellas in, Len was pretty sure a few of them were brothers, they'd been in about an hour and were hitting it steadily enough.

It was good for him to work behind the bar now and then, usually once a week at least, just so the boys knew who was in charge. He'd watched all his staff behind the bar and how they worked with the punters, Phil was pretty good, probably the best one he had. He wouldn't put his nephew behind the bar, he stayed in the bottle shop, too stupid, they'd murder him on his first shift. They all liked the girls when they were on but the girls cost him twice as much as Phil and they'd all be in here drinking anyway. It was a pity no-one wanted to see Phil with his tits out.

The three he thought were brothers were keeping to themselves which was good, he'd catch an eye every now and then. He'd give 'em a slow nod and they'd give him one back. They'd get a bit more vocal as the day wore on. By three in the afternoon they'd be talking to him like he was one of them. By five they'd be getting loud telling him jokes, by seven they'd be making jokes about him and come eleven he'd tell Phil to cut 'em off. Phil put up with a lot of bullshit, but that's the advantage of owning the place, you roster yourself on and off whenever you want.

"Alright Len?"

"Afternoon Charlie," Len took Charlie's empty middy glass and refilled it with super. Charlie was one of the old boys who'd sat in the middle of the bar. No man's land. Charlie used to drink in the pub when Len's old man ran it, same drink, same stool, same boring arse bloody bastard cunt of a man.

"Been out on the course, Len?" asked Charlie.

"Yesterday morning," said Len, taking money from Charlie's pile and setting down his beer.

"How'd you go?" Charlie picked up his middy and moved it a half inch to the left.

"Had a shit of a day Charles, only went out for nine and hit forty-five."

"Jeez Len, you could've lied to me if you wanted to."

"Haven't had one that bad for a long time, but you know what they say Charlie, a bad day golfing beats a good day working."

Charlie gave an empty chuckle and drank from his glass. Len had been having the same conversation with Charlie for forty years. The old cunt drank so slowly he was only worth about two hundred a week. Still, an old fella in the place kept the blues down a little and two hundred covered one of the young one's wages. With or without the grog book.

Len watched the ponies on the telly behind the bar, he hadn't had a punt today. Wasn't all that interested. He was still waiting on his application to come through from Liquor and Gaming. The last couple of years had been good enough to open a second hotel just outside of Perth. The set up would be a little different, closer to the city, less agro, more money, smaller place too. He was thinking of offering the managing spot on this place to Phil if it all worked out and he could go and work at the new one. He'd have to wait though, it had cost him more than fifteen thousand in fees already and another twenty-five in site works promised if it went through. He'd been on the phone almost every day last week chasing them up. He'd left it this week though, couldn't be bothered with it, he'd get back onto them after the weekend and blow some fire but he had to be careful with them, they could make it all very difficult.

The door on the far side of the room swung in and a young fella Len half recognised walked up to the bar. Len walked over to the till, opened it up and pulled out the ten dollar notes, counting them in his hand. He'd make him wait a little bit. He turned the notes around so all the numbers were facing the same way, put them back in the tray and pushed the till shut.

The young fella was still waiting.

"Hey Len."

"G'day," Len gave him a slow nod as he made his way over to him, he still couldn't place him.

"How you been, alright?" the young one asked him.

"Good, good, haven't seen you in a while," Len went along, hoping it'd come back to him.

"Jug of super if I can Len, couple of glasses."

"Coming up."

Len took a cold glass jug from the bottom of the fridge. He tilted it under the tap and pulled on the flow. He watched as the beer filled up, it was nice and cold, he had it so cold the taps had a sheet of ice around the crown. He was proud of his beer lines and how cold he kept everything, that was another one of the keys to it all. Len looked at the young one waiting, watching the beer fill the jug, late twenties maybe, maybe younger, it could've been years since he last saw him, he might be here just for the funeral, Len wished he remembered his name. Knowing their names can make the world of difference, could save him thousands of dollars.

"Two glasses?" Len asked as he snapped the tap off and set the jug on the bar.

"Yes please Len, two glasses."

Len gave up, he couldn't place him. He bent down and fetched two fresh middies out from the fridge. He'd been meaning to put all the glass trays up in the higher fridges so he wouldn't have to bend down when he was working. He could move all the premix drinks and stubbies down instead but he didn't work all that much behind the bar to warrant it and the boys liked looking at the girls bending down for middy glasses on the weekends when he did spring for a skimpy.

Len brought the glasses over, took the twenty dollar note off the bar and made the change.

"Thanks Len," said the young one, leaving the money on the bar.

"Enjoy now," Len made his way to the middle of the bar and sat down with Charlie to chat about yesterday's round of golf.

Charlie put his glass sideways on the bar and shuffled off the stool, making his old man way slowly out the door. The races had finished for the day and that was when Charlie hit the road. Len had been keeping an eye on the young one who'd come in earlier. His name still hadn't come to him, whoever he was he'd spent the last couple of hours on and off his phone. Whoever he was waiting for hadn't turned up. He was on his fourth jug of beer and still hadn't used both glasses. At first he was getting text messages and Len watched him out of the corner of his eye as he got moodier and moodier, punching the replies into the phone. Then he started to make some calls but it looked like he was getting the answering machine.

He'd walk out every now and then with the phone to his ear and came back in looking more flustered than when he went out. Len noticed some of the other black fellas were watching him as well, the three brothers in particular, they'd all started on the bourbons about an hour ago and were starting to laugh a bit louder. Len was safe enough behind the bar. If worst came to worst all he had to do was walk through the door to his office and pull the cage down. They'd be too busy killing each other to even think of him.

"Fucking poxy cunt," the young one slammed the phone on the bar, he picked it up again and looked like he was going to throw it across the room but held back at the last moment.

Probably for show, thought Len.

"Hey cuz," called one of the black fellas who'd been watching him.

Len watched the young one react, he'd been hunched over his phone for the last hour, eyes squinting, talking to himself, now he stood tall, his shoulders wide and faced the table.

"What's up?"

"Try and keep it down Cars, we're trying to have a fucking conversation here."

"Was I disturbing you was I?"

"A little bit my brother."

"Is that right?"

"A little bit my brother, just a fucking little bit."

Len moved a few steps in the direction of the office. He didn't want to commit too early, they could be playing with each other and he didn't want to look unsettled, either of them could break out laughing at any moment, Len could never tell, even after all these years.

"Well, I'm just on the phone trying to organise something so if I need to talk that's what I'm going to do," his voice getting firmer.

"Well, whoever she is Cars, it doesn't look like she's turning up today now does it?" This got all three of the boys at the table laughing.

"I ain't starting nothing this weekend Chester." Len watched as the young one turned his back on the table and poured the last of the jug into his glass.

"You just come from fucking jail, Cars, you's on parole my brother, you ain't starting nothing for another eighteen months, cunt."

Len watched as the one who'd been speaking stood up off his stool, the two next to him followed. Len moved another step towards the office, it was a matter of time now.

"Fucking faggot cunt comes here this weekend and throws his weight around, too scared of fucking jail to go back in, cunt, starting nothing this weekend, fuck your faggot arse."

The young one turned round and met Chester's stare. Chester stopped halfway across the floor, his brothers on cue stopped with him. Len had one foot through the door and was eyeing the standoff. The young one started pulling up the sleeve of his tracksuit, not saying a word to the others who were looking at him.

"Get undressed you little cunt hey, look at this fucking thing, rolling up his sleeves."

The young one picked up the beer jug and smashed it over the bar, holding what was left of the handle in his hand.

"You dumb fucking cunt," said Chester, walking forward shaking his head, his brothers moving with him every step. They started towards him, half wary half menacing, fanning out from each other to box him in. If they got a hold of him and took that jug handle away he was going to be in serious trouble, if it went that way they'd be putting one more in the ground tomorrow. The young fella raised the jug handle in the air looking at the three staring back at him and without warning started sticking himself on the inside of his arm. Once, twice, three times, over and over into the same spot. Jets of blood bursting out with every hit, Len could see the others' faces, their eyes rolling wide as they started walking backwards at the sight of all the blood spurting out across the floor.

"You fucking mad cunt brother, you fucking mad cunt." Chester was smiling and shaking his head as he moved backwards towards the door.

Carson held the jug over his arm, sticking it in again and pulling it down his arm as they backed off. The others kept going until they reached the door, feeling for it behind their backs and pushing it open.

"We'll be seeing you," Chester called out as they went out through the door.

The young one turned back to the bar, he put what was left of the jug next to the till and started flicking his hands onto the floor. He rolled down his sleeve and was pressing hard on his arm, cradling it close to his body. As he sat on the stool breathing hard and holding his arm in close, it came back to Len. He remembered who he was.

Jodie

She liked the way his moustache was a little thin on his lip. He always looked brooding, you could see the prison in him. She hadn't met anyone like him before. He was so strong and handsome. She wanted him to come over to the house when her mother was away working but he said he couldn't. Her mother took forever to leave for work this afternoon and she couldn't get away, she was supposed to meet him at the top pub but her mother got a call to come in a couple of hours later. But they were together now.

His arm seemed to have stopped bleeding, he kept the bandage wrapped tight that she'd put on for him. This was the third one, the others had soaked through. She thought he might need to go to the hospital but he said he was alright, he didn't want her to worry. They kissed some more, sitting in the front seat of his car. He'd driven her all the way out of town and they'd parked up near the hill overlooking the river. It was a good time of year for the river and out here they were far away from everyone.

She didn't see the difference between sitting out here or back at the house while her mum was at work. They'd be more comfortable back home. She didn't want to push him though, she didn't want to sound stupid in front of him.

He pulled his face back from hers every once in a while and smiled at her between kisses. She smiled back, he was so gentle with her, he pushed her hair back over her ear and leaned in again, he tasted like beer, but not like Uncle Phil smelled like beer; Carson smelled powerful and in control. She took his good hand and tried to put it between her legs, he slid it up her shirt instead and told her to behave. He was driving her crazy. He was something else, she grabbed his hand and tried again.

Patrice

Patrice sat alone in the dark. He had his feet up on the desk admiring his shoes. Ordinarily he'd have to wear boots, but on night shift he liked to bring in his nice pair of slip-ons, it made him feel like he was somewhere else. They were black leather, but soft, soft leather slip-ons with gold banding running over the toes. He felt like a golfer in these shoes, one of the classy ones he used to watch growing up, the ones that used to dress in black wool sweaters and matching pants. Faldo, Ballesteros, Player, all the gentlemen. He cast himself back to his home, sitting watching sports with his father as a little boy. Always the golf. It was thought of as an English game but they watched it anyway. Patrice remembered his father's clean socks resting on the footstool beside him. The golf seemed to go on for days. But it brought a calm into the house and Patrice enjoyed it very much.

His mother would come in every now and then and bring him lemonade and rillettes on bread. She'd ask about the game and his father would always answer smiling saying how nice it would be to join the local club and play themselves as a couple. By the end of the day the house would smell of his father's Pastis, the old man would be asleep on the couch and his mother would be listening to the radio, sitting quietly under her reading lamp flicking through one of her magazines. It seemed like a thousand years ago.

"I'm makin' a sarnie Pat, you having one son?"

Patrice looked up, Derek was standing holding open the large steel door to the control room. He was heading to the kitchen again and was making another round of sandwiches. Derek was an Englishman, from the north, Patrice wondered what he was doing on those mornings when he was watching the golf with his father. He imagined Derek in England doing much the same, maybe watching snooker or darts instead.

"No thank you Derek," Patrice said quietly.

Derek could be loud, it was best not to encourage him. Patrice had watched him make three rounds of sandwiches already tonight, and heard him too. Derek nodded in silence and slumped his way back to the kitchen.

Patrice wondered about it all. The unit was particularly dark tonight, the power had been shut down and they were running on the generators that backed up the prison. The computers were down, the hall lights off, only walkway lights and the manual console which controlled the main doors to the unit.

As Derek was banging the cupboard doors to put away his bread and butter and Branston pickle, one of the prisoners from the lower cells called out for him to be quiet. Derek had a mouthful of food in him at the time and started nodding to himself as he cleaned up the counter. Derek knew which prisoner it was, Patrice knew who it was too, the whole wing knew who it was.

Derek picked up the two paper plates holding his food and casually strolled back towards the control room. As he passed by the door of the prisoner who had called out, he stopped, gently put his plates on the ground, and without a word began kicking the cell door with the flat of his boot. Derek kicked a steady rhythm into the door, it went on for a time. Before long the prisoner in the cell started screaming and kicking back from his side. Once he started Derek stopped, picked up his plates, had a bite of one of his sandwiches and walked back to Patrice.

Three hours later they'd made a walk of the unit making sure everyone was still alive, something they had to do twice every evening. Patrice watched as Derek was plodding his way towards the kitchen again. He had broad shoulders but he'd put on a lot of weight since he started working the long twelve-hour shifts. He had tattoos that ran the length of his arms and crept up around his neck, they were the tribal ones, the medieval axe blades twisting around each other, dark, black and menacing.

Derek shaved his head now as well. He started losing his hair late last year and was running out of moves, one day he came in with a clean shave all over. At first he looked mean but since he had put on so much weight, he now looked strange, awkwardly obese like an absurd ogre, but there were worse ones to spend the night with, that was for sure.

Patrice picked an imaginary packet of Rothmans out of his top pocket and looking across at his shoes laying on the desk, sparked up his lighter and took a long drag blowing jets of smoke up through the ceiling and out of the prison.

The small green light went off on the console. An assistance alarm, not a duress. It was on the top tier, deep in the back row of the wing. Patrice tried to think who was up there. It might be the old guy who came in the week before last, the one who had the child pornography on his computer. He'd worked up in the mines and spent his days digging holes in the ground and his nights locked away in his little box pouring over his laptop in the dark.

Patrice hoped he wasn't up there hanging himself. He slipped off his soft leathers and pulled on his heavy boots which he had pushed under the desk. Patrice pulled hard on the laces. The boots were cold and stiff, they were new and were yet to be worn in.

The old man who Patrice was thinking of had big queer-looking eyebrows that he groomed upwards into comical white fans of hair. A hint of the disturbance that lay within. Patrice wondered if he'd be naked when they went in, strung up and nude with his cock sliced open bleeding out on the floor. Patrice stood up, radioed to Derek that he was answering an assistance on the top tier; Derek acknowledged and said he was on the way.

Patrice holstered the radio, he thought about his wife probably sitting in bed next to her mother in France, they'd either be laughing or crying together, watching a movie, drinking, more like sisters than mother and daughter. He looked around the dark wing, the air was cold, surrounded by steel and hard vinyl flooring. He could hear Derek clomp his way back towards him. The green light was still flashing silently in the dark as Patrice stared at it, feeling some pain in his back from sitting too long.

They walked side by side up the steps, Derek hadn't finished making his food but he was chewing on something. Every day the wings got a few salad trays delivered for the prisoners and staff. A catering tray filled with lettuce, tomato, some squares of cheese, a little beetroot, some cold cuts of meat, sometimes roast meat like they had today, and sometimes just lunch meat which someone said was made from donkey. Patrice never ate it. When he went through the academy they told him they fed the prisoners food to make them fat, lots of white bread, endless amounts of carbohydrates, loaves and loaves coming out from the prison bakery. They also white washed all the hot food. Any soups, stews or casseroles were

dumped with white flour. The prisoners knew it firsthand because they worked in the kitchen, they were the ones pouring it in.

The officers at the academy told them that if they were in danger of losing control of the prison, it would better for them to go to war with a fat unhealthy prison population. All the carbohydrates and sugar were practically poisoning them. Anyone who was in for more than six months usually left ten kilos heavier. Especially the older black ones, some of those would balloon out quickly, some of them doubling in size. It didn't surprise Patrice all that much, not since he first came to Australia and saw what people ate in this country. He was given a meat pie the first week he came to work and nearly brought it back up. Donkey meat indeed.

"You think it's the old cunt?" asked Derek in his thick northern accent.

"It was 29, I think that's him," said Patrice.

"Could be son, could be, I thought it might be Brody meself, I can't remember," said Derek, holding on to the rail of the stairs as he kept up with Patrice.

"Brody?" asked Patrice.

"Yeah, the young one, you know?"

"Without the teeth?"

"That's the one."

Patrice weighed up the options, it'd either be the old queer hanging himself from the bed post or it'd be Brody, also probably naked straddled on the floor trying to get his cock in his mouth. Brody was one that returned to the prison frequently but only for a few months at a time. He never did anything to warrant getting thrown away but he also couldn't quite keep it together. Brody was one of the ones he'd been warned about when he first started. One of the older officers had caught him inside the shower room in unit 4, putting on a broomstick show for a few other prisoners. Brody was pushing a mop handle up his arse while three other prisoners, who had all thrown in for a pouch of tobacco, sat on the bench stroking themselves.

Maybe the guy with the eyebrows, thought Patrice.

They reached the door and stood still outside listening for any clues. Derek knocked firmly with the back of his hand, he didn't want to look in if he could avoid it, he'd already seen his share.

"Alright in there?"

They both stared down at the floor with their ears towards the door. Nothing. Derek tried again.

"Alright in there, do we have to come in?"

Again they waited, nothing. Derek went to the spy hole and lifted the flap staring into the cell.

"He's fucking gone and blocked it," said Derek with his face pressed up against the door.

Patrice saw him from behind, Derek was nearly as wide as the door. He was still staring through the spy hole trying to see past whatever was up there on the inside. Sometimes the prisoners would stick a bit of paper over the hole if they were using the toilet or having a wank and it was usually acceptable as long as they took it down when they finished and it wasn't up for too long. Sometimes they forgot it was there and left it up, other times they just wanted their privacy to last a little longer.

Derek looked back to Patrice, he started shaking his head and gesturing towards the door. He raised his voice and banged harder.

"Alright if you don't remove the obstruction we're coming in, you have five seconds to comply." Derek looked back at Patrice, listening for a reply.

Patrice couldn't hear a thing coming from inside the cell. Some of the other prisoners in the surrounding cells were stirring and two of them started counting aloud the ordered deadline. One was starting at one and going up, the other was starting at five and counting down. Patrice braced himself. There was usually nothing to worry about, if there was a drama he had the distress button on his belt he could push, but still the adrenalin had already kicked in, they had no idea what was behind there waiting for him. This is where the work became real. Patrice knew from his time that the whole thing could be a set up. The prisoner behind the door might be losing it, he might have planned it all out, stick up some paper over the hole, press the assistance button, crouch by the side of the door holding whatever weapon he's been making over the past week and stick it in whoever comes through the door. At the very least it would get him transferred somewhere else and that might be all he's after.

"Alright we're coming in." Derek started unlocking the door.

That meant Patrice would be going in first, Derek wasn't so thick after all. Patrice slid his baton out and breathed in. Derek was fumbling around with his keys and was taking longer than usual. Patrice took a step closer and tightened his grip, his heart picked up as Derek unlocked it and pulled the door open fast out into the corridor.

Patrice stepped in.

"G'day boss."

Patrice thought they might have gone in the wrong door. It wasn't Brody or the queer. It was Gerry. Gerry was an older fella, late sixties maybe seventy, it was hard to tell if you didn't look them up, he was sitting on the edge of his bed playing his Xbox with his headphones stuck in his ears. When he saw Patrice come through his door he took the plugs out and moved a few inches backwards on the bed.

"You pressed your distress button," said Patrice calmly, feeling his heart race in his chest.

"Oh sorry boss, must have bumped it by accident."

"By accident?"

"I get a bit excited on the machine here you know," said Gerry gesturing to the Xbox.

Patrice turned around and pulled the piece of paper down off the inside of the door. He remembered Gerry being transferred in yesterday to keep him out of trouble with another prisoner. Before Patrice left the cell he took in the tiny room the old man was sitting in, hunched on the side of his bed playing a children's game in the middle of the night. Above him on the top bunk was a younger aboriginal man fast asleep and dead to the world. Gerry slowly began to put his headphones back in and kept a wary eye on Patrice.

"Please keep the paper off the door Gerry," asked Patrice gently.

"Sure thing boss, my fault."

Patrice headed back for the control room, he could feel the sides of his boots cut into his ankle, he always felt uneasy after any incident in the prison. In a sense the false alarms were worse. There was no release, the adrenalin had nowhere to go. Instead of being burned up it just bubbled itself slowly away inside. He'd be

unsettled now for the next hour or so. His hands would shake, his skin would be clammy and he'd generally need to move about and try to walk it off. He thought of his beautiful shoes, no chance now for the rest of the evening. As he walked down the upper landing towards the control room he could hear Derek shut up the cell door behind him and reprimand Gerry some more, his northern accent ringing through the wing.

"And put some fucking clothes on Gerry, you're not at home now."

Daniel

Daniel was back full-time for the next few weeks. He'd done a Dip Ed after his Arts degree and his qualification meant he could fill in for the permanent teaching staff while they were on holidays. He'd sworn he wouldn't take anymore full-time work, but in a way he was forced to if he wanted to keep his casual position. If he worked three days a week he could take home close to living wage, he made a little more doing the full five days, but it made the walls close in on him. Made him feel like he was in prison. This thought made Daniel laugh the first time he had it, but that was a couple of years ago now. Now he just tried not to think about it too much.

"And Charlie, he was from the old school you know, steal one dollar from him and you'd be flogged...."

Aaron was running his mouth again like always, he only came in two days of the week but each time he did, he pretty much took over the classroom. Story after story that put the fear into everyone who was in earshot, he was a complete lunatic, an utterly unstable and disturbed madman. He'd been in and out since he was a teenager, one of the ones who'd spent more time in than out. He'd talk all sorts of bullshit about his adventures but he was one of the ones Daniel believed most of the time. His touch with reality was so distant Daniel had to keep an eye on him constantly, always making sure he was between Aaron and the door. Daniel would concentrically dance with him in secret from the opposite side of the room like two magnets swaying back and forth around an invisible pole.

Aaron's life had sent him to years and years of prison and all that time wasted had sent him steadily insane. He had set people on fire, bashed men who owed him money close to death, driven over ex-girlfriends in stolen cars and terrorised his own children with multiple episodes of drug-fuelled psychosis. At the moment Aaron was taking it easy doing ten years for a home invasion that ended in rape and torture. Aaron's madness was the worst kind of madness, it was the kind where he didn't know he was insane. They kind that can only be given to you by a family or an institution.

When Daniel first met Aaron a couple of years ago he called him a "champ" as a term of endearment for filling out the art class paperwork. Aaron put down his pen and told Daniel not to call him "champ" as it sounded like "tamp" and if anyone overhearing thought he was happy with being called a tamp or thought he'd be happy to let someone call him a tamp to his face or behind his back that could lead to problems.

Daniel remembered looking at him as if his concern were a perfectly natural one to have and was something he came across all the time, throughout the normal course of his life. At first Daniel thought it was a good thing to be able to talk to people like Aaron, to be able to communicate with them, show them compassion, but as time wore on and the conversations continued and deeper depths of insanity were explored further and further, Daniel felt like he was doing more damage to them by treating them like ordinary men. Because Aaron and all the others like him were not ordinary in any sense of the word, they were outcasts who were truly worthy of being outcasts. Irrational and unreasonable and dangerous.

Men addicted to the idea of themselves, forever bending the world to fit around their own disturbing reality.

The more Daniel treated them like ordinary men, like men who earned the respect of being listened to, the more Daniel himself had to distort his own sense of reality. Each time he held back his shock at another one of their stories, every time he told them that everybody makes mistakes and that they shouldn't feel too bad, each time he worked his head around to understand their reasoning for whatever it was they'd done, he went a little further down that path with them. And every step he took towards them, was another step he was taking away from himself. Now he no longer saw the world as he once had.

They were making him ill.

He'd catch himself every now and then, when the classroom was quiet and they were all actually painting. He'd scan the room and he'd forget their names and all their stories and all their explanations and he'd see them for what they were, what they'd done. He'd go from left to right around the room identifying each one as he did. Murderer, drug trafficker, rapist, wife-beater, armed robber, child rapist, child-killer and then he'd arrive back at himself.

If he was being honest, he worked in an asylum. It was a madhouse pretending to be a prison. A charade, in which all the inmates were happy to play their parts. Daniel had been inside it now for years and he hadn't seen any of them ever actually improve, not one of them return to some sense of normalness and wellbeing. They seemed insane beyond redemption, armed only with unrelenting self-abuse and a dogged resolve to see out their tiny, unravelled lives, all the way to the sorry end.

Jodie

She watched him from the backseat of the car, he had his shirt off and was resting against the bonnet smoking, looking out over the river. The view from the lookout was pretty good, especially at this time of the evening when the sun was going down. He had beautiful broad shoulders and smooth skin and he had been gentle with her when they were together, just like she imagined he would be. He turned a little to the left and she could see his chest in profile, he had a beautiful body. When they moved to the backseat earlier she started playing with one of his nipples when they were going at it, he started laughing and told her to cut it out but she kept on doing it anyway. He seemed to like it.

She hadn't been with an Aboriginal before. She wondered how many more times they'd be together. He leaned back on the bonnet, his arms stretched out on both sides, they nearly went the width of the car. His muscles moved and twisted as he shifted himself, he looked like an eagle out front with the sun going down in front of him. The bleeding had stopped on his arm and the bandages she put on him had held well, even when they were tearing their clothes off in the back seat. She wondered what her mother would think if she knew she was up here with him, in his car, on the hill. She wondered what she'd say if she walked home with him on her arm.

She rubbed her hands over her flat tummy, her own skin was smooth too. He hadn't pulled out quick enough, maybe the nipple thing had distracted him. She wondered if any of him had made it up into her, properly into her. She finished her period a few days ago so she'd probably be okay. But you never knew. All the stories her mother was always telling her.

There was her friend from primary school who got pregnant when she was twelve years old. She didn't even know she was pregnant, the baby was growing underneath her rib cage, she went to the doctor with a chest pain and came out with the news she was having a baby.

She looked back at him again, he had the cigarette in his mouth and was rubbing the back of his neck up and down with his good arm. She thought she wouldn't mind having his baby. It'd be a beautiful little one, a gorgeous coffee-

coloured little thing. She could move to the city with him, rent a unit, get out of her mother's house. He could work and she'd take care of bubs. She patted her tummy a few more times. Could be a good thing.

She put the rest of her clothes back on and got out of the car, the sun was just resting on the horizon now, it'd be getting dark soon. As she walked towards him he heard her footsteps on the gravel, he turned to meet her as she sidled up next to him, he put his good arm over her shoulder and she leaned in. He smelt like sex and tobacco, his bare skin warm, pressing on her through her shirt.

"You go alright don't you?" she looked up to him laughing, she grabbed a hold of his nipple again and gave it a twist.

"You behave girl," Carson smiled back, jerking his chest away.

He grabbed her by the arm and pulled her into him, kissing her slowly, both of them smiling as they went at it. She had had him in her mouth in the back seat but he didn't seem to care. His tongue was slow and warm and as he wove it in and out of her mouth she could taste the smoke from his cigarettes. She ran her hand between his legs and felt him, felt he was ready to go again. She ran a hand over his back and arched into him, kissing him, closing her eyes. She started unbuttoning his jeans and he started doing the same, she felt safe with him, like he was looking after her. She felt him hesitate a little and pull back, she opened her eyes and saw he was looking over her shoulder back out towards the road. She turned and saw a car drive slowly past them, an old Ford with different coloured panels over the front wheel and driver's side door. She didn't recognise the car or make out the driver in the fading light.

"They friends of yours Jode?" he asked her, not taking his eyes off the car.

She was still pressed against him, she could feel him lose interest, his face changed, his body tensed. He followed the car with his eyes as it crawled passed them on the road.

"No Carson," she said getting a little scared by the look on his face. They both watched as the car picked up speed and disappeared out of view. She watched him as he fixed on it, staring down the empty highway heading back into town.

"We best head back," he said, without looking at her.

"Alright babe." She was trying to reassure herself that everything was alright.
"Can you drop me home, I have to be back before ten anyway?"

"Let's go."

He wasn't speaking much on the drive back, she had her hand on his leg as he drove. He was driving fast, the lights on the car lit up most of the road but still it was dark and at this time of night there was usually something or other jumping out trying to cross from one side to the next. She thought about the car that passed them at the lookout. She wondered if he was thinking about it too. She knew she'd probably have to get used to him being quiet if they did end up together. If she got pregnant and they moved to Perth and started a family away from town, away from her mum, he'd probably get like this once in a while.

"You going pretty fast, hey Cars?" she asked him friendly.

"It's alright," he nodded, looking straight ahead as he drove, two hands on the wheel. She looked down at the dash, they were coming up past 140 on the dial. The car was nearly silent inside, barely made a sound. He looked good behind the wheel, looked in control. He had put his shirt back and the soft cloth sat close to his skin showing off his body.

"You have a man, Jode?" Carson asked her without taking his eyes off the road.

"No Cars."

"Yeah, you sure?"

"Just you babe."

As they pulled into her cul-de-sac she saw Jake's car parked outside the house. She had been with Jake a few weeks ago but it didn't turn into anything. They'd hooked up again at the footy club fundraiser where she had to help her mum look after the sausage sizzle. He was a cousin of her mum's friend Stacy. They'd been together a few times, once at her place and twice at Stacy's. They'd actually done it once in Stacy's bed. Stacy worked at the hospital with her mum as a cleaner, and when they both worked the same shift, it made the sneaking round a lot easier.

Jake had gone up the mines a couple of weeks ago, she didn't expect to see him back in town so soon. She could see Jake take notice as they drove up to the

house, he opened his car door and was texting into his phone as he did. As Carson pulled up in the driveway Jake got out and started walking towards Jodie's side.

She saw Carson start tapping the steering wheel, looking out the window as Jake walked past the bonnet. She pushed the window down a little as he came near.

"What are you doing here Jake?"

"I just got a call saying you were out at the lookout hanging off some fucking nigger, that's what I'm doing here you fucking slut."

Carson was out of the car, she watched him as he walked across the headlights heading for Jake.

"Let's go cunt," Jake turned to meet him.

Carson said nothing as he went forward, he caught Jake with a straight elbow, slamming it into his jaw. Jodie heard a loud snap and saw Jake's chin give way. He let out a groan and wobbled on his legs down the driveway, putting a hand up to his face as he staggered backwards. Carson grabbed him by his collar and started punching down into his head while holding him in place. From inside the car Jodie could hear the dull smacking sounds and see Jake shrink down with every hit. The back of his shirt started to rip as Carson held on to him, hanging him just above the ground.

He gave him one more before dropping him onto the driveway.

Jodie watched from the front seat, Jake wasn't moving but she could hear him moaning and crying, saying something to Carson. Carson started walking back towards the car, Jake's blood was all over him and the cuts on his left arm had opened up and were soaking through the bandage running down his arm.

He was staring at her through the windshield as he walked towards the car. He pointed at her with his good arm and moved his finger in the direction of the house. She got out just as he got in. He didn't say anything, he put the car in reverse and waited for her to close the door. When she did, he pulled out of the driveway and took off up the small street, tyres screeching as he rounded the corner and disappeared.

She stood still at the top of the driveway and looked at her mother's tiny house, all dark and quiet with the lights shut off inside. Jake was squirming now, trying to get up, his low moan filling out the empty country air, mixing in with the

faint roar of the car engine still to be heard as Carson drove further and further away.

Jennifer

"What happened that night when you went back to your mother's?"

"She'd gone over to my auntie's to help with the cook up for the weekend, so it was just me at home, so I waited it out on the porch there, I knew they'd be coming," Carson said, nodding back at Jennifer.

"Why wouldn't you leave or go somewhere else for the night if you knew they were coming after you?" She could feel her brow heavy over her eyes, she was trying to look relaxed.

"Where you from Miss?"

"Carson you know we can't...."

"No I don't mean where you live, I mean where you from, not your suburb, you from the city? You born in Perth, grew up in Perth?"

"Yes," Jennifer had promised herself not to give out any details, but sometimes it was impossible.

"Well, small country towns you know, everyone knows everyone, my mum's still there, her place, most of the times she's by herself you know, so if something needs to get sorted, it's best to get sorted while I'm there."

"It got fairly out of hand though."

"That's them miss, they roll up in two cars, I see 'em coming towards the house, one was a ute and the other was the same car that pulled up slow up at the lookout, and I'm waiting for them, getting ready. Had a bottle there taking some good hits from that. Mum's always got a little bourbon in the house, so I waited. I knew I put the hurt on the other fella pretty good, he's calling me a nigger and that so I don't feel nothing there, but I knew he'd be back. Jody would have told them who I was and that, not to get me hurt, that's just how girls are, so a couple hours later the two cars come up, four boys in one and two step out of the other carrying baseball bats. Jake, the one who called me a nigger, he's not even not even there, found out they took him to hospital, these boys are his older brother and his mates. Now by this stage I was 'bout half way through my mum's bourbon, drinking it straight, I wasn't blue drunk but nearly there you know, if it's going be happening you can't be sloppy."

"I understand the circumstances Carson, in that respect it's just..."

"Miss, I come home for funerals, see my mum, that's it you know, everything else come for me."

Jennifer knew what happened next. She'd read Carson's file taken from the victim statements and the police reports, everything he was saying was the truth.

The two cars arrived just after ten at Carson's mother's house. He was intoxicated on the verandah and had been drinking for most of the day. He'd consumed beer earlier at the pub and nearly a bottle of bourbon as well as cannabis before the victims arrived at the house. The victims approached the house together, with the two men carrying the bats walking up front. Carson had walked off the verandah to confront them and headed towards the group, meeting them on the front lawn of the house. The altercation was said to have lasted somewhere between one and two minutes.

"Four of those young men went to hospital Carson, one of them is still there."

"Well miss, six of them come for me, so if I sit back and let them do what they come to do, it'd be me up there in Royal Perth and they'd be sitting here talking to you."

"You could have called the police to wait with you," Jennifer felt foolish as soon as she said it, she even let herself smile a little. Carson picked up on it, he smiled with her, pointing a finger at her jokingly across the desk.

"Now miss, I see you know right there."

Everything he said made sense to her. She thought of her own son, he'd just graduated from uni and was working part time at the cricket grounds in East Perth. He'd qualified as a sports scientist and was looking to go up to the mines and work as a Health and Lifestyle Officer. He'd be earning more than she was, his plan was to work for three or four years and buy a house outright once he'd done his time. He was still living at home and she knew she'd be sad when it came time for him to leave. The starting rosters for the new ones could be as long as four weeks on and one week off, but he might be lucky and get a smaller swing. She told him he could stay at home as long as he wanted, rent free, while he was saving up for his own place. She wasn't looking forward to those first weeks when she'd be alone in the

house without him. He was a good son, she'd raised a beautiful boy, she'd been very lucky with him.

She looked at Carson's file on the computer screen in front of her, his picture was there from when he was arrested a few days after the incident.

"Just let me check something here, Carson."

Jennifer pretended to click a few times with the mouse on the screen. She looked over at him sitting there across her desk, he still had the trace of his smile leaving his face, he looked happy here in her office, he had put on a little bit of weight since he'd come to prison, not too much, he still looked slim and strong and quite handsome. She looked back to the mug shot on the screen. There was a chaos coming out of the picture. Carson had a big black eye that was swollen up close to the bridge of his nose, he had cuts running over his forehead and down his left cheek. He head was cocked just slightly to one side and his chin jutted up a little as if he was studying the camera that was taking his picture.

His eyes were dark, sunk hard and serious into his head. He looked like a different person. She imagined what the night must have been like for him in the lockup when they processed him, took his fingerprints and photo and fed all his information into the computer. He looked like a prisoner in the mug shot, like someone caught behind enemy lines, alert, scared, ready to fight but weighed down with the situation. He looked strong, but in the way a survivor looks strong, someone who's been through it and has come out the other side.

There was a knowingness to the face on the screen, like he knew what lay ahead and knew what was expected of him from this point on. At the bottom of the mugshot picture was a small, black arrow icon. It showed the previous year's photos if the prisoner had been arrested before. Jennifer clicked on the arrow and a drop-down box showed dates going back seven years:

6/9/12

1/4/11

15/2/09

30/12/08

22/3/08

6/2/07

12/2/06

She clicked on 2011 and a slightly younger picture of Carson popped up, the abrasions were gone, the black eye missing, he looked heavier around the face, with a little stubble. She clicked on 2009. Another one, much younger this time, he was smiling, had a grin on his face, he looked cleaner than in the other photos. His hair was very short and had gel in it pushing it forward. She clicked again and each time she did, she brought up the previous photo and the face on the screen got younger and brighter and healthier. The hairstyles changed, slicked forward, died blonde, rats-tail showing just behind his ear, freshly shaven, baby-faced. The clothes changed too. Tracksuit, black jacket, white shirt, tank top, basketball singlet.

Jennifer clicked on the last photo, 2006, and she was looking at a little boy, he wasn't smiling, he was caught, his face down ever so slightly towards the floor, eyes looking up into the camera doing what he was told. His shoulders were down, turned in, he looked very skinny, some pockmarks on his chin and a big head of hair curling over his sad little face. She looked over at him now, sitting in the chair across her desk, and saw him looking around the office waiting for her to finish what she was doing.

It was all so bleak looking in from the outside. She knew she'd never really be able to help him, not in any meaningful lasting way.

Daniel

Friday was always quiet, it was a split day for the prison. Mainstream prisoners for the morning classes, then lock-down until three so the protection boys could come and use the school in the afternoon. This meant that most prisoners wrote off Friday as a day off from work and school and that the protection prisoners could come and paint a picture without the threat of being murdered on the way to class.

Daniel had felt pretty good this morning, he'd come to the end of his time filling in for the permanent staff and would be back to three days a week next term. The Friday class in the morning was small, just a handful of boys who were serious enough about their painting to come in on their day off. About as close to normal as a prison art class could get.

The prisoners from unit 6 that would come later in the afternoon were never any trouble either, they were always fairly subdued, quiet and polite, unlike mainstream prisoners. They were a strange blend of well-meaning pedophiles and dope fiends unable to lock into a reasonable sexual appetite or square their debts with the rest of the prison. The disdain held for the Rock Spiders, as the other prisoners called them, filtered its way to the teaching staff as well, and Daniel was no exception. They were a special sub set of sub humans who'd done such unspeakable things they were excluded from being treated decently by anyone. They did as they were told and in a world filled with people aching to tell somebody what to do, they were the perfect subordinates.

They'd be in later this afternoon but right now Daniel was dealing with Carson trying to take over the room again.

"I don't know where he ended but I put that cunt on the ground boy, he come up frontin' like this," Carson mimed someone holding a bat and getting ready to swing it and shuffled his shoulders back and forth on his stool, acting out someone coming towards him.

Daniel thought about the epic poetry he was asked to read by his art history professor which detailed the great battles of the ages, A Day Upon the Bloody Green, When Hades Came to Hastings.

"And I could see in this boys eyes he hadn't swung no bat before and I just march straight in, he takes a swing, I raise up on the left side," Carson lifts his shoulder and ducks his head, "and he catches me on my arm there," Carson hits his forearm hard, "boy I grab it with my left hand and I'm feeling nothing cause I am blue brother," makes drinking gesture, "I come over and give it to him right there, buum, buum, buum," Carson's throwing straight rights in the air, "this boy just drops, brother, I never seen anyone go down that quick, I mean he just gave up and fell down boy, and now I got his bat and his mates coming for me and I just let him have it, boom," Carson hits a home run from his art room stool, "he's gone, heard this big fucking crack, all wet and shit, bad, bad hit brother and he just ate it, now he's gone, now I got four cunts coming at me but they just seen what happened with these two," Carson points to the art room floor by his feet, "so one's coming in half confident and I just open him up boy, buush, buush, I mean he's getting peppered and his mate started swinging wild into me and I can feel it a little bit on the side of my head there but not too much you know, and this cunt in front he's just falling apart so I let him drop, swing around hit this other cunt bang, straight elbow, these boys just falling, I go to give him a few more as he's tripping up, give him one more, crack, broke that cunt's jaw," Carson demonstrates slowly a long punch down towards the floor, in his eyes he's back there, "I got another one, he's on my back now and we start rolling around and he's gone mad dog on me, he's like a little cyclone, throwing wild trying to head butt me and everything and I'm thinking these cunts don't know how to blue, so I get him on the floor, hold his head down right on the ground and bang bang bang straight in on top, his head goings nowhere, stuck straight in the grass, think I broke my hand with that one there, boy started crying and everything and I'm just gone by this stage, I want to hurt these boys you know, but he's finished, nothing left of him, he's crying for fuck sake so I stand up and there's five of these boys on the ground now, two of them not moving, one's crying, two others are crawling away and there's this one other cunt who hasn't come in yet, he's standing by the car and he's been watching the whole show, the massacre there, and I stand up and walk towards him and you seen in the movies, you seen when they see the monster and they just freeze and stare up eyes open," Carson stands up, eyes wide open, looking up towards the ceiling hands out,

"well that's this cunt and I stop just short and I know he's not coming in, and I stand there staring down at this boy and I tell him straight up, come near this house again I'll burn you filthy cunts alive."

Carson delivered the threat in the art room to the invisible white boy. Fire in his eyes, teeth clenched, bearing down on the apparition like it was as real as Daniel sitting in his chair. Pure violence, pure hatred, all being spat out across the linoleum floor.

Carson turned and flashed a grin at Daniel. "Boy shat his pants right there my brother."

Ariel

"I don't give a fuck, I really don't...." Dean sat still, his wide shoulders stretching his shirt, showing off the run of his collar bone and the top of his chest.

"Alright, I'll just put down that at the moment you're uninterested in pursuing any of the programs until you have a better idea of your expected release date." Ariel turned to the screen and typed in the information. Dean had been with him before.

"I've done 'em all anyway." Dean sniffed and looked absently around Ariel's office.

"Is that right, I'll put that down then, that'll look better." Ariel started typing again.

"They've got the drug course which I've done, the alcohol course I've done, Better Beginnings, Anger Management, fucking domestic violence one," Dean started counting on his fingers, "the father son one, the fucking OSH course which I just did, fucking cert three in Addiction, cert two in cooking, the one about health and lifestyle, fuck 'em mate, I've done 'em all and they want me to go through 'em again."

"Yeah, look, that'll be fine Dean, I'll note it down that you've completed everything that's on offer and then I'll get the copies of all the certificates from the school and put them in your record so when the VJ is looking at it, he'll know you've been doing the right thing."

"The fucking VJ," Dean was rubbing his face with both his hands trying to revive himself, "this fucking place mate."

"Do you have any idea how long you're going to be in, Dean? Have you met with legal aid at all?"

"Nah, I'm the wrong colour, I was on the phone this morning and the woman I was talking to said they'd have someone out to see me by the end of the month."

"That's not too bad Dean, that's actually pretty good." Ariel was being honest.

"If I was one of the family though," Dean pushed his nose flat against his face with his forefinger, "that'd be a different story wouldn't it."

Ariel nodded briefly and went back to his computer screen; he wanted to keep Dean on side, fill in his forms and get him out of his office.

OUT

Ben

He dragged the razor tight across his face. He was a good-looking boy, he had his mother's good looks and his father's hair. Nice and thick, just like the old man. His father was a bastard but at least he had a good head of hair on him and thought well enough of his sons to pass it down. His father was getting old now, well into his sixties, but still with a good mop on his scalp. The old man looked like a wolf the way he combed it back and had it shaggy on the sides. Ben kept it sharp though. Not loose or ragged, closely shaved on the back and sides with the top slicked down. He kept his stubble shaved close too, he'd do it every evening, as late as he could and by the time he left his house the following morning, it'd be looking just right. For some reason he'd completely forgotten to shave last night.

He checked the time on his phone, ten after seven in the morning. Greg said he'd be there at eight. He had plenty of time.

He moved fifteen ounces for him in the last few days. He paid Greg \$200 an ounce, sold them whole for \$350 or if he broke it up into fifties he could make \$400 off each one. If he broke it down to twenty fives he could make a little more but it wasn't worth the trouble, too many young ones coming through the house. Too many shitty conversations. Ben didn't mind them too much, he got to play King when they came over, strutting round the house in his white singlet and his track pants, smoking on his Marlboro Lights. The girls were pretty too, although he never knew just how young any of them really were, better to play it safe, move the ounce as a whole if he could, which he could most of the time, bag up the leftovers into fifties, every now and then a few of the boys would want a half ounce, that was nice and simple too, move the fifteen ounces quick and get them out of the house.

He was clearing three thousand most weeks, he could stretch it out to four but he really had to work for it and see more people, which meant more risk, so he looked at it that it would last longer if he kept it low key and he could keep earning without getting caught. And three grand a week was still three grand a week.

He came out of the bathroom feeling good, light and flexible. The morning sun filled the small space in the lounge room and if he kept it vacuumed and sparse the house looked half decent. He was thinking of moving, picking up a rental

somewhere in a better suburb maybe, but most of his buyers were close by and he wanted to keep the travelling down to a minimum, keep everything under the radar as much as possible, he had a whack put away in a safe box in town, he was trying to figure out how to use it to buy a place of his own.

