

SETTLING DAY

a memoir

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UQP

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For my children and grandchildren

He'll get over it

'Where to, love?'

My mind was blank as I stared through the wire mesh screen. The ticket seller at Lidcombe Station repeated his question, drumming his fingers impatiently on the counter.

'Central Station, please,' I mumbled, slipping a two dollar note into the brass metal tray.

'Single or return?'

'Single, thank you.'

Sydney's Central Station isn't so much a destination as a hub for interstate and suburban trains and buses to converge. I'd think about where I was going when I got there. As I waited on the platform I noticed a man standing nearby reading a newspaper. The front page spread featured a beachscape with the headline: 'Prime Minister Harold Holt, disappeared presumed drowned.'

It had only been four weeks since I'd left my husband, John McNorton, but being separated from my infant son, Adam, whom I couldn't take with me, made it seem like an eternity. I hadn't gone far in that time, just two suburbs in fact, but without my son

it may as well have been to the ends of the earth. Not an hour had gone by when I didn't think about the last time we had been together, his angelic face turned up to mine. I had