He looked over at his knife roll sitting on the kitchen counter, he hadn't cooked anything in months, he wondered if he'd ever pick it up again. He really couldn't see himself sweating in a kitchen for twelve hours a day, not after three grand a week. He picked up his cigarettes on top of the microwave, lit one up and unrolled the blades on the kitchen counter. He took out the boning knife and ran it over the sharpener a few times, the sound brought him right back to TAFE, the thought of it depressed him down to his bones. He put them back in the roll. His old man really was a cunt. He put them on top of the fridge so they were out of sight, he didn't even want to look at them.

He started to organise a pot of coffee, Greg liked a to have a cup when he came over, he never stayed too long but he'd sit for about twenty minutes and chat about whatever was happening for him. Usually it was something to do with his marriage falling apart or the new horror story he'd heard from one of his mates. Greg also said it was good to stay for a little while in case anyone was watching the house. Only drug dealers have a dozen friends that pop over for sixty seconds at a time.

Greg only sold weed, nothing else, he said the other stuff was too heavy, he was older than Ben, about forty, Ben never asked him his actual age. Greg was doing alright but only just alright, he lived in a shitty two bedroom unit in Scarborough just off the highway. He was stoned all day, every day, and it was starting to show when Ben would be chatting with him.

His mind would skip a beat midway through a conversation. He'd switch off but would still be nodding his head like he was following along. The last time he called over he was talking about magnets, looking in to magnet watches which he said he could get from America online. You put them on your wrist and they did something to your blood flow, drew out the iron particles running through your veins. Cleaned you up a bit. Ben wasn't quite sure, he had tuned out when Greg started to explain it.

Ben figured that Greg was making fifty off of every ounce he was giving him, he'd be paying one-fifty a piece, maybe even one hundred, so he'd be clearing between eight hundred and sixteen hundred a pound. Ben never asked him and Greg never mentioned it either. He probably had three or four guys just like himself selling a pound or two for him every week. Ben wanted to move up a bit but Greg had the contacts and he was holding onto them. Ben tried to casually ask him if he could get in with some of the guys who supplied him and ask if they needed any gear moved. Greg said he wouldn't do that even if they asked him to find someone. Greg was scared of the whole scene.

"It's no joke Benny," he'd always say every time the subject came up.

Greg would try and convince him with stories about people who couldn't pay their debts, in an effort to scare him off. Guys who got pulled off production lines by four heavies and had their legs broken right there on the factory floor. Guys who were chased off the road and dragged out of their crashed cars and flogged, being told their children were going to be killed while it was all happening. He'd describe the sound of the bones being broken, arms being wrenched out, noses being busted up, all the screaming and all the howling that went with it. Greg would move his leg up and down and pull back with his hands as he made the sound of some poor bastard's femur splintering and giving way.

Ben was usually stoned when Greg told him these stories, as was Greg himself, so they were fairly hard to take at times. But Ben reminded himself only the ones that fucked up were the ones that got stepped on, the rest made money, went to their safe boxes and that was that. Greg was right in a sense though, it was no joke. Money-wise certainly. Three grand a week would be more like three grand a day. It was only limited as to how far he could push it, how far he wanted to take it.

Ben went to the laundry. His bucket was in the sink. He started smoking pot a few years ago with his brother's uni friends. They'd have these beautiful joints rolled. Roll them the size of long cigars, chop up the weed, some Champion Ruby, even some rose and lavender petals from the garden if someone felt like making the effort. Once they started smoking more often, though, the joints got replaced with a pipe, a little three-dollar job from a smoke shop or deli. After a while the pipe got

replaced with a bong, back to the smoke shop, a toilet-shaped bong, one shaped like a pistol, a see-through plastic one, one shaped like Kim Il Jong where you smoked out the top of his head.

Finally, the bong got replaced with a bucket.

Ben's was a two-dollar green one from Bunnings. Filled to the top with tap water with a two-litre coke bottle with the base cut out and a cone piece melted through the lid screwed on top. Ben packed the cone piece with weed and pressed his thumb into it. He straightened the bottle deep in the water with just its neck and head poking out. He screwed the cap on tight, careful not to spill any of the weed. He took his lighter and lit it, slowly drawing the bottle up out of the bucket as he did. The bottle rose up and filled with white creamy smoke. Ben liked the look of it. Dense and clean. A thick cloud of high getting bigger and bigger.

When the bottle was only an inch or two left in the water and completely filled with smoke, he unscrewed the lid gently and bent down to take it in. He exhaled and emptied his lungs of air and very quickly and very quietly took the lid away and placed his mouth over the bottle, pushing it back into the bucket. The water pushed the smoke out through the top of the bottle deep into Ben's lungs. Maximum high, minimum weed and not a rose or lavender petal in sight.

He stepped back from the sink, holding it in his chest, the bottle floated and bobbed in the bong black water as he held his breath and leaned with one hand against the wall.

Ben blew out the little smoke that was left, the effect was instant, his eyelids heavy, his head dizzy, the skin on his face softer and warm. He lost all the angles off his body, everything now mellow and distant.

He walked through his clean house, passed the fridge and took out an iced coffee and headed out the back where the sun was glaring across his little patio. He stepped out through the back door and felt the warmth of the pavers under his feet. His fingers were tingling as he adjusted to the brightness and the fresh air.

He stretched his body long and felt as light and free as God Himself as he stood tip-toed and giddy, marveling at his own creation, taking in as much of the world as he possibly could.

Greg had been and gone. The fifteen ounces were all in the freezer, he could move five of them whole this afternoon. He'd gotten a few texts late last night and another two this morning asking if it was all good to come round. Greg had been alright today, seemed to be in a good mood. Went through the normal routine, commented on how clean the house was, Greg seemed to think Ben was cleaning it for him which wasn't the case, but Ben didn't mind too much. Greg was Greg, he could think what he liked.

He told him another horror story from his travels, a friend of his he hadn't seen for a while turned up on his doorstep looking for a place to stay a couple of days ago. The friend was Travis, he worked as a fabricator down in Rockingham making boats that they were selling to the Japanese as luxury yachts. Travis spent most of his day being sprayed with hot flecks of fibreglass coming out the back of a band saw. He was saving up to buy his own yacht and, according to Greg, was well on his way. Travis lived in a share house with two other guys. They had a four-bedroom house overlooking the ocean on West Coast Highway.

Travis had been there for a few years now, the three of them had a good routine sorted out. One of the housemates owned a café which he wanted to build up and franchise out and the other one surfed most of the day, he was on the dole and was thinking about going back to school to study viticulture, move down south maybe and start work at a winery. One night, late into the night, the two mates were up drinking, the one who owned the cafe was a smaller fella and his cafe wasn't doing as well as he hoped it would and they were up drinking together for hours. So Travis gets up at four in the morning 'cause his shift at the boat factory starts around five.

Travis walks out through the lounge room and these pair are still up. There's a lamp on in the corner of the room and they're both sitting by the couch and there's about six bottles of wine on the table plus a few beers plus whatever else. The surfer is sitting back on the couch, the little cafe guy is leaning forward and they're both wiped out drunk. Sloppy, slurring, four-in-the-morning drunk, but they look like they've had a good night, the cafe guy's looking relaxed, they've probably got another ten minutes before one of them passes out. Travis says hello, says his

goodbyes, no problems, he won't be back until after six that night, so he leaves them there and that was that.

He comes home just after six that evening and the surfer, he's in the kitchen and he's drinking a cup of tea and he looks like he's been up drinking all night but he looks different than usual, Travis had seen him plenty of times the day after a big night, but this time he didn't look right. So Travis sits down at the table and starts to ask him how he is, you know, big night last night, how'd you pull up, that sort of thing, and the surfer looks up at Travis and tells him the cafe fella, just after Travis left in the morning, started to sway on the couch and fell face down into the surfer's lap but he wasn't passed out. At first they both started laughing cause the cafe fella could barely move, you know, he couldn't lift his head and then after the giggling died down he starts rubbing into the surfer with the side of his face and the surfer fella he was as drunk as the other one and he's sitting there in the dark getting himself rubbed up by his best mate, and the surfer said because of all the booze and how late it was, it all felt pretty good and then the cafe fella takes out his cock out and starts giving him a blowjob there on the couch.

Now Travis is looking at the surfer drinking his tea in his bathrobe and he's looking back over at the couch he's talking about and Travis doesn't really know what to say, he's a fucking boat fabricator, so he just kind of sits there as the surfer goes on staring into his mug. The cafe guy kept going and going, started stroking him off and getting right into it and then the surfer couldn't hold out any longer and did his thing and the cafe fella swallowed and everything, then he said he lifted his head up, and just passed out sideways on the couch.

The surfer said he didn't know what to do so he just went to bed and when he woke up the next morning the cafe guy had gone to work and now he didn't know if his friend even remembered what happened and everything was just very weird and he had no idea what to do 'cause he'd be home from the cafe in a couple of hours. Now Travis, he's sitting there stone-faced, no idea what to say, what to do, so he ends up saying he'll take off for the night and let the two of them sort it out, so he disappears and heads to Greg's place. That was a couple of nights ago.

When Travis went back the night after, there were cops all over the place. The cafe fella had come back home and shot the surfer four or five times with his dad's

rifle. He called the police straight away and when they arrived the cafe fella was waiting for them, he'd put a drop sheet over his surfer mate who was lying on the kitchen floor wearing his bathrobe and his underpants. Travis said the surfer told him, it was the best blowjob he'd ever had.

The story was still rattling through Ben's head as he was barrelling down Roe Highway heading towards Midland. He had to concentrate but he couldn't get it out of his head. He prided himself on staying focused and taking care of things. He always made sure to never drive with too much pot in the car, kept everything clean on the outside, good tyres, rego up to date, everything, if a rim fell off the car or a door got scratched up, he'd get it fixed the next day.

He had a friend who was pulled over from letting his rego lapse when they took away the stickers. The cops ran his plate driving behind him and pulled him over; when they came to the car, the smell of dope was in the air, even sealed and still frozen in plastic bags. His friend had the best part of a pound all broken up and ready to go, now he was sitting on remand in Hakea waiting for his court date to come up, so far he'd been in five months.

Ben drove a late nineties hatchback, nothing fancy, no big cars, no laser lights, just small, compact, cheap, he looked like a uni student driving around. Whenever he was on a delivery he'd stop and buy a roast chicken and chips from Red Rooster to fill the car up with a good smell in case he ever was pulled over. It was all about widening the odds as much as possible. The chook cost him twenty bucks and in the grand scheme of things it was nothing. Plus he only ever went out delivering three or four times a week, the rest of the time they all came to him.

He was on his way to see Chappie, Chappie was the big brother of one of his classmates at TAFE and as soon as Ben saw him he knew he was someone worth knowing. He had that greasy look to him some of the Midland boys have. Long trackpants covering dirty old trainers, a baseball cap stiff with sweat, a couple of neck chains, a basketball shirt, a little stubble, rough and scabby hands, tats running up the arm and generally looking like a full time Midland scumbag. It was as if some of them just didn't wash at all, some of them looked like stray dogs when you'd see them on the street, especially in summer when it's hot and dusty and they'd be bouncing along, up to who knows what.

Except Chappie never walked anywhere, he had a SS fully booted, immaculate condition, blood red, dark windows, when he stepped out of it he looked like one serious motherfucker. Chappie always took three ounces off Ben each week. He didn't know if he was selling it on or keeping it for himself. You never knew with guys like Chappie and Ben didn't want to ask, he wanted to keep as cool as possible with him. He might be able to introduce him to a few people who could put him onto some gear. Start off with pills, a bag load at first, do his time with those, maybe three four months then he could move up. That was the only way he could see himself really doing it, he could make ten, fifteen a week. He had the smarts to do it, he could keep his head low and make it happen, but he needed someone like Chappie to get him started.

He pulled up into Chappie's driveway and parked down deep in the carport next to the back door. The front yard was paved with old concrete slabs, they were painted red and wore the look of thirty years in the Midland sun. From the car Ben could see the grass in the back, it was a foot long, dead and yellow, waving back and forth at him from a distance through the wood and wire fence. There were a few milk crates scattered about, bottles, oil cans and batteries. Ben waited in his car, that was the deal, he'd didn't even need to beep the horn.

The side door to the house swung open beside the driver's side door.

"Benny boy," Chappie slunk down the small set of steps and came to lean in through the open window.

"Chappie," said Ben reaching out his hand, the two shook, Chappie shook his hand straight, no gimmicks, no bullshit. He leaned across the window smelling the bbq chicken and chips, Ben could smell bourbon on his breath and Midland strong body odour coming off his arm pits.

"Same as?" Chappie asked smiling in.

"Same as always man," Ben reached down to the under seat of the passenger side and put the three ounces in the Red Rooster bag sitting on the floor.

"You're the only one that brings a chicken dinner, man," Chappie gave a dry smile, taking the bag. He reached in the front of his track pants and handed over a roll of money.

"You're the only one who gives me money that smells like balls."

"Next time brother."

"Alright man."

The screen door opened again behind Chappie, there was a big Aboriginal fella leaning out of the doorway, he looked down from the house into the car at Ben. Ben looked back at him with one hand on the gear stick. He was tall, had some bruises and a cut-up face, his left arm looked like he'd been slicing it up. He said nothing, just stood there with his arm on the door-arch staring into the car. Ben looked back at Chappie.

"It's all good Benny, I'll call you up in a few days, yeah?"

"All good Chap, till then man, for sure."

"Till then."

Chappie

"Get some of that in you there Cars, them boys sound lucky more than anything else."

Chappie watched as Carson took some weed from the bag and started packing it.

"Who's that there then?" asked Carson, nodding out towards the driveway.

"He's alright, that's Benny, little fella from Craigie, works with Kendal doing his chef course, but that cunt never shows up, fancies himself as a bit of a mover."

"That boy there?"

"He gets good shit, I don't know how he gets it, but he gets it."

Chappie watched Carson light up the bong and take a long draw on it, the bubble of the water making a dull sound in the little front room.

"So what's the go, you look fucked man." Chappie was nodding at Carson's arm and forehead.

Carson blew out a long stream of smoke and lay back on the couch, shaking his head slowly from side to side, coughing a little as he did.

"Weren't nothing Charlie, just some cunts being cunts."

"You got anything on now?"

"Fuck all cuz, laying low for a spell you know," said Carson.

"You not going home again then?" asked Chappie.

"Nah, not for a while, well I gotta go see my little brother tomorrow is all, mum asked me to check in on him, she's saying he wasn't going to the rec centre no more, little cunt's been going wild, reckons he's been out hitting up little wadjies on their way home from school, taking their shoes."

"Cops?"

"Matter of time you know, little Noongar out running amok, matter of fucking time."

"True."

"Little cunt'll end up in Rangeview."

"How old is he now?"

"Fucking old enough, mum told me to take him back home if need be, said she'll put sense in to him if it came to it."

"When you doing that?" asked Chappie.

"Texted there, he said he'll meet up tomorrow arvo, reckons he's hitting some munya today, says he's well busy," Carson was smiling across the coffee table, breaking into a chuckle.

"Little Clemmy?" Chappie was shaking his head, remembering being at Carson's house when they played basketball together years ago back home and seeing Clemmy on the floor in front of the telly playing nintendo in his pajamas. Chappie and Carson'd been around each other for a long while now, good friends. Chappie didn't have too many Boong mates, he didn't have too many mates at all for that matter. Always busy, always putting it together, had no choice. But he could relax with Carson, he was different, he trusted him, he knew he'd go to the wall for him if need be, he'd done it more than once. Not many boongs'd do that for him, not many white cunts either.

Of the few people he had in his life he knew he could count on Carson, count on him to be there for him. They used to play on the same basketball team when they were kids before Chappie's mum brought him and his little brother to Perth. Carson's mother used to run the club back home and one of Carson's aunties coached the team. She was a young one, only about twenty. Chappie remembered thinking how beautiful she was when he was playing. He was only about ten or eleven at the time but even then he was paying attention. Being hypnotised by those creamy brown legs, strong and toned, sliding in and out of those basketball shorts. Gorgeous girl she was, beautiful. A good player too, the whole family was.

"I got something tonight if you want to tag along," Chappie said, leaning back on the couch.

"What you got?"

"No pressure man, I have to go and straighten a few boys out who are playing up, but if you want to lay low and crash here a few days no pressure, I can take Glen with me, but might be a few hundred in it so just offering it if you want it, no need to, only if you want."

"Few hundred?" said Cars, looking interested.

"Could be five there for you, depends how much they have going?"

"I could use five hundred Charlie, yeah, how many?"

"Five or six boys but they're rich kids playing house, just have to bust in, make a noise, walk out, I don't think they'll even kick up. Even if they do, shouldn't be a drama." Chappie hoped Carson would come along, he looked like he'd had a rough couple of days, it'd be nice to help him out with some coin.

"Will they call the cops?" asked Carson.

"Not these boys."

"Nah?"

"Nah, they've been moving pills for me for the last two months, so nah, they won't."

"Well I wouldn't mind getting my mum a new microwave."

Ariel

Ariel had successfully organised internet access at work. He had filled in a form and sent it to head office. His justification was he needed to access justice forum sites in other countries in order to keep up to date with trends in law enforcement as well as network with sister specialists in similar fields around the world. He concluded his application by stating that a well-informed and well-connected network of justice workers could enable the department to pick up on systemic advances as they happen and reap the benefits of new corrective management styles in real time.

At the moment Ariel was in a bidding war for a carton of New Zealand Sem Sav on an online auction site. He was sitting on twelve bottles of premium Marlborough for only \$35, plus \$15 delivery but that was still only \$50 for twelve bottles. Ariel hit the calculator icon on his computer, that was just over four dollars a bottle. He liked to always have a good few cartons of wine in the house but every time he came to work he'd lose a lot of his winning bids because he was missing for eight hours a day with no internet. But not anymore.

He'd secured a half carton of Pemberton red early this morning and although he paid almost ninety dollars for it, it was a wine he'd drunk before and knew it was worth it. He also won a carton of Italian Chianti and took a gamble on a Californian pinot which he noted had a high alcohol content as well as aromas of chicory, bush fire almonds and deep charred rosewood.

He called in sick yesterday. He actually was sick, he had another late night. He drank most of a bottle of Glayva, a sweet whiskey liqueur with the consistency of honey, he had made himself a buttery mushroom soup and ate half a loaf of ciabatta, dipping it in through the thick layers of goats cheese he'd crumbled over the top. Half way through the sweet liqueur he put on a documentary series he'd been watching about the history of baseball. They were ten two-hour episodes starting from the first game ever played in the middle of the nineteenth century and working their way up to the modern game. Ariel was up to the episode where Ty Cobb, the mentally disturbed second baseman for the Detroit Tigers, knifed a hotel manager who intervened when Cobb was beating to death a black elevator

operator. This was back in 1909. The last thing Ariel remembered was pouring himself an enormous Glayva and pouring the sticky ooze down his throat in one hit. He remembered the voice over describe the incident while a just-in-tune violin played "Take Me Out to the Ball Game".

Ariel woke up a few hours later with the sun coming up outside. He shifted in his chair, rubbing his eyes, and he noticed he'd wet himself during the night. He picked up his mobile phone and called his manager at work. If he called early enough in the morning there'd be no one there and he could leave a message on the answering machine. That was best, no talking, no explaining, and in the condition he was in he'd definitely sound like he was ill. Also Monday was the day when he scheduled all his appointments for the week so that meant there'd be no-one waiting for him on Tuesday and he could spend the day making the bookings. There was a bbq and football day on Wednesday and Friday was pretty much lockdown, so it only left Thursdays to really book any appointments. He could book most of the guys who had school on that day so most of them wouldn't show up. If he did it right he could go the whole week without having to see anybody.

An email icon popped up on the screen. Ariel opened it up, it was from the online auction site, the rival bidder in Amby, Queensland had just put in another bid for the case of Marlborough with only seconds remaining on the clock. Ariel now had an additional fifteen minutes to place another bid, the increments went up nine dollars at a time. The Queensland fella had raised it to \$45, another bid from Ariel would bump it to \$54; plus postage he was now looking at \$69. He clicked on his calculator. \$5.75 a bottle, that was still good. He had bought this wine before and it was well worth the price. Light, crisp hints of dandelion with the softest breath of mandarin which was extremely rare for a Sem Sav.

Ariel clicked again, raising the bid another nine dollars.

"Your move asshole," Ariel watched his bid history change from losing to winning. Ariel had to be patient now, the rival bidder now had his fifteen minutes to respond. Ariel was going to make him work for it if he wanted it. He'd go as high as he needed to get this carton of wine. He opened his emails while he waited. He had a message from Facebook. It was an advert for Nikes, somehow he could only manage to maintain friendships with businesses online. He wasn't quite sure he was

aware of all the rules of play on the social network sites. He had nine friends in total. He used to have more, particularly a few women friends he made through his sister who all accepted him as their friend after his sister's birthday party a few years ago. He had gotten a little drunk but had to leave early as it was mainly a girl's night and he just dropped in to give his sister her present. He'd come across a little charming on account of his short visit and left before he had time to get too messy. His sister posted pictures of the night the next day and everyone was tagged in the photos and before he knew it he had about fifteen women as his friends on Facebook. He used to stay up late at night scrolling through the photos they had up of themselves. His sister had some gorgeous friends and some of them thought nothing about posting themselves doing cartwheels on the beach wearing string bikinis or sweating in the gym after a yoga session.

One night after a particularly boozy session, Ariel had messaged a few of the women asking them for more photos of themselves. When he woke the next day around noon, he'd received five missed calls from his sister and a couple of lengthy messages left for him on his mobile. He decided to delete them all without listening and let the situation cool for a while.

After that, Ariel pretty much only had contacts to do with online gambling, footwear and an Israeli man in a wheelchair he had friended by accident when he was looking to buy a new recliner for his home office. There was an ad on Facebook next to the new shoes Nike were selling which showed a woman in grey gym shorts, actually they just showed the woman's arse in the grey gym shorts. Ariel felt himself getting aroused. This was happening more often lately.

Ariel thought about it, he looked at the clock, the bidder hadn't made a move, he had twelve minutes. He clicked on the image and was brought to a gallery of close ups of women bending over doing exercise. Ariel moved his chair back from the desk and unzipped his fly, he clicked to share the screens on his monitor so he could keep an eye on the bidder from Amby. He worked away at himself as the small clock icon on the auction site flashed "going, going..." and the counter worked its way towards zero.

Ariel found it building up for him but he wanted more, he clicked through the gallery and the next picture was a woman in tight green spandex bicycle-shorts

doing the downward dog on a Yoga mat. Ariel felt a rise inside him as he liked what he saw. He flashed over to the counter, only a few minutes to go, still nothing from Amby. Again the next picture on the gallery, a sweaty blonde woman doing squats, breathing out with full lips. A few strands of long hair falling over the ridge of her eyebrows as she glistened and panted in high definition for him. He liked this one for sure, he inched himself forward in his chair, he could feel it creak ever so slightly under his weight. Back over to Amby, nothing.

Back to the blonde squatting, good. The phone on his desk started to ring. He picked it up with his free hand and put it under his chin.

"Hello," he was breathing a little faster with the exertion but not enough for him to sound out of breath.

"Hi Ariel, it's Margaret," came the voice.

Margaret was one of the ladies who worked in the school, she wanted to let him know that a prisoner was scheduled for an art class where Ariel had scheduled him for an assessment on Thursday. He pictured Margaret in his head. She was heading towards middle age, jet black hair, probably dyed, not so pretty but she had a nice voice. Soft and warm. Ariel tried to get her talking, he asked her about what programs were coming up over the next few months.

He tried to imagine it was the girl doing the squats talking to him, he wriggled the phone just below his ear, he could hear Margaret but not make out exactly what she was saying, he was getting close, he looked over at the auction site, still "going, going..." flashed on and off, the man from Amby was silent, the girl was squatting up a storm, he could see her move her lips, he could feel her breath in his ear through the phone, "going, going...".

"Yes Margaret," Ariel said, panting a little now.

"Ariel?" came the voice.

He looked at the length of hair falling over her eyes with the sweat rolling down her high cheek bones.

"Yes Margaret," he said in a breathy whisper as he gripped himself now with both hands, working harder, stretching back on his chair, the creak underneath him getting louder.

"Ariel...?" Margaret's voice stretching away in the distance as the phone began slipping out from under his chin.

"Margaret," Ariel shouted as he clung hard to himself and tipped backwards off his chair, gripping the phone with one hand, trying to catch himself, pulling it off the desk as he tumbled backwards.

Ariel lay on the floor. The girl with the squats and Margaret in his ear had brought him home. He could feel his heart bounce in his chest. He could feel the weight of his own body hold him to the ground. He stared up at the ceiling as he wiped his hand on the cheap carpet and did his pants back up. He propped himself up on an elbow and could hear himself wheeze as he did. He picked up the phone and put it to his ear. No sound. He'd ripped the line out of the wall. Margaret was probably looking at her phone in the education centre wondering what happened. She'd call back in another while. Ariel stood up and turned the chair back upright and flopped himself back down. He clicked away the image of the women exercising and looked to the icon on the auction site.

No more flashing, just a solid red "Gone".

Chappie

Chappie pulled the car up outside the house. It was a nice big two-storey white brick mansion up in the northern suburbs out near the beach. He liked driving through the suburbs up here at night, the roads were smooth and wide and clean, like they were laid yesterday. He took his nephew up here every Christmas to look at the lights they'd have on most of the houses. There was one street not far from where they were now, half the houses had themselves covered top to toe in Christmas lights. It was like driving through a video game.

There were a few cars parked by the side of the curb and two more in the driveway, they were having a card night tonight. Jamal was in the house, his mother was away with her family back in Saudi and his old man was away in China selling something to somebody. Jamal had started dealing for Chappie, had a little gang of big-shouldered Muslims around him, they weren't nothing though. Chappie had met his share of real ones and these boys weren't even close.

He looked over at Carson, he was in the passenger side not saying much, they'd both spent the day hanging out at Chappie's, Carson borrowed some of his clothes and was sitting mostly in black, looking out the window at the houses lining the other side of the street.

"So Cars, I told 'em I'd be coming up to see 'em but these cunts think we're coming to have a drink, that's how far behind they are, so going in's no trouble," Chappie looked up to the second storey of the house.

"Coming out neither," said Carson, looking out the other side. "Let's do it?"

Chappie loved Carson, he was something else, he stepped out of the car and could hear Carson do the same behind him. He stood on the front lawn and took in the house again. They seemed to be all upstairs, he could see a few lights on and a few shadows across the wall, couldn't see any shapes in the window. He met Jamal in a nightclub in Northbridge, next to a 24-hour hamburger stand about three in the morning. Jamal was off his chops, those Muslim boys didn't know how to drink, wasn't in the blood, they were wild fucking jackrabbits let loose without a map.

Jamal was running his mouth and gave Chappie his number saying he wanted to raise enough money to start a detailing business. Chappie took his number, hit

him up the next day and kitted him out with enough pills to make a few grand. The first few weeks went alright, then just over a month later Jamal started telling stories and before long Chappie was waiting to get paid. It was all still friendly but Chappie knew it was time to rein it in, before these fellas got out of hand.

They both walked up the driveway, Chappie looked over at Carson as they approached the door, Carson flashed him a nod. Chappie hit the doorbell and knocked a few times.

"Little Clem tell you who's he up to?" asked Chappie.

"Nah," said Carson shaking his head.

"Remember Tracy?" asked Chappie.

"It better not be fucking Tracy, Charlie," Carson burst into a wide grin, laughing at Chappie pushing him on the shoulder.

"Tracey knew how to do it though Cars, you know that," Chappie said, leaning back a little, raising his chin at Carson.

"She knew how to make your cock run like a tap is what she knew, if she puts the dose on my little brother, God help me boy."

"Here they come," Chappie looked through the thick glazed glass on either side of the door.

It swung open and Jamal stood before them wearing a black V-neck sweater, no shirt underneath, new dark blue jeans and a big smile.

"Chappie, thanks so much for coming out man," Jamal extended a hand and Chappie gave him a good shake. Chappie went along with it, bouncing his head up and down as he did.

"You got some beers in there or what, Jamal?" Chappie asked as he walked through the door.

"Whatever you need Chappie, this is your house my brother, beers, wine, scotch, vodkas, a little bit of ganja, whatever you need man," Jamal was a little drunk.

"This is my man Jackie here, good friend of mine," said Chappie, nodding towards Carson.

"Welcome my brother," said Jamal, reaching out. Carson smiled at him and shook his hand. "Let's go upstairs and meet the rest of the boys, you probably know most of them anyway, Chap."

Chappie followed Jamal up the thick carpeted stairs to the sounds of the small party above. He saw Jamal was wearing tan suede lace-up desert boots. They looked like they were steel capped at the toe. Looked about his size too. As Jamal reached the top of the stairs, Chappie took him by the back of his knitted V-neck and launched him down to the bottom. Carson moved to the wall and watched as Jamal rolled down and landed back at the front door.

"Can you bring him up for me Jackie?"

Chappie walked through the lounge room and saw the rest of the boys sitting round a circle oak table playing cards, there was a bottle of bourbon in the middle, joints in an ashtray, a few beers. They looked up at Chappie, a few he recognised, a few he didn't. None of them looked like much. He went over to the stereo and turned it down. Two of the boys stood up from the table.

"Can I help you, man?"

Chappie knew he was nothing, he had one of those beards with no moustache and a small pair of rimless glasses on his head. He was dressed better than Jamal, another sweat shirt but cream, a gold chain dangling round his neck, big thick shoulders on him, but still he looked soft.

"Sit down boys." Chappie was now standing still in front of the table.

Chappie saw them look over his shoulder and he knew Carson was up now with Jamal. He looked back and saw Jamal in Carson's grip, a busted nose was flowing good and a mouse was starting to form under his left eye. Jamal looked like he'd been told. He wasn't saying anything. He turned back to look at the boys round the table, they sat back down looking wide-eyed at Jamal.

"Phones, chains, wallets on the table, shoes on the table, watches, cash, all the gear on the table," Chappie looked them over as he spoke, they were looking back and forth at each other.

"Do you boys need convincing?" Chappie spoke over his shoulder, not taking his eyes off the table.

Chappie heard Carson drop Jamal to the floor and give him a little more so the other boys could see. Jamal started squealing, sounded like he was eating a few good ones. Chappie kept staring at the boys and one by one they started emptying their pockets.

"Who owns the Calais out front?" Chappie asked, nodding toward the street.

One of them put his hand up just high enough to be seen.

"Push it forward," Chappie gestured at the keys on the table, a set was pushed forward.

"The XR?" asked Chappie.

Another set of keys slid out from the pile.

"Mohammad, go get us a bin liner."

Patrice

Patrice was waiting by the control room in Unit 6. He was escorting the prisoners over to Education for their Friday afternoon session. Unit 6 had the cleanest unit in the prison. The yellow vinyl floors gleamed like Vatican gold. One of the prisoners was sitting in the far corner running a paint scraper over the floor surface. He was removing tiny specks of dirt which had gathered over night between the floor space and the wall. He had a small blue flannel cloth which he'd use to wipe the scraper every time he managed to get something off the floor. He was young, twenty, twenty-one. Had a shaved head and a few tattoos on his forearm. He didn't look like a tamp, he looked a little stronger, firmer round the edges, but he still had traces of that look in his eyes, the look that all the Unit Sixers get. Shifting, nervous, petrified.

Patrice thought about his wife coming home tomorrow, she'd get in around five in the evening, he'd swapped a twelve-hour shift for an eight-hour one down in Gardens and would head straight up after work to pick her up from the airport. He'd have to make sure he cleaned the car tonight and try and get the smell of smoke out. He bought a pack late last week and had started up again.

The last email she sent just had the flight details on it. No chat, no missing you, nothing. Just the time and the flight code. He even answered back saying he couldn't wait to see her, it was a fairly long email by his standards. He was still getting used to typing on Australian keyboards. He typed slow, one finger at a time. He had to slow down his thinking when he wrote emails. Sometimes he'd get in the middle of a sentence and forget what he was saying. He tried to explain this to her once in an email when she complained that he never wrote to her but he made a balls of it. She did send a picture of her standing next to her mother in her mother's kitchen back in France. There were herbs hanging from the ceiling drying in bunches behind them. Stone walls on the inside of the house and an old fashioned iron stove. Her mother was holding onto her tightly, she had a sad look in her eyes. One that made its way through the photo and took over the whole picture. A sadness she didn't have before they left.

Patrice wondered if he was doing the right thing. Maybe they should move back home. Life was easier in Australia that's for sure, but what was the real benefit over the long term of living an easy life.

"Alright Patty," Jerry called from behind the glass of the control booth. Jerry was one of the older prison guards. He'd come up in prisons in the seventies in Britain. He was a gentleman, seen it all on two continents, nothing seemed to phase him. Patrice never saw him lose his temper or hit out at the prisoners. He'd been around too long. He still dressed like he was in the seventies too. Thick grey hair, slicked back every day, big square glasses, socks pulled up to his knees, always wore shorts, even in winter.

"Never cold enough for trousers," he'd always say.

He'd somehow worked the job out, that's the way it seemed to go with some of the guards. Some of them worked it out and acted like Jerry, not many of them but some of them did it well. Fair, gentle and firm. A little bit military in the way they came across, always last into an incident, first to write up the reports. Most of the others turned mean like Derrick but never let it affect them personally, they could switch it on and off. Others let it take them over completely. Burn into them and change them from the inside. They were the ones who took it home with them. Drank too much, trained too much, wouldn't go out for dinner with their wives at night or a pub on the weekend because they'd stepped on too many prisoners over the years. They were the ones who'd hand out the beatings, they were the ones who'd carry a grudge with a newbie and put him in a cell where they knew he'd be bashed or raped. They'd piss in the water jugs, take blankets away before lock down, leave the lights on in a cell the whole night just to keep a man awake. They'd find out where the prisoners lived on the outside and drive past their house late at night looking in at their wives and girlfriends.

Patrice remembered two men who came to the prison with the same name last year. One of them had a run in with one of the worst guards in the prison. A dangerous bastard from England with a reputation for cruelty. The kind who wore a lot of gold and fancied himself as a hard man. After the run in, the guard did the paperwork and arranged for both of the men to be placed in the same cell. Every time one of them got called for an assessment or work order or a visit he'd call the

wrong one out and send him down. The other prisoner couldn't refuse to go as it was a legal order. Both of the men missed visits with their family, time in Assessments and classes in Education. All of which made it harder for them to shorten their sentence. Small little acts of terrorism which helped keep the balance in the guard's favour and helped him pass his shift without getting bored. After a few months the prisoner made an official complaint and a week later he was found in his cell with his eyes kicked out.

"They're coming now Patty, I think Gregory's bringing them up," Jerry was smiling at him through the glass control room.

Patrice smiled gently and nodded. He was looking forward to the long walk across the open space to Education, he could have a smoke on the way. Friday was definitely one of the better days. Patrice watched as the prisoners filed one by one and took their ID cards from Jerry through a slot in the control booth. Patrice watched how he interacted with them as he handed out their cards. There were about fifteen prisoners in total, Jerry had looked after them in unit 6 now for a good few years. He called them by their first names, smiled at them, a quick chat back and forth commenting on one or two of them who were holding their paintings under their arms.

"Looking good Michael," Jerry said through the glass at young Michael. Michael was holding a painting he was working on for his daughter. Michael smiled widely and seemed to come alive, he held it up for Jerry to see properly. It was a picture of his four-year-old sitting on her mum's lap holding a teddy bear. Michael was no artist, he was actually a heroin addict who owed half the jail a pouch of tobacco or a long slow rinse.

"I think the bear's come up good Mr Walker," said Michael, admiring his own work and now holding up the line, "I'm getting it sprayed today and should be able to send it home."

"Very nice Michael, well done son," said Jerry.

"Thank you Mr Walker."

"Alright Michael, keep it moving now," Jerry nodded his head in the direction of Patrice.

"Mr Peterson," said Jerry as he handed an ID card to the oldest fellow in the bunch. He wore a filthy bandage on his forearm. His hair long, thin and wispy. Sores and sun-spots made his head look like a large egg shell. His dark eyes were sunk deep into his skull and loose tired flesh hung from his emaciated sagging face. He didn't speak, he looked like he'd given up trying to explain himself a very long time ago. Patrice made a note to look up Mr Peterson on the computer as he saw him creep and shuffle along the spotless linoleum floor. He looked a walking version of every parent's collective nightmare.

Michael came near the front of the line, still buzzing from Jerry's kindness. Patrice saw the painting up close. The child's face looked like it was melting. He had somehow painted a grown man's forehead on his daughter's brow. Her own eyes were too close together, making her look more like a goblin than a little girl. The teddy in her arms had no eyes at all.

Michael saw Patrice looking at his painting, he looked and met Patrice's eyes for his opinion. Patrice saw the desperation in the young man's face. He hung frozen between expressions, there was hope in his eyes that Patrice would acknowledge his painting, acknowledge himself as a man, the look on his face carried the full weight of Michael's regrettable life.

Maybe he had painted a beautiful picture, maybe he could send it home and his daughter would love it and hang it in her room and maybe he could return there and be a dad again and his wife would take him back and they could start over and he wouldn't have to live in this place with these men and be shouted at and cursed and sworn at every time they walked through the prison. Maybe he and Mr Walker could be friends on the outside and he could go to him for advice and he could introduce Mr Walker to his wife Alison and his daughter Michelle. He stared at Patrice waiting for the verdict, waiting to find out if he might be able to be a human being again. Patrice saw it all in his face and he nodded back to the young man, a good solemn sincere nod that told him the painting was indeed beautiful, that his wife and daughter looked very forgiving and that the world was an enchanting and magical place, brimming with infinite possibilities and endless compassion for each and every member of God's eternal family.

Chappie

Chappie pulled the Calais deep into his long driveway, Carson was right behind him in the XR. Both cars were parked alongside the house out of sight from the road, Chappie would make a call in the morning and get rid of them both. They'd left Carson's Subaru out front of the mansion, in that neighbourhood it could be weeks before anyone reported it.

The Calais they'd taken home handled well, the Muslims hadn't done any work on it but it was pretty much new. Chappie turned the engine off and listened to the XR rumble behind him, the engine was humming and Carson let it rest a while before killing it.

Chappie got out and walked into the house carrying the bag. Chappie liked the way Carson wasn't loud and excitable. Some of his friends would get the adrenalin going afterwards and would need to run around the place shouting and screaming. Half the time Chappie would end up rolling on the floor with them just to get them to settle down. But Carson was cool.

He'd done it all before, he was reliable. Carson came in and flopped down on the couch, Chappie headed to the fridge for some beers.

"You staying, man?" Chappie asked, bringing him a drink.

"Think I will, yeah Charlie, been a heavy couple of fucking days." Carson was shaking his head quickly and opening his eyes wide, trying to refresh himself. Chappie took the stash they'd gotten and put it in the middle of the coffee table. Carson drank from his beer half watching what was going on.

"You still seeing Clemmy though, yeah?"

"Yeah I'll go up and straighten the boy out, not much more, might come back tomorrow night huh?" said Carson.

"As long as you want man."

"What 'bout you?"

"Fuck all, get rid of those wheels there, that's about it really."

"You call Mark up, hey?" asked Carson.

"Yeah, he'll take 'em," Chappie passed a handful of cash towards Carson. "You want some?"

Chappie was pointing to the pills on the table.

"Nah brother, maybe just some weed there, hey, need to wind it back for a day or two," Carson took the bag of weed Chappie passed across the table.

Chappie put his share of the money back in the bag along with the rest of the stash and rubbed his eyes. He'd been up for days and needed some sleep, he could relax with Carson in the house and get a good few hours. The money for the Calais and the XR would keep him going for another few months.

"I'm going to take a shower, man, the spare room still empty?" Carson asked, standing up.

"Yeah, if you don't count all the shit that's in there."

Chappie watched him as he made his way to the shower, he could see how tired he looked up close, he hoped he'd get a good night's sleep.

Chappie took another drink of his beer, looking at the bag bundled up on the table, he was doing alright, making it work. He did the right thing with those boys tonight, a little heavy but it needed to be done. He drank again from his beer and could hear in the background singing coming from the shower.

"Charlie me boy, is that the Chatanooga Choo-Choo?"

Daniel

It was Daniel's last class before his break. He was looking at a brochure from an art gallery looking for work from Australian artists. He couldn't sell anything in Australia, maybe it would be better overseas, get in with a gallery in Singapore or Canada maybe. Start off as part of a group show, maybe send four or five paintings over. He'd have some credibility being from Australia, he could sell the first lot for a few thousand each, he had the paintings already sitting there at home. Sell out the paintings at the group show, he could even buy them himself under a different name to create some kind of buzz, he knew it worked that way sometimes. The gallery commissions could be as high as fifty percent so the whole thing would cost him around two grand a piece, but the gallery wouldn't know he was buying his own work. They'd ask him for more, be a part of another shared show but maybe just with one other artist, they'd be excited about the money they made and they'd start promoting his work more, he'd pick up a few real sales soon enough, maybe have to buy one or two more of his own. Then they'd give him a solo show, push him hard, raise the price to ten grand a piece, fifteen for the large ones and then he'd be off, simple. Twenty pieces in the show, average of twelve grand a piece that's \$240 000, minus the gallery's commission, he'd still be looking at \$120 000, less tax he'd get just under \$100 000. Part-time at the prison he barely made forty grand a year and that was enough to get by on. With a hundred grand he could take two years off, paint ten, fifteen pictures a year and keep it going.

Every twelve months the price would go up a fraction. He was going to go on the internet next week and do some research, for some reason he suspected the French would enjoy his work the most. He could see, through the art room window, the prison guard bringing the bunch down from unit 6. The guard in front, with the sunglasses, was smoking as they trailed behind him like little ducks. Little ducks with their heads down to the ground keeping a straight line behind their mother.

"Daniel."

Daniel looked up and saw the head of Education standing in the doorway. Daniel put down the pen on the paper he was doing his maths on, trying to make it look like official business.

"Yes," said Daniel inquisitively.

"I've cancelled the art program today as it's holiday period next week, so can you go into room four and help the prisoners set up the Nintendo?"

"Sure, no problem."

The final day had just gotten easier. Instead of talking about the price of new canvases and admiring another portrait of Bon Scott or Ned Kelly, he'd be sitting on his arse watching them play tennis on the Wii, slapping an imaginary ball back and forth in front of the large hand pulled projector screen.

Daniel watched as the head of Education walked up to the front gate to greet the prisoners coming in. He was telling them the news, about how today was going to be lesson-free and would be movies and games instead. There was only a handful of them, Daniel could see most of them smiling and looking at each other, allowing themselves to laugh a little. He saw Michael who was carrying that painting of his under his arm. Michael made a face which suggested disaster and began a pantomime involving his canvas and a make-believe can of sealant spray. The guard unlocked the gate and the prisoners passed the control booth, sliding their IDs through the slot in the wall as they went.

Daniel thought about the rolling hills of the South of France, about maybe taking a trip down across the Pyrenees in a hire car to eat tapas in San Sebastian. He'd be served white wine by waiters in neckerchiefs and Spanish girls would float by the doorways gossiping loudly, being drowned out by the roar of a crowd watching a bullfight somewhere off in the middle distance.

He walked to the supply cupboard and opened the padlock with the heavy bunch of keys connected to his security belt. He couldn't remember if Michael wanted the matte finish or the enamel gloss.

Sanji

Sanji parked in the staff carpark. He was running late. He had to meet his supervisor at university as next week he'd be handing in his thesis. It had been a long time coming. He left Bangladesh more than five years ago now but it was nearly done. His IT business was doing okay but he needed extra money until he finished his PhD and could get a real job. Real work, real money, maybe as a consultant. His father had spoken to him over the past year and said they were crying out for computer engineers as well as system and security developers in Chennai. He wasn't sure if he wanted to take his degree and go into either of those fields. He'd spent the best part of six years thinking about software security and systems security, he felt like he needed to branch out in another direction, take his skills another way, maybe something in entertainment. He'd been working on the side trying to develop a program which would allow the owners of films or music to automatically deduct from the service provider an agreed-upon dollar amount for every illegal download done over the month by a home user. This would force the service provider to pass on the cost to the person doing the downloading so the studios and record companies could still get paid and the music and film producers could take back their industry.

It was an attempt to reverse what had been done, his system would bypass security and privacy measures with the program picking up trace codes put into each product, the code wouldn't identify what the product was, only who owned it and who had stolen it online. The music and film people would have to be convinced, as would the service providers, and of course the codes had to work perfectly, but Sanji thought he was close and if he managed to pull it off, the money would be astronomical. He could bring his father to Perth, set him up with a house on the beach, his two sisters could come too. They could holiday every year, anywhere they wanted, he could take his father to Melbourne to play the casino as much as he liked. He would be very proud.

Sanji took his security jacket from the front seat of his car, he was running very late for his shift. He walked up the platform to the train station where he could

see his partner waiting for him. He looked just as ridiculous in his uniform as Sanji did.

Danny was holding two coffees in his hand, one for himself and one for Sanji. He had a smile on his face, the job was one of the worst around but a good off-sider could make all the difference.

"Sanji, Sanji, Sanji", said Danny, doing his best Indian accent bobbling his head around.

"I'm from Bangladesh motherfucker," said Sanji, taking the coffee from his friend.

"What's the difference?" said Danny. "You're late."

"This coffee is cold," said Sanji taking a sip. "Tastes like a dog's ass...."

"Listen man," said Danny, "we're running a scheduled system here, we're actually supposed to be at Leederville by now, I don't know how they do things in Delhi but this is Western Australia."

"Go eat your father's shit." Sanji took another sip. "This coffee actually does taste like a dog's ass."

They walked towards the top of the stairs, they'd do a ticket check on everyone coming off the incoming train and everyone coming through to get on the next one. After that they'd take a ride and hit Leederville in about an hour.

Sanji hated the work but it was either this or drive a cab. He needed shift work that could be flexible around his uni schedule as well as his IT business. But he was getting almost no work from that at all lately, just the occasional uni student who had too much pornography on his lap top and had infected his system. Nothing major, fifty dollars here and there. He didn't want to drive a cab because some of the Australians scared him, the loud ones could be very intimidating, especially late at night, when all the drinking was going on. When he first came to Australia he noticed everyone seemed to drink an awful lot of alcohol. Really quite frightening. He had to do the occasional late night shift on the train but if things got out of hand they called the police and could all lock themselves in with the driver. It wasn't ideal but better than being in a cab with a car full of Australians late at night.

Sanji put his coffee down on the ticket machine and watched as the train pulled into the station. He stood there watching the people walk off. The young

pretty girls, the fat men, the slow old women. The young men walking alone with mean looks on their faces. He watched them approach. They never had to ask anymore, everyone knew the drill. They held their tickets out as they walked past. Some walked faster than others, some looked him in the eye, some said hello, others said nothing. Sanji had stopped reading the tickets most of the time.

He'd nod and say thank you and pretend he was doing his job. He couldn't have cared less, even if he tried.

"I'm going to the restroom, Danny," said Sanji as the last of the passengers left the station.

"Three minutes until it goes Sanji, be quick," said Danny. looking at his watch.

"Up your white ass motherfucker," Sanji called back. making sure no-one was around.

Sanji stood over the urinal. He looked around, the mirrors had been replaced by polished pieces of steel. There were scratches cut into them with knives, compasses, who knew. Graffiti was all over the wall, meaningless indecipherable scribbles, one after the next. The small single toilet filled the space with the stench of piss. Paint was falling off the walls, the ceiling cracked and flaking too, there looked like there were shit marks on the ceiling. It was worse than Bangladesh. He washed his hands and tried to make out his reflection in the defaced metal. They may as well have stuck a frying pan on the wall. There was a needle box to the left of the sink, bolted shut and yellow, the box scraped to shreds for good measure, who knew what was taking place in these toilets. There were two old posters in steel frames by the mirror, one for sexually transmitted infections and the other for the psychotic potential of chemical drug use. It was like being in some sort of hell. Midland always got to him this way.

When he walked out of the toilets Danny was standing by the first door of the train, keeping his eye on him, making sure he wasn't going to be late. A few of the public were walking fast towards the train, trying to catch it at the last minute.

"Alright Sanji," Danny looked a little anxious. He'd been a transit guard for over four years and unlike Sanji he wasn't going anywhere else. This was Danny's job for the foreseeable future so he took it considerably more seriously than Sanji did.

Sanji made the doors just in time and they closed behind him as he stepped through. He and Danny would start at the far end of the train, Sanji would take the left hand side and Danny would take the right. Usually they had to issue one infringement every two or three trains. Sanji had one of the lowest infringement rates of all the casual transit guards and had received a second warning letter suggesting his numbers improve or he may face reassignment or dismissal. He was told he had fourteen days to respond to the warning letter. Sanji felt like wiping his ass with it. He did neither.

"Tickets please," said Danny as he reached the end of the carriage. He didn't have to say it loudly, once the public saw one of them pull out a ticket they all followed. Danny was efficient. He was quite lean and would bend down and back up quickly, looking at the concession cards and swiping the smart riders as he went along. He had an army background but was thrown out for fighting with an officer. Apparently they'd get all the soldiers together at the barracks once a week and if there were any issues between the troops they'd slug it out in a boxing ring. Danny KO'd the wrong sergeant and was kicked out the following month on grounds of mental instability.

"Ticket please, miss," Sanji nodded politely and smiled as if he was interrupting, "Thank you, ticket please, sir". He was wandering slowly up his side of the carriage, Danny was nearly halfway done already but Sanji couldn't see the point in rushing something so trivial.

As he looked at the people on the train he sometimes felt above them. They were just ordinary folks. Riding around on public transport in the middle of the day, most looked like they didn't have very much money. They didn't look like PhD students either. Then he would feel bad for thinking that way. His father would always remind him to be grateful for his circumstances, create his own opportunities, work as hard as possible but that success was never guaranteed. He would tell him those who fail in life do so sometimes simply because they were unlucky, and being unlucky is something that can happen to anyone.

"Life is a hundred metre dash," his father would say to him late at night in the family kitchen when Sanji was weary and tired from studying for his high school exams.

"Some begin at the starting line, son, some have a twenty metre head start, some have a twenty metre handicap, but worst of all are the poor bastards who have no idea the race is even being held. Circumstance, awareness, hard work and luck. This is life."

His father had repeated this mantra over and over to him for as long as Sanji could remember. "Circumstance, awareness, hard work and luck."

The doors between the carriages opened at the far end and Danny walked through, Sanji was falling far behind, the lady sitting in front of him was holding out her ticket smiling up at him. She had found it, he smiled back and moved on.

"Ticket please, sir."

"I already showed my ticket," the young man said, pointing in the direction of Danny who was now in the next carriage. He was an Aboriginal man, he looked sleepy. He was clean enough though, sometimes they smelled terribly. Sanji had seen plenty of them on the train, always causing problems. He was told to treat them like any other passenger.

"I'm sorry sir but I'll need to see your ticket."

"But I just told you I already showed my ticket to that one there." Again he pointed towards Danny.

"Sir this is my side of the train, I'll really need to see your ticket, I'm sorry." Sanji saw the man had lacerations running down his left arm, they looked a few days old, scabbing and dreadful looking. Always causing problems, thought Sanji. The man was looking up at him now, staring into his face.

"Please sir," said Sanji, "could you just show me your ticket please." Sanji could feel the people around him begin to stare at the two of them.

The Aboriginal man looked away and let out a deep breath. He looked like he was calming himself down. He looked back up at Sanji, his shoulders square, his long arms sitting rigid on each leg, he spoke slowly and seemed to be considering every word.

"I just told you, that fella there already seen my ticket, I switched seats just now cause the sun was in my eyes."

Sanji could see bruising and more cuts around the man's eyes, they were wide open and fixed on Sanji. His knuckles, which he was clenching tight on his knees,

had dried black scabs running across both hands. The doors between the carriages opened up again and Danny walked back through.

"Everything alright?" Danny asked. The passengers, all watching, turned their heads in Danny's direction and followed him as he approached and stood shoulder to shoulder with Sanji.

"Everything is absolutely fine...."

"Everything is not absolutely fine, you tell him now, you already seen my ticket."

"If a transit officer requests you to produce a valid ticket, sir, you are required by law to produce one," said Danny.

"You are fucking joking," said the Aboriginal man, raising his voice and shaking his head in disbelief.

"Sir, you have entered into an agreement to abide by the rules set by the public transport authority by stepping onto the train and if asked by a transit officer to produce a valid ticket you are required to do so." Danny rattled it off.

"Are you saying you didn't already see my ticket?" the man's voice was getting louder.

"I'm instructing you of your obligations as set down by the transport act...."

The Aboriginal man stood up, Sanji raised his head, he was much taller than both himself and Danny.

"Did you ask anyone else on this train twice for their ticket?"

"Sir, I'm instructing you now to lower your voice and I will ask you one more time to comply with the request and produce a valid ticket."

"You've already seen my fucking ticket." The man stepped towards Danny and was now in his face. Sanji had pressed his alert button which sent a message for supporting officers to be available at the next station.

"Sir, I'm now giving you a verbal warning to step back and keep your distance or you will be placed...."

The train was rolling into Bassendean, Sanji felt the train under his feet slow down as it approached the platform.

"You saw my fucking ticket." the Aboriginal man hadn't moved and was staring back at Danny looking him in the eye. "Tell this cunt here, you already saw it".

As the Aboriginal man turned to look at Sanji, the train doors opened and four officers headed for the carriage doors. The man turned to look at the guards approaching and as he did Danny grabbed him from behind and tried to push him to the floor.

"On your knees sir." Danny's arms were now braced around the man's chest.

"Here we go, here we fucking go," the Aboriginal man started shouting, looking up at the ceiling, barely registering Danny's hold of him at all. As the officers stepped into the carriage he started bucking and easily twisted free of Danny, turning to face him. He grabbed Danny by his shirt front and started pushing him away to the back of the carriage; Danny, wide-eyed walking backwards, was trying to get himself free. At once the other officers blew past Sanji and tackled both of them to the ground. There were a few shrieks from some of the women on the train as they all fell in a heap on top of each other.

Sanji stepped back, watching as they tried to restrain him on the floor. Sanji held on to one of the handrails to steady himself, not wanting to get involved. A woman was standing next to him watching. She was thin, had greying strands of hair and a woollen jumper that looked too warm for the weather. She was watching the struggle and looking back at Sanji each time the young man shouted at the officers trying to arrest him.

Sanji felt embarrassed to be part of it all. They looked like thugs trying to get him under control, they were screaming at him telling him to stop resisting. He kept swearing at them as he twisted his body, his face jammed into the floor. They finally managed to get his left hand behind his back and secure a bracelet but he wouldn't give up, he kept his right hand free. It was a matter of time before they'd have him secured but he was making them work for it.

Tony

"Do you agree the time is 5:45pm?"

"Yes."

"Are you aware you also have the right to contact a friend or relative to inform them where you are and arrange or attempt to arrange to have them present during questioning?"

"Yes."

"Are you aware you have the right to contact a legal representative of your choice to inform them where you are and arrange or attempt to arrange to have them present during questioning?"

"Yes."

"Is there anyone you'd like to have present?"

"No."

"Are you under the influence of drugs or alcohol at this particular moment?"

"No."

"Have you been involved in a traffic accident in the last 24 hours?"

"No."

"Are you currently on any medication?"

"No."

"What level of education did you acquire at school?"

"Year ten."

Tony was listening as Craig reeled them off. The young fella looked like he'd heard it all before. Plenty of times. He had to keep an eye on his mobile for a call from Tubby. He hadn't been out and about for most of the week, it'd be good to see him again. Craig was looking bigger than usual, like he'd put on weight. His wife had left him last month and he'd been hitting the sauce a bit too hard. But he'd come round. Soon enough he'll realise he's better off without the filthy gash. She was a right cunt that's for sure, had Craig spinning in circles. Tried to get him to quit the force and head up the mines. Seemed to be the whole world was bent on sending their blokes up the mines. Come home for a week, fuck off for four, send money. Poor cunts. Craig'd come good or he wouldn't. That's how it went.

"Sergeants, could you step outside for a moment please," young Wilson had knocked on the door and let himself in to the interview room. Young little prick. He was alright. Tony remembered his own first year as a detective, fucking nightmare year. Every cunt with an ear load of advice, all the bullshit, all the stories. Fucking pricks the lot of them. Wilson would come good, maybe, he'd have to show 'em a few things first.

Tony walked out of the interview room and checked his phone again for a text from Tubby, nothing. Craig ambled out behind him, he was nearly waddling now he was that big. How did the cunt put on so much weight in one month? Tony saw the Aboriginal fella look up at him as he closed the door. Don't be looking at me, nigger; I'll put you in a box.

"The hospital's just been in contact about one of the friends and they've just flown him to Royal Perth." Wilson looked proud of himself for relaying the message successfully. But here comes the questions son.

"Is he dead?" asked Craig.

"No they just flew him to Royal Perth, he's not dead."

"Is he going to be dead?" asked Craig in a hurry.

"We're all going to be dead, Craig, eventually," Tony tried stirring him up. Nothing.

"He's out, he's in a coma," said Wilson.

"Induced, was it induced?" Craig was looking serious now.

"I don't know." Wilson was floundering.

"What you mean you don't know, you didn't ask if it was induced?" Craig was getting wide-eyed.

"Well I didn't speak to them directly, Julia just passed me the message and said...."

"You didn't even speak to them?" Craig was turning a good shade of red.

"Julia just told me to tell you...." Wilson was looking for a foothold.

"For fuck's sake, Wilson," Craig was spitting. "Go find out if it was induced."

"There's also about the girl," said Wilson.

"There's also about the girl?" asked Craig. "What the fuck is that supposed to mean?"

"The girl, the nurse's daughter, the one in the car with him," said Wilson pointing towards the interview room.

"Is she in a coma too?"

"No."

"Well?"

Tony checked his phone again, there was a message, hopefully from Tubby, he pressed on it and it came up, it was from his mobile phone company telling him his bill was available to view online. Fantastic.

"She's fifteen."

"Alright so she was fifteen and he's how old?"

"He's 25 isn't he or is he older?"

"He looks older."

"She looks fucking older."

They were standing around Julia's computer. Julia was sitting there with her hand over the mouse, shaking her head back and forth and making silly noises with her tongue.

"She definitely looks older," said Craig. He was staring at the photo intently, it seemed to calm him down, who knew what was going through his head.

"Fifteen," said Julia out loud and slow, she shook her head some more, who knew what was going through her head.

"Does he know?" Craig asked.

"Not yet," said Tony.

"Let's go tell him then."

Tony followed Craig in, the black fella was sitting just where they'd left him, hunched over the cup of tea he wasn't drinking with a dirty look on his face. He'd been alone for a couple of hours now while they double-checked everything that had come back from the hospital. Tubby still hadn't phoned.

"Alright Carson," said Craig, sitting down at the table flipping through the pages in the file in front of him. "You need to tell us everything from the start."

"I told you, I showed my ticket," he was looking into his white foam tea cup.

"Forget about the ticket Carson, I'm not talking about that, I couldn't care less about the train ticket."

Tony could see the frustration growing in Craig's face. He usually kept pretty cool but his wife had really thrown him. Fucking women. Ten high at the tip if they didn't have a slit, his father had said once. A bit harsh but that's the way he always played it.

"Carson," Craig was running out of moves.

Carson looked up and stretched himself, his hands raised up to the ceiling, long wings on him. Tony saw the state of his left arm, cut to ribbons, he might be on the gear, Tony wasn't sure, didn't really care.

"Carson, you can do better than that," Craig's tone of voice was shifting up a notch.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Carson answered him casually.

"You fucked someone's daughter in a stolen car and nearly killed her boyfriend and four of his mates." Craig seemed relieved in saying it.

"I've no idea what you're on about sergeant."

"Carson....." Craig again.

"When did they start putting Indians on the train?" Carson said, looking back and forth between Tony and Craig.

"She was fifteen mate," Craig moved his head in over the table.

Carson leaned back and kept an eye on Craig who was still staring at him. Tony felt like he was going to say something, maybe lean forward and confess, maybe not - but he said nothing. Just breathed in and out with his mouth closed looking at them both.

"Carson, this is about as serious as it gets. This won't be a couple of years son." Craig was trying something else.

"Every time I meet you boys it's always as serious as it gets."

"Carson, if you cooperate with us and make our jobs easier, I give you my guarantee that we'll ask for the minimum sentence possible."

"Will you?" asked Carson, looking back at Craig stone-faced.

"If you play it straight with us and let us know exactly what happened so we don't have to be chasing this up all over the state, then yeah, we'll ask for the minimum."

"I have nothing to say to you fellas," said Carson.

"Carson?" Craig was getting stern again, his wife had ruined him.

"Carson, Carson, Carson," said the black fella, parroting back into Craig's face.

Tony could feel the bad vibe gathering in the air. Craig was playing it terrible, he was all over the place. You pick a track and stick with it, he was all over the shop today. The young fella looked bored and agitated, like maybe he'd come flying across the table, hopefully at Craig if he did.

"We need to address what happened with that young lady," said Craig, trying to bring some control back into the room. "Her mother is beyond upset about the incident and the young man you assaulted is still in the hospital, as are two of the friends and another one's been flown to Perth and he doesn't look like he's going home anytime soon."

Carson was a statue taking it in his stride. Craig's words meant nothing. Tony was impressed.

"The one witness from the second altercation outside your mother's home, Carson, said you attacked two of the victims with a baseball bat." Craig again.

"Sergeant," Carson looked amused.

"Look we understand you've had a tough run mate, but you can't go round nearly murdering people regardless of the circumstances, do you understand that?"

"I do understand Sergeant," said Carson, laying on the sincerity.

"Do we have to start this all over again?" Craig was holding the file up in the air, the young fella had got to him.

"I understand," Carson said, repeating himself, enjoying the look of anger growing on Craig's face.

"Alright then, from the beginning. Do you agree the time now is 7:45pm?" Craig asked in a loud voice. Tony tried to keep the look of shock off his face. Craig had fallen apart.

"Do you agree the time is now 7:45pm?"

"Yes," said Carson, looking him in the eye.

"Are you aware you also have the right to contact a friend or relative to inform them where you are and arrange or attempt to arrange to have them present during questioning?"

"Yes."

"Are you aware you have the right to contact a legal representative of your choice to inform them where you are and arrange or attempt to arrange to have them present during questioning?"

"Yes."

"Are you aware you have the right to contact a legal...?"

"Yes," said Carson shaking his head.

"Is there anyone you'd like to have present?"

"No."

"Are you under the influence of drugs or alcohol at this particular moment?"

"No."

"Have you been involved in a traffic accident in the last 24 hours?"

"No."

"Are you currently on any medication?"

"No."

"What level of education did you acquire at school?"

"Year ten."

"Were you aware that the young lady who you had sexual relations with in the back of the stolen vehicle was in fact...."

Tony watched the clock on the wall, it was only a few minutes till knock off. Craig had gone mad with pain, the poor cunt of a thing. This shit could wait till tomorrow. He wondered if Tubby was in the bar already, he better bloody not be, the last time he saw him he was going off on holiday to Bali by himself. Bloody pervert. Who knew what he was getting up to over there. Land of bloody smiles my arse.

"Excuse me sergeant," Tony said, standing up from the table. He pushed in his chair and walked out the door.

Ariel

Ariel looked up at the clock above the door. It had just gone eleven in the morning. His office was getting very warm. He didn't have any ironed shirts to wear this morning so he wore his pyjama shirt to work and put a woollen jumper over the top. It was either that or come in late. It meant he couldn't take his jumper off for the whole day. He had hoped it wouldn't get too warm but he was starting to feel the heat already.

Ariel's department was being audited by head office. There was an inspection happening tomorrow afternoon. He had to make sure all the overview files and procedural policies were physically on display. That meant printing a few thousand pages off the computer and filing them in a dozen or so lever arch binders. The printer had been going all morning. It seemed to be adding heat to the room. Ariel could feel a sweat forming around his face. He thought about going to the bathroom and taking off his pyjama top and just wearing the jumper but that would probably be itchy and would leave him with a rash. He'd just have to sweat it out.

"Haaay," Ariel looked up to the office door and saw Big Luther standing there waving a slip of paper in his hands. Big Luther was wearing sunglasses on top of his shaved dark head. He was built like a beast. A bull walking upright on two legs. He was a warrior from somewhere unknown, somewhere far off in every sense. No one claimed him and he never let on that he was human enough to come from just one place. He smiled a lot and laughed when he spoke, Luther was one of the crazy dangerous ones. He'd been in and out for the last twenty years. Dark black skin, a chest as big as Ariel's belly was wide. He wasn't that tall but he took up a hell of a lot of space. He was here for his second assessment visit. Ariel had spoken to him a few weeks back. Luther spoke like an Indian mystic in a cowboy movie, a wild scarred-up War Chief talking in riddles leaving everyone to work out whether or not he was an ancient sage or just a plain lunatic. A plain lunatic capable of ancient and sacred acts of cleansing violence.

Big Luther wore his sunglasses everywhere he went, indoors or out, and wore a big wooden cross that hung loyally round his neck. He was a man of God at war with the world. A world that was trying to break him down. But Luther, unlike most

of the other prisoners, seemed to breathe in what they were trying to kill him with. He absorbed all the jail had for him and carried himself with the ease of a shape-shifter. He was schooled in all manners of jailsmanship and was crafty beyond reason because of it. He was a smiling psychopath who might just be in control of everyone he came in to contact with.

"Luther, come in, come in, have a seat," said Ariel, gesturing towards the chair.

"Thank you very much." Luther slid into the chair. Ariel noticed that even though he sat down he seemed like he was the same height. Ariel adjusted himself in his own chair, trying to change his perspective.

"How have you been Luther?"

"Alright, thank you," said Luther, staring motionless at him.

"Right, well, let's get down to it then, just let me just get up your file," said Ariel, clicking off the weather page.

"You alright there sir, you seem a bit red today," said Luther, smiling at Ariel.

"I think it's just the heat getting to me a little," said Ariel.

"Fair enough," said Luther, happy with the exchange.

"Now have you been down to the Chapel since you saw me last, Luther, we need to lower your security rating but we need a few more things to happen first. Now, you said your mother would visit you if she knew you were going to Chapel because you know, as we discussed, if you have regular visits it shows the board that you've been interacting well with others on the outside and it'll shave a few points off your total score which is obviously a good thing."

"Yeah, well, that's what I wanted to talk to you about there sir, you see, the chaplain down there he's a little bit, how do I say this, he's a little bit off scripture, if you know what I mean." Luther left it at that, he tilted his head a little and stared at Ariel waiting for his response.

"He's a bit off scripture?" asked Ariel, he had reached down under the table and unbuttoned his pants to try and cool himself down. His shirt ends underneath his jumper were beginning to soak through with sweat, the dampness was sucking the jumper closer to his body.

"Well," began Luther, making himself comfortable, "I need certain things when I go to worship, see, I need a man who's willing to listen to you after he asks a question, you know, I need a man who's willing to change from his position of thought when you're having a discussion with him, he doesn't have to change his position of thought, I'm not saying that, but, he has to be willing to consider changing his thought, you see, because if you have a position of thought that you're not willing to ever even consider changing from, then you don't actually believe in the position you're holding, you know what I mean."

"Have you and the chaplain had words together?" asked Ariel.

"Well, that's just it, I went down to do as we planned out here, go once a week, but the chaplain down there, as I've said, is a little off scripture and he's saying certain things which, you know, from my point of view, well it's not actually my point of view, it's a scriptural point of view, but they're off, is what I'm saying."

"And that means you can't go anymore?" asked Ariel.

"My uncle looked after me when I was five years old and he'd drink with his friends inside, cause it was hot outside you know, and he turned to me one day and said go out and bring it some water, pointing to the dog's bowl on the kitchen floor. I fill up the bowl, go outside, and my auntie's chained to the washing line. And she'd drink from that bowl too, you know what I'm saying?"

Ariel was beginning to feel dizzy, he promised himself to bring in extra shirts so this wouldn't happen again. Luther was confusing him.

"It's like you're born and given a totem, yours might kind of be the koala or the wombat maybe, mine is the bush turkey, you put a small baby that's crying in his cot, but he's still crying you know, you take him up and feed him, you put him down he's still crying, no-one is getting any sleep cause the little baby is crying, you dip a rag in petrol there, you squeeze it out good, put it next to the little fella's head, baby falls asleep, everyone else in the house falls asleep, it follows on you know...."

"Have you contacted your mother since we last talked?" asked Ariel, straining to keep up.

"I spoke to her on the phone but she wasn't in, I left her a message there on voice mail, told her about the chaplain."

"About him being off scripture?" prompted Ariel.

"That's right, see I've spoken up for Jesus before, when he's being misrepresented," Luther continued.

"I see," Ariel felt sweat run into his eyes.

"A few years back I come up on an open window, next to a grog shop there, night time, someone left it open a little bit you know, snuck in, two bottles of scotch and a few long beers and that, took 'em down where I was sleeping, behind a footy club under the grandstand, this was in Adelaide, South Australia way, so I sit down, get comfy, start knocking back those beers, nipping away at the scotch there you know, so I look down and there's a bottle of scotch gone, so I open the next one up and get him started and it's the middle of the night now you know and anyway I died that night see, under that shelter there, the grandstand, I took myself off this place."

"You died?" asked Ariel.

"That's right, and I wake up in another place, far away from South Australia. It's dark, not pitch black but pretty dark and I'm standing and all around me are people standing asleep, just kind of dozing there with their chins on their chest. I look around and there's millions of them, as far as I can make out. To the left there, the right, front and back, stretching out one after the other. And I know where I am, everyone's waiting. So I'm thinking I'm not supposed to be here, this place is not for me, so I called out, I said I want to speak to the King."

Luther's arm was raised up like he was a little boy in school.

"The King?" asked Ariel.

"That's right, I called out again saying I want to speak to the King and all of a sudden I was standing in this big throne room, big warm room, had thrones all along the edge, shaped like a semi-circle you know and all the thrones were on the side of the semi-circle and all these men were on these thrones there and in the middle was the King."

Ariel could feel sweat trickle down into his left eye, the sting of the salt blurring his vision.

"The King," said Luther, leaning forward. "And I said I want to talk to Jesus because I shouldn't be there with all those people asleep and one of the men on the

thrones looked at me and said you can't speak to Jesus, and he was holding this parchment in his hands there, like an old scroll you know but it was long and I looked at him and he looked at me and the room was all quiet around us, big room, a little red in colour but warm you know like candle light and I knew by the way he was looking at me, that that was my scroll he was holding." Ariel sat transfixed listening to Luther, sweat now trickling past the corner of his mouth. "Then I heard His voice call out and He spoke to the fella there, said to him, Luther has spoken up for me before, now I'll speak up for Luther."

"What did he say?" Ariel was holding his breath.

"Well then I woke up in the hospital you know, they had tubes in me, going in and out, I'm sitting there in an empty room and a bit later they find out that I'm awake and about four different doctors come in the room from all over the hospital and they tell me I'd been dead throughout the night a few times and they were all waiting to see if I'd make it or not. They had all the files in front of them and were showing each other. Some of them were shaking their heads there, you know, amazed I was alive."

"Hello," Patrice stood in the doorway looking over at Ariel who was sitting still in his chair, small rivulets of sweat beading over his face.

"I need to take Luther to the BBQ now," said Patrice, looking concerned as Ariel glanced towards him. "Luther, they're waiting for you to start the ceremony, we should go now if you can, everyone's out there, even the superintendent."

"We can finish another time Luther, your next hearing won't be until next month, the end of next month, I'll reschedule you for next week." Ariel was wiping his face with the back of his sleeve, the coarse wool tearing across his lips as he did.

"You might need some water there sir, look like you're about to pass out." Luther stood up and smiled at Patrice in the doorway, he slid his sunglasses from the top of his head down over his eyes and walked out the door.

Jennifer

Jennifer pulled her cardigan tight around herself. The sun was out behind the clouds but it had little warmth for her today. She hid her fists curled up inside the ends of her sleeves, bracing against the wind that blew across the treeless prison oval. She left the house wearing a blouse too thin and a summer cardigan, her long coat was in the car, parked outside the prison, if she wanted it she'd have to sign her alarm and keys out and back in again, it was too much bother.

She'd cancelled all of the afternoon appointments for the BBQ and football game. It was another special day put on by the prison. They had been waiting around for a while now, they were about fifteen minutes over schedule. The barbecues were lined up ten in a row with the prisoners manning the grills, smoke from the steaks and sausages had been blowing across the oval with the afternoon breeze. All the cooking had been done and the meat was now waiting in the catering trays covered up with foil.

About 100 prisoners had turned out for the football game and the feed, but they couldn't start until the day was opened in Language. Jennifer could see Luther being escorted out through the gymnasium in the direction of the Assistant Superintendent who was waiting near the PA. Jennifer remembered Luther did the openings sometimes, she had heard him first maybe a year or two earlier. Hopefully he'd be the one to do it again, they could get started and she could get back inside.

Luther was being followed by a handsome guard, Jennifer had spoken to him once or twice at the front gate when they had both come to work at the same time. He had some sort of accent. He seemed like a gentle sort, he stood out from most of the others. He kept himself in good shape and looked clean too. Jennifer liked seeing him in the prison, it made the place seem more normal.

Luther was doing his usual slow swagger as he walked up front. He was short and stocky. Powerful. She had spoken to him a few times during his visits to the prison. He was one of the more serious ones. He had a good heart and there was very little bullshit about him. The other prisoners seemed to know it too. He had their respect. Men incapable of having respect for almost anything had it for Luther, as much as he needed.

He walked around the back of the barbecues and was heading for the Deputy Superintendent. The prisoners who stood by the catering trays waiting to dish out the food greeted him as he walked by. Some shared a private joke with him, one of the servers pushed a plate wrapped in tinfoil into his hands. Luther strode through the prisoners nodding here and there, giving a broad grin to one or two of the chosen few. He walked past the fire pit where the full bloods were sitting around a smoking pile of ashes watching their kangaroo tails twist up out of the ground.

Luther had their respect as well, though they didn't call out to him, they nodded silently in his direction as he strode past, one eye on Luther and one on their kangaroo tails. Luther walked up to the Deputy Super who stood by the microphone. Luther stopped next to him, shoulder to shoulder, he didn't greet him or shake his hand, just took his position staring out at the hundred or so prisoners waiting as patiently as they could for the show to begin.

Jennifer hoped they would keep things short, the wind was starting to pick up and was cutting through her cardigan, she could feel the bones in her arms starting to chill, she'd be sore all night tonight for not keeping herself warm. The naturapath told her to eat more celery to help fend off the osteoporosis that was settling itself into her bones. She was eating celery by the bucket load, blending a few stalks every morning into her breakfast shake, she had to admit it had worked after only a month or two, but all the celery in the world wouldn't keep her warm on a day like today.

"Alright, we'd like to thank everyone for coming out today to enjoy a bit of footy and to share a meal, we're running a bit behind so I'll hand straight over to Luther to get us started."

Luther took the microphone off the Super without looking at him, staring down onto the ground as he started to speak.

"Alright, I've been asked to say a few words in language here boys to get us going for today." Jennifer listened as Luther rattled off and began speaking in his native tongue. She'd heard it a few times before but each time she did it struck her as being beautiful. Beautiful in its distance and eloquence. It seemed out of place here in the prison. But for all its beauty it was also nearly forgotten and it made Jennifer sad to stand there alone and cold watching the last of something evaporate

before her eyes. She imagined herself a much older woman being asked about it as one of the few people who saw it in the flesh. Like the last living survivors of the *Titanic*, the ones who were actually there, and every year that passed the passengers got older and older until the reporters were talking to old men and women who were on board the ship as babies.

Luther had finished as quickly as he had started.

The prisoners all made a line to get to the barbecues, they picked up their plates from the first table, their sausages, steaks and onions from the next, on the third were large bowls of salad that went mostly untouched, and on the last a hundred or so white bread rolls and large tubs of margarine. Two eskys filled with cordial and an industrial roll of paper towels sat at the end on a steel trolley stolen from the medical centre.

The flurry of prisoners circled around the tables filling their plates, they went back to different patches on the oval and set up temporary camps in their pre-ordained groups. A few prisoners sat alone off to the sides, a few walked about between the crowd carrying their food as they went. Jennifer watched as Luther sat near the full bloods around the fire pit, Jennifer thought it a good idea herself and slowly made her way over to catch some heat.

The handsome guard was there too, he was smoking, standing just off to the side watching things carefully from a safe distance. These days were always risky for the prison staff. They were a long way from any secure rooms. The prisoners outnumbered them by about twenty to one. If they wanted to start a riot, rape some women or settle some scores, it was days like today where they could get away with it or at least get it over with. Jennifer looked around the expanse of the football field. It was probably three or four ovals combined in size. The high cement walls which ran round the perimeter had everyone sealed in, staff included. She would sometimes imagine running away from the prisoners if they rioted and tried to get at her. She knew she was getting on a bit, in her mid-fifties now, but she was still attractive and she knew what half of them were capable of, it wouldn't matter if she was ninety years old and dead in the ground with some of them. If they let themselves loose they'd fuck the holes in the walls. She'd read in the files one of

them had split a poodle in half before coming inside, and one of the hens in the chicken house was found done over and dead.

She imagined herself running a few laps around the oval before being caught and set upon, then she stopped thinking about it, it couldn't be fully thought through, not all the way. As she approached the fire pit she could smell the burning fur from the kangaroo tails. There were about seven or eight of the desert boys, all sitting round chewing scraps of meat off the long curved cartilages. These boys had dark, dark black skin. All of them big and brooding and silent. Very little sound or movement. They spoke in hand gestures to each other and didn't speak at all to people like Jennifer, not unless they absolutely had to.

When she had one of them in her office they'd sit tense and still, looking away from her as she asked them simple questions. They'd speak to her in low whispers, in mumbles she could barely understand if they made any sound at all. Now, sitting around the fire pit, they seemed more relaxed. Relaxed and occupied, chewing away at their tails. The smell turned Jennifer's stomach, it smelt like a petting zoo, singed hair and meat that probably hadn't been cleaned, eaten from hands that probably hadn't been washed. One of the Noongyar prisoners who had somehow organised a tail for himself was storming around the others, his piece of kangaroo swinging out of his left hand as he made his presence felt.

"There's not even any fucking salt," he barked as he stalked the area looking for the little plastic shakers scattered about on days like these.

"Ungrateful sod," thought Jennifer, looking at him as he marched about, entitlement up to his elbows.

She knew who he was. She'd interviewed him and gone through his pre-sentence report before his trial. He was a vicious bastard, nothing redeeming about him whatsoever. Mean and ugly with a permanent scowling hostility. He regularly beat his woman to a pulp, his kids too. Two of his sons were in the system but they couldn't be housed in the same prison. He was one of the more dangerous ones, like Luther in his strength and size but this one had no heart left in him. When Jennifer allowed herself to imagine the worst thing possible that could happen to her in prison, it was men like this one who she imagined doing it to her.

She stood by the side of the fire pit and warmed herself a little, trying to keep out of the way. She didn't mind that they didn't talk to her. For some reason she felt safer around the ones from far away. She knew it didn't make much sense because they were just as violent as the ones from Perth, more so even, they were full of superstitions which gave them a special kind of evil when they wanted to call on it.

As the mean one stamped in and out of the area looking for his salt, Jennifer watched the others lounging around. One was a big young man with a shaved head and a dim look in his eyes like there wasn't much happening inside. Jennifer knew him too, he had a child's mind, a retarded child's mind. She couldn't remember what he was in for. She'd met him briefly during a visit to the gardens where he was working but he was eventually kicked out because he kept pulling up the tomatoes thinking they were weeds. He looked happy sitting by the edge of the fire now, the long tail of the kangaroo draped over his knee, chewing the upturned end like he was playing a flute. A flute made out of cooked flesh and burnt hair.

The others around the fire were his friends.

"You look cold."

Jennifer turned around to see the handsome guard smiling at her, he was still wearing his sunglasses, his smile was warm and gentle.

"Could you tell, I thought I was warming up," said Jennifer a little awkward.

"I'd give you my jacket but it probably wouldn't look right," said Patrice.

"I should have become a guard instead of a psych," said Jennifer, immediately regretting her words.

"I don't think so Jennifer."

She liked hearing her name come out of his mouth as she stood there looking at him. He must have remembered her from such a long time ago. She could smell tobacco smoke off him mixing with the smoke from the fire pit.

"If only for the wardrobe maybe," said Patrice offering her an out.

"I haven't see you for a while, were you away?" Jennifer was trying to remember his name.

"They move me around a lot, sometimes I get lost in the units, I don't mind moving around so they put me all over the prison."

"I suppose that's nice, to have a change all the time."

"I like it, it breaks up the work for me."

"I didn't know you smoked?" said Jennifer, she was turning into mother mode, she desperately didn't want to.

"Only when I'm smoking," said Patrice smiling again.

A loud whistle blew off in the distance. They both looked in the direction, the football team had taken the field and a fight had broken out. Two prisoners from opposite teams were rolling around on top of each other. The other prisoners moved away backwards, giving them space. The prison code surpassed the laws of football, no-one was joining in, not with everyone watching. In prison everyone barracked for themselves.

Jennifer could see a gate open from the far end of the oval. Seven officers in flak jackets came running out in the direction of the pair. Jennifer watched as the two men threw wild punches and scrambled over each other trying to get the upper hand. The prisoners were watching silently, one eye on the fight, one eye on the officers closing in.

"Alright you pair of fucking idiots, pack it in for fuck's sake," the officer wearing the umpires jersey was yelling at them, red-faced, as the other officers reached them and pulled them apart. Within seconds they were handcuffed and were being frog-marched separately off the oval in different directions. The heavy breathing guards trying to calm them down and get their wind back as the two prisoners yelled at each other over their respective shoulders, trying to agree on an acceptable time and place to finish their business.

"Recreation, ya cunt," screamed one to the other.

"Suits me ya fucking maggot."

"Don't fucking call me a maggot ya fucking dog cunt."

"You're the fucking dog cunt, cunt."

"You're the fucking dog cunt...."

"Alright fellas," the umpire addressed the remaining players as the officers dragged the two away to the punishment cells in unit 1. "Because of Huey and Duey there, we're going to be playing a man down on each side and if we have any more carry on this afternoon this'll be the last fucking time we play a game of footy...."

Jennifer noticed she was standing closer to Patrice.

Adrian

"Did the dog have a collar on it?"

"Nih."

"No, your honour."

"Ok."

His daughter Helen was moving her family down south shortly. They had sold their house in Perth and were making a tree change for Narrikup, a little patch of nowhere between Albany and Denmark. He was going to miss those bloody kids. They were all staying at his house at the moment while they waited for their property down south to settle. Everyday when he'd come home he'd be greeted by both of the grandkids hiding behind the door in the mud room. Same hiding place every day. He wondered if they actually thought they were hidden. It made the house come alive again and made him wish for those times when Helen was a little girl and Angela was still alive. He had done a pretty good job as a father, he was away probably more than he would've liked but it was a different time back then and in the end she had turned out a beautiful woman regardless.

"Your honour, he wants to show you pictures of his wife's wrists."

"Well just wait a minute, let's get back to the dog first of all, I want to make sure we cover everything here, were there any missing posters put up in your street?"

"Nih."

"No, your honour."

"And your son brought the Jack Russell home after a trip to the park by himself?"

"Da."

"That's correct, your honour."

Thankfully it was a long settlement. The owner of the farmlet needed to turn in a few head of sheep at the woolarama. It was going to be his last effort apparently before he moved in with his own family and retired both himself and the property. Who knows what Helen and the boys and Greg were going to do with all that space. It was big enough to get lost in it and the dams on the property made

him very nervous. The eldest was only learning how to swim and the youngest didn't seem to understand the concept of water at all.

"Your honour, he really wants to show you the pictures of his wife's wrist".

"Okay, has he got them there now?"

"Yes your honour, he says the police came to the house and arrested his wife in front of his son and the Jack Russell, your honour, and that there were significant abrasions and bruising around her wrists as the police officers were very rough when securing the hand cuffs, your honour."

Maybe they'd come back after a year or two, maybe Greg wouldn't enjoy it as much as Helen. She was stronger than he was though and could probably convince him to stay if she wanted to. She was saying Perth was just too expensive and herself and Greg were spending too much time working and not enough time at home. It definitely was a different time now.

They were going for the right reasons and he supported Helen's choice, but deep down, when he thought of the little ones so far away, it was very hard. He tried to hide it from her, but he sensed she knew how painful it was for him, she knew what cost the move carried for the whole family. They were all putting on brave faces for each other.

"Your honour, he says it's as if they care more about the dog than they do about a human being."

"Oh yes, that looks very uncomfortable, those really are quite serious bruises." He handed the phone with the pictures of the woman's bruised wrists back to the court clerk. "Well, I can't see a way around this other than to set a trial date and we can settle the issue of ownership that way. Jasmine, do we have a date next month where we can get this through as quick as possible?"

"We do your honour, we have a full day on the twenty first."

"We'll probably need at least two days for this I'd imagine, is the twenty second free?"

"Yes, your honour."

"Excuse me your honour, he says the twenty first is no good as his wife has to return to Serbia to look after her mother who is sick at the moment."

"I see, will the same date the next month suit?"

Maybe he needed to explain it to Helen more clearly, maybe keeping it to himself wasn't the best thing in the long run, not for the kids anyway. The country life would do them good but growing up without a grandad wasn't ideal. Not in the long run.

"He says it will, your honour; eh, but he wants to know if he'll be able to get an interpreter for that date."

"Will you be available on that date?"

"I just go where the court sends me your honour, so I couldn't say that far in advance but if I'm not available another interpreter will be."

"Jasmine, could you make a note that we need an interpreter who speaks Serbian for the twenty-first and the twenty-second."

"Yes, your honour."

The week before, Helen and Greg went to Narrikup to peg out the block for the small arts studio they were planning to build. They left the kids with him for the weekend and went by themselves for some time alone. In a moment of selfishness he found himself waving goodbye as they pulled out of the driveway and wishing deep down, very deep down, that they'd be killed on the road driving south and the grandkids would have to stay with him forever. He didn't let his mind follow the thought, he went back inside and set up the chessboard to play a game with the eldest one. He was still playing without his Queen to give him a chance while he was learning the game. The deal was once he beat his grandad in a proper game, grandad would put his Queen back on the board and if he ever beat grandad with the Queen back on the board, grandad would never play again.

He watched as the Serbian couple walked from the court with the husband whispering in the interpreter's ear. The court officer placed the file in front of him as they brought the next one up. It was an interesting one, a tall young man, Aboriginal, getting into all sorts of terrible trouble it seemed over the years. He was picked up on the train for not having a valid ticket.

The court officer read through the formalities and they got underway, the Lists this week had been relentless, it was going to be another twelve-hour day before he could even think about going home.

"So we had an issue with a train ticket and disturbing the peace and resisting arrest?"

"Your honour there's also the matter of four separate assault charges and a statutory rape charge facing the defendant in a separate matter."

"Not today, though, are they sergeant?"

"Eh, yes your honour, that's correct, we are still waiting at this stage for the investigation to be finalised, I just wanted to make the court aware of the serious nature...."

"Sergeant are you seeking to lay charges today other than those presented here?" He held up the case file for the sergeant.

"Not at this stage your honour, I just wanted to...."

"Well, we can't ask the defendant to wait indefinitely until you're ready to lay charges, Sergeant, so I'd suggest we deal with what's in front of us today and when you're satisfied with your other investigations we can look at that separately."

"Yes your honour, it's only the fact that the accused has been before the court several times dating back almost every year since turning eighteen, this is not the defendant's first offence by any means."

"Your honour, with due respect to the police sergeant, I hardly think it's fair to ask my client to defend himself against charges which haven't yet and indeed may not ever be laid against him."

"I agree you with you there, as I've said."

"Your honour, the defendant has several violent convictions, among them multiple convictions against police."

"Once again your honour, my client's history is of no relevance to the current very minor charge of riding without a valid fare and again I fail to see the point of bringing up future hypothetical charges, which in reality may never actually be laid against my client."

"How does your client plead with relation to the offences facing him this morning?"

"Not guilty, your honour."

"And is there a reason why he was without a ticket when he was arrested?"

"Your honour he had bought a ticket on the day of the arrest, he says he showed the ticket to a Transperth transit officer and was then harassed by a second officer who asked to see his ticket again, my client believed he was being unfairly targeted as no-one else on the train was asked twice for their ticket. When he made his objections to the second officer, the first officer then intervened and that's where the situation escalated and he was eventually set upon by a number of transit officers at Bassendean train station and was brought by police to East Perth lock-up for formal charges to be laid."

"And was your client able to produce a ticket for the officers at East Perth?"

"No, your honour."

"Was he asked to produce a ticket as evidence by the police officers in East Perth?"

"No he was not, your honour."

"Your honour, if I can interject there, the defendant was not asked to produce the ticket in question as other more serious charges were coming to light regarding the multiple assaults and sexual...."

"Sergeant, I will impress upon you once more the nature of today's hearing and I will make it clear to you at this time that I'm finding your inability to grasp procedure here, regardless of circumstances, to be quite trying."

"Yes, your honour."

"Please sit down, Sergeant."

"Yes, your honour."

"Does your client wish to address the court at this time?"

"No, your honour."

"Considering the police didn't even ask to verify your client's version of events and considering that is the only matter before us today, your client is free to go, however I will remind your client in light of the Sergeant's remarks that it would be unwise for him to make it difficult for the police to locate him while they finish up their enquiries regarding the other matters concerning him, is that understood?"

"Yes, your honour."

"Okay, if your client can take a seat on the side there, we'll get him his paperwork and he can be on his way."

Everything was passing, there was no avoiding it. The work kept him busy, kept him relatively young, he could still visit often, drive or fly down, they had the first year Law now in Albany, maybe he could organise some talks for the university down there. He could start campaigning again for them to put bloody jurisprudence back in the unit list. Maybe just for that it would work out for the best. Who was next, Gebbel, what a prize this one was, for all Greg's faults, his work made him grateful for his son-in-law every day.

"Paul Gebbel, Paul Gebbel," the court officer called him up.

He'd been arrested in Maylands, carrying an unloaded pistol and 38 grams of methyl amphetamine in clip-seal bags. He watched the police interview this morning when he came in before session. He'd been remarkably hostile with the arresting officers. They'd done well to keep their cool. This one might need to go inside for a spell. The court officer ran through the formalities.

"Mr Gebbel, you're choosing to represent yourself at this time, is that correct?"

"Yes, your honour."

"Mr Gebbel, I will make you aware at this stage that you are facing a possible jail term, are you sure you want to go ahead without counsel?"

"Yes, your honour."

"Very well Mr Gebbel, before we ask the police Sergeant, can you briefly explain to me what happened in your arrest interview? I viewed the footage of it this morning and I have to say I found your behavior to be less than impressive, your conduct in particular towards the officers was quite disturbing."

"Your honour, I have no memory of the interview itself, I've slept about one hour a night for the last sixteen years and half the time I don't know whether I'm awake or asleep and at the time of the interview I didn't really know if I was dreaming or if I was at the police station, your honour."

"Do you believe yourself to be awake at this present time, Mr Gebbel?"

"I do your honour?"

"Are you sure, Mr Gebbel?"

"I'm not entirely sure, your honour."

Ben

"Benny".

"Greg?"

"Greg?"

"Chap?"

"Yeah."

"What's up man?"

"I got a spot for you."

"No shit?"

"You still up?"

"You serious?"

"You serious?"

"Yeah, when?"

"Come now."

"On the way."

Chappie

"How much you got, Chappie?" Carson called over from the couch as he stared ahead at the television in the corner of the room.

"Fair bit man." Chappie knew Carson wanted nothing to do with it. "You want in?"

"Nah, fuck that, not now man, I'm right under it at the moment."

"Too soft," Chappie laughed across the room.

"Too smart," Carson shot back, not taking his eyes off the screen. "Look at this fucking cunt here."

"Who's that?"

"This cunt selling bank machines, watch him, he walks through shops, goes from place to place and he tells you where the bank machines are, Subiaco, Rockingham, Joondalup - and look at it, all the places look exactly the same."

"Probably filmed it all in the one street." Chappie was finishing up the bags now, Ben would be here shortly.

"Nah man, they just turned everything into the same shit."

Chappie could see Carson shaking his head at the cricketer who was smiling out at him from the small screen. Big ears on the cunt. He put the last seal on the last bag, he hoped Ben would work out.

"You giving those to that young one?"

"Yeah, unless you want in?" Chappie prodded again.

"You're mad boy, they going to eat him alive." Carson was shaking his head in disbelief laughing to himself.

"I'm starting him off easy, couple of drop-offs, nothing really."

"You still hearing from that one with the car, the one that makes you act like a mechanic?"

"Terry?" asked Chappie.

"Yeah, Terry." Carson was still locked on the bank commercial.

"Yeah, that's who I'm starting him off with?" said Chappie.

"You are Fucking Mad, boy, Carson repeated. "You and Terry and the child with the poxy car and bag of Chicken Treat," Carson trailed off half to himself, half to Chappie.

"Red Rooster," Chappie said deadpan, as he stared at the package sitting ready on the counter.

"Hey?"

"He gets it from Red Rooster, not Chicken Treat."

"Oh."

Patrice

Patrice wished he hadn't read it. It was too much. He had always tried to remain compassionate, but this was beyond him. He had never encountered this kind of cruelty before, so predetermined and so casually applied. The aberrations were understandable, the two boys breaking into the old ladies' homes in the middle of the night, the raping and the penetrating, the fingers, the fists, even the wine bottles, it was beyond imagination but that somehow made it easier, made it understandable, one act of madness, one quick glimpse into hell. But this, what he had in front of him now, this was too much. This had a community of people willing to accept it, men, women and children even, standing by, watching, learning.

Patrice was on night duty in unit 2. The prisoners called it "The Bronx", it was one of the worst units in the prison. An animal in every cell and a nightmare burning behind every door. Derek was with him again and showed him the file he now had in front of him. Eddie Walsh, he'd come in on an animal cruelty charge, the worst in the state, in the history of the state. He was smuggling cured baby pork to China for the past year, he'd cure the pork in a shed in his back yard and twice a month drive it up in a refrigerated truck to Doctors Creek just past Derby. From there he'd give it to a trawler boat who'd take them further up north up to a town called Kupang in Indonesia where they'd be flown by charter plane to Jakarta and eventually be taken by ship up to Hong Kong by a legally registered importer.

The meat was for people who had a lot of superstitions about their food, superstitions going back a dozen dynasties or so. They couldn't have any pork that was older than three months and each batch that they received had to be from the same litter. The mother had to be fed on oats and white wine and the curing process had to be done with the pigs still alive. They were cooked slowly over hot rocks, two or three litters at a time and the oxygen had to still be in their blood – it was supposed to give the meat some special providence for those lining up for it at the other end.

When the cops finally busted in on Eddie and his back yard cook house, he had thirty odd piglets all stacked on top of each other, all hand crippled by himself so they couldn't move and sweating it out drowsy-eyed and moaning on their way

to a fine dining cook-out a quarter way around the world. The report on the file said when the police burst through the door, half the piglets wriggled themselves free with fright, squealing and rolling themselves off the pile onto the floor below.

Patrice could feel Derek's breath on the back of his neck. Derek had read it himself twenty times over but he was still bolted to it. Patrice noticed that the English ones like Derek held a sense of justice and believed there were certain things which existed beyond the limits of their collective mercy which they were unable to leave untouched and unattended. As a consequence Eddie Walsh had been discussed. He had set himself aside for close attention.

Ariel

Ariel woke in a panic, his heart trying to break out of his chest. He sat up sweating and looked around him, trying to place himself. He'd dreamt he was part of a football club in some small Wheatbelt town and they were having the end of the year bash. One of the players had picked a fight with him and before he knew it they were rolling around the club house floor laying into each other. All the members watched on. He wasn't fat as he rolled around trying to stop the other bloke from punching into him, he was slim like a football player, fit and muscled, but the other fella was bigger and eventually got the upper hand. The bloke he lost the fight to had a thick black moustache and fought him with a style that was free of the flashiness he'd seen on the fights on TV. He beat him with long Australian jabs, elbows that sprung in and out and fast hooks that smashed into the side of his face without warning.

During the ordeal Ariel could feel himself losing the fight, he knew he was in for much worse when it was over, he knew there was a code amongst the club, a weird and unspoken code that was applied every time after a fight was lost. He lay on the ground waiting for it while the other man sat at the bar and had a large beer poured for him from the tap. Ariel wiped the blood from his nose, it was bleeding but wasn't flowing, the other club members were all taking off their clothes, nodding to each other. There was nothing he could do. At once eight or nine of the men came at him all naked, arms stretched out ready to get a hold of him. There were two blokes on every arm and leg and one sitting on his chest, every one of them naked. He could feel the women in the club look on as they set upon him, some of them were laughing together, others were just looking in silence, drinking from cans of premixed vodka.

The men ripped Ariel's clothes off so he was as naked as they were, and one by one they took turns stroking him and licking him, all the while one of them pushed two or three fingers slowly up inside him. He watched as the flesh of the centre half forward's arse squashed and squeezed on top of his chest and felt the stretch and strength of his own leg muscles as the other players went at him with their tongues, their faces disappearing into the mob of heads bobbing up and down

in between his legs. He felt himself getting harder and harder and as they kept at him, the women's voices in the club house getting louder and more boisterous, some of them were commenting on the size of him, some of them were commenting on how well they played the ball the season before last, some of them were simply ordering more drinks.

The sound of the till ringing and cans being opened filled the room. Ariel started ejaculating as the clump of fingers penetrated him deeper and deeper, the flow coming out of him like a hot river pouring all over the laughing faces of his teammates. As he squirmed and squirted on the floor, they all, one by one, walked away, calling for more beers, doing up their belts and buttoning up their shirts as they dressed themselves. One of them stood on a table, cracked a can and loudly pronounced Ariel best on ground and the raucous laughter that followed filled the clubhouse air and ran like rivers of shit deep into Ariel's brain.

"Ariel my man, this alright?"

"Carson, come in, come in, how are you doing?" Ariel started to bring up Carson's file on the computer.

Ariel had spent the early hours of the morning, after his nightmare, standing naked in his kitchen eating fried Pagnotta smeared with horseradish. As he chewed and breathed through his nose he stood still, staring into the darkness outside the kitchen window, waiting patiently for the sun to come up, not sure for the first time in his life if it actually would.

"You losing weight big man, or what?"

Carson took a seat in front of Ariel, smiling at him as he got comfortable.

"I wish, Carson, but no unfortunately not."

"Buying bigger clothes then, huh?"

Ariel laughed and sadly shook his head, he appreciated the effort Carson was making. He'd only been out a couple of months and now that he was back in, they'd have to go through the assessments process all over again just like he was a new prisoner, a fresh intake. Ariel was glad to see him though. Carson made him feel like he didn't have such a terrible job. He enjoyed listening to his stories, he liked being paid the attention.

"Now, you're in remand at the moment, is that right?"

"Yeah, had a bit of trouble there so they got me waiting now, I suppose maybe a few months at least."

"Are they looking to lay more charges to go on top of these ones?" Ariel gestured at the computer monitor.

"No I think that's it, hey."

Ariel looked over the details on the screen in front of him. The cops had arrested him a few weeks earlier, they had him on a raft of charges, assault, multiple counts of grievous bodily harm, statutory rape, solicitation, threats to kill, deprivation of liberty, assaulting public officers, and a backlog of fines on top, one of the victims was still touch-and-go in the hospital, if it didn't go Carson's way he could be looking at a murder charge. With his history they could put him away for anything up to eighteen, twenty years. He looked over at Carson who was looking very relaxed considering the circumstances. Ariel knew he wasn't stupid, he must know what he was facing, maybe he was pretending or maybe it was all too much to face up to. Maybe he was just hoping for the best.

"Have you been placed in a job, Carson, since you been in?"

"Yeah they got me in the canteen now doing the Spends."

"Is that alright?"

"Easy work you know, count the pouches, keep the blue mags shelved for the boys, take the order forms for the xbox and the cds. That's about it really. Beats painting or concrete you know, not as good as the kitchen, but still it's level one."

"Which unit are you in now?"

"I'm in 7 there now, they saying tomorrow I'll go over into 3."

"You happy with that?"

"Yeah, 3's alright."

Ariel looked at him with open eyes, attempting to offer him something resembling hope across the space between them. He waited to see if Carson would elaborate, let him in some more. He looked tired this time round, a few more scrapes on his face since he'd seen him last. He was starting to get that worn-in look.

"Well, let's start with the day they arrested you, I suppose, Carson, and then we can go from there."

"I just had me little brother there in the bar, killing some time waiting for my mum to get home."

"And you went home to live with your mum?"

"No nah man, I was only there to take my little brother back, he was going a bit loose and that you know, first time by himself in Perth, he was supposed to be going to Clontarf on a scholarship, good musician, good little songwriter, but he was running amok you know, up to all sorts so mum asked me to rein him in and bring him back home for a bit. Hit Clontarf again maybe next year when his head's on right, you know?"

"And they arrested you in front of your mother, is that correct?"

SHAKE IT ALL ABOUT

Phil

Phil drank slowly from his middy glass with yesterday's paper folded on the bar in front of him. It was a quiet afternoon. There was a local footy match on down the road, the place would fill up soon enough. There was Charlie sitting at the top of the bar watching the telly and two Aboriginal boys sitting on stools around one of the high tables by the door. The tall one was pouring from a jug for himself and the little fella was sucking at a coke can with a straw. He had to keep an eye on him to make sure he wasn't pouring bourbon into the can. The little fella looked underage but the tall one didn't try and bullshit him when he ordered, so that was good. Brothers probably. The older one slapped him lightly around the side of the head and pulled the straw out of the can, throwing it on the table. Looked like he was schooling him. Definitely brothers.

"I meant to ask you how'd your day in court go, Phil?" Charlie croaked the words out of his mouth, keeping his sagging eyes on the horses.

"Ah, alright Charlie, couple of hundred in damages, I have to pay his doctor's bill and pay for a new fly screen for his front door." Phil poured himself another light beer from the tap.

"Almost worth it then?"

"Fuck Charlie, if I could hit him again for two hundred I'd be happy man." Phil let out a chuckle and flipped off the tap, he reckoned he could siphon off a couple hundred bucks over the next two weeks no problem. Len wouldn't miss it. He'd be in Perth anyway in a couple of days to work out the new place. If it all worked out, Len would spend most of his time in the city and Phil would hopefully have the run of the place, not that it would make much difference, Len did fuck-all anyway.

"Did he pay you the money?" asked Charlie, still glued to the screen.

"What's that?"

"Your neighbor, did he pay you the hundred he owed you?"

"Not yet Charlie, but I've got it under control."

"No worries then," Charlie let out a few old chuckles, "whenever a silly prick can't pay his way, it makes it hard on everyone."

Phil slid a fresh one in front of Charlie, taking his empty away, and headed back to the till without taking any money.

"Thanking you," said Charlie, the grin fading from his face down into nothing.

Phil pulled a five dollar note out of his pocket and rung up a middy for Charlie. He always made sure to make a show of paying out of his own pocket. He dropped in the note and took out three two dollar coins and a fifty cent piece. He put the change in his pocket and closed the till. The tall fella with his brother was coming over with the empty jug in his hand.

"Same again?" asked Phil.

"Please mate, another super thanks."

Phil got him a fresh jug, nice and cold and poured from the tap.

"What you got there, a telly or something?" Phil was nodding over towards the younger one who was resting his feet on a box under the tall table.

"Clemmy, get your fucking feet off there boy."

"Fuck, no harm Cars, no harm," the younger one called back, leaving his feet on the box.

The tall one kept staring at him, saying nothing. The little one got the message and took his feet off the box.

"New microwave, mum's had the same one since they first come out," the tall one explained, turning his back on his little brother.

"Very nice," Phil put the fresh jug on the bar and noticed the little one put his feet back on the box. "There you go."

The tall one slid a twenty across the bar. Phil made the change and handed it over.

"Cheers."

"Good on ya," Phil wiped his hands on a tea towel he had hanging by the post mix and went for a sip of his beer, sitting back down on his stool. He hadn't read the paper yesterday and he forgot to pick one up this morning before he came in. Maybe he could take twenty a day while Len was gone, might be able to get away with twenty-five if he was smart about it. He turned a page of the newspaper over. Someone found a cane toad in Port Hedland.

"Make sure you watch that one," Len had snuck up on Phil and was whispering in his ear. He was standing close quarters to him watching the tall one walk back to his table. "Make sure you keep a good eye on him," said Len again. "That fella there is a mad man."

"Is he?" Phil was looking in the direction Len was nodding, he wondered how long he'd been standing behind him. The tall one was kicking the little one's feet off the box and was giving him another slap round the back of his head.

"His name's Carson, the young one sitting down must be his little brother, I don't know what he's called, they're Carmel's boys, you know the one that's always about with the raffle book for the basketball club."

"Carson?" Phil was pretty sure Len hadn't been there when he was at the till.

"Young prick was in that day you went to court, nearly got himself killed, the cops are looking for him now, here take this," Len turned around and was leaning on the inside of the bar, he'd passed Phil one of his business cards and was now pretending to polish a beer glass.

"When he leaves," said Len quietly, "call the number on the back, don't call them while he's still here, only when he leaves, I don't want them arresting fellas in here."

"Alright Len," Phil put the card in his back pocket without looking at it.

"How many has he had?" Len was talking into the glass he was pretending to clean.

"That's his second jug so far, he's been alright though," Phil took a long sip on his middy, he was in the clear.

"Two more at the most and then cut him off, he's the reason we had to get the bloody carpets cleaned."

"Oh, he's that one is he? No worries Len. You heading out?" Phil folded the paper over and read the back page. The big Nigerian playing for Richmond was on an assault charge.

"Yeah I'm going to hit a round with Trevor." Len reached into his grey pants, pulling out his cigarettes.

"You going for nine or eighteen?" Charlie chimed in, eyes still on the ponies.

"I'll go for nine but the card'll probably look I went for eighteen," Len put a cigarette in his mouth.

"Well, you know what they say?" Charlie's lizard chin croaked up and down.

Len walked out of the bar saying his lines out loud as he fished for the lighter in his pocket. Charlie's dry voice faded behind him as he turned the corner, past the ice machine, and headed out through the office door.

Dean

"Mate it was the fucking size of a meteorite," Dean held his hands the length of a big fish.

Daniel had been asked to take the computer class this morning on account of the art room getting painted and the IT man not turning up. Daniel thought he was going to be in for an easy morning but the Campus Manager tapped him on the shoulder and asked him if he wouldn't mind sitting in. The class was one of the jokes the prison seemed to enjoy playing on the inmates. The prisoners sat around and learned to manoeuvre their way through obsolete computer programs, saving files to floppy disks, typing command prompts long dead and wading their way through an encyclopedia of pointless exercises, processing imaginary balance sheets on the very earliest editions of Microsoft Word the prison could get its hands on.

The prisoners either didn't know or didn't care.

"I don't know how they fucking did it, it was like milky green, huge fucking thing, like kryptonite in Superman, you know," Dean kept going.

"Fuck me," said the one hanging on every word.

"Thing must have been worth nine hundred fucking grand mate, I reckon they'd be shaving bits of it for months, when they brought it out we all shot it up there and mate when it went in, straight away it felt like someone just stuck a fucking crowbar into my brain and just starting levering it over to one side," Dean cranked on an imaginary crowbar levering his brain over to one side.

"Fuck yeah man," the skinny one said, nearly drooling, he was getting excited at the prospect of slamming the kryptonite.

"We were all super fucked for hours man after that and I remember sitting there just on another fucking planet and staring into this huge dirty crystal sitting in front of me, my fucking arms wouldn't work mate I was that fucked, I could not fucking move."

"Fuck man, that sounds unreal."

Patrice

He ran in at a solid pace. His feet could be heard thundering off the grass as he launched himself over the crease and hurled the worn-out cricket ball down the length of the pitch. The batsmen braced himself and blocked it, firmly holding the bat in pose as the ball lost all life and dribbled off to the side onto the well-cut grass. Patrice had walked himself in circles for hours. He had arrived at a local park a short distance from his home. The park was being used by a group of Sri Lankans or Indians or Pakistanis who were playing a casual game of cricket, each taking their turn at batting and bowling.

Patrice had been watching them for some time now. They spoke English between themselves and were warm and friendly with one another. He remembered a holiday he had taken with her last year in Kuala Lumpur, where he saw the Malaysian men walk hand in hand up and down the streets in the middle of the day. Once they were eating breakfast at a roadside café in the city and he saw a group of taxi drivers seated at a table waiting for a fare. They'd drink their milky tea from glasses with metal handles and sit side by side with their arms over each other's shoulders. Patrice felt so alone.

She wasn't coming back. She had written to him, in French this time, saying she couldn't live without her mother and she felt it was only fair to make the decision sooner rather later. He had tempted her with a new life and she had chosen her old one.

She hadn't chosen him. He had lost. Her mother's eyes staring at him out from that photo in the kitchen burned into him as he stood on the green grass watching the men play their game.

The bowler returned again and hurled another toss down towards the batsmen. The batsmen stepped forward this time, his eye fixed in position, he swung the bat as the ball came up from the pitch and cracked it through to his right hand side. The second batsman let out a roar and started running towards the opposite wicket, the fielders scrambled and were shouting instructions at each other, this time in their own language, all at once the men moved in the same orbit, everyone knowing their part, the ball was picked up and the fielder dived sideways,

throwing the ball towards the batsman's wicket, floating gracefully towards the ground as he did. The wicket keeper snatched the wild throw from the air and brought it down onto the metal stumps, banging them over into the ground. A wild roar came from all the fielders as they screamed in delight and the runner who was struck out slowed to a light jog with his head towards the sky, laughing to himself as he ran out the remains of the crease.

Patrice imagined what it must be like for them here in Australia. A well-kept cricket pitch on a pristine oval with not a soul to be seen in sight. He had visited India himself many years ago and remembered walking out of the airport in Bangalore just after midnight, past the protest posters encouraging people to "Keep the Gunpowder Dry", past the airport security in their immaculate whites and mysterious turbans and finally out into the churning streets teeming with thousands and thousands of Indians, one after the next. An waterless ocean of swirling brown faces all on their own invisible paths, like curious individual ants with their own agenda, all shuffling free without a care or a Queen in sight. Not even Paris at its thickest had prepared him for anything like it, people swarming together, passing him by, inches from his face. He tried to take them all in as they passed, brushing up against him as they did, the airport making the foot traffic more urgent and frantic. But there were too many bustling by him, he could feel the pass of air with each face that shuffled past, his head went light and he needed to find a cab to sit down in, one with a door he could close and shut tight, take hold of a little space for himself.

He had built everything for them both. The ideas didn't work without the two of them together. He'd either have to meet someone here or go back to France, but she hadn't asked him to come back.

It must be a paradise for them, he thought.

Ben

Ben was waiting in his hatchback. The light rain had left a little moisture behind and the streetlights were casting a glow over his bonnet, making his tiny car look clean and cool. He had to wait in the car park of Meltham train station. It was out of his way but that's where Chappie told him to be. It was his first one, no chicken dinner in the car this time, no need. The man coming was going to pull up in a yellow Hyundai, park his car, flip his bonnet and stand there looking at his engine like there was something wrong. Ben was to get out of his car, go over and look in at the engine with him.

After a short time Ben was to lean in and pretend to adjust the cap covering the points. Next to the cap would be a small flip-top box mounted on the radiator hose, Ben was to open the lid, take out the roll of money, drop in the dope, then shake his head saying to the man he didn't really know what was wrong with the car. The man was going to shake his head, take out his mobile phone and pretend to call the RAC. Ben would get back in his car, count the money and leave.

Ben looked at the clock on the dash, the man was running fifteen minutes late. Chappie said he was never late, he'd been making the same drop off now for more than two years. If for whatever reason he didn't show up Ben was to wait no more than thirty minutes; the trains ran every twenty minutes so it would look strange to see someone waiting in their car for any longer. Benny took out a smoke and lit it up, he looked into his soft pack cigarettes and rattled the last few around, counting how many he had left. He had a good feeling about working with Chappie, he'd still keep Greg going for as long as he could. He hadn't told Greg he was branching out, that could make him nervous and maybe pull back with the weed. He saw an ad for Harvey beef on the billboard above the train station. Good looking cow, green field and a butcher in the foreground shaking hands with the farmer. He must be the farmer 'cause he wore the hat and the flannel shirt.

Ben thought of all the chefs in all the kitchens in all the world hammering through a service about now. The sweaty fat ones working over the hotplates in some shitty grill and tavern, the Chinese slave chefs in the factory kitchens pumping out a thousand dishes a day. Twelve, thirteen, fourteen hour shifts. The casino

carveries, the breakfast bars and burger joints, pizza ovens, pastry chefs and all the fuckers lining up with their mouths open and their wallets out. They all made him sick as he sat there thinking about the money he was going to be making. He felt well above it, well above them all.

He lit another cigarette and took in the light poles hanging over the train station. He was checking for cameras, Meltham was a nothing stop in between Perth and Midland. A nothing in between two bigger nothings. He looked over the other cars parked in the carpark, making sure there was no-one in them. In his rear mirror he had a good view of the road. It was a Wednesday night, not much happening, not too late to be suspicious but late enough for almost everyone to be home already. He watched one or two people come off the last train and watched them as they made their way down the twisting steps to the car park below. They all looked legit, he took them in as casually as he could, making sure none of them were hanging around.

He never carried too much when he was moving weed, never more than two or three ounces at a time and that was only on special occasions, if it was all going to the same person at the one drop. Getting caught with three ounces of weed would get him in the shit but it wouldn't get him to prison, not real prison anyway, maybe a fortnight on a farm or twelve months on a behaviour bond, but tonight was very different. He was sitting on two hundred pills, twenty per bag, stuffed into the back of the radio console. Chappie showed him how to pop out the stereo, snap off the brackets and push back the saddle further into the interior of the dash. The pills sat snug in behind and the stereo slid back flush enough to look normal.

Ben watched another train slide through the station, must be an express, no-one on or off, no choice. He was carrying well over five grams squashed in behind the stereo. Five grams moved him into serious waters with the law. The buyer was paying twenty a pill, probably selling them on for thirty-five, maybe forty. Chappie said they were the best in the Perth, the buyer could easily move them for thirty-five, forty a piece, especially to people who knew what they wanted. Nothing worse than splashing out and getting handed shit so this guy didn't mind paying good money and whoever he was selling it too obviously made it worth his while. He was getting it once a week from Chappie and had been getting it for a couple of years

now. Ben was to make sure he got four thousand off him, keep a thousand for himself and give three to Chappie. He didn't know how much Chappie took for himself and how much he had to give back, he knew he wasn't making it himself but he didn't press for him for information. He didn't care how much Chappie was making, he was happy with his share, a thousand bucks for half an hour's work was good. A good start at least.

Being over five grams made him nervous but in order to get in, he had to take on a little risk. Over five meant a maximum of fifteen years, but he wouldn't get anywhere near that, if he was caught it'd be his first offence, probably six months on the farm, maybe a year, a couple more months going to meetings on the outside. It was worth it. If he did it well Chappie could set him up properly and he could start to manage the drop-offs better so he wasn't so exposed.

A yellow Hyundai rolled into the car park, its hazard lights coming on as it approached with its engine off into an empty car bay. Whoever he was, he was good. Ben put his cigarette in the ashtray, he didn't want to throw it out the window in case he drew attention to himself. He sat and waited as the man got out and walked to the front of his car. He hoisted the bonnet and stood there with his hand around the edges of the car staring into it and shaking his head. He was so good at the charade Ben thought he might actually be broken down and maybe wasn't the guy at all.

Ben undid the stereo, slid out the console and took out the satchel of pills, sliding them into his jacket pocket. The hazard lights of the Hyundai were pulsing a nice glow through the windscreen, glaring on and off through the beads of water that still sat fat on the glass. Ben stepped out of the car and approached the man. His hand holding the bag was still in his jacket pocket, he took his position beside the man and stared down into the open bonnet, neither of them saying a word. He saw the flip top container just as Chappie described it to him. Ben thought it was a good idea to mouth some words silently in case anyone was watching from a distance and after a brief one-sided exchange Ben leaned into the car, flipped open the container, saw the small roll of fifties in a money bag waiting for him and made the switch. He put the dope in the container and the money in his pocket. He

nodded again at the engine block and started shaking his head. The man nodded and pulled out his mobile phone and pretended to call the RAC.

Ben walked back to his car, opened the door, sat down and counted the money. His hands were sweaty so the notes were sticking to each other, he made himself take his time and did it again. On the third try he got through the roll clean, four thousand to the penny. He started up his hatchback and put it in gear, as he pulled out he stopped the car alongside the yellow Hyundai with the orange hazard lights still beating steadily. He looked for the man but couldn't see him, he wasn't in the car, he wasn't walking through the train station. Ben turned to his left and saw the man standing at the passenger side window staring in at him. Ben nodded, the man nodded back. Ben shuffled the gearstick around and put it in first for the second time. Without saying any more, Ben put his foot down and steadily headed for the exit. As he pulled out of the car park he could see the man was still standing by his car, watching him as he drove away.

Tony

Craig hadn't spoken for the last half hour. Tony had been listening to him stuff his face since they left the road house. The fat bastard had ordered half the shop. Family sized box of chips, two crumbed sausages, chilli chicken wings, deep fried dim sums and a large iced coffee to wash it all down. The crackle and crunch of Craig's saliva mixing with the fried food and the lacquer of his milky coffee was turning Tony's stomach. He didn't mention it though, Craig had enough on his plate, cunt-wise and literally. He'd found out she was banging another bloke for the last six months. Some New Zealand prick over on a work visa, worked as a pipe fitter up north and at Craig's house too. Craig wanted to kill him, Tony had told him to cool it and think of the kids. Craig told him sometimes he'd come home after it had been raining and would notice a dry patch on the driveway about the size of a car. He said he hadn't thought about it at the time.

Good detective work Craig you silly fuckwit.

Tony hadn't been out this way since forever, not since he'd gone camping when he was a kid. His mum and his two sisters would always be in good spirits. His sisters would show him how to put up his own tent and collect a bit of stream water to make mum a cup of tea. His old man would take him out in the four-wheel drive and teach him how to shoot fish heads off a washing machine with his 303. His crazy old man had packed a few wobbegong heads on ice before they left and he'd drive out to an old dump he knew about and take pot shots at the poor buggers sitting on top of an old Westinghouse. It's where he used his first firearm, learned how to get his eye in, or at least knew how far away he was from being a good shot. His old man was a cracker, a crazy old punter and heavy drinker but if you needed a wobbegong taken out from a thousand yards he was your man.

"It just shits me you know, all the hard work I put in for her, all the fucking car upgrades, all the bullshit holidays, the amount of fucking hours of my life wasted walking around a market in fucking Thailand," Craig was off again, trying to make sense of it.

Tony turned from looking out the window and took a sly glance at Craig, seeing if was going to go on, he'd been listening to it now for hours. He tried to help

him out but Craig wasn't helping himself, best thing for him would be to wash his hands and go and get himself rooted. No chance of that though without paying for it 'cause of the state he was in. Maybe he should tag along with Tubby and go to Bali. Fuck the markets. Craig was that far gone he wouldn't inflict him on Tubby and really deep down who knew what Tubby was dipping his dick into. Hopefully legal-age women if the world was a decent place, legal aged men at the very least. He didn't ask Tubby for details, he'd have to arrest the prick if he told him the wrong thing.

"It's the kids I feel for, Tony, that's what really just destroys me, you know, little Michaela and Aristotle."

He'd named his kid Aristotle. Tony remembered when he came in and announced it a couple of years back. They were working the armed robbery squad together down in Rockingham. Week after week chasing skinny junkie rats holding up Sizzlers and Subways with sledgehammers and pick axes. It was his wife's idea and he went along with it, the silly prick, even came in with a straight face. Aristotle Theodore McKenzie. Fucked the kid for life. May as well have pulled his onesie over his head and punched the kid in the guts right there in the delivery room. Rockingham was something else, where every Englishman in the country with a single digit IQ and a tradies ticket went to make his fortune. Spawn a couple of cunt sprogs who'd grow up with Ronnie Kray as a role model and take up the family tradition of total fucked-in-the-headness.

"Do you think she'll talk," Craig chimed in. "Her mother said she was going back and forth?"

"Who?" asked Tony, trying to figure out which part of Craig's universe he was talking about now.

"The girl," Craig flashed back.

"What's she going to say?" Tony was worried Craig was going to get his daughter to testify against her own mother about the Kiwi, maybe he should suggest taking some holidays, not with Tubby, just by himself, see a psych even, he had to do something.

"She's going to say he talked her into going to the lookout and forced himself onto her in the back seat otherwise he wasn't going to take her back home and she'd have to walk herself back in the dark." Craig gave Tony a look.

"Oh right," Craig was back, thought Tony, at least he was half on the job, that could help him out, get his mind off it all for a while.

"Did the mum say anything else?" asked Tony ,adjusting his seat belt.

"Nah, that's pretty much it, but she said the daughter was going back and forth." Craig looked to Tony for answers.

"Well we can't fucking rely on that," Tony eyed the box of chips sitting in the middle of the car, there were one or two left. "Any news from the hospital?"

"Still the same, touch and go," said Craig.

"So he's not out of the woods yet?" said Tony.

"Not yet."

The country rolled past the windows as they drove on in silence. Tony thought about grabbing the last two chips out of the box but Craig's guts falling out through his seat belt had put him off. They'd been partnered up now for a good few years. Craig was a good copper most of the time, car-shaped dry patches in the driveway aside, but he didn't deserve any of this. He seemed to be a good father. He didn't cheat on her and he never paid for it. It was a shame for him to be going through it the way he was. He wasn't like Tony's old man who'd fuck anything that'd let him get close enough. His mother finally walked out on him once Tony had finished high school. She'd been waiting for him to graduate before she took off. If he had've known he would've failed his exams to keep her round a few more years.

His old man went off the deep end for about six months, couldn't see the reason why she took off, all her fault he reckoned, even Tony's fault he reckoned. Tony hit the road the year after and joined the force. Got sent up to Geraldton for the first couple of years to knock heads and run the lock house on late shift. Saw enough of that to know he had to get himself into a suit as quick as possible.

"It's just like she's been drawn, you know Tony, drawn by some invisible force, like the elephants in Africa, when they all go to the graveyard." Craig was back on himself. "Or the ducks when they fly south for the winter, the ones from Canada

that fly all the way down to south America, they all fly together, all heading in the same direction."

"Yeah that's wild Craig," Tony was ready to jump out of the car.

"But they don't actually fly south themselves you know, they get taken there, they don't go because they want to, they get up into the sky and the wind just takes them that way, all at once. They go where they're being led Tony, just like the elephants."

The tea tasted like cum. Tony never tasted cum before but he'd smelt his share of it. Must be the metal coming off the water pipes. She'd placed the cups down in front of them, the young girl wasn't saying anything. She sat slumped at the table, cuddling one of her knees in cheap black leggings and a grey baggy sweater. Her blonde hair was pushed back by a black hair band keeping most of it in check with a few strands spilling out over the sides. Even sitting here in her mother's kitchen and wearing her pyjamas she looked older than sixteen. She looked older than eighteen truth be told. She was a pretty young thing too, not many blokes given the opportunity would stand a chance. She was a bombshell on legs, most men would slit their mother's throat just for a sniff at her. She wasn't drinking the tea, she was looking down at her sleeves, listening to her mother tell the world how terrible she was.

"I've been telling her since she came out of primary school," the mother couldn't even finish the sentence, she was crying small, exhausted little tears into paper tissues she'd scrunched up into sad little balls.

The mother looked like she'd been at it for days, she had her own version of the baggy sweater and the tight leggings, only she didn't have the energy to make an effort with her hair. Her nose was red to match her eyes and she looked like she hadn't slept for a year and half.

"I mean what kind of animal comes back home and causes so much pain in just one day? What's a piece of shit like that doing out walking the streets? With my daughter," her voice went up at the end, almost into a shout but she didn't have it in her. Tony could sense the house had been filled with rage over the last few days.

It was still bouncing off the walls, hanging in the air, he could see it in the daughter's face and could hear it in what was left of the mother's voice.

"Jodie, what we really need from you, and look we know that this has been a very traumatic time for yourself firstly and also your mother, but what we really need to know from you, is that the version of events that you've described to us today, is that going to be the version of events you're going to remember when we go to court?" Craig was back on form, he was treating them like his own family. They filled each other's holes perfectly.

"I don't have anything more to say," Jodie whispered into her sleeve.

"Jodie, don't you dare talk like that to Detective McKenzie, he's come all the way from Perth...."

"It wasn't my fault mum, for fuck's sake," Jodie spat the words across the table at her mother.

"What were you thinking getting in the car in the first place."

"Just a minute now," said Craig, interrupting them. "I think it's really important that the both of you don't add to this by taking it out on each other. Mrs Marshall I have to stress in this situation we really can't be laying any of the blame at all with Jodie, as the minor in the incident, the responsibility lies firmly in this case with the offender...."

Tony looked through Craig's words that were filling up the kitchen. He was calming them down for sure and was doing a bloody good job of it but it was obvious what had happened. The girl was a small town cunt trap, as thick as she was beautiful, out to fuck someone she could lay her hooks into. Tony knew if he had any sex drive left he'd probably have a wank tonight just on the strength of her sitting there yelling at her mother. She was a wet dream in Kmart pants and no doubt the whole town was in line, drooling after every move she made. Surely she couldn't be that stupid ... but maybe stupid enough not to see the fall out that was happening now. That silly Abo drank four jugs of beer and then had this thing looking at him with a welcome sign hanging over her snatch.

Fuck me, thought Tony, we should be giving him a fruit basket and shaking his hand for not eating her alive.

Tony and Craig headed back to the motel after the interview. Craig was looking better, like he'd found his stride again. Playing the man in control had done him some good. It was one of the best parts of the job. With everyone feeling so weak and wounded, it was good to play the saviour every now and then, regardless of what was actually going on. There was a footy match on in town and the local pub was full up so they had to book into a small motel back on the main highway about fifteen minutes out.

"I think we've got enough there Tone," Craig was asking as much as telling.

"I think you might be right Craig," Tony thought as much, the mother would tear up the courtroom, if it was a male judge he'd have a keen eye on the girl, if it was a male judge with a daughter it'd be a wrap. The silly nigger had gone and fucked himself with this one. If the bloke in the hospital went lights out on top of all this bullshit, that'd be that.

"I think Mrs Marshall would be bloody good Tone, you know, on the day." Craig was asking for more.

"I think you might be right, Craig."

They pulled up to the motel, it was the kind where the car park spaces were right outside the doors to the rooms. They headed to the reception to check in. Tony hoped they had Foxtel. He felt like a long shower, a couple of beers and a good few hours of a footy. Didn't really matter who was playing, just something to take his mind off the shitty town and Craig's fat arse.

The door swung open and a little bell announced their arrival. Tony had no idea what kind of person would set up shop in a place like this and run a ten-unit shit box in the middle of nowhere. What kind of lives were people living, who exactly was this enough for?

"G'day fellas," a fat woman wobbled out from behind an old brown curtain that separated the reception area from what looked like a living room. Tony could see the telly on behind the curtain, she'd been watching the swimming, some bloke with a tracksuit on with a whistle round his neck was poolside talking into camera. The room looked dark and musty.

There was a couch that looked like it'd been fucked on a few thousand times and was ready to give up on the whole thing.

"How are you going?"

Tony nodded at her, taking in the green plastic hairband with bobbles on her head. The bobbles were bending backwards and forwards as she stood there smiling at them, her smile was a horrible bored smile like it had been tacked on to her fat face earlier in the day. It was the kind of smile you could only really perfect working long years in a hole like this.

"Just checking in, we had a booking for two rooms under McKenzie."

"Oh yeah, you're room's been ready for a couple of hours now, let me get the book here, if you can sign there and pop your car rego or license number next to that and you'll be right to go, you're both in number four at the end there."

"I'm sorry?"

"Just at the end there, next to the water tank," the bobbles swayed back and forth, seemingly trying to hypnotise Craig. The silly cunt only booked one room.

"Well we really need two rooms, we're not together or anything." Craig was under the spell, the bobbles had him.

"Oh right, well, I don't think we have any more rooms, there was a match on today and the umpires took all the rest."

"The umpires?"

"Yeah."

"What umpires?"

"For the footy, you can't have home town umpires anymore, not after last year," she was making perfect sense to herself.

"They took all the rooms?"

"Well there was quite a few of them plus our regulars," she nodded at Craig, the bobbles working hard.

"How many were there?"

"Well there was five," she recounted in her head to make sure.

"Five bloody umpires?"

"Two boundaries, two goals and one field," her head stopped moving.

"Look, we're detectives from Perth, we're here on business, police business, we can't eh, we can't eh..." Craig had lost whatever he found back at the house.

"There's two beds in number four, you won't have to share."

Tony listened to Craig in the shower as he stood taking in the room. There was no beer in the bar fridge, there was no bar fridge. He might have to do a run back into town. Only GWN on the telly. No footy anywhere, just John Deere commercials and news readers with mustaches and funny haircuts. Tony flopped down on the springy single and looked through the gap in the curtain out onto the car park. Maybe he could talk Craig into doing a beer run after he gets out of the shower. It was still early enough in the day, too late to drive back to Perth but enough light to do a quick run.

Tony could hear Craig's phone ring from inside the bathroom.

"Oh for fuck's sake," Craig's voice sailed out from the shower. "Tony? Tony could you grab that mate, I've got shampoo in my hair."

Now he'd have to look at him naked.

"Got it."

Tony pulled himself off the bed and headed in, Craig was doing the decent thing and turning himself to the wall, the steam from the shower mercifully clouding up most of the glass.

"Who is it?" Craig was calling over the water, still blinded from the shampoo.

"I don't know, hang on?"

"Is it Julie?"

"I don't know, hang on, it's still in your fucking pants," Tony leant down and fished out the phone ringing in Craig's trouser pocket.

"If it's Julie, tell her I'll call her back will you, tell her I'll be five minutes."

His wife hadn't called in over a month. He finally got the phone out of the pocket and looked at the caller ID.

"It's a local number."

"Hey?" Craig was reaching for a towel.

"Hello, Detective Sergeant McKenzie's phone, Tony speaking."

"Yes ...uh-huh...yes ... I'm Detective McKenzie's partner... yes ...yes we are ... just now? ...Yes ...Which direction? ...How long will that take him? ...right ... OK thanks."

"He's here Craig."

"Hey?"

"He's in town."

"What, here?"

"He's been drinking at the hotel."

"You are joking."

"Come on."

Ben

"You must have done something."

"No Chap, nothing man, just like you said." Ben could feel his leg moving under the table. Chappie had asked him to come down and meet him at a pub by the railway in Midland. It was a little place set in between an old bookstore and a printers that looked like they shut up shop a long time ago.

"Well whatever you did, he's taken a liking to you," Chappie took a long sip from his pint and slowly licked his lips, pulling any beer left on his stubble into his mouth.

"That's good then, hey?" Ben tried not to show his relief.

"Bit risky, Benny, that's all, he wants five times what you gave him last Wednesday on the next one, there'll be five grand to you, same set up as before, he'll let me know which train station on the night, so come to mine on Wednesday, same as before and then go from there." Chappie stared a hole through Ben making sure he was up for it.

"What do you reckon?" asked Ben, trying to stall.

"I reckon it's a bit risky." Chappie kept Benny in his glare.

Benny was nodding, as much for his sake as Chappie's.

"Just keep your wits about you, alright?"

"Sure Chap."

"You up for it?"

"Yeah man."

"You said you wanted in," Chappie was leaving the door open for him.

"Yeah man, I'm good."

"Alright then."

Daniel

"I've got outlaw blood see."

Of all the men Daniel wondered about, the one standing in front of him now was the one he wondered about the most. He called himself Chains, a self-professed bush relic and feather foot. A ratty-haired, hollow-eyed bone-pointer who dealt exclusively in demon worship, premonitions and half-baked hunger strikes. He carried with him an intoxicating hospice-like stink that clung to his body and grew out of him, like a gang of dying flies pregnantly rotting out the innards of a sheep's bloated arsehole. He saw his role in life as a fleshual transistor for all that was sacred and terrifying in the natural order of the wild Aboriginal world.

In the stories he had rattled off for Daniel throughout the years, he'd sat a hundred spastic babies on a hundred different ant hills and with his own hands sliced a thousand or more whistle-cocks with a single piece of jagged quartz and a gallon of his own tepid spit. He was also a doing a seventeen year turn for rape and murder and currently had his mind on recording his first album of country and western spoken word. He'd wandered into Daniel's art class from time to time during the week, Daniel wasn't sure of his real name because he wasn't on his class list but Chains was a frequent visitor to the art room, so much so he'd take time out of his day to whisper in Daniel's ear whose paintings were improving and whose should be set on fire.

"It makes no difference to me you understand, it's just a question." Chains was standing in front of Daniel now with his palms facing ceiling-ward, his eyebrows arched high on his face and a prison-issue green t-shirt hanging loose and filthy off his bony shoulders.

The rest of the class had gone out for a smoke break and were drinking their milky tea and their instant coffees. Daniel remembered the Occupational Health and Safety instructor who came in every Thursday to give the inductions saying that the Styrofoam cups the boys drank from released a poisonous chemical every time they interacted with boiling water. Daniel wasn't sure what to make of it but had since brought in his own coffee cup from home.

Chains took another step towards him, lowering his voice and repeating the question. Daniel could see the long thick yellow fingernails on the tops of his fingers as he moved towards him, a sleepy disturbing oracle of a man trying to take possession of something that wasn't his.

"If you had to make a choice, would you rather fuck your parents or kill them?"

Daniel watched as the question came out of his mouth. Chains really wanted to know. He had spent time thinking about it and wanted to know what other people thought. He stood his ground as Daniel made a hesitating show of deliberation. Chains waited, hanging onto the silence between the two of them, the answer mattered.

"Look man," Daniel's palms were now up, his eyebrows heavenward in tune with Chain's own, "I think you're welcome any time to come in and make yourself at home here, you know, even enrol in the class, but really man I, I just don't, eh, you know, that's just not something I really want to get into, you know."

Chains looked at Daniel, taking in the response.

"Yeah," Chains looked disappointed, Daniel may not have been as kindred as he had believed.

"But seriously Chains, it's a good question, a lot of stuff going on there," Daniel took the bunch of keys attached to his belt and made a motion towards the door. Sometimes showing them something like a set of keys could jolt a prisoner back into submission. Daniel needed to get out of the room. Chains wasn't much of a physical threat but even being touched by him would be disturbing. Daniel took a step towards the door, Chains held his ground, his heavy jaundiced eyes weighing his head down as he peered into Daniel's face.

"It's not my world you know, this place, this earth," Chains was trying to explain himself. Daniel nodded slowly at him, looking into his milky yellow eyes.

"It's the devil's realm this, it's his playground, not just the prison, the whole world," Chains shot a look deeper at Daniel, one that spoke of the hepatitis in his blood and the epilepsy in his nervous system, one that hinted at the all spastic babies and all the discarded cock meat left as a dud sacrifice to the sand and spinifex of his own whirling synapses.

"Chains...."

"It's like a woman with her trouble see, she's been given a ritual of pain, a ritual of suffering," Chains nodded as he went on.

"Chains, please." Daniel rattled loudly on his keys.

"It's a covenant see, a covenant of blood between the woman and the creator, between the woman and the snake, now you, in your stories, you have the snake and he's no good, in our stories the snake's the creator. This is his world, see? These are his women, this is his trouble."

Tony

Tony was trying not to make it obvious but he was looking over at Craig as he tore up the road back into town. His hair was still wet as he gripped the steering wheel, the roar of the engine mixing in with the tyres on the rough country road. Craig was leaning forward, no doubt running through his head all the likely ways the arrest was going to go down. Tony knew his partner had felt the fire come back to him around the kitchen table earlier in the day, and putting this one's face in the ground, right in his home town, would help that feeling take hold.

"Craig?"

"Tone?"

"You good?"

"Yeah, mate."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Alright then."

"You good?"

"Me?"

"Yeah."

"Yeah, mate."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Let's get him, hey?"

"Let's do it."

Craig pushed the car on, he was doing about twenty over what he should be, driving like he was beating the sun to the horizon line. The bloke from the pub said the tall fella would be about twenty minutes walking home, he was with his younger brother and he'd be carrying a brand new microwave still in its box. Tony knew he'd have to keep an eye on Craig when they pulled him up, he'd have to keep an eye on the tall one as well in case he got frisky, which he'd be more than likely to do if he'd been drinking all day.

Craig peeled around the long bend leading into town, the road that took them up the main street rose a little and Tony could feel the car shift gears as the engine lifted to meet the challenge. Tony flashed another look over at Craig, he looked like his adrenalin was going into the red. If he didn't slow down they might be using the tall one as a speed bump. They reached the top of the main drag and the two brothers came into sight, walking away from them heading towards the cricket nets at the far end of the oval. The footy match in the distance looked like it had just finished and a few of the players were drinking beer on the sidelines, looking towards the car as Craig hit the lights and the siren. The tall one noticed too and turned towards them as Craig closed the distance and finally pulled up onto the grass, blocking the path. Before Tony could take his seat belt off, Craig was already out the door, yelling instructions.

"Alright, put the fucking box on the ground."

"What the fuck did we do?" the little one called out to Craig as he approached both of them.

"Clem, shut your fucking face and head home boy, here take this and tell mum she needs to wipe down the inside plate before she uses it." The tall one handed over the microwave, careful not to let it fall.

"Fuck that Cars, this is bullshit," the little one took the box with a scowl heavy on his face.

"Fuck off and tell mum her she needs to wipe it down," the tall one looked at him like he was his father. "Now, ya little cunt." The little one walked away, keeping his eyes on all of them.

"Alright turn around, that's it Carson, game over mate," Craig had one hand on his belt, making his way over.

"Sergeant, Sergeant, Sergeant," Carson was smiling at him, leaning back but compliant.

"We told you, if you made us chase you all over the place...."

"How are you chasing me if I'm at home, hey," Carson turned slowly with his hands behind, his eyes skyward.

"Over here," Craig kept his distance and ushered him over to the car.

Carson walked to the driver's side door and lent forwards with his chest touching the roof, his hands still fixed in place behind his back. Tony was standing by the passenger side door, eye to eye with him over the roof of the car. Carson held his gaze as Craig rattled off the bullshit in his ear.

"I'm placing you under arrest for aggravated sexual assault...."

Tony watched as Carson played along. His arms and wrists were being jostled behind his back as Craig organised himself and told him what was what. He'd be looking at a string of charges and if they could make half of them stick he'd be seeing out his forties in jail. Tony could see on his face that he knew it. He was doing well to keep himself in order. That's it son, fucking goodnight Irene. Craig pulled him off the car and fed him into the back seat.

Patrice

Patrice buttoned up his shirt, looking at himself in the locker room mirror. He had come in an hour earlier today to work out in the gym. He had kept himself in good shape but that was mostly due to not eating too much. She didn't marry him for his body and she didn't leave him because of it either. He was awake most mornings now around three or four, he figured he may as well use the time to come in for a workout when he was on shift. He'd started on the treadmill, did twenty minutes but half of that was walking pace, he usually brought up a little phlegm after he was done, it was good to clean out his system, might help him with the cigarettes. He'd lifted some free weights and hit the bag for a spell, he was stronger and fitter than he'd thought he was, which it was a nice surprise.

The shower had been good, the endless hot water feeding off the prison system had kept him going for nearly as long as his work out. The change rooms brought him back to his school days, the smell of cheap deodorant and shower gel in the air, the wet towels and the martial art magazines strewn about. They gave the place its character. It was female free. Completely functional and utterly uncomplicated.

He was wearing a tight white t-shirt under his khaki uniform. He looked good, like he was in the army, an officer maybe. His face was still looking young, his skin not too loose, he looked like a man, not old or young, but a handsome man nonetheless.

"Alright Patty," Derek called in through the open door as he came in with another officer for a morning session.

Patrice lifted his head to return the greeting but Derek had passed by. Patrice turned on the tap and took his razor and soap from his shaving bag above the sink. The sound of the water running calmed him as he lathered his face and thought of her on the other side of the world listening to her mother's voice in her ear. Helpless against the flow of familial advice and shame and guilt. He'd have to go and get her if he wanted her back, he didn't know if he wanted her back, he wanted the last fifteen years of his life back, he wanted to go to university instead of tramping

around South America for most of his twenties. He wanted something other than what he had, he wanted to live forever.

"It's Fitzy, Tony and Em on the breakfast show...."

Derek had turned on the stereo in the gym, three mental retards giggling into a microphone, laughing about nothing, with a dance beat going on behind them. Patrice thought of the millions of people driving to work every morning listening to it. The DJs stopped talking and a dance anthem blasted through the gym, Patrice could hear the dead drop of weights bounce off the floor and the groans and grunts of Derek and his mate as they pushed themselves to their limits.

Patrice approached the SHU unit, he had only been here once before. The SHU was the special handling unit, where fucked-up prisoners went to go to and get fucked-up even more. Usually they kept the same officers on rotation in the SHU, but even the most dedicated sadists got the sniffles from time to time.

"Morning Patrice."

"Mr Porter."

Patrice took his seat beside Mr Porter in the control room. Porter was a South African prison guard with highly questionable politics and a fierce devotion to regulation, order and the rule of law. He had run the SHU since the early nineties when he first moved to Perth in one of the first waves of white migrants fleeing an ever-darkening Johannesburg. He had Dutch slave-holding blood pulsing through his veins and his inner instinct, which told him to control and dominate everything without restraint, was here given complete authority to exercise itself with absolute power and unquestioned abandon.

The SHU console looked down the long corridor that made up the entire single floored unit. Patrice noticed the silence in the place that was missing in all other areas of the jail. In here you didn't kick up a fuss and scream at the guards, here you kept your mouth shut and prayed you didn't stand out. The prison within the prison was the endgame for any and all inductees worthy of exceptional correction. It was spoken of in whispers, especially by the Aboriginal prisoners, some of their people had been killed in here. Rhino Island some of them called it. A place to be feared in a fearful place.

Punishment wasn't drawn out in the SHU. The prisoners weren't worn down through years of boredom and despair, they were beaten to bloody pulps until they behaved, kicked to pieces and clubbed and sprayed and stomped, bashed for hours at a time if that's what it took. Strapped to metal beds and beaten back into little boys. No matter how much a prisoner had in him, there were enough officers and enough shift changes and enough concrete walls to get the job done. Order would be restored. The SHU was whatever hell the prison needed it to be.

Ben

Ben forgot to shave again last night, he couldn't do it this morning, not if he was going to look good for the meet. He'd spent most of the day before cleaning his house, thinking about everything that could go wrong. It was a shit load of pills; Chappie must be testing him. He wasn't going to be doing it like this all the time, just this once. If the exchange went smooth he still had to drive all the way back to Midland with twenty grand in the car. It was a nightmare scenario, ten nightmare scenarios.

If he got pulled over at any stage he'd be deep in it, he didn't really have an out either, there wasn't much he could say to the cops to get him off, other than turn in Chappie - but then he'd have to move to Adelaide. He'd rather go to jail. It was just gone six, peak hour would be humming for another half hour or so. When it was time to leave he'd take Reid Highway at half past and head to Chappie's. A couple minutes there and off again to who knows where, hopefully close by, hopefully Midland station, he could make the drop and be back at Chappie's in five minutes if it was Midland. Back home by eight thirty, maybe straight to the safe box and then back home. Maybe he needed to rent somewhere else, he didn't like Chappie knowing where he lived, he should have lied to him when he asked him but he didn't want to start lying to Chappie.

He looked himself up and down in the mirror, his stubble was looking a bit fluffy, should be dark enough by the time seven thirty comes around. As he breathed in, he bounced his broad shoulders up and down, in the mirror he looked like a boxer, he couldn't box for shit but he looked like one and that had been enough so far. He slapped himself around the face and headed for the door. He picked up his car keys and cigarettes from the kitchen counter and put one in his mouth, he looked around for a lighter. He reached up to the top cabinet above the stove top and took down a box of matches. From where he stood he could see his knife-roll on top of the fridge. He took it down and rolled it out across the bench. He stood staring down at them with the box of matches in his hand and the cigarette in his mouth. He ran his fingers across the cloth of the roll, touching the handles of the

knives. It wouldn't hurt just in case. Not the big ones, just a small one, just in case he needed it.

Adrian

"Your honour, my client is a Burundi man and he speaks no English whatsoever, I've only been able to speak with him briefly this morning when an interpreter was finally found, your honour, and it's been very difficult to ascertain exactly what the circumstances were surrounding the, eh, the arrest, your honour."

"Are we able to enter a plea at this stage?"

"Eh, not really your honour, not with any real confidence, the interpreter is actually from Goma which is north of Burundi and the dialects, your honour, although similar are quite distinct so I'd have to say at the moment, your honour, I couldn't with very much confidence say what position my client is actually in."

"Goma?"

"Yes, your honour, that's correct."

"Where is Goma?"

"Ah, Goma, your honour, I believe is to the north of Burundi, it's a border town between northern Rwanda and the Congo, your honour."

"The Congo?"

"Yes, your honour."

"And are we able to get this man an interpreter who speaks his actual dialect, is it Gomese?"

"I couldn't speak to that with any real confidence your honour, I apologise."

"No, that's alright, look obviously the charges are very serious so I think a period of remand at this stage, until an interpreter can be found, would be in everyone's best interest."

"Yes, your honour, we were able to ascertain that my client ingested the balloons of heroin under the threat of death, the interpreter spoke to the fact that my client's wife and children are being held hostage in Tanzania and are under the threat of execution were my client to refuse to smuggle the drugs into WA."

"Tasmania?"

"I'm sorry your honour?"

"Did you say this man's family are being held in Tasmania?"

"No, no, your honour, Tanzania, that's a province I believe, sorry - a country - south of Burrendi, also south of Rwanda, your honour."

"I'm not sure you have the pronunciation quite right there."

"I'm sorry, your honour?"

He had to take a break, he looked at the clock on the wall above the gallery. It was twenty minutes to lunch, he had another long one in the afternoon, he might adjourn early, he needed some bloody rest.

Ariel

"And then the judge remanded you again?" Ariel wasn't surprised, half the boys' sentences were taken up with time served waiting on remand. If the cops didn't like you they could make a case to have you remanded and make you wait for your trial to come up. Once they had you in, they could stall for up to two and half years, keeping you locked up. If they still had nothing after thirty months the judge let you go with a free bus ticket and a hundred bucks. Ariel had often come to work in the morning to see a sad soul make the long walk up the driveway to the bus stop at the top of the road. Plastic bag in hand and a weary confused look on the face.

"Did they give you any indication of when the trial date might be?"

"Could be months, you know, they're still waiting on whether that one's going to wake up or not in the hospital, they want to run all the charges at once."

"How was the judge?" Ariel asked casually.

"Alright, hey."

"Yeah."

"Yeah, alright, you never can...?"

Ariel nodded in support.

"And how's your little brother?"

"He's back home, so my mum'll be watching him close now, hopefully he'll come good."

"Are they coming for a visit?"

"No, I don't let them come in, mum especially, she don't need it, forget the travel to get here but just being in here full stop. I don't like to think of these guards telling her what to do."

"Yeah, that's fair enough."

"And now they got those cameras, you know, everyone who comes in for a visit gets lined up and has to look into the lens, get their photo taken, that's true, right?"

"From what I understand, Carson, yeah."

"Now they know if a prisoner gets regular visits it keeps the peace in here a bit, people don't feel so lonely, gives the boys here something to look forward to,

something you can take away from them if they play up, you know. So knowing that it keeps people in line, what do these cunts do? They take everyone's photo and put 'em all in a file. Forget about my mum, let's say my little brother comes to see me, that boy's about an inch away from the radar as it is. So he does the right thing, comes in to give me support, and what happens? He ends up on a database, so anything happens on the outside further down the road, they not only have his name and address, they have his photo on file from the time he was a little fella, he's on the system now. All the family and all the loved ones get put down on the naughty list you know, so fuck that."

"Are you sending letters home or anything Carson, phone calls?"

"A little bit now and then, if there's a birthday or something like that I'll send a card or a letter, you know, maybe make a phone call but really anything you say or anything you write they're listening to all of it. They're on the phones, they're opening the letters, you know half the time boys get their mail, the envelopes come in already open. Missus be sending pictures of themselves undressed you know, bending over on a bed or something, nothing filthy, just a taste to give their fellas something to pass the time with, but come mail time the photos never show up. The envelope's open and the photos are missing. Ladies be asking the boys in the visiting rooms if they got the photos, boys got no idea and then that's when things start going wild and cunts end up getting dragged out. Fucking madness."

"Alright, well listen, Carson, we'll wrap it up there today, I'll make a note of the visitor issues that you're having and that it isn't to do with people not wanting to come and see you. I think I'll be able to write it up so it won't affect your rating too much, particularly if you're still sending a few cards and people are taking your calls and you've got the canteen job which is a high trust position, so hopefully it won't be too much of a problem." Ariel was closing down his computer, it was coming up to lunchtime and he was going to head down to the new mess hall the superintendent had introduced in an effort to boost staff morale.

"Alright, thanks big man, see you in a week or two. hey?"

"Thanks Carson, and good luck mate, I mean that, I hope it goes as well for you as it can." Ariel reached out a hand and they shook across the table.

Carson left and headed out through the control room to pick up his card and head back to his unit. The prisoners ate first before being let out for recreation for an hour and a half. It was like primary school all over again, only there were no blackboards, no prefects and hardly anyone ever went home.

Ariel shut down his computer and pulled himself out of his chair. Starting up the computer after lunch would burn up a few minutes of the day, give him something to do. It was a small act but it all contributed to getting to three o'clock as painlessly as possible. He took his keys from his belt and locked the door behind him and headed out past the control room towards the mess hall.

The mess hall was where they started serving hot food for the staff. Before they introduced free meals for everybody, only the guards were given hot lunches and dinners, but the new superintendent thought it would unify the staff if they all got to break bread together once a day. What the superintendent hadn't counted on was the fact that the prison guards jealously protected the privilege of their hot chow like the God of the Old Testament watched over His chosen people.

The prison guard union had a long history of fighting, lobbying and picketing for rights that would otherwise be denied to them and it turned out they didn't feel like sharing the spoils with anyone who never swung the bat or sprayed the mace. The fact that the education staff and now some of the assessment officers were lining up to take their share of the vegetable lasagnas, roast pork dinners and oven baked fish and chips was not an easy pill to swallow for any of them and it severely tested the already seriously strained social skills of the more grizzled, bitter and battle-worn screws.

Ariel sat down alone at a table near the Baine-maries and started eating before anyone else had arrived. There was a wide flat screen TV on the wall with Ellen DeGeneres making a rich fool of herself by dancing over her coffee table and looking half-sexy in her checkered sweaters and waistcoats. On the buffet-spread there was whitefish baked in capers and cream, spaghetti bolognese made with beef mince and tinned tomatoes, creamed corn and frozen peas as well as baked potatoes and a small salad bar with boiled eggs, pineapple rings and canned pickles.

The food wasn't amazing that's for sure and Ariel even considered still bringing in his own lunch. It was prison food, cooked by crims, maybe one or two

steps up from what they were feeding themselves. Who knew which crims were doing the cooking and who knew who was watching the crims that were doing the cooking. All questions like these were best left unasked. Ariel hoped quietly to himself that the tartare sauce was semen free, the bolognaise wasn't pulsing with hepatitis and that the peas weren't poached in hot piss and vinegar.

"Where's he from then?"

"I don't know, is he a teacher?"

The guards had started to filter into the lunch room. They hadn't seen someone out of uniform sitting at a table before and the shock of Ariel being so close to the food made them all very nervous.

"Did you let him in here?"

"Do they have keys to get through themselves?"

"They don't have keys to the cells, do they?"

The chatter was soft enough to be private and loud enough to be heard by everyone in the room. Ariel sat his ground and kept eating, slicing a fork into the baked potatoes and keeping his wits about him. He reminded himself they were high school drop-outs who couldn't pass the entrance exam to be policemen or even army cadets. He could take their bullshit all day and if they wanted a war he'd come and eat through their whole shitty menu as long as his key kept opening that door.

Two teachers from Education came through, a young man who might have been the art teacher and an older fellow who Ariel didn't recognise. He looked Chinese, Japanese maybe. They were both drinking from coffee cups and headed slowly for the buffet, checking out the space for the first time. They filled up their plates and sat down at a table in the middle of the room, halfway between Ariel and the officers on the other side.

"I can't believe they're allowed in."

"They're eating all our food."

"Where are you from?" One of the guards couldn't help himself, the hard wiring in his brain couldn't make sense of the new phenomenon.

Ariel knew the teachers were being asked the question, the teachers said nothing, they looked down at their lunch and ate in silence pretending not to have

heard. This sent the guards further into confusion and discomfort. Ariel saw out of the corner of his eye the guard turn back to his colleagues and confer in whispers what their next move would be. The teachers tried to engage each other in quiet conversation, hoping that would buy them some time to finish their lunch in peace.

"Are you from Education?" the English guard shot back a more pointed and direct request for tangible information.

Again the two teachers stonewalled him, and their failure to even acknowledge him as a living being sent the guard spiralling into astonishment. The guards never had to put up with anything like it before. In their previously sacrosanct society, questions never went unanswered, orders were never disobeyed and a plate of peas and baked potatoes was never shared with anyone out of uniform.

Again they huddled together around the plastic tables, closer this time than before, whispering in fury, trying to work things out. They didn't speak anymore to the teachers and after a while they even stopped whispering to one another. Ariel could feel the tension in the air, the guards chewed with venom and threw sinister glares towards Ariel and the two teachers. They were braving out the serves they'd plated up for themselves. They were doing well.

The hateful brain chemistry from the guards was swarming thick in the air now. Filling up the room and interfering with the reception on the flat screen. Ellen started to jolt and fuzz, the teachers finally got out of their seats and left as quietly as they came. The guards had reached the end of their incredibly short tethers and Ariel, in a supreme act of defiance and personal salvation, stood up and went back for seconds.

Ben

It was getting darker earlier now. Winter was on its way and Perth would get turned into Scotland for a couple of months. Wet, cold and icy mornings, frost on the grass for a couple of hours - and then back to normal for the rest of the day. It wasn't much of a winter, wasn't much of a season. It was a strange city. Melbourne had four seasons every day apparently; in Perth you were lucky if you got two a year.

Ben was told the pick-up was at Ashfield train station. Another nothing. It sat in between an industrial road and a football oval. At seven thirty at night, no-one was ever at Ashfield station.

He was sitting on a thousand pills broken up into twenty smaller plastic clip-seals. This time there was no hiding behind the stereo, he just had them in a small canvas bag. Chappie told him, if for some reason the cops tried to pull him over, he was to drive away and throw the little bags out the window every few hundred metres. The cops would either stop to pick them up or they'd chase him down but the car would be empty. He'd have to cover the cost of the pills plus Chappie's end, but it would be better than getting caught with this much on him at once. He knew Chappie was covering his own arse, but owing fifteen grand was better than doing fifteen years, which is what he'd be looking at if he did get picked up.

It was the same deal as last time, yellow Hyundai, bonnet up, walk over, look in, drop the dope, pick up the cash, quick count and head back to Midland. He'd be making five grand tonight. Wasn't bad at all. He was thinking he might need a bigger safe box, maybe a few different safe boxes around the city, there was a new one opened up in Wanneroo, he could even go and open one up down south in Bunbury but that meant he'd have to drive with a lot of cash on him, he was probably getting ahead of himself.

Ben's car lit up as headlights flooded through the back window. The lights veered to the left and the yellow Hyundai came into view in the rear mirror. The car stopped just behind Ben's, boxing him in. Ashfield didn't have a car park on account of its location, just a grass verge on either side of the train lines. The man got out and lifted up the bonnet just as he had the week before. Ben took a breath as he

watched him in the mirror, he reached over and gathered the bag from the passenger seat and felt for the small blade he had in his left pocket.

He got out of the car and walked over to the man staring into the engine. This time, instead of the flip-top box there was a bigger metal basket rigged between the engine block and the radiator with a small cage-top fitted with a snap-latch. It was just as Chappie had explained it and Ben was glad to see it. He didn't look at the man staring into the car, he leaned down and fiddled with the latch to get it open, it was brand new and stiff to move, he placed the bag on the engine block and used both his hands to get the basket open. He flipped it up and saw a yellow envelope sitting in the basket instead of the five money rolls he'd been expecting. He felt the touch of cold metal on the back of his neck and heard the sound of a gun being cocked. Whoever was holding it pushed it into him so he had to keep his head under the tilt of the bonnet.

"Your hands don't move, Okay?"

"Yeah," Ben's mouth went dry, he kept still.

He felt hands go through the back pockets of his jeans. They left his jacket alone. He thought about his blade.

The man who had been looking in at the motor took the bag off the engine block and disappeared behind him out of sight. Ben heard his footsteps disappear onto the wet grass.

"Very slowly mate, take the envelope and put it your right back pocket." The voice was very calm, Australian accent, very normal, no swearing, not a drop of panic. Ben began to reach for the envelope when he was stopped by the gun barrel nearly pushing him flat against the car.

"Now listen, we have what we need already, it makes no difference to me to leave you here lying on the ground, you understand?"

"Yeah," Ben held his hands motionless a few inches above the car and felt strangely relaxed with the control he could hear in the man's voice.

"Pick up the envelope very slowly. Put it in your right back pocket, anything else happens other than that, then I can't help you mate, alright?"

"Yeah," Ben spoke very quietly as he moved his hand towards the envelope, he picked it up, felt like it was empty. Without straightening his body he moved his

hand around his back and slid it gently in his pocket. As he did he felt a hand grip his wrist as the gun barrel pushed him down on top of the engine block. There were two of them now, they leaned on him hard, flattening him across the car. They took his other hand and put what felt like a cable tie on his wrists. As they did, Ben could feel the heat off the engine coming through his jacket. He started to moan a little as the heat seared through his track suit and began burning into his skin.

"You're burning him on the engine, man," a voice let somebody know.

He was pulled from the car and pushed down into the grass. He could smell the polystyrene smoldering from his jacket.

"Alright mate, are you listening? I need you to pay close attention to me now," the voice cool as Christmas.

"Yeah," Ben answered quickly.

"Now turn your head towards the walkway there, coming off the train platform, can you see that man up there standing by himself, looking down here at us?"

Ben craned his neck around and stretched it up to see a heavysset man looking in their direction, standing alone. He nodded and dropped his head back to the ground.

"Now that man's from Lebanon, he's been in Australia three days and for the next twenty minutes he's going to be looking at you sitting still in the passenger side of your car, which is where we're about to put you, understand?"

Ben nodded, the gun barrel back on his neck.

"Now after twenty minutes, if you're still in your passenger seat, he'll get on the next train to Perth and you'll never see him again, but if you try and take off, he'll come down here and he'll kill you. Do you understand that?"

"Yeah," said Ben.

"Good boy."

Jennifer

Jennifer opened up the job board on the computer. The government sector was advertising two positions for psychologists, one at the Drug and Alcohol office in Northam and another with Child Protection down in Mandurah. Both of the jobs sounded horrific, the only advantage being that she wouldn't have to worry about being raped and set on fire everyday she was at work. The money was about the same, if she moved to Northam she could rent out her house and probably save a bit each week but then she'd have to live in Northam. The choice between Mandurah and Northam, it was like choosing between lung cancer and emphysema.

Maybe she was better off going up the mines, she might be able to get on the same site as her son. She could earn more by making beds and cooking bacon than she could here in the prison. She'd probably be doing more good for people than the endless roundabout she was on with these boys. She could save a fortune on bills and food, maybe rent a hotel somewhere in South Perth every week she came home. Four on, one off. She could keep her furniture in storage, the big orange one in Osborne Park with the Koala sign out the front.

Maybe she'd give them a call and ask how much it costs to rent a space. It shouldn't cost that much. She could study when she was on-site, on her break times when the shifts were over. Her son had told her the maids and cleaners worked twelve-hour shifts going room to room changing sheets and replacing toilet rolls. They started early, around four in the morning, and finished at four in the afternoon, some camps started later, all depended where you were, but she could start a new career. It wasn't too late, she still had a good twenty years left in her, she could do a Dip Ed and become a primary school teacher.

"Miss?"

She looked over at him, he was one of them from up north, from the Kimberly. He had a gorilla's forehead. She hated herself for thinking it but he did. It hung like a granite ledge over his eyes. His nose was flat and wide-spread across his face, his skin almost blue-black with darkness. He'd been sitting in her chair whispering at her for the last half an hour about his family back home. He told her he astral-traveled last night and flogged his wife in her dreams. He said he was able

to do it by shaking the tree outside her bedroom window. He said when his wife woke up this morning she'd be stiff and sore all over. He said it with his straight monkey face and a sense of profound justice. It was his way. A way she had to examine to the point where she could distinguish his behaviour as something identifiable. Something understandable. Something treatable.

"She no good you know." The husky shame that was in his voice went over the desk and filled the room as he sat uncomfortable, looking down at the floor, shifting shapes with his hands to chase after and vindicate his words.

Jennifer was lost. She wanted to see him hurt. This huge hulking brainless ape sitting in front of her. Part of her wanted to find out if what he said was true. Part of her wanted to find his wife and ask her if she woke up this morning feeling sore. She imagined the drama playing out in the courtroom as he was charged with astral battery and hopefully punished with some appropriate form of cosmic torture. She hated him. Forty thousand years isolated on a desert island and even then it wouldn't be even remotely possible to imagine that maybe not everybody on the planet evolved at the same time.

Patrice

Patrice had done another workout this morning. He was getting up earlier and earlier. They had kept him in the SHU for every one of his shifts for the last fortnight. After another long day he was travelling home on Tonkin Highway, the long arcing road joining the hills and the south side of Perth with the northern and eastern suburbs. Patrice had stopped at the bottle shop nearest the prison and bought himself two long beers for the ride home. He had started doing this every so often when the prison was getting too much for him. The bottles cost him ten dollars if they were on special, he had a cup holder in the centre console of his car and he'd sip away as he drove the hour or so back home to Beechboro. The freeway was old and ugly, lined with drying and dying scrub trees and the occasional run of power lines. No houses, no mountains, no rolling hills, just a yellowing grey dustiness and a disappointing set of traffic lights around every other bend in the road.

Patrice would wear his uniform on the drive home, he'd been waved in once before on his way to work through a random breath test but the young copper saw his brown shirt with the stars on his shoulder and let him pass. He must have thought Patrice was a country policeman as he even saluted as he rolled by, giving him a slow nod as he did. The traffic was bad today, it seemed to be getting thicker and thicker every year. A new wave of Irish and Kiwi workers were coming to Perth to get rich on the mines. The city was taking in a thousand people a week and to Patrice today it seemed that all of them were driving home in his lane.

He pulled up at the lights where Armadale Road crossed the highway. On either side he could see the last remnants of farm land hanging around the edges of industrial factories, panel beating workshops and the occasional tyre yard. Every now and then Patrice would see one or two horses wandering on the outskirts of a property yet to be chopped up and developed. These small patches of country were an echo of Perth's former self, at least that's what Patrice was told by some of the older guards who worked at the prison. Even the old English ones who came out in the fifties and sixties lamented the loss of Perth's innocence like it was their own sacred soil.

Patrice looked to the car behind him as he waited at the lights, there was a fat girl riding shotgun, being driven around by her bony mother. The mother looked strung out and wiry with greying hair she wasn't taking care of. She was squinting through the windscreen behind Patrice, waiting for the lights. The daughter sat glassy-eyed, staring forwards sucking on a can of Pepsi. When she lowered her head back down after pouring in the cola, the fat around her chin swelled out to a nice comfortable cushion she seemed happy to rest her face on. She said something without turning towards her mother, the mother gave a long response, long like someone was listening to it. The daughter took another hit from the can. Patrice edged forward towards the line, praying for the lights to change.

The year before last they were talking about starting a family. Patrice was getting to the point where it was his last chance, he didn't want to be much older than forty and be having kids. She was still young, thirty-five at the time, they had even picked out two names they were that serious about it, then it all just seemed to fade into the background. Every time she took a trip back home to see her mother she'd leave a little more of herself back in France. The roots they were trying to plant in Australia were being ripped out every year. It was stressful for Patrice, living in a constant state of unease, never knowing when she was going to decide to take off. It was a relief in a sense that she finally did it but in every other way it was shit. She was shit for doing it, too. The way she went about it didn't help but how do you abandon a life the right way? How do you give up on another person with kindness, it can't really be done. What you were getting hadn't been enough and what you were asked to give, you didn't have.

Patrice pushed the cigarette lighter in on the dash. The lights went green.

He pulled out ahead of the fat girl and the mother, his car was good, strong, well looked after. He blazed ahead and took the beer in his hand, taking a long hit as he climbed up to a hundred kilometres. He put the cruise control on and could feel the cold beer settling into him, clearing his head, making him feel light and dizzy. He put the bottle down and followed the road as it took a long bend to the right, carrying him like a river turning down the crest of a mountain. Patrice took a cigarette from his pocket and lit it, filling the car with plumes of good white smoke. He rolled the front windows down and pulled on the cigarette, feeling the full

moment of magic as he glided around the bend, all his troubles and worries drifting out the window behind him.

Patrice thought about her walking around her small home town by herself, running errands for her mother, taking the car into the village to have it repaired, cleaning the above-ground pool her mother would insist on filling each summer. He hoped she was miserable. He hoped she'd want him back, he hoped she'd return and beg him to take her back and promise to love and look after him and have his children and name their sons after his own father and he'd listen to her as she wept and shook and trembled on his doorstep and when she'd finished and it was his turn to speak and she'd be waiting for him to open his arms and his heart and his home, he'd tell her to fuck off back to her mother and drown herself in that ridiculous pool.

Patrice had gone no more than a minute when he had to brake and take his place in the long queue of cars waiting at the next set of lights.

Ben

"I need more, Greg." Ben was sitting, uneasy, staring at Greg who hadn't touched his coffee this morning.

"How much more?"

"Maybe double every week for the next few weeks."

"Really?" Greg scratched the side of his face, thinking about whether he'd be able to do it.

"Just for the next month I reckon, max." Ben wanted him to say yes and fuck off out of his house, he had enough in his safe box to pay Chappie what he owed, but he'd taken a hit and he wanted to build his cash back up and put the whole of last week behind him.

He'd sat for six hours in the car by himself keeping an eye on the train platform trying to get himself loose of the cable ties. By the time he woke up it was past one in the morning and Chappie was standing over him cutting him loose.

He'd come looking for him after he hadn't showed. The battery to Ben's hatchback had drained, so Chappie drove him home in his SS and he heard the story on the way home. Ben played it as cool as he could but he had been scared. Chappie told him that he'd sort it, Ben would still have to come up with fifteen grand to cover the pills and Chappie would look into it at his end. He told Ben to take a rest for a while and he'd get back to him in a few weeks.

"What, have you been taking a business course or something, drumming up customers?" Greg asked, picking up his coffee. Ben knew Greg would be trying to figure it out, figure out what was in it for him, probably asking himself where his own drive had gone.

"Nah Greg, it's just picking up, you know, everyone's trying to relax, get some peace of mind, I just need a bit more if you have it, that's all."

"How come you only need it for the next month, though?" Greg looked genuinely confused.

"Fuck Greg, seriously man, it's no bother, don't worry about it, only if you had it...." Ben tried to back up; anytime arrangements were changed significantly,

everyone wanted to know the full story. What was changing and how it affected them. Greg was no genius but he was no idiot either.

"You owe money?" Greg asked Ben, looking at him like he actually cared.

"No Greg, I don't owe anything, I just wouldn't mind earning a bit more, that's all."

"Because if you do, I can help you out, if you need it, help I mean," Greg was sincere, he didn't want to lose the easy money Ben was putting in his pocket every week.

"Greg, let's just leave it mate, don't worry about it," Ben got up and headed to the kitchen to grab an iced coffee for himself.

"Jesus, Ben, you know what happens to people who owe money," Greg called after him over his shoulder. "Remember Mikey I told you about, the one who used to be the jeweler down in Fremantle, the one with the huge collection of Dockers memorabilia and the little telephone box inside his workshop where you could go and smoke a pipe?"

Ben opened the fridge door and moved a few things round, he didn't want to go back and sit and listen to another one of Greg's stories.

"He ended up owing money to one of the clubs, they had him design a special ring to commemorate all the fallen members and he used jade stone or quartz or some shit and they gave him, enough to make something like thirty rings you know, anyway Mike the silly tit loses the bag somewhere and tries to replace the gem stones with a bunch of opals he had left over from another job. When he presents the opal rings to the two boys who go to pick them up a few weeks later, they tell him they're not the stones that they gave him and he starts by saying they are and of course they're obviously not so then he changes his mind and says he replaced the ones they gave him with these opals 'cause opals are better, which they're not, and one of the boys who was listening to him just cracks him across the jaw and basically breaks Mikey's face in half.

The quartz or the jade that they gave him turns out was from this bloke's old man's property out in York and the old man was one of the founding members of the club back in the day and the gem stones were the last thing the old man salvaged before he sold the property and since passed away. So this bloke tells

Mikey that he owes the club thirty grand for the missing stones and they'd take the rings that he made as well, and they leave him there crying on his own floor and these two boys leave in a huff, with the opal rings and two framed jumpers signed by Jeff Farmer and Shauny McManus. Anyway, Mikey has no chance of raising thirty grand so he has to put his shop up for sale the following week..."

Ben figured it out as Greg was talking and he was reading the use-by date on an old carton of cottage cheese.

Chappie had set him up.

Craig

Craig sat in the middle of the visitor's room. He was on the three-seater bench side of the table, where the prisoner's families or lawyers sat when they came to visit. There were a few people spread around the centre all watching the heavy door at the end of the room. Waiting for their husbands, sons, uncles or whoever to walk through in the zip-up polystyrene jumps-suits that made it difficult to smuggle a balloon of drugs or pass along who knows what that'll end up getting stuck in to who knows who.

Craig had heard all the stories from the guards at the front desk. People coming in with syringes hidden up inside them, somehow passing it on to the crim they were coming to visit. Babies with packets of weed or gear taped inside their nappies or toddlers with contraband strapped to their backs under their t-shirts.

There was a chance he wouldn't even come down. He'd be called up for an official visit but sometimes they wouldn't turn up at all or they might come to the visiting room, see who it was and turn back on their heels. A lot of them would rather sit in a box than talk to the police.

The heavy door opened and Craig could see there were a few guys waiting, looking out over the guard's shoulder. One of the crims was holding a couple of cans of coke and a few chocolate bars. No doubt waiting for his wife and kids. Craig saw a weary look on his face as he stood there looking out, hopeful, into the visits centre. He was alone in his plastic outfit, holding on to what little he could still provide for his family. It made Craig think of his own wife walking out on him.

Some of these blokes in here, with all their bullshit and dramas, still they had loyal women who were willing to stick by them. Whether they stuck by them 'cause they were stupid or in love or just had nowhere else to go, it didn't matter to Craig. What mattered was their loyalty. Whoever these women were, they could be counted on, counted on to get in the car once a week, bundle the kids in the back and put on a happy face for an hour and a half. Just like going to church. All that was asked of the kids was to visit dad in his ridiculous outfit, drink a warm can of coke and not ask too many questions on the drive home.

"Sergeant".

Craig hadn't noticed him sit down, he'd been staring at a couple on the far side of the room. One of the older crims, bald head and glasses, fat around the waist, he was shaking his head at the woman and holding her hands. She was crying and he talked to her, trying to settle her down, making her promises. She started shaking her head, he tapped on her hands and leaned in close, trying to reach her.

"You come to see me or what, Sergeant?"

"Yeah, thanks for coming down, Carson." Craig turned to face him, giving him his full attention.

"What do you want?"

"There's been an incident," Craig got straight to it.

"Has there?"

"Yeah, it's your brother, there's been a string of incidents in fact," Craig held the gaze Carson was giving him.

"Your brother stole a car late Monday night, from outside the pub you had him in before we picked you up."

"Where's he?"

"I'll get to that, Carson, let me finish."

"Where is he?"

"Carson..." Craig was warning him.

"Sergeant..." Carson was warning him.

"He's in Rangeview, he was taken there Tuesday afternoon." Craig let him have that much.

"He's alright then?" Carson visibly relaxed, shaking his head at Craig.

"Not exactly, Major Crash found paint thinner in the vehicle." Craig said it as flatly as he could.

"Major Crash?"

"He turned the car over, Carson, the young man who was with him died at the scene." Craig watched Carson take it in.

"Who was with him?"

"I can't tell you that, he was a minor," Craig looked down at his file waiting for what was next.

"Sergeant, I need to know who was in the car with him?"

"I can't, Carson, sorry."

"You are fucking kidding me?"

"Carson," Craig held onto his power giving him a look.

"You have to get him into protection," Carson was leaning over pointing his finger at Craig.

"Carson, I don't have any pull or even know the procedures over there at Rangeview, but I'm sure whoever processed him explained everything he needs to know and gave him all the information about his options...."

Carson stood up from the table and headed for the heavy doors.

"Carson, sit down here please," Craig stood up, drawing attention to himself, gathering up his paperwork in an effort to look composed.

"Suit yourself." Craig watched Carson walk through the steel doors that took him back to the prison and storm past the guard who let him by without a word. As the door slowly closed, Craig could see the prisoner still clinging to the cans of coke looking out into the room. His face was a little less anxious as he munched away on his freshly opened chocolate bar.

Damien

Damien liked working in the prison, he liked leaving his mobile phone at home every morning and not having to talk to anyone for most of the day. He worked in Intelligence and spent most of his working hours pouring over the mail that had been flagged and listening in on conversations that prisoners had with the outside world. Occasionally a guard or another prisoner would tip them off as to who was worth listening to but ever since they started recording the phone calls to the main intranet they had a bank of stored conversations they could listen to retrospectively if anything ever happened. It wasn't as exciting as catching the crims before they got up to mischief but Damien still liked to devote an hour a day listening in on live conversations. Retroactive prosecutions were all good but it meant someone usually got hurt in the meantime, crim to crim wasn't too bad but stopping the incident before it happened might save a guard from getting seriously injured or even worse.

The sound quality had improved drastically since the prison went digital a few years ago and Damien liked to close his office door and turn off the lights, making it as dark as possible while he was listening in. He put on his headphones and ran his mouse over the phone bank in unit 3. There were two phone calls being made at the time. One from Prisoner H2038776 and one from prisoner F0312654. Damien clicked on prisoner F.

"Well, who gave it to her?"

"I don't fucking know, I told you."

"She's seventeen years old."

"I know how old she is, Lance."

"Well she never had fucking cocaine come up in a piss test when I was home, did she?"

"Don't you raise your voice at me Lance, I'm ringing to let you know what's going on with your own bloody daughter."

"You find out who's giving her cocaine."

"I've asked her a million times, she won't talk to me."

"I don't care if she won't talk to you, you hear me, do what you need to do and find out who's fucking giving her cocaine."

"How am I supposed to find out if she doesn't talk to me?"

"I tell you what love, I have fucking had it up to my eyes with your bullshit alright, with this bullshit mothering you try and get away with, she's your bloody daughter...."

"What can I do?"

"What can you do? What the fuck can I do? I'm stuck up here in this fucking shit hole."

"That's not my fault is it, I'm just ringing to let you know what's going on."

"You don't have any idea what's going on, you retarded fucking cunt...."

"Lance, don't...."

"No, I'm fucking sick of it!"

"Well I'm sick of you."

"You're sick of me...."

Damien took a slip of paper from his desk calendar. His wife had given him a Gary Larson desk-set for a Christmas present at the beginning of the year. He looked at the picture in his hands. A couple were standing in a bunker surrounded by cans of food, looking out at mushroom clouds billowing over the horizon, the woman was asking if he remembered to pack a can opener.

Damien thought of his wife every time he replaced the day's date.

Damien clicked on the other phone.

"They got him in the infirmary now, I'm getting picked up by Francis in a little bit, she's going to take me to see him."

"They letting you in to him?"

"I'm his mother, Carson, they have to let me in."

"Did they say how bad he was?"

"They got him good."

"Fucking pricks."

"Watch your language, hey."

"Mum."

"Don't be making it worse now."

"Who did it to him?"

"Two of Bill's cousins, they already there for something else."

"When's the funeral?"

"Francis said it was going to be Friday."

"She talked to William?"

"No, she talked to Pat."

"Who's Pat?"

"That's Bill's wife."

"But Clemmy's going to pull through, huh?"

"He'll be on a charge now."

"Did they tell you that?"

"No-one has to tell me, that's it now, they'll drag him through it, same as you."

"Mum, he's only little."

"You said you were going to straighten him out."

"Mum."

"You said that, when I asked you about him, that's what you said to me."

"Mum?"

"What Carson, I was counting on you."

"I brought him home, didn't I?"

"Now he's seen you arrested and all."

"What can I do about that, mum?"

"I know about that girl too Carson."

"Mum."

"You let yourself down there and you let me down too, I'll tell you that."

"I can't talk about that now, mum."

"Well, that's all they're talking about round here."

"Look, I want you to call me as soon as you see him, I want to know how he is."

"He's in the hospital."

"Mum, listen...."

"They hurt him something terrible...."

Damien lost the sound on the computer. He'd turned in his chair reaching for the telephone and accidentally knocked the headphone jack out of the computer. The prison computers only had audio if the head phones were connected, this made them more secure and made sure the only person who was listening could be tracked through their own personal login. It was a way of keeping the intelligence safe and the staff accountable. Damien held the phone under his chin and punched in his son's phone number. He'd just put in his late tax returns for the last four years and now the tax office was asking him for fifteen thousand in unpaid HECS fees. His son hadn't ticked the box in his tax form declaring his HECS debt when he started with Main Roads. His Urban Planning degree cost him a fortune. Damien was going to call him and tell him straight it was his obligation to pay what he owed, even if it meant taking a second job.

As he waited for his son to pick up, he opened his prison emails; his wife had sent him a message. She wanted him to ring Flight Centre today and see if the tickets were ready to be picked up. It annoyed him that she seemed incapable of doing the smallest things like picking up plane tickets or paying an overdue phone bill or anything that involved talking to people over the phone. She was timid in that way. She left him in charge of pretty much everything, which was good in some ways, just not when it came to picking up plane tickets on the way home from work.

Daniel

Daniel was playing Chess with Malcolm. An alcoholic skeleton in for slicing up his ex-wife. Malcolm used to be a functioning boozier who ran the social events for a members only country club up in the hills. He worked behind the bar, set up the marquees for the private functions and organised the meat trays and party hats if it was someone's birthday. Malcolm had managed to balance the work and the booze quite well until his wife started to get bored at home and let the family history of manic depression and anorexia creep into her daily routine.

Malcolm's previously satisfying sex life diminished rapidly along with his wife's body and he'd started to drink a little more in order to cope with the unwelcome change. A month or so into a boozy haze he decided to put his hand up the skirt of an Irish waitress who was trying for a six-month extension on her 457 work visa. According to Malcolm it turned out Ciara was more than prepared to put up with his groping and general lechery in exchange for bettering her chances in the Lucky Country. But when her time ran out and Malcolm couldn't organise six more months, she celebrated her deportation with a public announcement on Melbourne Cup Day that Malcolm was a king-size sleazebag and had coerced her into doing all sorts of deviousness under the threat of being shipped back home to Emerald Isle. The free and easy mouth of the Malcolm's Coleen, ended up costing him his gig at the country club and the news got home to his skinny wife before he did.

Within the hour Malcolm was booted out of home and began instantly drinking his way through their savings account. A few weeks later when the money was nearly gone, he took to gambling at the Casino in an effort to raise more cash. Eventually Crown had taken his last penny and he found himself in the middle of the gaming floor causing a scene. He was promptly lifted off his feet by three or four uniformed Kiwi's, his arms and legs strapped with Velcro cuffs and was given a sound kicking in one of the basement storage facilities. When they threw him out Malcolm stumbled bloody into his car and headed for the hills hoping to be pulled over by the cops before he reached his house. He pulled into the driveway just as the sun was coming up, taking out the garage door as he did. He said he couldn't remember exactly what happened next but the cops told him later he'd severed the

distal tendons in his wife's arms and sliced through her brachial artery nearly ending her life.

Malcolm had since become an amateur medical enthusiast and would spend most of his time in the prison art room explaining to anyone who would listen, how the body functioned and which movements correlated to which parts of the anatomy. Violence towards women and children was usually frowned upon in prison but for some reason Malcolm had been given a pass. He felt comfortable enough to talk about it openly, perhaps his caveat of blacking out and not remembering gave him some leeway. Blacking out and not remembering was a very popular defence.

Daniel was focusing hard on the chess board, he hated losing to Malcolm, they'd play about twice a week. He was a slow chess player whereas Malcolm was very fast. Daniel would take fifteen minutes sometimes to make a move. Malcolm would take a couple of seconds, about the time it took to pick up a piece and put it down again. There was something wrong about the whole set up where a man who was this good a chess player could be in prison, whereas Daniel, who really had no skills at all, managed to hold down a well-paying job and keep it all together.

Maybe it was his ability to keep away from the extremes of life that kept him safe. He remembered hearing that drug users were like adventurers, in the right setting they'd be the the heroes. The first ones to go over the mountain top, the first out of the trenches, ropeless, raging and eternally alive. They were also the ones who'd take out a bigger mortgage than they could afford and handle the pressure with a three piece Fitpack and five points of meth. Daniel wanted to be an adventurer. He wanted to go over the mountain top.

"Code Red education, Code Red education"

The voice came over Daniel's radio strapped to his belt. Code Red meant a fight had broken out. Daniel stood up and walked to the classroom door locking himself and the other prisoners inside. The policy was for every teacher to secure their rooms so the fight could be contained in one area. Daniel was looking out the window onto the grass trying to see where it was coming from. It could be a false alarm, they happened more often than not. The prisoners were gathering around Daniel trying to get a look themselves. Everything in the prison affected everybody

else. Everyone wanted to know what was happening, knowledge could mean a good night's sleep, knowledge meant you could get your story straight if you needed to.

"Someone needs to get in here, they're going for it".

It was Marcus' voice, he was the business studies teacher. A tiny stick figure of a man, a mid forties train wreck with the body of a marathon runner and the social skills of a jockey. He had told Daniel once around the lunch table that he liked living at home with his parents so much, he didn't see a reason to leave. Eventually, when Marcus was still single and thirty-five, his parents moved out of the house and left him to it. He considered it a victory.

The door to the business studies room suddenly burst open and from the far end of the centre, Daniel and his students could see all the action as it spilled out onto the grass. It was Carson and another prisoner Daniel didn't recognise. Carson had dragged him out of the classroom and as they both fell over each other, he had other fella by his shirt and managed to land himself on top. Carson's face was bloodied up and Daniel could see, even from a distance, his green shirt was spattered dark and torn around the neck. Carson started throwing punches down into the other fella now with his right hand holding him still with his left. Marcus appeared out of his classroom door watching the spectacle, a look of dread on his face. He was looking over at the control booth at the entrance to the school, looking for the guards who were yet to appear. Carson fidgeted his legs around the other fellas chest and slowly, in between fierce hits from the top, worked his way up and got one of his knees pinned on the bloke's shoulder. Carson was screaming down at him now as he was throwing his fist over and over again into his face. Daniel could see the bloke on the bottom kick up with his legs trying to flip Carson off him but there was no chance. Each time Carson laid into him his legs kicked a little less.

Daniel could see all the faces, teachers and students alike looking out from their doors and windows taking in the whole scene. Carson kept at him, the blokes one free arm had gone limp and Carson, putting his hands around the blokes throat, started hammering the back of his head him into the ground yelling into his face as he did. The blokes legs lay flat on the grass, Carson wasn't stopping. A stream of guards finally poured in through the main gate and were heading towards him. The other prisoners from the business studies class began walking backwards until their

backs were against the wall. Marcus stepped inside his classroom as four guards pulled Carson away and began handling him on the ground. A fifth guard knelt on the grass beside the other fella and radioed for the medics.

"Code Blue to education, Code Blue to Education."

The guard rolled the man over on his side as the others bundled Carson in cuffs away from the scene. More guards had come into the centre and were now directing the other prisoners back into their classroom. Daniel watched on as two medics, who must have been on their way already, appeared with their own security guards and a hand stretcher between them. They rushed down to the man on the grass and poked and prodded him with their white rubber gloves all the while talking into his ear trying to get him to respond. One gestured to the other and they rolled him onto the makeshift bed before carrying him off to a waiting golf cart outside the main entrance.

Daniel noticed the way the prisoners reacted towards the fight. There were no cheers or smart remarks. No advice or encouragement, like the kind you often hear at boxing matches. Daniel had been to fight nights at local pubs and they were vocal affairs. Ten dollars at the door got you standing room in front of a big screen and a licence to abuse two strangers belting it out on the other side of the world. But this was different. There was no distance between who was in the ring now and who might be in later on. The wrong words from the wrong mouth could turn this mornings main event into a prelim bout for a heavier stacked card later in the day.

"Danny boy, you're move son".

Daniel turned from the door and took his seat across from Malcolm. He was one of the few who hadn't bothered to look out the window and watch the fight. He was happy where he was. Or happy enough just coping with his own private blend of misery. Watching other people suffer might only reinforce further what he already thought about himself and the rest of the world. That there was something terribly wrong with all of it, something unfixable and permanent and ever present.

Patrice

"Yes we'll be ready," Mr. Porter put down the phone and jotted something down on his clip board.

"Alright Patrice, they'll be bringing him down in the next ten minutes so just follow my instructions and we'll get him situated, OK?"

Patrice nodded assuredly, taking in the dryness of Mr. Porter's South African accent.

"He's nearly after massacring another fellow down in Education there, he might be with us for a while," Porter passed a pair of surgical gloves to Patrice.

"Is he coming from the infirmary?" asked Patrice standing up, pulling on his gloves.

"He's refusing treatment and unit 1 don't want him, Glen said he was just bruised up and bloodied a bit, but he's kicking up one hell of a fuss."

"What happened?" asked Patrice trying not to be too intrusive.

"He has a brother in the infirmary in Rangeview, so he took it upon himself to settle the ledger".

"What did the little brother do?" Patrice wanted to know.

"Who knows Patrice, just a bunch of silly coons kicking the crap out of each other."

The place put the fear into Patrice. Porter made him extremely uncomfortable. There were no sounds coming out from any of the cells in the unit. They had four prisoners in the SHU at the moment, all sitting silent and subdued. Two of them were already broken in before Patrice started his fortnight, he'd seen the other two go through the processing. Porter ran a tight crew and his two chief lieutenants followed his orders to the letter. Jeremy was the biggest, all arms and chest with a jaded look to go along with his greying stubble. He always wore black leather gloves and his nylon flak jacket, even when he was sitting down for a cup of tea. An urban soldier ready for action at a moment's notice. Jeremy was at home in the SHU and he made sure every prisoner was aware of it.

The other was Kenneth, a younger guard and a relative new comer to the prison regime. He was getting schooled in the arts of torment and zero tolerance

and was a diligent and industrious little pupil. What made Kenneth so dangerous was that he questioned absolutely nothing. Not even internally, there seemed to be no check whatsoever to anything that came through Kenneth's brain. No hesitation, no dirty looks, just compliance, obedience and robot like attachment to his duty-bound code of honour. Kenneth could have been a great man if he was surrounded by great men, but he wasn't, he worked in a man-made hell where everyone was reminded of their duties to the commonwealth and their obligation to kneel before a power greater than themselves.

Patrice had seen Jeremy and Kenneth at work on his second shift in the SHU. A mentally ill prisoner who took it upon himself to knock a guard unconscious and start a fire in his cell was handled in short time by the officers in his unit. When he arrived at the SHU in the early hours of the morning he'd been worked on considerably, turning up with teeth missing and a steady flow of blood running over his chin, wetting his beard and dripping down onto his shirtless chest.

As he was marched down the corridor to be inducted into the SHU he started twisting and shouting as he went, his long uneven hair straggling as he spat and spittled his way through a volley of threats and promises. Mr. Porter told Kenneth to sweep his feet before they made it a quarter way down the hall. Jeremy held him steady from behind, pushing his neck forward to avoid a toxic spray of blood and pulled firmly on his hands which were cable tied behind his back. Kenneth reached down and yanked the prisoner's ankles sending him face first down to the floor. Jeremy immediately dropped both his knees into the prisoner's back while Mr. Porter placed a safe bag over his head. Patrice sat behind the control desk, mercifully assigned to paper work for his stay in the SHU and watched as the white safe bag slowly but gradually soak red from the inside.

Mr. Porter applied a rubber neck clamp which was attached to a long six-foot pole allowing him to hold the prisoner in place and still keep his distance. Kenneth used a similar device on his legs while Jeremy got back to his feet and took his time removing the Taser from his holster. They electrocuted the man for the next few minutes and Patrice watched him writhe into unconsciousness as he coloured the safe bag crimson and eventually went still.

It had all being prearranged, orchestrated with the detail of a wedding planner. Before the prisoner had even arrived he'd been researched. He was Dirty. HIV. He called for special preparations. They had greeted him with face shields and long sleeves. Double gloved and fleshless. The clamp poles were placed within easy reach all along the corridor. The manner in which they were to be used, if needed, had been discussed. Safe bags hung in dispensers like paper towels in a busy washroom. The Dirty Prisoner was entering a factory specifically designed to deal with any and all of the challenges he was likely to present. A slaughter house where the livestock went through but came out alive the other end. He was nothing more than an object to be sharpened and refined. An object that in turn, also sharpened the machine itself as he went through it, making, with every pass, the deathless abattoir exponentially more efficient and capable.

Patrice had watched as Jeremy's gloved fingers clenched around the safe bag and dragged the beaten man quietly down the corridor.

"Ready to receive?"

Patrice heard the crackle of Mr. Porters radio, they were outside with the new prisoner.

Jennifer

Mandurah and Northam didn't work out. In truth Jennifer never put in her best application. The selection criteria was government vague and she missed the cut off day for the child protection job altogether. She was talking to her son through email while he was away on the mines. He was working as a shot firer blowing holes in the desert and "chasing the colour" as he liked to joke. He said there were a lot of Irish working up there with him but none of them were given explosive jobs. Somewhere along the way it had been written into policy that Irishmen and dynamite weren't to be tolerated. Too many grainy films of British pubs getting blown to smithereens had seen to that. Her son was happy with his lot. He told her he wasn't drinking too much up on site, he had to watch himself as he was held to stricter account because of his job. He seemed happy, or at least in good spirits. He was making good money, getting a good start.

She felt they had a better relationship through email, they seemed to talk more online than they ever had face to face. She wondered if that was her fault, if that was something she got wrong as a mother. Her son was more open and honest and more generous with his thoughts and feelings three thousand kilometres away than when he was sitting in front of her across the kitchen table. Maybe it was just the way things were. You didn't have to negotiate a conversation when you're in different time zones or different rungs of the latitude. The social form disappeared. All that was left were good feelings, homesickness and a longing which never surfaced when you were in each others pockets.

She was dropping hints about maybe taking a job up north herself. Not Northam north, but mine north. It was like living in the old days, chasing the gold or the iron ore, digging up the country, selling it to the Chinese, literally million dollar chunks of the country getting shipped out every day across the waters. The greedy miners had all built their own railways. From the same part of the desert up to Port Hedland, her son told her there were three railways all heading in the same direction. There was a sickness to it. A sickness which seemed to pour out of the dirt and make sense of eighty-five grand a year to make a few beds and spray a bit of

room freshener. She expected he'd probably get back soon enough with a contact so she could be done with this place.

Security had taken over her office, she had to move out as they were repainting the entire administration wing of the prison. She was asked if she could share the work space with the Assessments team who were situated between the gatehouse and the canteen. The only problem was there weren't enough rooms to conduct the assessments and the psych reports. This meant anytime Jennifer had a prisoner the same time the Assessments people had, she had to move into the tea room to do the session. The tea room served as its namesake as well as a photocopying station for the admin staff as well as a storage facility for a thousand odd rolls of toilet paper and a poorly stacked tower of industrial sized coffee cans.

This was Jennifer's second week sharing the unsharable space. She was back sitting with Carson who had just spent a month in the SHU on account of him nearly killing another prisoner in Education. He was back in his regular unit now but he didn't look right, he seemed different since she'd seen him last. He'd lost a bit of his colour, he was greyish and slightly pale. Thinner than when she had seen him last and not smiling as much as she remembered.

She was embarrassed by their surroundings. He looked like he deserved much more. One of the assessment officers had put through a long run through on the photocopier. The machine in the back of the room was shifting and stapling and churning out booklets making a meaningful conversation nearly impossible. He sat there looking at her, damp, slumped and slightly gaunt.

"Well honestly Carson I don't really know where to start," Jennifer looked at him apologetically.

She watched him and kept her distance, she really had no footing from where she could begin. They'd talked together only months before and she couldn't find a way of engaging with him without covering the same ground and sounding completely ridiculous. She didn't want to treat him like an idiot. She wanted to show him respect but that was nearly impossible to do while going through the motions of her job.

The whole process made her inhuman, made her less than what she was, less than what she wanted to be. Every instinct she had, made her want to get off her

seat and walk over to him, hold him in her arms and stroke his hair and whisper into him that everything was going to be alright and everything would work out for the best and that he'd be taken care of and he didn't have to worry about anything anymore.

She imagined him subduing himself and nestling into her, safe and secure and protected. She'd hold him and tell him she loved him. She'd tell him he was worthy of her love and worthy of all the love that ever was in the whole world, as much as his human heart desired. But he was looking at her now with a broken heart, with a heart without longing. Wordless and souless. He was looking at her like he held his broken heart in his hands and was offering it to her. Not to fix but to throw away.

He looked at her like he knew she couldn't help him. His pain was nameless and homeless. His pain had no place to go other than inside his own suffering self. It all made no sense. The hurt was built over generations, and one sick lifetime wasn't enough to understand it at all.

"Carson?"

"Yes miss,"

"Carson you don't need to call me miss, Jennifer's fine".

"Alright Jennifer, thank you," Carson spoke low and quiet.

"I didn't mean it like that," Jennifer was trying to make him feel comfortable.

"I didn't either miss, I'm sorry".

She felt him come to her a little, soften slightly, felt him closer than he'd ever been sitting in her office. The photocopier at the back of the room went on in its disjointed rhythm and churned out another booklet.

"I guess we'll just get into it again if you don't mind Carson," said Jennifer picking up the paper file in front of her.

"Honestly miss, at this stage, it's"

"Carson?"

"It's just all fucked miss," Carson was shaking his head.

"The psych reports?"

Carson was taking his time answering, he took a deep breath and began like he was going to say something important, but he held in whatever it was and shifted in his chair, a look of frustration spreading over his face.

"Go on Carson, please,"

"It's all of it Miss, the whole thing."

"Carson, you know, circumstances can change very quickly sometimes,"

Jennifer was doing her best.

"Not just here," Carson sat still.

"What do you mean?"

"The first time I saw it I was only young, I was about fourteen and I was getting the MVP for playing in the under eighteens basketball team."

"Yes," Jennifer was bracing herself for what he had to say, trying to stay ahead of him.

"The coach we had on that team was this white fella, my sister coached the young uns, my unc took all the girls teams cause they only went up to under thirteens and my coach, he took the big boys, under fifteens to under eighteens."

Jennifer was listening, she wanted to say something worthwhile.

"I go up to the park where they were having the awards, Saturday arvo, middle of day there, sausage sizzle, few cans of cool drink, all the other teams go up, girls, boys, little fellas, all of them and at the end of the day I get called up for my award."

Jennifer was trying stay ahead, one move ahead at least, she didn't know where he was going.

"Coach gets up there before he announces the award and he says, talking about me, he says this young fella basically ran the team for our under eighteens program this year," Carson stared into Jennifer as he impersonated the coach.

"That's something you should be very proud of Carson," Jennifer leaned forward putting on her best face.

"No, no miss, there was no program see. We turned up every Tuesday night from seven to nine and played a half court scratch match every week. No drills, no skills, no fundamentals, no pre game, post-match talk, no strategies, plays, no calls, nothing. Just eight teenagers playing three point scratchies once a week. And this man stands up and tells everyone I was part of a program. A program he was running".

"Okay," Jennifer had nothing.

"That was the first time I ever saw it you know," said Carson. "That there was really nothing behind it all?"

Jennifer knew exactly what he was talking about, she knew it herself, she was a part of it. She was a dress maker for the Emperor, stitching new clothes with invisible cloth. Every seam a lie. All the needlework done in vain. She wanted to vomit. She wanted to go find her son and take him back home, sell her house and move them both far away where they could start their lives over. They'd plant gardens, herbs, fresh greens. She could start smoking pot again, live in a shack somewhere near the beach. Catch her own fish, bake her own bread. The further away the better, the simpler the better, she wanted to be proud of who she was and the of life she was living.

"Sorry folks, just be a moment," one of the assessment officers waddled into the small room.

Jennifer forgot his name, he was the enormous fat one who seemed to be getting bigger and slower each year. He barely looked over at Jennifer and Carson, ignoring them as much as talking to them, well and truly lost in his own private hell.

"Oh someone's got a print run on have they," his fat face stared into the copier as he asked Jennifer over his shoulder. She wanted to kill him, for Carson's sake and her own.

"I think Marie is running off a few copies for her course this afternoon," Jennifer wanted him out .

"Is she?" the fat one stared deeper into the machine, weighing up his options.

"Well I'll guess I'll come back later then," he looked at the single piece of paper in his hand and made a popping noises with his mouth before ambling his way out the door as lifelessly as he had come in.

"I'm really sorry Carson," Jennifer felt mortified at the interruption.

"No shame in it miss, he's alright." He spoke low and understood.

"No that's really unacceptable, I should have insisted we had our own room" she was trying to convince him.

"Honestly miss it's fine".

"You don't know if Marie has left for lunch do you?" he popped his head back through the tea room door, looking back and forth between Jennifer and the photocopier, waving his piece of paper back and forth between his blubbery fingers.

Ben

He'd run it through his head a hundred times. They sat him in the driver's side of the car before they took off, his hands cable tied behind his back and his neck tied to the back of the chair. He had kept one eye on the train platform to make sure no-one was heading his way but in reality he couldn't have moved even if he wanted to.

It was an easy way for Chappie to make fifteen grand. The blokes who held him up were probably friends of his, they probably all made five each off the night. Maybe Chappie paid them a couple each, maybe it was the the pick-ups idea when he met Ben on that first night and Chappie had been happy to go along with it. It didn't matter either way. The pills would go back to Chappie, along with Ben's fifteen and he sells it on again for real and make more money. Ben tried to remember the man looking down from the platform at the train station.

Was he even looking in their direction, was he even there at all.

Maybe it was a test, maybe he was being blooded by Chappie to see if he was smart enough to work it out, smart enough to be trusted to work with so much money. He had to go and confront him either way. He had to make things right. Couldn't just leave it the way it was. As it stood he looked like a cunt. He was either being tested or taken advantage of. Ben had called Chappie yesterday after Greg had left to let him know he had his pot for him but Chappie wasn't answering. First time in months he didn't answer his phone or didn't call himself the day before to confirm. There was a chance it was all a coincidence.

There was a chance Ben had been left out to dry.

He took the large chef's knife out of the pouch and quickly ran the blade back and forth over the steel. The blades were good, exact with perfect balance and very light to handle. The metallic slice of the blade could be heard as Ben weaved it on both sides motioning down towards his fingers. If he didn't hear from Chappie, he was going to go see him.

Patrice

Patrice typed slowly into the computer. He felt like a fool typing in front of the others. It was an incident report from yesterday, nothing major but he had put off writing it up, he was getting lazy. One of the prisoners took a disliking to the food being served and decided to tip out the salad tray on the floor. After refusing to clean it up he was set upon by a few officers and taken to unit one. The prisoner hadn't put up much of a fight, it took less than a few seconds to subdue on the ground. The crim was usually pretty good. He had been the wing cleaner for a few months now. Patrice was glad to be back in a normal unit, he never wanted to set foot in the SHU again. Hopefully it'd be a while before they sent him back.

"Alright come on Wally mate, rise and shine," Derek could be heard from the top tier calling through a cell door. He was doing the wake up rounds making sure everyone was up. Wally was a big fella who liked jam on his toast and lie ins in the morning.

"Wally, come on mate," Derek called again peering in through the hole.

Derek's comical Mancunian accent could bring a lightness to the prison, especially in the mornings. The bizarre fluxuations in his voice made him sound warm and friendly like a caring father or big brother waking you up rather than a surly prison guard. Derek was only a prick to ones he disliked, which were about half of them, but Wally was in his good books.

Patrice watched as the groggy prisoners made their way downstairs to grab some breakfast.

For the briefest of moments each morning, the place took on the spirit of a boys camp and Patrice would allow himself to feel like a fatherly scout master. The sense of intimacy that came with seeing so many people in their pyjamas, subdued and drowsy with sleep however restless, would visit him each morning and for the briefest of spells bring him a tiny moment of contentment.

"Good on you Wally," Derek moved on down the hall. Wally must be up and about or at least have moved his toes for Derek. Wally would be a scary one if it ever came to it, big enough to need half a dozen guards on him if he really wanted to make the effort. It was

strange how outnumbered they really were in here. Three or four guards for three dozen crims.

Everyday was a lottery. Patrice pushed the thought aside.

"Boss I gotta get down to Gardens early, they're doing the certificates and that today."

Patrice looked up from the computer to see Gavin standing in front of him. Gavin was a harmless, twenty two year old soul with a middle aged man's leathered face and an unquenchable appetite for cask wine and cold beer. He'd had been in the system since he was a teenager. Most of his teeth were missing, either punched or fallen out. His skin was tight, pockmarked and yellow. He had a grin on him every time Patrice saw him, that must be how he got through it. Keeping out of the way and making people laugh.

"You're getting a certificate today Gavin?" Patrice was comfortable around him, he knew he didn't mind appearing friendly towards the officers. Gavin was like the prison mascot, he took everyone down a few notches with his relentless cheer and friendliness.

"Those boys better be giving me a certificate sir, the amount of tomatoes I put in the ground for 'em over the last month, they'll be giving me a certificate or I'll be giving them that there," Gavin grinned a gappy smile and rammed his fist into his open palm a few times.

Patrice smiled back and wrote out a blue pass for him to be out of the unit before Movements.

"Well done Gavin, congratulations, you going be a gardener when you get out?"

"Nah fuck that sir, I'll be planting a few other things first if you know what I'm saying," Gavin nodded at Patrice smiling as he headed for the exit. Patrice pushed the button on the control panel and watched as he disappeared from view making a beeline for Gardens.

The smell of toast was filling up the unit as it always did in the morning. Patrice had another hour before he could knock off. He was thinking about going to the gym, having a nice, long hot shower before heading home and going to bed. The commute after night shift was good as the traffic wasn't too busy. He thought about making himself a cup of tea and maybe having some Vegemite on toast. He'd kept a

boiled egg for himself during the night, maybe just a bit of toast and butter with a sliced up salt and pepper egg and a hot cup of tea. She was fading nicely for him in his mind, it was getting better as the weeks rolled into months.

"Carson," Derek's voice was ringing out again from the top tier.

He was at the last cell at the end, staring flat against the peephole.

Derek was unhinging his keys, he wasn't calling down to Patrice. Patrice watched from the control room as Derek unlocked the door. They both knew Carson was in there by himself, they'd put him in there after his run in with the SHU. Derek opened the cell door and went in disappearing from the walk way.

"Holy fuck son," Patrice heard Derek's voice filter down through the wing. His radio crackled on his belt.

"Patty, call the medics mate, he's hanging off the fucking bed bunk".

Dean

Dean climbed into the passenger side of the commodore. Trev had come right on time, he was alright. He threw his plastic bag full of shit in the back seat and relaxed into the car, glad to be looking down at his own clothes for the first time in months.

"Coldies there in the back Deano," Trevor nodded behind the seat.

Dean reached back to the cooler bag under Trevor's seat.

"You fucking champion cunt," Dean pulled two cans from the bag and sat back round as Trev pulled out of the visitors car park and started up the long driveway.

Dean ripped open the can and necked it as he felt the car surge under him picking up momentum. Trevor ignored the speed bumps leading out on the driveway and rolled over each one as they took off. Before they got to the top of the road Dean threw his already empty can out the window and opened his second.

As he sat with the fresh air on his face and the hum of the engine droning under his arse, he thought of the empty beer can sitting on the freshly mowed prison verge and of the silly cunt who'd have to pick it up long after he was gone.

"Fuck em," thought Dean as he drained his beer. "Fuck every last one of 'em."

Whiteness and Australian Fiction

Chapter 1:
No Man's Land: Citizenship in a Spiritual Nation

"It's not apolitical or non-political, it's intensely political this, but it's done through story, and perhaps, seduction."

-Kim Scott

This sentiment, expressed by Kim Scott in his address at Curtin University for the second annual Miles Franklin Oration in 2012, describes Scott's perception of his own work as a novelist and the impact literature can have on community standards, notions of identity and improving the daily lives of everyday Australian citizens.¹ Scott's intentions as a social justice writer can be seen as a contemporary example of a pattern which has run through Australian literature since its inception and has continuously strived to shape Australian culture and national identity with regard to notions of equality, freedom and fairness.

In this exegesis I will be examining the role Australian literary texts, particularly novels, have played as instruments of social reform; texts which will henceforth be referred to as social justice novels. I will argue in later chapters how *Bird with a Broken Leg*, the novel accompanying this thesis, continues in this tradition and how it aims to address the notion of white privilege, which I believe is ingrained and largely unacknowledged in modern Australian culture. Australia appears to have a disproportionate number of social justice novels in its comparatively short canon and I will argue that as the nation has formed its own identity, there has been constant examination of social justice issues by authors concerned with what Amartya Sen describes as "justice as fairness".²

Due to the fact that Australian social justice novels have been largely authored by white novelists, particularly in the formative years of the nation, and also due to the word limit of this thesis, there is a greater focus on the work of

¹ Kim Scott. "2011 Winner Kim Scott's Oration". Miles Franklin Literary Award, 45:53, 2012, <http://www.milesfranklin.com.au/events/oration_2012.htm>.

² Amartya Sen. *The Idea of Justice*. London: Penguin, 2010: 81.

white authors in this exegesis, although Indigenous authors are by no means excluded. I will in a sense be providing a taxonomy of Australian social justice literature, which has been predominantly white-male authored; a tradition to which I acknowledge I belong, being a white, non-Indigenous, male author.

It is also important to acknowledge that for a white author writing about race and inequality in a social justice work, the representations of non-white protagonists are limited by the author's already racialised imagination. Toni Morrison speaks to this limitation of the white author within an American literary context, in her critical work *Playing in the Dark*:

The fabrication of an Africanist persona is reflexive; an extraordinary meditation on the self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly conscious. It is an astonishing revelation of longing, of terror, of perplexity, of shame, of magnanimity.³

Although I acknowledge my positioning and the limitations that come with it, I nevertheless believe there is much value in a white author such as myself revealing my racialised imagination, as such psychological nudity can be exceptionally fruitful for fostering true and open communication.

Australia has a relatively short history that includes many injustices, but also a record of progressive social change and a commitment to social justice. Paul Keating in his Redfern address spoke stirringly of Australia's track record in expanding its concept of nationhood and its sense of self, particularly with regard to issues of social justice:

I believe that the great things about Australian social democracy reflect a fundamental belief in justice. And I say it because in so many other areas we have proved our capacity over the years to go on extending the realms of participation, opportunity and care.

³ Toni Morrison. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992: 17.

Just as Australians living in the relatively narrow and insular Australia of the 1960s imagined a culturally diverse, worldly and open Australia, and in a generation turned the idea into reality, so we can turn the goals of reconciliation into reality.⁴

To begin to understand the enduring role of the social justice novel in Australia, we must first appreciate the historical context from which it emerged. It could be argued that Australia was initially explored by the British in the hopes of finding a resource rich land which would prove profitable for the empire in much the same way as India, Africa and Canada had proven previously. Captain James Cook, however, reported that Australia was an empty, barren land, lacking any exploitable resources of traditional interest to the Europeans.⁵ In light of Cook's discoveries, the land was deemed useless in terms of extracting profit for the Empire but proved useful in lowering the costs of the British penal system back home. British prisons were overpopulated as a result of the penal system undergoing a recent period of reform which had relied on excessive use of capital punishment, as described by William Blackstone:

It is a melancholy truth, that among the variety of actions which men are daily liable to commit, no less than a hundred and sixty have been declared by act of parliament to be felonies without benefit of clergy; or, in other words, to be worthy of instant death.⁶

A highly influential book, *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764) by the reformist Italian jurist and author Cesare Beccaria, had suggested how this near medieval system of capital punishment might be superseded. As Lund, Sløk and Mogens write,

It was Beccaria's influences which lead to the British individual being recognised as worthy of the protection of the state and this

⁴ Paul Keating. "Paul Keating's Redfern Park Speech", Youtube, 8:21, uploaded by socialretard28, Jan 8, 2011 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKhmTLN3Ddo>>.

⁵ Cook, James (1728–1779)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1966; accessed online 22 July 2016. <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cook-james-1917/text2279>>.

⁶ Sir William Blackstone and William Draper Lewis. *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books, 1867-1949*. Clark, New Jersey: Lawbook Exchange, William Blackstone Collection (Library of Congress), 2006: 13.

could never be possible whilst extreme and violent punishments were applied, for a large number of offences.⁷

The result of fewer sentences of capital punishment being handed out by the British judiciary was a prison population swollen beyond the humane capabilities of its penal system, and it was in this context that deportation to the newly discovered Great Southern Land presented itself as a suitable solution.⁸

From such beginnings Australia's first novel was not produced until 1830,⁹ nearly fifty years after the colony was established as a form of low-cost, substitute captivity. The absence of literature for so long was, according to Colin Roderick, due to three main factors: firstly, the extreme conditions the Australian environment offered the new arrivals; secondly, the insecurity felt as to whether the colony would indeed survive at all; and finally, the inadequate literary talents of the newcomers themselves. As Roderick writes of the early years of the colony,

[t]he basic pursuits of food-getting and money making were all that concerned them. There had been up till then confusion in men's minds as to the destiny of New Holland. Would it ever be a freeman's country? ... Continuous periods of leisure were too scanty and talent for literature too rare to produce anything more notable than newspaper contributions of topical interest.¹⁰

From this environment, and drawing heavily on his own experiences of being transported and imprisoned, Australia's first author and ex-forgery, Henry Savery, anonymously published *Quintus Servington* in Tasmania in 1830, and by doing so, launched the beginning of Australia's literary tradition.

A brief look at Australian literature of the early period suggests that novels depicting hardship, written by authors who had direct or observational experience of it, were of great interest to the reading public. The barrister John Lang's *Botany*

6. Erik Lund, Johannes Sløk and Pihl Mogens. *A History of European Ideas*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1971: 216.

7. "Overcrowding was a grave threat to the health and comfort of prisoners, and could rapidly make a previously tolerable confinement into a dangerous and frightening one. High numbers consumed scanty food resources and threatened inmates with jail fever, as did simply crowding cells so full that even air was in short supply." Philip Woodfine. "Debtors, Prisons, and Petitions in Eighteenth-century England." *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol.30 (2) (2011): 1.

8. Henry Savery. *Quintus Servinton: a Tale Founded upon Incidents of Real Occurrence*. [1830] Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1962.

¹⁰ Colin Roderick. *An Introduction to Australian Fiction*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1950: 3.

Bay (1880) drew on his own personal courtroom criminal experience, as did Police Magistrate Rolf Boldrewood in his bush ranging saga *Robbery Under Arms* (1888). Caroline Leakey's *The Broad Arrow* (1859), which portrayed the fate of female convicts being transported, in turn paved the way for Marcus Clarke's painstakingly researched masterpiece *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1870). All were written to make people aware of how certain sections of the new society were living or had lived. Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life* in particular, successfully drew people's attention to the horrors of the convict reality, a feat which Roderick celebrates:

The greatness in the work lies in its presentation of the utter helplessness of virtue in the grip of blind, unreasoning brute force. Clarke reveals feelingly the sterling gold of the man whom society maltreats, but loses nothing of his power in the scorn [of his jailers] who, in their hypocrisy and evil, are the inferiors of some of the wayward souls they tend.¹¹

This passage from Roderick is important, as not only does it make clear the interest the mainly white Australian readership had at the time regarding the maltreatment of its lowest caste, but it also hints that scorn towards an unjust authority may be a uniquely Australian characteristic, which gestures towards notions of fairness and equality for all people regardless of their personal circumstance. This idea would continuously resurface throughout white Australian fiction even as it shifted from being primarily concerned with the convict and criminal experience.

Perhaps the greatest shift in Australian literature (as well as the culture itself) concerning the future of the nation, came in 1850 with the discovery of gold in Ballarat. The gold finds resulted in a wave of immigrants who did not come in chains to the country, and they were accompanied by capital investment and infrastructure development. White Australians began to see other possibilities for themselves other than simply surviving:

There is no doubt that the gold rushes had a huge effect on the Australian economy and our development as a nation. It is also true to say that those heady times had a profound impact on the

¹¹ Roderick, 1950: 28.

national psyche... In 1852 alone, 370,000 immigrants arrived in Australia and the economy of the nation boomed.¹²

In this sense the gold rush at Ballarat, and the slew of others that followed throughout the country, legitimised Australia in the eyes of its white population. Australia was now a country which had the means to become whatever this population chose for it; survival and hardship could now be replaced with hope and possibility. Yet despite this optimistic shift, white Australian authors and their readerships were still fixated on the notion of a struggling underclass. Although the focus shifted from the convict experience, Australian literature was still engrossed by the grinding reality of daily life. For example, in 1854, the Italian immigrant Carboni Raffaello penned his authentic account of the gold miners' struggle for democratic rights in his novel *The Eureka Stockade* (1855). Like the convict novels that preceded it, it was a first-hand account of the struggles endured by those of the lower classes, and was a celebration of their mistrust and conquering of a corrupt and hostile governing regime. In Carboni's own introductory words, he wrote the book simply so every Australian could discover "what was what in goldfield life". This focus on the mining protagonist was soon superseded by the struggling bushmen favoured by the likes of Henry Lawson, but like the other writers before him, Lawson explored the hard lives of ordinary Australians through tales of itinerant workers tramping from farm to farm finding work; drovers away from home for months on end, as well as the trials suffered by the families left behind. These are the tales found in Lawson's collection *When the Billy Boils* (1923). But it wouldn't be until 1929, nearly a full century after the publication of Australia's first novel, that Australian fiction would seriously turn its attention to the country's most dispossessed, the Indigenous Australians.

The first novel to realistically tackle the realities of the Aborigines and explore a shared humanity between white and black Australians was Katherine Susannah Prichard's *Coonardoo* (1929), the importance of which is expressed by Palmer:

¹² "The Australian Goldrush". Australian Government. <<http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-gold-rush>>.

[Prichard] constructed mature Aboriginal characters and cast them in relationships with non-Aboriginal characters. In particular, she brought to the forefront the representation of Aboriginal women as attractive and desirable. This departure excited controversy for a number of reasons and makes Prichard's text a useful site for closer examination, for she did disturb the colonial imagination and dared to mention the unmentionable.¹³

Prichard wrote *Coonardoo* based mainly on her own experiences and interactions with Indigenous people, and particularly Indigenous women in the North West of Western Australia. Prichard's work concerning the lives of Aboriginal Australians followed on from her previous social justice novels *The Black Opal* and *Working Bullocks*, which, in the burgeoning Australian tradition, depicted the hard life of the workers in mining communities as well as the Western Australian timber industry, respectively. As a founding member of the Australian Communist Party in 1921,¹⁴ it is fitting that the compassionate and fair-minded Prichard was the first author to deal with the most burdened members of the new Australian society. Prior to Prichard's work, the Indigenous characters who appeared in Australian literature were either demonised or patronised by their white authors. As Aileen Moreton-Robinson explains,

[t]he colonial formation at the core of Australia's identity has been responsible for informing the ways in which aboriginal people have been represented – from childish, primitive, noble, to treacherous, cunning, dirty and savage.¹⁵

Although Aboriginal characters appeared in white authored Australian literature before *Coonardoo*, even their most sympathetic representations by other authors such as Jeannie Gunn suggest just how revolutionary Prichard's text actually was.

¹³ Palmer, V. 1959, foreword to Katharine Susannah Prichard. *N'Goola and Other Stories*, Australasian Book Society, Melbourne, 1959.

¹⁴ "Why I am a Communist by Katherine Susannah Prichard". <<http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/australia/1956/prichard-why.html>>.

¹⁵ Linda Miley. "White Writing Black: Issues of Authorship and Authenticity in non-Indigenous representations of Australian Aboriginal Fictional Characters" (Masters Diss., Queensland University of Technology, 2006): 10.

Gunn's previous works, *We of the Never Never* and the *Little Black Princess*, are described by contemporary critic Jeanine Leane as 'noncontroversial', inasmuch as they 'reflected the attitudes of her time, and gave authority to the belief that Aboriginal Australians should change their traditional ways and emulate the more civilised ways of colonialists'.¹⁶

Cecil Mann's reaction on first reading *Coonardoo* illustrates the novel's influence on the way non-Indigenous Australians viewed their Aboriginal countrymen and women. Cecil Mann was the literary editor for the *Bulletin* magazine in 1929,¹⁷ and his comments on Prichard's work, regarding the possibility of a romantic relationship between an indigenous and non-indigenous couple, seem, in a contemporary context, incompatible with his standing among the intelligentsia of the day:

With any other native from fragrant Zulu girl to fly kissed Arab maid, she could have done it. But the aboriginal, in Australia, in anyway cannot excite any higher feeling than nauseated pity or comical contempt.¹⁸

Prichard's humanising work concerning Indigenous Australians paved the way for other authors with similar convictions and enabled them to find audiences for their work, as was the case with Xavier Herbert's *Capricornia*, initially written shortly after *Coonardoo*'s publication, although not revised and published until 1938. *Capricornia* is described by J.J. Healy as bringing the contemporary Aborigine into full focus,¹⁹ and Herbert's publisher W.J. Miles described it as follows:

¹⁶ Leane, J. "The Whiteman's Aborigine." PhD thesis, University of Technology, Sydney, 2010:

15.

¹⁷ "Biography of Cecil Mann", [http://www.austlit.edu.au/run?ex=ShowAgent&agentId=A\(%23I\)>](http://www.austlit.edu.au/run?ex=ShowAgent&agentId=A(%23I)>).

¹⁸ Adam Shoemaker. *Black Words White Page*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2004: 39.

¹⁹ J. J. Healy. *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia, 1770-1975*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1989.

In preparing this book now for the press, I note that the argument reflects a psychological development, not only in the author, but also, to an observable extent, in the Australian public.²⁰

Here we see what Kim Scott suggests nearly a century later about the political dimension of literature and the tangible effects its circulation can have on the collective psychology of a nation. As for Xavier Herbert, his intentions for writing the novel could not be clearer or more in line with those writers who preceded him (such as Raffello), and succeeded him (such as Scott):

I wanted to commune with the Spirit of the Land, but found something much more urgent to give my attention to—the unutterable misery of its custodians. Since then the cause of the Aborigines has dominated my life.²¹

If Prichard broke through to the nation's consciousness with *Coonardoo* and Herbert continued this work with *Capricornia*, describing the life of a non-Indigenous man immersed within a shared culture with Aboriginal people, it would be Patrick White who, carrying on from his forebears, would bring about what J.J. Healy describes as 'the emergence of a heightened consciousness of Australia, in Australia'.²²

It may be argued here that the heightening of Australia's consciousness by Australians themselves, now reading authors such as White, was substantially due to White's ability to address the Aborigine not as the "other" or as a curiosity to be engaged with or inquisitively understood in relation to white reality as in *Coonardoo*, but as a part of white reality, which in turn is in itself a part of the Indigenous reality. Patrick White's exploration of Aboriginality can be seen as an acknowledgment of the Aborigine as human, emerging from the Australian continent. The Indigenous man and woman were fully and naturally human, perhaps more natural than the displaced white characters in *Voss* and *Riders on the Chariot*, as the Aborigines emerged and came to be from the land which they still

²⁰ P. R. Stephensen, *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*. Gordon (NSW): W.J. Miles, 1936: Foreword.

²¹ Xavier Herbert. *Capricornia*. [1838] Sydney: HarperCollins, 2002.

²² J. J. Healy. *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia, 1770-1975*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1989: 181-82.

inhabited and were not positioning themselves in foreign territories like the settlers. For White, the Aborigines were connected to the land; they understood it as it emerged alongside themselves, and did not have to fight it as the Europeans did, for they understood its properties. Voss, the German explorer bringing his foreign sensibilities to the Australian outback, thus comes to see himself as the other; he is unnatural within the Australian environment and it is only through his encounters with the Aborigines that he finds his own humanity or, in a sense, his own aboriginality. As Cynthia Vanden Driesden suggests,

[g]oing native in *Heart of Darkness* was the equivalent of going savage in Joseph Conrad's novel, contact with the black world releases all that is darkest and vile in human nature. Voss's immersion in the Aboriginal world brings self-knowledge and with it a saving humility which ... enables attainment of spiritual wholeness as well as a sense of belonging in this land.²³

This sense of spiritual wholeness and a sense of belonging has been explored by other modern Australian authors, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who are, like White, attempting to understand not just the other, but themselves in relation to others. Kevin Gilbert, Aboriginal activist, artist and writer, makes the case for a sense of nationhood within Australia which encapsulates and acknowledges White's vision of identity:

The Aboriginal nation, as a nation of the spirit, a nation without a flag, a nation without land or hope, a nation of underprivilege, has existed, probably, from about a generation after Captain Cook landed. Occasionally you meet one of its patriots, one of those people who, whatever their intermediate likes and loyalties, can be seen to cast their ultimate sympathy, the core of their feelings, with this Aboriginal nation. Ultimately too, I have noticed that there is always another idea concurrent with the concept of an Aboriginal patriot and implicit in it—an idea of an integrated, undivided human being—a whole person of whatever colour. In

²³ Vanden Driesden, Cynthia. *Writing the Nation: Patrick White and the Indigene*. New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009: 76.

the two above senses, one does not meet many Aboriginal patriots because it takes a special kind of vision to be one.²⁴

This notion of Gilbert's "Aboriginal patriot" can be seen as one which honours shared humanity over artificial cultural concoctions of race or otherness. In the 1970s, when Gilbert was, through his work, encouraging all Australian citizens to see their potential for this unique brand of inclusive patriotism, many non-Indigenous authors were accepting or had already accepted the invitation and begun their own examination into the social and cultural condition of white and black Australia. Non-Indigenous authors such as Richard Beilby, David Ireland and Thomas Keneally all offered works addressing in different ways this idea of the potential undivided wholeness of an individual human, one that is not clouded, distracted or retarded with unnecessary cultural nuances that ultimately lead to pointless and preventable suffering.

Beilby is perhaps the lesser known of the three aforementioned authors of this period. *The Brown Land Crying* (1975) tells the tale of the fractured and unofficially quarantined community of Perth's urban Indigenous Aborigines. Beilby's tale paints a bleak and grim picture of the living conditions of modern Noongars living in and around East Perth. Beilby's novel was, as he points out in his introduction, thoroughly researched, with the author personally interviewing the Indigenous Australians he would eventually write about. The result is a portrait of hopelessness for the modern-day urban Aborigine and Beilby's sense of horror is evident throughout. Although the novel offers deep concern and sympathy for the Aborigines it depicts, it offers no future for its subjects from Beilby's white perspective; none beyond a continuation and perhaps a worsening of the conditions facing Indigenous people at the time of writing. Indeed, Healy describes Beilby's work as 'the dramatic enactment of the despair of white Australia'.²⁵ In this sense, Beilby's novel is valuable, as it shares the true powerlessness felt by some non-Indigenous Australians looking in at certain elements of the Indigenous community. For Beilby, the disconnect between white and black is so egregious that he could

²⁴ Kevin J. Gilbert. *Because a White Man'll Never Do It*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973.

²⁵ J. J. Healy. *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia, 1770-1975*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1989.

not, for all his best intentions, offer anything other than a sincere declaration of sympathy, which in itself can be seen as an important step towards Gilbert's vision of an inclusive patriotism founded in active citizenship.

David Ireland's *Burn* (1975) can be read as a companion as well as an alternative to Beilby's novel. *Burn* also deals with the modern fringe dwelling Aborigine, through its disturbed protagonist Gunner; however, where Beilby gives the Aborigine no future in his work, *Burn* offers or allows, as Ken Gelder writes, a tangible and violent escape:

As a part Aborigine Gunner could have spent the novel in a kind of impotent stasis between two separated cultures, black and white. But Ireland allows Gunner to connect himself with the community of his tribe through Gorooh, to produce an organic link between the individual's 'will to power' and the empowerment of an oppressed culture figured as a community: this is where the novel's optimism comes into being.²⁶

In *Burn* we see the author truly immersing himself in the Indigenous condition to the degree where the solution offered is revolutionary violence towards the author's own racial group. Here, David Ireland can be seen as a true member of the Aboriginal spirit nation envisaged by Gilbert, as his allegiance is now not with one group or another, but rather with the humanity he shares with those he is considering, the same humanity Patrick White explored through *Voss* and *Riders in the Chariot*. Similar conclusions are also reached by Thomas Keneally in the more popular *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*, where the rage of the titular character becomes the only reasonable option when faced with such relentless and appalling prejudice. Keneally, like Ireland, allows his allegiance to follow what is true, rather than that which may be advantageous to himself or to the cultural group to which he belongs. While Beilby reluctantly sentenced Indigenous people to continue on in their role as the "untouchable" Australian class, leaving white Australia

²⁶ Ken Gelder. *Atomic Fiction: The Novels of David Ireland*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1993: 58.

unchallenged and intact, Keneally and Ireland suggest otherwise, and hint that white Australia, and whiteness itself, is vulnerable because it is founded in injustice.

Examining the landscape of Australian literature today and the prominence indigenous authors, as well as issues, hold compared to their comparative absence in the era of Beilby and Keneally, it could be argued that Beilby's bleak vision has thankfully not come to fruition and rather a more hopeful and inclusive culture has come to pass. One that is more in line with Gilbert's notion of affiliates to a new spiritual nation, through which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors continue to inform, through literature, the ideals that such a nation encapsulates. Today, non-Indigenous authors, such as myself (in detailing instances of Indigenous prisoners working with non-indigenous arts workers in my first novel *My Dog Gave Me the Clap*), or Robert Drewe (writing historical fiction regarding the near extinction of Tasmanian Indigenous people in *The Savage Crows*) are being welcomed and encouraged by Indigenous authors, activists and academics alike, with the only provision being that authors tackling these issues, who are not Indigenous themselves, should at least have had some relational experience with Indigenous people in their daily lives. As Anita Heiss explains,

[m]ost call for non-Indigenous writers to undertake thorough research, for there to be consultation with the Indigenous community, an awareness of protocols, a thoughtfulness in portraying Indigenous people speaking English, and a plea to stay away from negative portrayals and stereotypes such as black trackers and domestic servants.²⁷

It can be argued, therefore, that authors today, such as Kim Scott, Anita Heiss, Alf Taylor, Peter Docker and many others, continue to take advantage of Australia's cultural susceptibility to literature's power and are attempting, through their writing, to challenge and heighten notions of Australian identity, fairness and equality. These authors today seek to reimagine Australia's possibilities through story and, as Kim Scott suggests, through seduction. As such, literature, when aimed at fostering cultural and spiritual wholeness of identity, which includes all citizens in

²⁷ A. Heiss. "Writing about Indigenous Australia – some Issues to Consider and Protocols to Follow: A Discussion Paper." *Southerly* 62 (2) (2002): 198.

relational interdependency, can nurture lasting and meaningful change. Further, to take part in this process is not only an agreeable practice for authors today but may also be a moral responsibility of each individual Australian writer.

Having discussed literature's ability to change a nation's collective culture by reforming ideas of identity, history and justice, in the following chapter I will examine the realities of whiteness and white privilege within the Australian context and argue that tackling these issues within the framework of a social justice novel, is the next logical step in Australian social justice literature.

Chapter 2:

Twenty Two Million, Four Hundred and Thirty Seven Thousand, Six Hundred and Ninety Three Shades of White²⁸

Research into books, museums, the press, advertising, films, television, software repeatedly shows that in western representation whites are overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant, have the central and elaborated roles, and above all are placed as the norm, the ordinary, the standard... At the level of racial representation, in other words, whites are not of a certain race, they're just the human race.

- Richard Dyer²⁹

If you know the history and the whole concept of whiteness, where it came from and for what reason, you know that it was a trick and it's worked brilliantly.

- Tim Wise³⁰

In this chapter I will be examining the concept of whiteness and white privilege, concepts which have historically gone unacknowledged by the dominant white society in Australia, and examining how this lack of awareness of whiteness has impeded on the reconciliation process between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. I will also be examining the phenomenon of whiteness and white privilege as a catalyst for injustice. I will suggest that the seductive powers of social justice writing, particularly in the novel form, will allow those benefitting from white privilege to understand the concepts of comparative privilege, and to do so with compassion and empathy. A compassion and empathy which will hopefully lead to furthering Australia's slowly evolving awareness of whiteness and white privilege, and by doing so, progress Australia closer towards reconciliation.

To understand whiteness we must first make the distinction that it is not a biological reality but rather a social construction which has taken root through a variety of mediums, including literature, which have shaped what has come to be

²⁸ "Number of Australians identifying as non-indigenous Australians", Australian Bureau of Statistics.
<<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/680F87258CBBAF0DCA2578DB00283CAA?open=document>>.

²⁹ Richard Dyer. *White*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997: 3.

³⁰ Tim Wise, "The Pathology of Privilege Racism, White Denial and the Costs of Inequality," YouTube, 57:35. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AMY2Bvxuxc>>.

seen as normal for human beings in the Western world. Richard Dyer makes the argument that the biological aspects of race are of lesser consequence than the representations and imagery of race when it comes to influencing people's judgements about others worth and capacity. Racial judgements are based on learned constructs informed by racialised images and representations of what people eat, how they dress, their patterns of speech and their place of origin; and these for Dyer are all racial judgements rooted solely in the dominant (white) group's assessment of all other groups:

Race in itself – insofar as it is anything in itself – refers to some intrinsically insignificant geographical/physical differences between people, it is the imagery of race that is in play.³¹

It is the representation of whiteness, however, which is the most powerful tool used to maintain whites as superior over non-whites, and this occurs by deracialising whiteness altogether, giving it 'default' status. The representation of whiteness as 'above' or 'beyond' race thus maintains the power structure of a white dominated society. This balance of power is attained not by presenting white as superior to non-white, or non-white as less than white, but rather, by presenting whiteness as the default human condition, rendering all other groups as non-white, and therefore different from the accepted standard; or in other words, as sub-standard. Whites are human, while all other groups are sub-categories of that default position, as Steve Garner discusses in *Whiteness: An Introduction*:

Whiteness studies demonstrate how whiteness is rendered "default" or "normal" within the context of contemporary racial ideology. Treating whiteness as a non-racialised identity conceals racialised power relations and the ideas and practices that sustain them.³²

Such representation of whiteness not only affects non-whites but powerfully alters the self-perception of whites themselves, as they consciously or subconsciously embrace the mantle of normal, standard human, with every other group being the

³¹ Richard Dyer. *White*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997: 1.

³² Steve Garner. *Whiteness: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2007: 37.

“other”. This embrace of whiteness as normal is so powerful that whiteness itself is largely a foreign concept to most white people, as Altman discusses:

Consider for a moment the unreflectiveness of many white people about the meaning of their whiteness. If you ask white people what it means to them to be white, many will greet you with a blank stare. For many whites, whiteness is a kind of baseline or standard; it does not refer to a particular ethnic or racial group.³³

Many white people appear to be equally unaware of the privileges that come with being part of the dominant, normalised group, and unwittingly enjoy many of these privileges on a daily basis. Academic Peggy McIntosh was among the first to draw attention to the myriad advantages experienced by white people in her essay “Unpacking the Knapsack of White Privilege”. She describes the comparative advantages white people enjoy over people of colour by imagining a backpack filled with invisible, white-only provisions, for the exclusive and everyday use of, at times, none the wiser Caucasians. McIntosh describes the realisation that in order for one group to be under privileged within a shared social space, another group must by definition reap some comparative benefit:

As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.³⁴

The list of invisible white privileges mentioned in McIntosh’s short essay run from the powerful psychological benefit of her knowing that people of a similar race to her are generally celebrated for building the nation in which she lives, to her ability to freely move home and travel without fear that she may not be welcomed because of her ethnic group, to the mundane reality of buying band aids in the colour of her skin and for her daughter to be able to play with dolls which share her skin tone.

The unawareness of privilege which McIntosh refers to in her essay leads us

³³ Neil Altman. “Whiteness”, *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Volume 75, Issue 1 (2006): 45–72.

³⁴ Amy Vita Kesselman, Lily D. McNair and Nancy Schniedewind (eds). *Women Images and Realities: a Multicultural Anthology*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003: 380.

to the notion that racism's greatest threat may not be in the minds and actions of the bigoted and prejudiced, but rather in its systemic embedding within the social order, to the degree that the inequalities suffered by people of colour, as well as the converse privileges enjoyed by those of non-colour, are not appreciated or even recognized by the dominant white majority.

The socialization, standardization and systemization of racism has worked its way into the western world's daily reality to the extent that the perpetrators of inequity are for the most part simply unaware that they help maintain an unjust society by the very nature of their passivity. This notion of most white people living "beyond race" in their daily lives, free of a sense of responsibility for any racial discrimination, is what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls colour blindness; a condition that allows social and systemic discrimination to exist alongside the dominant group's non-racial personal outlook. It is what Bonilla-Silva refers to as racism without racists, "contemporary racial inequality is reproduced through 'New Racism' practices that are subtle, institutional and apparently non-racial."³⁵

The shift towards new racism, or racism without racists, presents an unusual challenge for reformers, as the problem seems to exist without any guilty parties, or at least parties who are aware of the racial inequity within their social order but who aren't willing to accept some responsibility for participating in, and thereby maintaining, the uneven status quo.

In *White Like Me* Tim Wise suggests that many members of the dominant group are living blind to the realities of racial inequality, so much so that they believe they are living, in the Bonilla-Silva sense, "beyond race". Wise states that this is a dangerous social norm which enables people not only to be blind to colour differences within their society, but also results in blindness to the consequences of colour, "people of colour understand there are consequences to colour, but colour

³⁵ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006: 4.

blindness, colour muteness, does not allow us to address that.”³⁶

Although there are distinct differences amongst non-white Americans (Indigenous Americans, African Americans, Latinos, Hispanics, to name a few) and also between non-white Americans and Indigenous Australians, the consequences of colour endured by indigenous Australians compared to non-indigenous Australians can be compared to the consequences of the differences between whites and non-whites in the United States. A brief look at social realities for Indigenous Australians will show Indigenous Australians well behind in nearly all social indicators.³⁷ The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports wide gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in areas of health, education, home ownership, employment and infant mortality to name but a few. Such systemic and institutionalized differences would suggest that Bonilla-Silva’s concept of New Racism is just as applicable to Australia’s social order as it is to that of the United States.

In her speech, “Racism exists in Australia - are we doing enough to address it?”, Dr Helen Szoke, the Race Discrimination Commissioner for the Australian Human Rights Commission, states that racism is still widespread in modern Australia and that Indigenous Australians are experiencing constant forms of both systemic racism in areas such as healthcare, housing, employment and policing, as well as “incidental” expressions of racism from the general public.³⁸ However, Szoke also maintains that the worst kind of racism consists of hateful and abusive behaviour towards one individual or group by another individual or group.

Although a central contention of this dissertation is that racism actually manifests in its most heinous form through systemic social, economic, and - by consequence - political exclusion, it is important for our purposes here to understand that racism in modern Australia, according to one of the nation’s

³⁶ Tim Wise. “Beyond Diversity: Challenging Racism in an Age of Backlash”. YouTube, 1:32:05, posted April 24, 2013. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RHxrV7u09w>>.

³⁷ “Falls in Indigenous infant mortality rates, but wide disparities still exist”. ABS & AIHW Media Release, 2008. <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbytitle/E6AA1218B5D52E50CA25773000183760?OpenDocument>>.

³⁸ Dr Helen Szoke. “Racism exists in Australia – are we doing enough to address it?” Australian Human Rights Commission. <<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/racism-exists-australia-are-we-doing-enough-address-it>>.

foremost authorities in Szoke, is most troublesomely manifested as a daily, personal interaction between individuals or groups of individuals. I would argue that this belief that racism's worst face is individualised rather than systemic, is precisely what exposes the invisibility of whiteness in Australia. By maintaining a focus on the person-to-person experience, we unwittingly ignore the true effects of racism for those living outside the accepted standardized group. Contrary to Szoke's comment, it may be easier to shrug off a racial slur or even recover from a physical altercation than it is to overcome such generational realities as lower standards of health, education, employment, housing and life expectancy.

If reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians is a genuine goal, surely a vital part of that process is acknowledging the power structure that exists, and acknowledging the benefits or privileges those in the dominant group enjoy when compared with those who are excluded from that group. This would mean moving beyond the idea that racism is individualised rather than systemic, a view which allows too many to understand racism as something for others to "sort out," as they personally are not to blame; or to see the colour of another's skin but not comprehend the repercussions of that skin. The worst effects of racism do not come on the end of verbal abuse or physical assaults motivated by hateful individuals, but rather, accumulate quietly, silently and often without fanfare, through what S.M. Tascon refers to as the "everyday" when reflecting on her 1999-2002 study, which involved white middle class Australian women reacting to disturbing images and information concerning recent arrivals of illegal "boat people", some of whom, including children, were subsequently incarcerated by the Australian government:

We are all variously located in a network of racially inscribed social relations of domination and subjection. This would then suggest that the participants were unable to clearly articulate this racialised positioning for themselves and therefore unable to shift the everydayness of their privilege.³⁹

As Tim Wise writes, "[i]f there is an underprivileged, there must be an over-

³⁹ Sonia Tascon. "Narratives of Race and Nation: Everyday Whiteness in Australia". *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, Volume 14 (2) (2008): 253-274.

privileged.”⁴⁰ Thus, in order to further reconciliation it is important for non-Indigenous Australians to understand and confront their own whiteness and the comparative over-privilege they enjoy on a daily basis. One way to do this in a constructive manner is to make whiteness visible through literature. As we have seen in the previous chapter, literature has the power to influence national identity, or as Geoffrey Dutton puts it, “[t]o understand a nation one has to read its books.”⁴¹ Therefore, if white people can be shown that their idea of “normal” is in fact a construct, and that the advantages they enjoy over Indigenous people everyday are very real, artificially gained and thoroughly unjust, then what is now seen as normal (white privilege) can eventually be seen as unjust and what is now ignored (Indigenous disadvantage) can be acknowledged; and further, the construct of race which cultivates this imbalance can be deconstructed.

When looking at Indigenous depictions in Australian literature, from Henry Savery’s first offering in 1830 to modern-day authors both indigenous and non-indigenous, we can see the nation’s cultural progress gradually follow the increasingly just representations of Indigenous people. Representations that do not only represent Indigenous people more accurately, compassionately and ultimately humanely, but representations which also advocate socially just interactions between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Leane (2010) writes of Australia’s earliest forays into depicting Indigenous Australians through literature as being one of exclusion through depiction of the Indigenous character(s) as other, not directly related to the narrative or the protagonist but as something which the main character(s) encounter along their journey. Thus, for Leane the Indigenous presence in early white Australian literature can be understood in terms of “setting” rather than “character”, with Indigenous encounters positioned as something to be passed through, something to experience and eventually leave behind:

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Whiteman’s
Aborigine has been identified, named, related, divided and

⁴⁰ Tim Wise. “The Pathology of Privilege Racism, White Denial and the Costs of Inequality,” YouTube, 57:35. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AMY2Bvxuxc>>.

⁴¹ Geoffrey Dutton. *The Australian Collection: Australia’s Greatest Books*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1985: 2.

inscribed in Australian literature, and these characteristics cycle through various narratives and genres to retell over and again the same story of Aboriginal experience as at the peripheries of all things Australian.⁴²

If we look at one of the earliest sympathetic representations of Indigenous Australians in Jeannie Gunn's *We of the Never Never* (1908) we see Indigenous Australians, although cast in an arguably fairer light than had previously been done by other white Australian novelists, still being cast as outsiders looking in at the colonial reality. The Indigenous presence is one to be tolerated and understood from the context of the white-normalised world. Although the Indigenous characters are treated to a "fairer shake" by the settlers and are to be given rations, these things are also done so that the white settlers can get on with the job of building their new nation. Although the work is an autobiographical account of the author's experiences on a station in Mataranka in the Northern Territory, and it is understandable for such a work to centre on the author herself, it is interesting to note that Gunn was the first white woman to settle in the Mataranka area and yet the Indigenous people, who had a considerable presence as part of station life, are still set far off in the background of the novel. Although Gunn's work improved the depiction of Indigenous people in the novel form, the white world remained at the heart of the story and it was the white world that was in charge. As Anthony writes of Gunn's approach:

Contrasting colonisers' relentless approach to cattle spearing on the frontier, she advocated the 'judicious giving of an old bullock at not too rare intervals' in order to keep the Aborigines 'fairly well in hand'. Her response of 'granting fair liberty of travel and a fair percentage of calves or their equivalent in fair payment' reflects changing mentalities from frontier violence to paternalism.⁴³

⁴² J. Leane. "The Whiteman's Aborigine". PhD thesis. University of Technology, Sydney, 2010.

⁴³ T. Anthony. "Criminal Justice and Transgression on the Northern Australian Cattle Stations" in I. McFarlane and M. Hannah (eds), *Transgressions: Critical Indigenous Histories*, Canberra: ANU E-Press: 41.

Although the treatment of Indigenous people in *We of the Never Never* is to be commended in comparison to what had come before, the shift from “violence to paternalism” shows the limit of the novel’s social ambition. The Indigenous people were still seen as part of the landscape, still locked into the setting of the novel and were to be thought of and considered as one might consider a looming bushfire or be mindful of a possible drought. This critique is all the more pointed when it is considered that the majority of the Indigenous characters in *We of the Never Never* are in fact children. The white settlers in Gunn’s novel are portrayed at their most fair in the colonial narrative to date, but are still represented as the authority figures in the text. It is up to them to adopt the role of benevolent, caring parents to the out of place, wild orphans of the Australian bush. This is an ironic status quo, considering just how out of place the settlers were from their own traditional landscape.

If Gunn is credited with treating her Indigenous characters with some sense of justice, albeit still at arm’s length, it would be later novelists such as Xavier Herbert and Katherine Susannah Prichard who would extend the white hand’s welcome even further and bring Indigenous characters closer to the white experience. Indeed Prichard’s accounts of inter-racial sexual relations between a non-Indigenous man and an Indigenous woman, perhaps brought the two worlds closer, at least on paper, than they had ever been before.

In *Coonardoo*, Prichard brings the intimacy between the non-Indigenous and Indigenous characters even further than just the physical, sexual sphere with her portrayal of Coonardoo’s effect on the white stockman Hugh’s psychology. As Hugh plays with his white daughter from his white marriage, Prichard takes us inside his thinking and equates the strength of his connection to Coonardoo to that of his relationship with his mother. This is arguably the first time in white authored Australian literature when the emotional and spiritual depiction of a white man depends on the closeness and love of an indigenous woman. Here the Indigenous woman is allowed into the world, not as background or as plot device, but as part of and equal to, the white reality. This, I would argue, encouraged white Australians to start imagining the possibilities of Indigenous inclusion within the hitherto normalised white hierarchy. Here the author, by suggesting equality between indigenous and

non-indigenous characters, is shaping what whiteness can be in this country, namely obsolete.

Coonardoo had been the one sure thing in his life when his mother went out of it. He had grasped her. She was a stake, something to hang on to. More than that, the only stake he could hang on to. He had to remind himself of her skin and race. Hugh had never been able to think of Coonardoo as alien to himself. She was the old playmate; a force in the background of his life, silent and absolute. Something primitive, fundamental, nearer than he to the source of things: the well in the shadows.⁴⁴

Along with Katharine Susannah Prichard, another Australian author who would similarly portray Indigenous people in his work was Xavier Herbert. Herbert's *Capricornia* focuses on the ill treatment of Indigenous and immigrant workers by white Australians and Herbert, like Prichard, ventured into the remote areas of Australia that he would later write about, gaining firsthand experience and insight into the lives of those who lived there. It could be argued that only when a person is exposed to the "other" are they forced to see their supposed differences unveiled, and in this sense both Prichard and Herbert - having immersed themselves in Indigenous life and culture - were perhaps forced to see their whiteness for what it was: fictitious, constructed and unjust. Just as Prichard lived in the far north Pilbara region of Western Australia before writing *Coonardoo*, so Herbert took himself far into the real and remote world of his interest. As Saunders writes,

his quest for new adventures and far horizons led him north to Queensland and by foot into the remote Gulf area of the Northern Territory. This was the first of several treks which he found demanded the utmost of his physical and mental powers while rewarding him abundantly for his endurance.⁴⁵

Herbert's immersion in his subject, including his personal effort to make incredibly long journeys on foot in extremely harsh terrains, is echoed through *Capricornia* as

⁴⁴ Katharine Susannah Prichard. *Coonardoo*. [1929] Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1993: 122.

⁴⁵ Suzanne Saunders. "Another Dimension: Xavier Herbert in the Northern Territory", *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol.14 (26) (1990): 54.

well as in his later work *Poor Fellow My Country*, as the characters of Norman and Prindy both cover immense distances to further their own respective journeys. Saunders concludes that for Herbert, the trek suggests the long road ahead in Australia's journey to true nationhood.

Capricornia may certainly be credited with indirectly raising the concept of whiteness, as it tells not only of the tragic effects of violence, oppression and exploitation on the Indigenous characters, but also calls into question how these events in turn damage the psychology of the white settlers, producing a disturbing social reality. For example, in the opening chapter of *Capricornia*, 'The Coming of the Dingoes', Herbert compares white colonialists to dingoes approaching a waterhole surrounded by kangaroos; because kangaroos are unable to adequately defend themselves against the approaching threat, they must either give up their position at the waterhole or be killed. As Webb and Enstice argue, this metaphor "acknowledge[s] the power of social Darwinism in the colonizing process ... Herbert's use of 'natural' extinction is red in tooth and claw."⁴⁶

If Prichard introduced Indigenous people as being able to enter the white normalised space, Herbert introduced white culpability for the inhumanity shown towards Indigenous Australians.⁴⁷ Although writing more than a half-century before whiteness became a field of study, Herbert was beginning a conversation that whiteness scholars are continuing today. Yet, whereas Herbert invoked white shame at the destruction of Indigenous people and culture, whiteness scholars such as Tim Wise advocate that past disgraces, upon which great prosperity has been built, should be seen as responsibilities to be addressed and put right by those enjoying white privilege today. Wise contends that a sense of fairness is not the only reason to acknowledge past injustices and redistribute wealth, resources and power; Wise also argues that there is a danger to unchecked whiteness and unchecked privilege, as it takes the form of intense societal anxiety. Interestingly, he also uses a canine metaphor:

That's what white privilege does to white folks. It creates an

⁴⁶ Janeen S. Webb and Andrew Enstice. *Aliens & Savages: Fiction, Politics and Prejudice in Australia*. Sydney: HarperCollins, 1998: 247.

⁴⁷ Laurie Hergenhan. "Australia: Echoes of Xavier Herbert".
<<http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2009/03/australia-echoes-of-xavier-herbert/>>.

intense anxiety, like a mental dysfunction, an emotional anxiety, and distress. If you are privileged after all, if you are the top dog, if you have all the advantage, you are constantly afraid of who's gaining on you. You're constantly afraid of who's coming to take what you have.⁴⁸

Wise is not alone regarding this notion of whiteness actually poisoning the psychology of those who enjoy its privilege. Nor is he alone in calling for whites to accept responsibility for past injustice as they directly influence the modern world, impacting negatively on both whites and non-whites. Lopez (1996) writes that in order for reconciliation to advance, all groups must strive to remove the inherited legacies of their respective groups. Just as it is important for the unfairly treated to have justice, so too is it important for those who have benefitted from injustice, past or present, to participate wholeheartedly in the restoration of a meaningful balance. Participating wholeheartedly will more than likely mean (for those currently enjoying white privilege) some relinquishing of power, social control, resources and status:

The construction of whiteness was central not only to the processes of power and oppression, established during the modern era of colonial domination, but still shapes the postcolonial world we live in. There is a relationship between exposing whiteness and decolonizing the imagination of both the oppressed and oppressors.⁴⁹

Such bridging of social distance between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians is canvassed by Patrick White in a series of novels which brought a sense of psychological and spiritual wholeness into the national consciousness. Arguably White's three most important contributions to the Australian social justice canon regarding Indigenous Australians are *Voss* (1957), *Riders in the Chariot* (1961) and *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976). The value of these works is not in centralising the

⁴⁸ Tim Wise. "The Pathology of Privilege: Racism, White Denial & the Costs of Inequality". Youtube, 57:35, published by Osiris Mann, Dec 12, 2013. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AMY2Bvxuxc>>.

⁴⁹ I.F.H. Lopez. *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

indigenous characters as protagonists or overtly and explicitly addressing social injustice and inequality; rather, it is in the “sameness” with which White portrays his characters both black and white. If we examine the portrayal of Alf Dubbo, for example, an Indigenous artist, sometimes drunk and also visionary, he takes his place in *Riders in the Chariot* alongside the white Miss Hare, the Holocaust surviving Jewish professor-cum-machinist Mordecai Himmelfarb, and the mild mannered washer-woman Mrs Godbold. Despite the differences between these characters, they share a spiritual space. In these novels, White is thus fulfilling what Petrilli (2010) believes is the role of whites who wish to deal with issues of whiteness, non-whiteness and the deconstruction of otherness. For Petrilli, “[n]on-whiteness is hosted by whiteness, and even when non-whiteness is the host, hospitality itself tends to be a concession made by whiteness. From its position of dominion, whiteness models and controls worlds and worldviews”.⁵⁰ Patrick White does not make Alf Dubbo equal by glossing over his negative racist experiences; indeed, his blackness, or at least the white characters’ perception of his blackness, is the cause of much misery. However, Dubbo is equal in that he himself experiences his own blackness first as a man, not as a black man or white man, but simply as a human being; a humanness which is shared by the other central characters who experience the titular prophetic vision of the burning horse-drawn chariot. As Vanden Driesen observes,

[i]n *Riders in the Chariot* each of the four protagonists (all from astonishingly varied backgrounds) experiences moments of communication at the deepest spiritual level with each other, and the black man who would normally exist on the furthest margins of that society is at the centre of each.⁵¹

The social justice novel in Australia’s short literary history has a strong focus on Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations and authors such as Prichard, Herbert, and White, as well as more modern writers such as Keneally, Beilby and Ireland, have all strived to achieve what Carl Jung calls the true calling of the artist, that being to

⁵⁰ S. Petrilli. “Whiteness Matters: What Lies in the Future?” *Semiotica* 180, (2010): 147-163.

⁵¹ Cynthia Vanden Driesen. *Writing the Nation: Patrick White and the Indigene*. New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009: 138.

meet the spiritual needs of the society in which the artist lives:

The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him. As a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is 'man' in a higher sense - he is 'collective man' - one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind.⁵²

This I would argue is why the social justice novel is so important: the social justice novel speaks to the unconscious, both at the individual level as well as the collective. It suggests and seduces rather than legislates and demands, and it makes a difference where the suffering is perhaps most painful, namely in the psychology of those enduring the injustice. The issues of race and white privilege facing modern Australians today are, for the most part, below the surface of daily reality. What is required now is an awakening of the nation's unconscious in order to bring these invisible evils to the surface.

Through policy changes and legislation we have agreed on equality for all Australians; most, if not all of the tangible barriers which treat Indigenous people differently to whites have been removed, yet we still see little change in the disparity between white and black Australians. This I would argue strengthens the notion that the next step towards reconciliation must not only be addressed economically, politically or financially but also psychologically. A psychological shift in thinking from both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians concerning their relationship to each other as well as a rethinking about how they see themselves comparatively to each other.

If we accept this version of the Jungian artist and how it relates to the social justice novel, we see in Australia many writers past and present who have fulfilled or have at least attempted to fulfil this role. Further, if we accept that the disparity between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians remains a cause of great stress within the national consciousness, and if we also accept that through literature the nation's collective consciousness can be addressed, I would argue that literature

⁵²

Carl Gustav Jung. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. New York: Harcourt, 1950: 169.

which increases the awareness of whiteness and otherness (and the necessity for their deconstruction) is a vital next step for Australian authors.

In conclusion to this chapter, whiteness and white privilege are relatively new concepts, which have yet to positively enter the daily Australian vernacular. From my own anecdotal experience, when discussing this thesis and the accompanying novel with those outside of academia, notions of whiteness and white privilege are for the most part completely foreign to the listener as well as unwelcome for most non-Indigenous Australians. This, I believe, is because most non-Indigenous people consider they have worked for all their achievements themselves, and consequently those who have not achieved have simply not worked as hard as they have. I will address this blindness to privilege and whiteness in the following chapter, where I will be directly referencing whiteness and white privilege as it is portrayed throughout *Bird with a Broken Leg*. Greater awareness of white privilege is yet to be realised by the collective Australian consciousness, and I therefore hope that the novel accompanying this thesis will break new ground in shaping our nation's future progress.

Chapter 3

If You're White, You're Right ... If You're Black, Get Back

"I'm not saying that white people are better, I'm saying that *being* white is clearly better, if it were an option, I'd re-up every year."

- C.K. Louis⁵³

"Justice is what love looks like in public."

- Dr Cornel West⁵⁴

In this chapter, using examples from *Bird with a Broken Leg*, I hope to connect academic theories of whiteness with a social reality which bestows habitual benefits on those within the dominant social group of non-indigenous white Australians and one which forces Indigenous Australians to suffer comparative inequality and systemic social injustice. I hope to show that whiteness is very much entrenched in the everyday experience of all Australians' personal, interpersonal and daily lived social experiences, and that - depending upon one's particular racial identity - these experiences are either to be enjoyed or endured. I hope that by addressing a general national blindness to whiteness and white privilege, I will contribute to a growing awareness of whiteness that will help to enable a progression in Australia's collective consciousness, one which hopefully further encourages Indigenous and non-Indigenous reconciliation.

Before discussing *Bird with a Broken Leg* I would like to share an anecdotal example of white privilege concerning my own experience within and without the prison system in Western Australia. Whilst working as a casual tutor and Education Coordinator for over four years in Western Australian prisons between 2007 and 2011, in the areas of art, dance and music, I have spoken and worked with many Indigenous men, young and old, on a daily basis, interacting with them within an Arts setting; a setting which lent itself particularly well to the sharing of emotions and feelings between myself and the men whose artistic expression I was

⁵³ C.K. Louis. "I Enjoy Being White". YouTube, 2:29, published by silencecomedy23, April 12 2012. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qg48ZZ2wYfM>>.

⁵⁴ Cornel West. "Justice is What Love Looks Like in Public". YouTube, 1:00:00, 26:28, published by Supernegromagic, April 17, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGqP7S_WO6o>

facilitating.

In a sense, the Arts classroom dynamic between teacher and student closely resembles a friendship relationship – more so than other classes which were on offer such as an Occupational Health and Safety or Computing classes. There is a cathartic and more personal nature to Arts and Arts practice which is generally more conducive to sharing thoughts and emotion, ultimately leading to a deeper mutual understanding between those participating. This notion of art as a communicative conduit is echoed in J.A Rubin’s *Art Therapy* where she states, “Group art therapy may look like an art class, but learning about art is secondary to learning about the self in relation to other people.”⁵⁵

Given that the Indigenous prison population in Western Australia hovers around 50% of the total prison population,⁵⁶ and that the Indigenous dance class and general music class I ran from 2007 to 2011 in both Hakea and Casuarina prisons represented this ratio accurately, I was privileged to interact with Indigenous Australians on a personal and social level. Put crassly, an Irish-born white male such as myself was able to interact with Indigenous Australians over the course of five years, working alongside them five days a week, forty-eight weeks of the year. However, the interactions I had with Indigenous people outside of work hours during these years was virtually nil. I had no Indigenous friends, no Indigenous relatives, nor associates, colleagues, or past school friends. My world outside of the prison was completely white, whereas conversely my world inside prison was predominantly black.

To make matters worse, I lived in what could only be described as a very diverse community group. I lived in the town of Bassendean, which is far from being a clichéd whitewashed beach-side suburb filled with insulated WASP professionals. Bassendean is in fact so diverse a community that the town council recently put in

⁵⁵ Judith Aron Rubin. *Introduction to Art Therapy Sources and Resources*. New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge, 2009: 64.

⁵⁶ Western Australian Department of Corrective Services Weekly Offender Statistics. Last accessed March 15, 2016. <http://www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/_files/about-us/statistics-publications/statistics/2013/cnt131226.pdf>.

place a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)⁵⁷ in order to help Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents to become more involved with each other. Yet even in this environment, where one of the neighbouring houses in my street was home to an Aboriginal family, I maintained a constant, vigilant distance from any and all indigenous people and upon more recent reflection, I did this unconsciously.

I have since moved to the southern Western Australian town of Albany and am now living in the suburb of Mira Mar, which shares a boundary with the adjoining suburb of Spencer Park. Spencer Park in Albany is almost identical to Bassendean in Perth, both in appearance and demographics. Again I find myself sharing a living space with Indigenous Australians, and unlike my unconscious choice to avoid Aboriginal people in Bassendean, I have tried diligently to interact with Indigenous people in Spencer Park. Yet although my intent has shifted, the results have remained identical. I find myself unable to even make eye contact with Indigenous people in the area in which I live. The only Aboriginal people I have spoken to in the last two years are two young students who attend a primary school where I work sporadically as a relief teacher. Again, even with greater effort, my only communication with Indigenous people seems to occur when I am in a position of authority within a system or organization; a system or organization which is predominantly staffed, owned and managed by white people.

This segregation which seems to exist in my life is certainly not a phenomenon exclusive to my own experience. Indeed my white friends, white work colleagues and fellow students in all aspects of social life all seem to share this distance from Indigenous people, a distance I am assuming is as unconscious as mine has been. Even in social situations where community interaction between residents is encouraged, I have witnessed this separation to be glaringly present. At the Tambellup Agricultural Show in August 2013, I provided the musical entertainment for approximately 200 residents of this small southwest town. The residents were celebrating the end of their annual show with a town BBQ and concert held on the small grassed area outside the Town Hall. Even in such close

⁵⁷ Town of Bassendean, Reconciliation Action Plan. Last accessed March 15, 2016. <http://www.bassendean.wa.gov.au/7_info_feedback/pdfs/bassendean_reconciliation_action_plan.pdf>.

quarters, the separation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people was uncomfortably apparent. The smaller group of Indigenous people, approximately twenty in number, sat to the side in one group, while the larger group of non-Indigenous residents, not more than a few metres away, remained firmly in theirs. It was as if an invisible rope cordoned the two groups into distinct factions. I have also witnessed similar informal, social segregation occurring when performing on mining camps in the WA's northwest, where a full mess hall with the capacity to hold one hundred people will see ninety odd non-Indigenous people grouped together, with the smaller group of Indigenous workers being kept, or perhaps keeping themselves, at an almost invisible yet very tangible distance.

In what way then does this form of social separation lend itself to the proliferation of white privilege? Anti-racist activist and author Tim Wise writes in “Whine Merchants: Privilege, Inequality and the Persistent Myth of White Victimhood”, that social exclusion or social separation, involuntary or otherwise, directly impacts on employment opportunities which in turn drastically affects all other social indicators. It is also a primary example of ‘racism without racists’:

With companies filling up to half of their new jobs by way of recommendations made by pre-existing employees and with informal, typically white-dominated networks providing the keys to the best jobs in the modern economy ...the research indicates that employers are more likely to hire people they'd like to “hang out with”.⁵⁸

This is to say that the principal at the school where I work, or the business leaders in the community of Tambellup, or the managing supervisors on the mine sites, will first look to those closest to them, those they understand and connect with, when looking to fill particular roles in their respective endeavours. The social segregation outside the town hall in the South West or on the mining camps in the Pilbara, no matter how voluntarily or involuntarily formed and no matter how “innocently” or unintentionally produced, directly leads to Indigenous people missing out on

⁵⁸ Tim Wise. *Whine Merchants: Privilege, Inequality and the Persistent Myth of White Victimhood*. accessed on June 25, 2015. <<http://www.timwise.org/2013/05/whine-merchants-privilege-inequality-and-the-persistent-myth-of-white-victimhood/>>.

opportunities available to those within the dominant group.

It is realities such as these which *Bird with a Broken Leg*, hereafter referred to as *Bird*, hopes to address and bear witness to. *Bird* will do this by focusing on modern inequalities existing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and will do so through a direct examination of present mentalities, actions and institutional practices. The Australian social justice novel, be it in the form of present-day-witness-bearing such as that found in Richard Beilby's *The Brown Land Crying* or the historical fiction of Robert Drewe's *The Savage Crows*, has a strong history in a comparatively short national literary canon. As mentioned in previous chapters, the works of many Australian authors have heightened awareness of inequality, and in doing so have managed to change the collective thinking of the nation. This notion of planting ideas in the consciousness of the citizenry in order to enact change is at the heart of *Bird* and its social justice aspirations.

Bird does not aim only to assist non-indigenous readers to understand the reality of white privilege; hopefully, understanding whiteness as a social construct will also help indigenous Australians to navigate their way towards a more equitable share of Australia's wealth, resources and opportunities. The current criteria listed for a socially just Australia by the Department of Social Services include a fair distribution of economic resources, equal access to essential services such as housing, health care and education, equal rights in civil, legal and industrial affairs and equal opportunity for participation by all in personal development, community life and decision-making.⁵⁹ These are factors which I have attempted to address in *Bird* through the central protagonist Carson, who is unable to successfully access most of these rights and services in the manner which other non-indigenous characters manage with comparative ease.

I have also attempted to depict the main Indigenous protagonist, Carson, as a strong, intelligent and heroic figure who can for the most part endure all of what the white world has to offer, or ironically not offer. Carson follows a slim tradition of strong Indigenous literary characters whose strength lies in their survivalist

⁵⁹ Australian Government Department of Social Services. Accessed Dec 4, 2015. <<http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/national-agenda-for-a-multicultural-australia/participation/social-justice>>.

nature and their seemingly endless capacity for endurance; think Gunnar from David Ireland's *Burn* or the titular protagonist from Thomas Keneally's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* or Prindi in *Poor Fellow My Country*. This has been done purposely, to fill or contribute to a comparative void of heroic Aboriginal figures in Australian literature. In this sense, *Bird* not only bears witness to the present day issues facing Indigenous people in Western Australia; it also adds to the small pantheon of Aboriginal people depicted in literature, in which indigenous readers may find inspiration and non-indigenous readers may find relatable familiarity rather than 'otherness'. This is in line with Kevin Gilbert's call for Indigenous characters and/or heroes to be as prevalent as their white non-indigenous counterparts:

Ask white or black Australian kids to name a heroic Red Indian chief or a famous Indian tribe and most will be able to do so because of comics and films. Ask them to name an Aboriginal hero or a famous Aboriginal tribe and they will not be able to do so because Aboriginal history is either unknown or negative.⁶⁰

For Kevin Gilbert, creating heroic figures in fiction dealing with Indigenous issues could adjust what Richard Dyer refers to as the overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant presence in literature of white people.⁶¹ Author and historian Henry Reynolds also contends that the lack of an Indigenous presence in Australia's mainstream narrative history has allowed successive generations of the dominant group to acknowledge, commemorate and celebrate their history while disallowing the subdominant group from doing the same. Reynolds contends that even relatively liberal-minded white Australians have been somewhat averse to Indigenous issues and characters taking centre stage in the nation's collective narrative:

Many people of less conservative bent [than historian Keith Windshuttle] were saying that history was bad for Aborigines. It made them feel and behave like victims when really they should be putting the past behind them and getting on with life. 'Lest we

⁶⁰ Gilbert, Kevin. *Living Black: Blacks Talk to Kevin Gilbert*. Ringwood, Melbourne, 1978: 3.

⁶¹ Dyer, Richard. *White*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997: 3.

forget', it seemed, was a slogan and admonition for white Australians alone.⁶²

Bird opens with a quote from Henry Reynolds' seminal work *Frontier*,⁶³ which is used to portray the fact that for many Indigenous people in Western Australia, not much has changed in the past two centuries. The quote regarding "cheeky niggers"⁶⁴ having painful, miserable lives or slowly rotting away in penal institutions was used by Reynolds to describe the experience of early- to late-nineteenth-century Indigenous men at the hands of the white settlers, and was chosen as the opening for *Bird* because it also aptly describes the condition of many Indigenous men in present day Western Australia, caught up in the repetitive cycle of the corrective service system. The continued relevance of Reynolds' observation about nineteenth-century Indigenous experience suggests the impact of a lack of indigenous representation in mainstream Australia. How much does constant exposure to an unbalanced representation of personhood affect those in the disenfranchised group? How dangerous is it for a minority group to have their identity distorted on a daily basis to the point where it misshapes perceptions of the dominant group and perhaps more dangerously, their own view of themselves? As Shane Huston states, identity should be "a construct of self, not of anybody else, your identity is your spirit, your set of values, a force which informs and directs your decisions, which is a product of story".⁶⁵

Yet, as Jessica L. Davis notes, mass media plays a vital role in how we see ourselves, our environment, and our place within our environment. It is not therefore unreasonable to suggest that a system which is owned and operated mainly by representatives of the dominant group would produce content which consciously or unconsciously aids in the maintenance of the dominant system:

We develop mechanisms through which we understand our environment and the forces at play therein. These are often enacted through cognitive shortcuts, or heuristics. These cognitive

⁶² Reynolds, Henry. "Destination Past." *Meanjin*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (2006): 109-113.

⁶³ Reynolds, Henry. *Frontier : Aborigines, Settlers and Land*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987.

⁶⁴ "There was no room for 'cheeky niggers' in the world the settlers were making - 'cheeky niggers usually had short unhappy lives or they rotted slowly in penal institutions.": 69.

⁶⁵ Insight "Aboriginal or Not," YouTube, 51:54, published by Insight SBS, Aug 7, 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5YZlpyz9E0>>.

schema are influenced by who we are, what we do and what we see, hear and learn through our exposure to mass media.⁶⁶

If we extend Kevin Gilbert's call for more indigenous representation in literature, how does the cultural landscape in Australia fare when its more mainstream media are examined? How many Indigenous radio presenters or columnists garner as much public attention as Alan Jones or Andrew Bolt? How many Indigenous news readers are on commercial television? How many Indigenous Australians hold key roles in Australian hospital dramas or police shows? Author and human rights activist Randa Abdel Fattah recently gave a lecture at the Festival of Dangerous Ideas where she condemned the "whitewashed" media for the damage it was doing to minority groups across Australia, with particular regard to Indigenous Australians:

I'm appalled by the whitewashing of our popular cultural content on TV. Perhaps it's trivial but nonetheless it's critical for what it means to disenfranchised human beings who are literally liquid papered white in our cultural artistic production. The ethnics and the Indigenous are relegated to SBS but even then they have to fit the part while commercial TV is still predominantly white. I see this, as a cultural elite desperate to retain the delusion of a monocultural society. Our indigenous population are by and large invisible.⁶⁷

Before discussing *Bird* and exploring the interactions between the multiple characters, both indigenous and non-indigenous, below is a list of characters who appear in this thesis from the accompanying novel.

Carson - the novel's protagonist, a young Indigenous man in his mid to late twenties

Daniel - a white prison art teacher

Patrice - a white Frenchman, recently immigrated, who works as a prison

⁶⁶ Jessica L. Davis and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr. "Racial Identity and Media Orientation". *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 29, No. 3 (1999): 367-397.

⁶⁷ "All Australians are Racist". Festival of Dangerous Ideas 2012, YouTube, 59:34, published by Ideas at the House, June 25, 2013. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0inhIrtDs1k>>.

guard

Jennifer - a white prison psychologist

Len - a white publican who operates a hotel in Carson's unnamed hometown

Sanji - an Indian student undertaking a PhD working part time as a train security guard

Ariel- a white, morbidly obese, mid-forties, prison assessments officer

Luther – an Indigenous prisoner, older than Carson

So how does *Bird* represent its Indigenous protagonist? The novel's opening chapter takes place in the prison art room where we first meet Carson and he is seen here, as he is throughout the novel, at a distance, from the perspective of the non-indigenous characters who narrate each chapter. Initially, I intended to write *Bird* from the perspective of Carson himself, but due to concerns about white appropriation of Indigenous themes and voices, the decision was made for the story to be told by the non-indigenous characters Carson interacts with, the result being a story which encapsulates the "distance" many non-indigenous readers may experience from Indigenous Australians; a distance which may hopefully, and ironically, bring readers closer to Carson as they stay with him throughout the novel.

Carson is described by the young art teacher Daniel in the opening chapter as big, confident and intelligent, someone who outmatches Daniel intellectually and verbally, as well as someone who could dominate Daniel physically,

He had the words, the skills, the quickness of mind... Carson was a big mother fucker. Confident and smart. Daniel knew if it came to it, Carson would tear him to pieces. Completely dominate and destroy him.

From the beginning of the novel, Carson is cast as a humorous, intelligent man who enjoys social power within the confines of the prison environment. Although he is incarcerated and at the mercy of the prison system, he can paint as well as Daniel, talk as well as Daniel, and is bestowed with greater physical gifts than Daniel. As we first glimpse Carson in this opening chapter, we also first glimpse white privilege.

Both Daniel and Carson occupy roles within the same (prison) system and

yet even though their skills and talents are comparable, their roles are diametrically opposite. Whereas Daniel spends his time in prison considering his dual career as an artist and art teacher, weighing up his options internally and speculating on his past efforts as a painter and leatherworker, Carson is fully immersed in prison life, distracting both the room and seemingly himself, with the obscene talk and topics ever present in prison conversation. Carson's life is fully absorbed in what Eoucek describes as the ubiquitous distortion present in all prisons and subsequently, in all prisoners' mentalities:

Every prison, whether the most modern or most obsolete, is characterized by an abnormal atmosphere ... an atmosphere which is intensified by the fact that all the men gathered here are stigmatized by having been convicted and placed in a penal institution.

For Daniel, life in prison is something to get away from, something which interferes with his ambitions, his "real" life. For Carson, prison is a permanent part of his existence, a fixture of his daily life, whether he is serving time or not. Carson's familiarity with incarceration is echoed throughout the book as there is constant reference to uncles, cousins and brothers who share his penal experience. This familiarity with imprisonment is portrayed more starkly in chapter fifteen when Carson visits his prison psychologist. As Carson sits in her office, Jennifer the psychologist scrolls through Carson's multiple mug shots detailing his progression through the justice system from the time of his first arrest. Carson has been intimately involved with the criminal justice system and intimately changed by his criminal history; the psychologist notes the metamorphosis of Carson from "skinny little boy" to the grown man with the look of a "survivor".

For Carson, the repetitive exposure to jail and the justice system does not send him into a panic when faced again with arrest and punishment. Rather, by the seventh time he is arrested, he is seemingly calmed, as the chaos leading up to his arrest has ended and he is now in familiar, well known territory - namely, the slow predictable monotony of the Western Australian justice system:

He looked strong but the way a survivor looks strong, someone who's been through it and has come out the other side. There was

a knowingness to the face on the screen, like he knew what lay ahead and knew what was expected of him from this point on.

Carson's personal history thus informs the ways in which his relationship to the prison system contrasts with Daniel's. For one, working in the prison is a distraction from "real" life, but for the other, prison *is* real life. Further, for one it is a source of income, but for the other, it removes his ability to generate income.

In this, the novel's opening scene, we also first glimpse a white protagonist's relationship (or indeed non-relationship) to the Indigenous protagonist, Carson. Although Daniel and Carson share equitable qualities and similar artistic interests and talents, their relationship is far from equal and could hardly be described as relaxed or friendly. Daniel seems to tolerate Carson's behaviour and views him as a dangerous and threatening figure; as someone who is to be controlled, albeit subtly, but controlled nonetheless. The indigenous Carson is the "other" in Daniel's mind and an unsafe other at that; a judgement apparently based on Daniel's preconceptions, since there is no evidence within the opening chapter to suggest Daniel has been attacked or threatened by Carson previously. This notion of the unsafe, non-white other is explored in Gormley's *Trashing Whiteness*, as he discusses the dramatic appeal of the reality television programme *COPS*:

These programmes generate affect by suggesting that the predominantly black suspects encountered by the police are always ready to erupt with violence. The black body is seen with an immediacy and paranoia by the white cultural imagination.⁶⁸

The white cultural imagination is simultaneously created and maintained by popular cultural narratives such as *COPS*, and in the opening chapter to *Bird* we see the results of such narratives evident in Daniel's ever-cautious approach to Carson and the other prisoners, who are predominantly Aboriginal men; and also in his distaste for the guards.

Daniel turned and gave Carson a friendly glance. He was pretty much powerless in here. He didn't have the authority of a guard and would feel ridiculous if he did. Yelling at people, shouting at

⁶⁸ Gormley, Paul. "Trashing Whiteness: *Pulp Fiction*, *Se7en*, *Strange Days*, and *Articulating Affect*." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, Vol 6.1 (2001): 155-171.

grown men. But the culture fed itself. It was the guards' fault, it was the prisoners' fault. They had turned each other into the worst possible versions of themselves.

In this opening chapter we are also given our first hint at the culture of masculinity that exists within the prison environment, and it is one that is aggressive, hostile and dominating. Daniel observes this version of masculinity with a critical distance, as violence and intimidation are foreign to his nature and values. Having Daniel at a critical distance from this distorted version of masculinity allows the novel to work towards exposing this particular failing of the prison management system. This in turn leads us to the introduction of a truly foreign character in *Bird* who is used throughout the novel to further explore masculinity, but more importantly is used to show what is required from an outsider, to gain acceptance into white mainstream culture. In the third chapter of *Bird* we meet Patrice, a French immigrant working in the prison as a guard and dealing with the uncertainty of an unhappy wife and a less than enjoyable day job. Through Patrice's eyes we witness Carson and other Indigenous prisoners through a foreign lens that contrasts with and exposes Daniel's white Australian worldview. Patrice observes Carson as he interacts with another Indigenous prisoner and takes in their mannerisms and physical movements with an almost anthropological eye:

That was how they did it. Arm outstretched, a slow hand in the air, tilted slightly on its side, a couple of fingers out straight, a couple more pointing down, thumb out to the side Patrice followed as Carson ambled up towards Assessments. He swayed a little in his walk, had a bounce, one step just seemed to pour into the next. He looked happy. Patrice never understood it.

Patrice is arguably one of the least outwardly racist characters in *Bird* yet even he sees the indigenous prisoners as mystifying and foreign, and his admission at the end of the chapter that he never understands their behaviour highlights the invisible damage done by whiteness itself. Patrice finds himself a new immigrant – in a country that continues to accept many – being seduced into the national acceptance of Indigenous degradation. This is a seduction which works more through absence, as non-indigenous Australians are offered few cues to

understand, interact with and make sense of Indigenous people's presence. Patrice is here used to show that whiteness keeps non-indigenous and indigenous people apart, and whiteness misunderstood - or even worse, unacknowledged - will continue to maintain this distance and the damage it causes. *Bird's* aspiration to uncover the reality of unconscious white privilege in Australia, begins to become more evident in this chapter as we continue to follow the internal thoughts of white protagonists concerning their most intimate feelings about Indigenous Australians. There is an attempt here to expose the dominant non-indigenous position as one of power, control and dominance over the Indigenous other, whether it be in the form of teacher (Daniel), prison guard (Patrice), police woman (Debbie in Chapter 3) or other white characters, introduced later, such as Len the publican or Ariel the assessments officer. Even Dean the white prisoner (from chapter 2), who shares Carson's social status as inmate, exerts more confidence and control when interacting with fellow inmates and officers than Carson seems to, within the shared space of the white-controlled prison system.

By constantly referring to the unconscious thinking of the white characters in *Bird*, as evidenced in the opening chapter discussed above, *Bird* uncovers the hidden power of whiteness as norm and by doing so, allows it to be acknowledged and discussed publicly. This uncovering of whiteness and its attendant privilege is what Wray and Newitz describe as essential in any work dealing with race, racism and social justice: "Making whiteness visible to whites – exposing the discourses, the social and cultural practices, and the material conditions that cloak whiteness and hide its dominating effects – is a necessary part of any anti-racist project."⁶⁹

Exposing the inner thoughts of multiple characters in order to address social concerns, particularly within a novel with a fragmented narrative structure, sets *Bird* in line thematically as well as structurally with novels such as Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1994), and William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1935). With Welsh's *Trainspotting* we are brought into the chaotic world of Scotland's addict "community" and are introduced to its inhabitants and aided in exploring their lives by those who see their existence within that particular subculture as normal,

⁶⁹ Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz. *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. New York: Routledge, 1997: 3.

understandable and at times preferred to the mainstream alternative of Scottish life. As heroin-addicted Renton decries in his opening chapter, in his rejection of what he sees as a grotesque conventional life,

Choose a life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family.
Choose a fucking big television. Choose washing machines, cars,
compact disc players and electrical tin openers... Choose DIY and
wondering who the fuck you are on a Sunday morning. Choose
sitting on that couch watching mind-numbing, spirit crushing game
shows, sticking junk food into your mouth. Choose rotting away in
the end of it all, pishing your last in a miserable home, nothing
more than an embarrassment to the selfish, fucked up brats you
spawned to replace yourself, choose your future. Choose life... But
why would I want to do a thing like that? I chose not to choose
life. I chose somethin' else. And the reasons? There are no
reasons. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?⁷⁰

Similarly, Faulkner's characters in *As I Lay Dying* also normalise and legitimise the outrageous social imbalance present both in the fictional town of Yoknapatawpha, as well in the Southern states of a heavily Jim Crow influenced America. Faulkner uncovered and exposed the madness of that social reality by similarly exposing the private thoughts and inner thinking of his multiple white narrators. As Thadious Davis describes Faulkner's achievement,

Faulkner constructed characters who are consciously white, racialised as white, and depicted the construction of whiteness within Southern and American society. As a result, he allowed outsiders to know in ways not otherwise available to them one ongoing narrative of white people in psychological nudity.⁷¹

I would argue that white privilege is just as socially destructive as narcotics or racist laws, and recognising this is the key challenge for both *Bird* as a social justice novel and for non-indigenous Australians more generally: to acknowledge the possibility

⁷⁰ Irvine Welsh. *Trainspotting*. London: Minerva, 1994: 187.

⁷¹ T.M. Davis. *Faulkner's "Negro": Art and the Southern Context*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990: 254.

that the pain and suffering white privilege causes in this nation is comparable either to the scourge of narcotics on a city's alienated youth, as in *Trainspotting*, or the racially motivated laws enacted to segregate entire communities of people for the benefit of the white people in power, as in Faulkner's America.

I would argue that the suppression of a people economically, politically and psychologically, be it obvious as is the case with the Jim Crow laws, or be it inconspicuous as is the case with white privilege, is equally damaging in terms of the suffering, hardship and inequality visited upon those in the subjugated group. I would argue further that those having a visible adversary actually fare better than those whose enemy is nameless and faceless, as is the case with white privilege. With an identified "enemy", a communal hope can be collectively formed and even the most powerful oppressor can be resisted over time, but as the Indigenous Australian struggle becomes a battle against the "invisible forces" of unnamed or even unacknowledged white privilege, how can such a battle be won? The history of Indigenous resistance and protest is well known but now the struggle is no longer against the invading colonists of the late eighteenth century or the blatantly racist policies of the twentieth century; now the struggle comes in almost unrecognisable forms, forms which George Fredrickson describes as "[t]he institutional patterns or social practices that have adverse effects on members of groups thought as races, even if a conscious belief that they are inferior or unworthy is absent."⁷²

Cornel West, a prolific philosopher and often outspoken champion for those suffering inequality and injustice due to racist practices and attitudes, expands on this idea of exploring and revealing psychological truth, believing racism in its current form is most dangerous as an existential threat affecting the psyche of those living under its burden. Although acknowledging money and power as essential components in the struggle for equality, he confirms that the real damage being perpetrated takes place inside the minds of those being marginalised:

This threat is not simply a matter of relative economic deprivation and political powerlessness -- though economic well-being and political clout are requisites for meaningful Black progress. It is primarily a question of speaking to the profound sense of

⁷²

G.M. Fredrickson. *Racism: a Short History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006: 151.

psychological depression, personal worthlessness, and social despair.⁷³

This is where *Bird* functions as an important intermediary between black and white Australia. It reveals to white readers how some Indigenous lives are led in Western Australia, giving white readers insight into the realities of an Indigenous underclass, but more importantly, by contrasting white characters who live similarly but experience little of the same consequences, it introduces them to the concept of white privilege and to the idea that true racism is a group phenomenon rather than a concern of one's personal experience. Racism is a group phenomenon that dictates that some groups will benefit while others will comparatively suffer.

Maya Angelou, the American author and poet, appears in the James Baldwin documentary *The Price of the Ticket*, describing this notion of racism being removed from any sense of skin colour, but rather existing as a relationship between groups, when she describes France's reaction to visiting black American artists who went to France in search of sanctuary from their turbulent American reality. Angelou states that France had no concept of African guilt and welcomed African American visitors as if they were their own sons returning home. However, although France extended a welcome to the likes of James Baldwin and Miles Davis among others, they reserved their own brand of racism for a group of people who were attempting to gain access to France's wealth, resources and power (which were predominantly controlled by the white mainstream social order), something visiting African American artists had no intention of doing. Angelou describes the racial culture of France at the time of James Baldwin's first visit:

Black Americans who went to France from Richard Wright to Sidney Bechet were so colourful and so talented and so marvellous and so exotic who wouldn't want them, of course. But among the people they did not want in France were the Algerians, as Jimmy (James Baldwin) said they were the niggers of France and to him they were his brothers.⁷⁴

⁷³ Cornel West. *Race Matters*. London: Vintage Books, 2001: 19.

⁷⁴ James Baldwin. "The Price of the Ticket". YouTube, published by California Newsreel, Nov 13, 2014, 1:27. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL8F5pLthns>>.

This is also where *Bird* will hopefully be effective, in enlightening the reader with regard to racism and race privilege. Most of the protagonists in *Bird* are implicit rather than explicit racists, meaning they are not vocal or outspoken bigots, prejudiced towards Indigenous people. However, most of the trouble that Carson finds himself in throughout the novel often comes to him on account of his blackness, and not on account of his actions. He suffers the consequences of colour in a world which is for the most part devoid of explicit racists, yet populated by non-Indigenous characters who all enjoy far more rewarding lives than Carson endures. This rethinking of racism, not as a result of one's own beliefs or actions but as a result of the social norms in place within a society, is what *Bird* hopes to achieve in terms of changing the national consciousness. The intention is not only for Indigenous readers to see their predicament in terms of an institutionalised lack of power, but for non-indigenous readers to view themselves, perhaps for the first time, as members of that institutional power group.

If the beginning of *Bird* puts focus on the Indigenous reality of prison life and the cruelty and control of white police officers (as we witness in chapter four where Carson's uncle is being tortured with electricity on the jail house floor), chapter five introduces us to the absurdity of the white world through the character Ariel. Ariel is presented as a sexually frustrated, obese, lazy glutton whose chief concerns include performing as little work as possible, attempting to maintain some control over his weight, and fantasising about co-workers and what he imagines to be a glamorous criminal life. He is in a sense the total opposite of Carson, who is fit, charming and engages in many sexual escapades throughout the novel, finding himself in heroic roles compared to Ariel's pathetic clownishness. Yet, the white controlled world of the prison system is revealed to be tolerant of a man such as Ariel, a man who does next to nothing in his role and yet enjoys the relatively high status of a prison assessment officer.

Ariel's purpose in the novel is to represent the privilege of the white ruling order. He is self-indulgent and lazy, and does no useful work yet is financially rewarded, which gives him access to a seemingly endless supply of wine and food (which he consumes with little self-control). The same lack of self-control is evident in his response to Carson's account of a sexual escapade:

Ariel could feel himself growing in his pants. He had to get some new ones, there wasn't even room in these ones to get an erection without it hurting. He imagined the small amount of blood squeezing itself into his hard-on as it crushed against the flesh of his thigh and the tight cheap cotton of his pants.

Ariel's character demonstrates a pattern that connects most of the white characters in *Bird*. This connecting theme is that they are all getting away with behaviour that is at best inattentive or self-indulgent, and at worst, criminal. Yet, there are no real consequences for their actions, whereas Carson invariably encounters dramatic consequences for every one of his actions, be they criminal or otherwise.

This speaks to the dominant group's overall control, not only over those in the subdominant group, but also over how members within their own group are treated. There is no consequence for the man torturing Carson's uncle, there is no consequence for Ariel using the prison internet to buy wine and masturbate during work hours. Patrice drinks and drives, the hoteliers in Len's pub are stealing from the register, Daniel is smoking marijuana on a regular basis, Dean bucks the prison system at every turn, Ben is running a clandestine criminal enterprise, Carson's underage girlfriend lies to him about her fidelity - and yet there are no consequences for any of these white characters as tumultuous as those suffered by Carson.

When juxtaposed against Carson's regular experience of being mistrusted, the white characters' collective immunity from repercussions for their behaviour exposes the extent to which their skin colour protects them. All of these white people, although observed in isolation, are enjoying the benefits of their membership of the dominant group, whereas Carson finds himself engaged in violent physical altercations stemming from innocuous behaviour such as a love tryst or a lost train ticket. This is white privilege, this is the true devastation of racism; a systemic social order designed, preserved and manipulated by those in power to maintain and conserve control. As Claude Anderson states:

Racism has nothing in the world to do with getting along with people, racism is a competitive relationship between groups of people that are competing to own and control resources, wealth

and power.⁷⁵

The fact that none of the white characters are explicitly allied in the novel, other than the co-workers at the hotel or the correctional facilities, speaks to the exact nature of change required in the Australian national consciousness. For whiteness and white privilege to be reformed, its existence must first be acknowledged by those within the dominant group; all non-indigenous Australians must start to recognise themselves as holding membership of this dominant social order.

Even Dean, the white prisoner, enjoys the safety of whiteness along with Ariel, Patrice, Len and so on. These seemingly disconnected characters are in a fraternity of privilege which allows them to enjoy a comparatively better life than those outside of their group. It is the notion of comparativeness that I would argue is the most essential and perhaps the most difficult for many non-indigenous Australians to come to terms with. Seeing oneself as a lone competitor in a crowded capitalist society is vastly different to imagining oneself immersed within a nexus of shared and enjoyed supremacy, a nexus which is demonstrated throughout *Bird* as the white characters collectively and consistently move unhindered through their lives regardless of the outrageousness of their behaviour. The final chapter in the book points to this in particular as inmate Dean, whose behaviour, demeanour and general attitude are by all accounts appalling, leaves the prison unscathed and unchanged and begins to enjoy his new liberty by breaking the law, consuming alcohol in his friend's car and throwing the can out the window, before he has even left the prison grounds. This is in stark contrast to Carson, who does not leave the same prison alive.

I would argue that what is required for Australian indigenous and non-indigenous reconciliation is akin to the awakening reminiscent of the young fish in the opening parable of David Foster Wallace's *This is Water*:

Two young fish are swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim

⁷⁵ Dr Claude Anderson. "Understanding the Game," YouTube, 22:34, published by AfriKanRising Transcended Sage, Aug 21, 2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5GvXLGjXeo>>.

on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?"⁷⁶

Likewise, for us to proceed towards eventual and complete reconciliation, all Australians must ask themselves, "What the hell is whiteness?" For it currently shares many of the same qualities as water did for the aforementioned fish. It pervades every aspect of our daily lives, it saturates every social, political and structural norm within our societies and it is like water, invisible, hiding in plain sight. Foster Wallace continues,

The most obvious and important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about. Stated as an English sentence this is just a banal platitude. But in the day to day trenches of adult existence, banal platitudes can have a life or death importance.

The beginning of this thesis opens with a quote from Kim Scott concerning the political nature of literature in Australia with regard to changing the social landscape, with particular regard to Indigenous issues and reconciliation. Although I do not disagree with Scott's contention that literature can transform the political landscape, I would argue that the next step towards reconciliation must not come through political means but rather from a spiritual source. When we consider a critical and transformative reimagining of citizens' relations to themselves and each other, we are entering into the landscape of empathy, compassion and even love.

That love (in the Greek "*agape*" sense of the word⁷⁷) would factor into social justice concerns is not a new idea; in fact it has taken centre-stage in almost every major social reform throughout history. For example, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke eloquently on *agape* love being the foundation upon which his non-violent movement rested:

We speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word *agape*.
Agape means nothing sentimental or basically affectionate. It means understanding, creative, redeeming goodwill for all men.

⁷⁶ David Foster Wallace. *This is Water*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2009: 4.

⁷⁷ Love that is spiritual, not sexual, in its nature. *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2011.

Cornel West's famous and oft-repeated maxim, "Justice is what love looks like in public", also invokes love as the underlying current upon which social justice revolution is carried:

We must embody a universal embrace of all those in the human family, and sentient beings, and consolidate an unstoppable fortitude in the face of systems of oppression and structures of domination. We will suffer, shudder and struggle together with smiles on our faces and a love supreme in our souls.⁷⁸

Further, West adds that

We must recast old notions of empire, class, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and nature into new ways of thinking and being. Deep democratic revolution is what justice looks like in practice.

Thus, if love is too grand a concept to will the nation to a more compassionate understanding of its fellow citizens, surely fairness, as it holds in the democratic tradition, could be enough to rouse Australians? When Father Frank Brennan, now Professor Father Frank Brennan, was awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 1995 for services to Aboriginal Australians, particularly as an advocate in the areas of law, social justice and reconciliation, it was Australia's sense of fairness he believed would bring about lasting social change.⁷⁹

I would argue that white Australians, although knowledgeable about certain conditions Indigenous Australians endure, still maintain a distance from these realities, a distance that is reinforced through Indigenous Australians' continued narration as the "other", the non-white. Yet it is also through the power of story that the social justice novel can turn facts and figures into meaningful narratives that can inspire real empathy. The stripping away of the otherness is vital, in order for non-indigenous Australians to see indigenous Australians as they see themselves. This is no easy task - particularly when still so much of the popular "conversation" both implicitly and explicitly describes Indigenous Australians as

⁷⁸ Cornel West. *"A Love Supreme: The Occupied Wall Street Journal"*, published Nov 18 2011. <<http://occupiedmedia.us/2011/11/a-love-supreme/>>.

⁷⁹ <<http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.library.uwa.edu.au/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=ed6700f4-fbc4-4a02-abb8-68825a7e87c5%40sessionmgr4004&vid=1&hid=4106>>.

“other”, as members outside the dominant group. Furthermore any conversation is in the dominant group’s language, a language which can be seen as yet another instrument through which the social imbalance is maintained.

If we are to apply the parable of the fish considering water for the first time to Indigenous and non-indigenous reality, we must then explore what things pervade our Australian lives in an everyday capacity, which non-indigenous Australians are for the most part happy to leave unexamined. I would argue that two of the most interesting components of daily life that are largely ignored and contribute greatly to maintaining group-based disparity are space and language.

When we are discussing story and social narratives within social justice novels we are after all discussing the influence and power of language. It is therefore worth noting who holds the power of it and how they use it. A radio broadcaster, a federal minister, or a news reporter all have tremendous effect on a nation’s collective consciousness, and the language they use to do this is always in the dominant group’s tongue. Carbo and Riggins state that “Language is the key mechanism through which ideas and problems are characterised publicly. Elites such as politicians play a major role in the discursive reproduction of value systems and beliefs, such as about Indigenous or immigrant peoples”.⁸⁰

What is modern Australia’s track record of its use of language in the public arena when addressing different issues concerning Indigenous Australians? According to Aldrich, Kwi and Short, who analysed political speech concerning Indigenous issues from 1972-2001, white Australians are being reminded constantly that Aboriginal people are not the same as non-aboriginal people, regardless of which political party holds government: “politicians of each administration communicated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples were “not like us”, this characterisation was framed differently: from being exotic and positively different (Whitlam and Hawke/Keating administrations), to being not like “us” but that if “they” let go of “their” ambitions and symbols “they” could be (Howard

⁸⁰ T. Carbo and S.H. Riggins (eds). *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997: 91.

administration)".⁸¹

As to space, throughout *Bird* Carson is constantly seen as the Indigenous man entering a space he has little to no control over and, more often than not, traversing such spaces temporarily. He is interviewed and probed by white psychologists and white assessment workers, he nomadically stays in the home of his white friend, he is shuffled through a court procedure which all but ignores him, rides the train and is singled out immediately as one to watch by the security team. At all points throughout the novel Carson is isolated within a white world which is suspicious of him, curious about him or in fear of him. The only point where Carson finds himself surrounded by people of his own cultural background, as well as being part of the majority group, is within a prison setting. Carson's time spent in the art room, or indeed Patrice and Jennifer witnessing jail culture at the prison barbecue and football game, are the only times when the Indigenous presence is greater and more powerful than the white. In other words Carson, along with all other indigenous prisoners, feels most comfortable and enjoys being part of the normalised group, only when he is incarcerated.

These are also the only times in *Bird* when the otherwise white orientated world accommodates the Indigenous culture, social customs and language. In chapter twenty-seven, at the prison barbecue, the prison authorities provide traditional Indigenous food in the form of kangaroo tails, and they wait before commencing the "feast" in order to hear an opening to the day in traditional language. Further, the barbecue itself recognises NAIDOC week, a national celebration held each year to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.⁸² The irony here is that Indigenous culture is most clearly acknowledged by non-indigenous people only in a context which excludes Indigenous people from mainstream white society; namely, in prison. As Jennifer, the prison psychologist, reflects on Luther's commencement address in traditional language,

⁸¹ R. Aldrich and S. Short and A. Zwi. "Advance Australia Fair: Social Democratic and Conservative Politicians' Discourses Concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their Health 1972–2001". *Social Science Medicine* 64.1 (2006): 128.

⁸² "Celebrating NAIDOC Week". Australian Government. Last accessed June 6, 2016, <<http://www.naidoc.org.au/aboutcultures>>.

Jennifer listened as Luther rattled off and began speaking in his native tongue. She'd heard it a few times before but each time she did it struck her as being beautiful. Beautiful in its distance and eloquence. It seemed out of place here in the prison. But for all its beauty it was also nearly forgotten and it made Jennifer sad to stand there alone and cold watching the last of something evaporate before her eyes.

The only other times throughout *Bird* when Carson finds himself surrounded by other Indigenous people are ultimately moments of distress and adversity, when he is being arrested with his uncle in the fourth chapter of the book, and in the pub in his hometown, when he engages in verbal hostility with fellow drinkers. At the moment of his first arrest, Carson has no control of the situation and shows no respect for those in charge. Likewise the pub scene depicts the Indigenous drinkers and their extended families as a resource to be tapped into and benefitted from by Len the proprietor. The indigenous culture here is being recognised in some ways, but only in order to be controlled, dominated and exploited.

Bird not only documents the “evaporation” of traditional Indigenous culture through examples such as Luther’s opening speech for the prison as well as Carson’s general disassociation from the white dominated world; it also implicitly examines the lack of culture present in modern white Australia, “culture” here meaning the sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another.⁸³ There is a dark irony surrounding the relations between indigenous Australians and non-indigenous Australians. The non-Indigenous dominant social group which makes up “white’ Australia suffers from a lack of shared culture, while the Indigenous subdominant group has been stripped of its culture through invasion and denigration. If culture is transmitted through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next,⁸⁴ non-indigenous Australians have created a near cultural vacuum by removing the shared culture of Australia’s Indigenous people and offering very little in the way of a culture to replace it.

⁸³ Collins English Dictionary. accessed: April 17, 2016. <<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/cultures>>.

⁸⁴ Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition*, 2005. accessed: July 25, 2016. <<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/culture>>.

Throughout *Bird* the desolation of the modern indigenous condition is mirrored by the absence of any real strong sense of shared culture amongst non-indigenous Australians. Indeed, the foreign characters - Patrice the French prison officer, as well as Sanji, the Bangladeshi student - are used throughout *Bird* to highlight aspects of what are the more unfortunate aspects of Australian mainstream life, namely the absence of a strongly shared culture. For example, Sanji, the student/transit security guard, witnesses Australians from an outsider's point of view and sees them as a threatening, loud, brash people to be wary of. He doesn't find comfort or mystery in the urban Australian experience. It doesn't inspire him to explore the heart of Australian life, the culture does not entice him as that of other foreign countries does. He also alludes to the culture of alcohol consumption and binge drinking when reflecting on his job options as a transit guard or a taxi driver. Riding the train lines throughout the day is much preferred by Sanji, as the Australians he has to deal with are for the most part sober.

He didn't want to drive a cab because some of the Australians scared him, the loud ones could be very intimidating, especially late at night, when all the drinking was going on. When he first came to Australia he noticed everyone seemed to drink an awful lot of alcohol. Really quite frightening. He had to do the occasional late night shift on the train but if things got out of hand they called the police and could all lock themselves in with the driver. It wasn't ideal but better than being in a cab with a car full of Australians late at night.

As the Bangladeshi Sanji is used to reflect on Australians' relationship with alcohol, the cricket team Patrice encounters is a vehicle for exploring normative white Australians. For Patrice, white Australian macho culture is not necessarily bad, but through his eyes, Malaysian men have it much better:

He remembered a holiday he had taken with her last year in Kuala Lumpur, where he saw the Malaysian men walk hand in hand up and down the streets in the middle of the day... They'd drink their milky tea from glasses with metal handles and sit side by side with their arms over each other's shoulders. Patrice felt so alone.

In this passage, Patrice reflects on the isolation that is cultivated amongst white Australian men; an isolation that is also pertinent to discussions of reconciliation, as the disconnect between non-indigenous Australians has an adverse effect on their ability to view their lives as connected to the lives of Indigenous Australians. A comparative impulse is central to acknowledging the concept of white privilege, so this passage of the novel seeks to foster a comparative sensibility.

An examination of the lack of culture in Australia, particularly in relation to men interacting with one another, is further considered in chapter thirty-two, when Ariel wakes from a disturbing nightmare in which he has been gang raped on the floor of a football club by his imagined team mates. Ariel's imagined camaraderie with his white Australian "mates" is not cosy or friendly like the cricket players observed by Patrice, nor does he experience a sense of companionship as with the Malaysian men. Rather, his male bonding is an unsettling scene of sexual humiliation and ridicule, all set against the sounds of unfeeling women, the ring of cash registers and the opening of cheap premixed drinks. For Ariel, white male culture is thus an ordeal that inspires fear rather than comfort, as it is for him not a culture to get lost in but rather one to be avoided at all costs. It is also interesting to note here that Ariel's disempowerment throughout the novel is only experienced in his dream world, a stark contrast to the arduous state of Carson's daily reality. The disturbing scene also hints at Ariel's subconscious recognition that he has done nothing to earn his way into his privileged membership of a dominant group, as he enjoys both white privilege and male privilege.

Just as our white privilege tells us that modern philosophy began with the ancient Greeks, we ignore that many Greek thinkers, scientists and authors first studied in Africa to learn from the teachers of ancient Egypt. Molefi Kete Asante states,

The priests of Egypt cite from their records in the holy books that in the former times they were visited by Orpheus and Musaeus, Melampus, Daedalos, besides the poet Homer, Lycurgus the Spartan, Solon the Athenian, and Plato the philosopher, Pythagoras of Samos and the mathematician Eudoxos, as well as

Democritus of Abdera and Oenopides of Chios, also came there.”⁸⁵ Pythagoras himself spent over twenty years in ancient Egypt⁸⁶ and yet he is credited in western thought for his triangular theorem with no mention of the fact he spent nearly a third of his life under the shadow of the pyramids. The notion that Pythagoras himself conjured his principle independently is as absurd and as pitiful as the notion Captain Cook was able to explore the eastern half of the Australian continent before declaring it entirely uninhabited. Yet these horrendously implausible histories are continuously presented and accepted in a mainstream educational context as well as within academia. If one undertakes an undergraduate degree in Philosophy in Australia (which I did in 2002) one can graduate without hearing a word about the Greeks’ travels to Africa. The Greeks are presented as the first original philosophers; the civilising force behind the rational, scientific mind of the western world. This is the equivalent of delivering a history on Hip Hop and Rap music and beginning the discussion with Eminem, and yet that is what we do with our western perspective on the world. As it is what we do with our nation’s history beginning in the late eighteenth century. Perhaps it would be fitting for us to imagine another nation today arriving on our shores and declaring the land empty of inhabitants for us to begin to imagine what it must feel like for Indigenous people in this country today.

For those who exist within the dominant social group, acknowledging white privilege is not only essential for reconciling with those outside of that group; it is also essential for an understanding of self. Australia is not a nation built on the backs of swaggies, battlers and pioneers, but is rather a nation whose foundation is one of murder, dispossession, genocide and cultural and human extermination equal to the horrors of the African slave trade or the Jewish holocaust or the reign of Leopold II over the Congo.⁸⁷ Modern non-indigenous Australians have benefitted and continue to benefit greatly from these past injustices, just as modern Indigenous Australians are comparatively suffering the consequences of this past.

⁸⁵ Dr Molefi Kete Asante. “An African Origin of Philosophy: Myth or Reality?”. Accessed July 5 2016. <<http://www.asante.net/articles/26/afrocentricity/>>.

⁸⁶ *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London, Routledge, 1998: 252.

⁸⁷ Liam O’Ceallaigh. “When You Kill Ten Million Africans They Don’t Call You ‘Hitler’”. *Diary of a Walking Butterfly*, accessed 16 April 2015. <<http://www.walkingbutterfly.com/2010/12/22>>.

White Australians cannot appreciate one position without acknowledging the other. White Australians cannot understand the condition of the modern reality for Indigenous Australians without understanding what part their own ancestors played in setting up that reality and to what degree they themselves now benefit tremendously from such a foundation.

In the quest for national reconciliation this reimagining of ourselves, both indigenous and non-indigenous, through story, through seduction, through books like *Bird* and others like it, is what I hope will lead to greater empathy, greater compassion and greater understanding of the other as well as of the self. By exploring Carson's sad and tragic few months in *Bird*, non-indigenous readers are given a glimpse into a small part of the daily indigenous reality as well as the role they themselves play in it. I hope that they may see themselves as a prison guard or a publican or merely a fellow passenger on a train; and Indigenous readers likewise are given a glimpse into a diversity of whiteness that they may not have considered previously. The power of such literature, as it is afforded to all readers, indigenous and non-indigenous, is that it allows both groups to re-evaluate their own presumptions and beliefs, and by doing so they may be able to reimagine themselves, their world and those they share it with.

It is this reimagining that Paul Keating touched upon in Redfern in 1992; the ability within each human being for empathy, and to take responsibility for past actions as well as the modern consequences of those past actions; to see the world not only through one's own eyes, but through the eyes of another.

It might help us if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of land we had lived on for fifty thousand years - and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours. Imagine if ours was the oldest culture in the world and we were told that it was worthless. Imagine if we had resisted this settlement, suffered and died in the defence of our land, and then were told in history books that we had given up without a fight. Imagine if our spiritual life was denied and ridiculed. Imagine if we had suffered the injustice and then were blamed for it. It seems to me that if we can imagine the injustice we can imagine its

opposite. And we can have justice.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Paul Keating. "Paul Keating's Redfern Park Speech", Youtube, 8:21, uploaded by socialretard28, Jan 8, 2011. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKhmTLN3Ddo>>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Aboriginal or Not”. YouTube, 51:54, published by Insight SBS, Aug 7, 2012.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5YZlypz9E0>

Aldrich, R. and Short, S. and Zwi, A. “Advance Australia Fair: Social Democratic and Conservative Politicians’ Discourses Concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their Health 1972–2001.” *Social Science Medicine* 64.1 (2006): 125-37.

“All Australians are Racist”. Festival of Dangerous Ideas 2012, YouTube, 59:34, published by Ideas at the House, June 25, 2013.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0inhIrtDs1k>

Altman, Neil. “Whiteness.” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, LXXV (2006): 45–72.

Anthony, T. “Criminal Justice and Transgression on the Northern Australian Cattle Stations” in McFarlane, I. and Hannah, M. (eds). *Transgressions: Critical Indigenous Histories*. Canberra: Australian National University E Press, 2007: 35-63.

Asante, Dr Kete. “An African Origin of Philosophy: Myth or Reality?” Accessed July 5 2016. <http://www.asante.net/articles/26/afrocentricity/>

“Australian Goldrush, The”. Australian Government, accessed 5 July 2016.
<http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-gold-rush>

Australian Government Department of Social Services. Accessed Dec 4, 2015.
<http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/national-agenda-for-a-multicultural-australia/participation/social-justice>

Baldwin, James. “The Price of the Ticket”. YouTube, published by California Newsreel, Nov 13, 2014, 1:27. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL8F5pLthns>

Beccaria, Cesare marchese di. *On Crimes and Punishments*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 1986.

Beilby, Richard. *The Brown Land Crying*. London and Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1975.

“Biography of Cecil Mann,” AustLit, accessed 5th July 2016.
[http://www.austlit.edu.au/run?ex=ShowAgent&agentId=A\(%23I](http://www.austlit.edu.au/run?ex=ShowAgent&agentId=A(%23I)

Blackstone, Sir William and Lewis, William Draper. *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books, 1867-1949*. Clark, New Jersey: Lawbook Exchange, William Blackstone Collection (Library of Congress), 2006.

Boldrewood, Rolf. [1888] *Robbery Under Arms. St Lucia, Qld*: University of Queensland Press, 1951.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006.

C.K., Louis. "I Enjoy Being White," YouTube, 2:29, published by silencecomedy23, April 12 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qg48ZZ2wYfM>

Carbo, T. and Riggins, S.H. (eds.), *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997: 88–107.

Carboni, Raffaello. [1855] *The Eureka Stockade*. Carlton, Vic: Miegunyah Press, 2004.

"Celebrating NAIDOC Week". Australian Government. Last accessed June 6, 2016. <http://www.naidoc.org.au/aboutcultures>

Clarke, Marcus. [1870] *For the Term of his Natural Life*. London: Macmillan, 1899.

Cook, James (1728–1779)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cook-james-1917/text2279>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 22 July 2016.

Davis, Jessica L. and Gandy, Jr., *Oscar H.* "Racial Identity and Media Orientation." *Journal of Black Studies* 29.3 (1999): 367-397.

Davis, T. M. *Faulkner's "Negro": Art and the Southern Context*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.

Dr Claude Anderson. "Understanding the Game," YouTube, 22:34, published by AfriKanRising Transcended Sage, Aug 21, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5GvXLGjXeo>.

Dr Helen Szoke. "Racism exists in Australia – are we doing enough to address it?" Australian Human Rights Commission, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/racism-exists-australia-are-we-doing-enough-address-it>

Dutton, Geoffrey. *The Australian Collection: Australia's Greatest Books*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1985.

Dyer, Richard. *White*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Euocek, J. "The Mind of the Prisoner". *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 31. 4 (1937): 375-383.

"Falls in Indigenous Infant Mortality Rates, but wide disparities still exist," ABS and AIHW Media Release, 2008, accessed 5 July, 2016. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbytitle/E6AA1218B5D52E50CA25773000183760?>

- Fredrickson, G.M. *Racism: A Short History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Garner, Steve. *Whiteness: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Gelder, Ken. *Atomic Fiction: the Novels of David Ireland*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1993.
- Gilbert, Kevin J. *Because a White Man'll Never Do It*. Cremorne, N.S.W: Angus and Robertson, 1973.
- Gilbert, Kevin. *Living Black: Blacks Talk to Kevin Gilbert*. Melbourne: Penguin, 1978.
- Gormley, Paul. "Trashing Whiteness: *Pulp Fiction*, *Se7en*, *Strange Days*, and Articulating Affect". *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 6.1 (2001): 155-171.
- Healy, J. J. *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia, 1770-1975*. St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1989.
- Heiss, A. "Writing about Indigenous Australia – Some Issues to Consider and Protocols to Follow: a discussion paper." *Southerly* 62.2 (2002): 197-207.
- Herbert, Xavier. *Capricornia*. [1938] Pymble, N.S.W: HarperCollins, 2002.
- Ireland, David. *Burn*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1974.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. New York: Harcourt, 1950.
- Keating, Paul. "Paul Keating's Redfern Park Speech". YouTube, 8:21, uploaded by socialretard28, Jan 8, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKhmTLN3Ddo>
- Kesselman, Amy Vita and McNair, Lily D. and Schniedewind, Nancy (eds). *Women: Images and Realities: A Multicultural Anthology*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003.
- King, M.L. "The Christian Way of Life in Human Relations." Paper 6:322-328 delivered at the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches, St Louis, Missouri, December 4, 1957. <http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Vol6/4Dec1957TheChristianWayofLifeinHumanRelations,AddressDeliveredattheGeneralAssemblyofthe%20NationalCouncilofChurches.pdf>
- Lang, John. *Botany Bay, or, True tales of early Australia*. Sydney: New South Wales Bookstall Company, 1880.
- Laurie Hergenhan. "Australia: Echoes of Xavier Herbert". <http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2009/03/australia-echoes-of-xavier-herbert/>
- Lawson, Henry. [1923] *While the Billy Boils*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson 1923.

Leakey, Caroline W. (Caroline Woolmer). [1859] *The Broad Arrow: being the story of Maida Gwynnham, A "Lifer" in Van Diemen's Land*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1992.

Leane, J. "The Whiteman's Aborigine." PhD thesis. University of Technology, Sydney, 2010.

Lopez, I. F. H. *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

Lund, Erik and Sløk, Johannes and Mogens, Pihl. *A History of European Ideas*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1971.

Moreton-Robinson, Aileen. *Talking up to the White Woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism*. St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2000.

Morrison, T. (1992). *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the literary imagination*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

"Number of Australians identifying as non-indigenous Australians," Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed 5 July 2016.
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/680F87258CBBAF0DCA2578DB00283CAA?opendocument>

O'Ceallaigh, Liam. "When You Kill Ten Million Africans They Don't Call You 'Hitler'". *Diary of a Walking Butterfly*, accessed 16 April 2015.
<http://www.walkingbutterfly.com/2010/12/22>

Petrilli, S. "Whiteness Matters: What lies in the future?" *Semiotica* 180 (2010): 147-163.

Prichard, Katharine Susannah. [1929] *Coonardoo*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1993.

Prichard, Katharine Susannah. *N'Goola and Other Stories*. Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1959.

Reynolds, Henry. "Destination Past". *Meanjin* 65.1 (2006): 109-113.

Reynolds, Henry. *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987.

Roderick, Colin. *An Introduction to Australian Fiction*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1950.

Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. London, Routledge, 1998.

Rubin, Judith Aron. *Introduction to Art Therapy Sources and Resources*. New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2009.

Saunders, Suzanne. "Another Dimension: Xavier Herbert in the Northern Territory". *Journal of Australian Studies* 14.26 (1990): 52-65.

Savery, Henry. [1830] *Quintus Servinton: A Tale Founded Upon Incidents of Real Occurrence*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1962.

Scott, Kim. "2011 Winner Kim Scott's Oration". Miles Franklin Literary Award, 45:53, 2012. http://www.milesfranklin.com.au/events/oration_2012.htm
Sen, Amartya. *The Idea of Justice*. London: Penguin, 2010.

Shoemaker, Adam. *Black Words White Page*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2004.

Tascon, Sonia. "Narratives of Race and Nation: Everyday Whiteness in Australia". *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 14.2 (2008): 253-274.

"Town of Bassendean, Reconciliation Action Plan". Last accessed March 15, 2016, http://www.bassendean.wa.gov.au/7_info_feedback/pdfs/bassendean_reconciliation_action_plan.pdf

Vanden Driesen, Cynthia. *Writing the Nation: Patrick White and the Indigene*. New York: Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2009.

Wallace, David Foster. *This is Water*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2009.

Webb, Janeen S. and Enstice, Andrew. *Aliens & Savages: Fiction, Politics and Prejudice in Australia*. Pymble, N.S.W: HarperCollins, 1998.

Welsh, Irvine. *Trainspotting*. London: Minerva, 1994.

West, Cornel. "A Love Supreme, *The Occupied Wall Street Journal*" published Nov 18 2011. <http://occupiedmedia.us/2011/11/a-love-supreme/>

West, Cornel. "Justice is What Love Looks Like in Public," YouTube, 1:00:00, 26:48, published by Supernegromagic, April 17, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGqP7S_WO6o

West, Cornel. *Race Matters*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.

"Western Australian Department of Corrective Services Weekly Offender Statistics". Last accessed March 15, 2016, http://www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/_files/about-us/statistics-publications/statistics/2013/cnt131226.pdf

"Why I am a communist, by Katherine Susannah Prichard". last accessed March 14 2016. <http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/australia/1956/prichard-why.html>

Wise, Tim. "Beyond Diversity: Challenging Racism in an Age of Backlash". YouTube, 1:32:05, Missouri State University, posted April 24, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RHxrV7u09w>

Wise, Tim. "The Pathology of Privilege Racism, White Denial & the Costs of Inequality". YouTube, 57:35, published by Osiris Mann, Dec 12, 2013.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AMY2Bvxuxc>

Wise, Tim. "The Pathology of Privilege Racism, White Denial and the Costs of Inequality". YouTube, 57:35, published by Osiris Mann, Dec 12, 2013.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AMY2Bvxuxc>

Wise, Tim. "Whine Merchants: Privilege, Inequality and the Persistent Myth of White Victimhood". accessed on June 25, 2015.
<http://www.timwise.org/2013/05/whine-merchants-privilege-inequality-and-the-persistent-myth-of-white-victimhood/>

Woodfine, Philip. "Debtors, Prisons, and Petitions in Eighteenth-century England". *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30.2 (2011): 1-31.

Wray, Matt and Newitz, Annalee. *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. New York: Routledge, 1997.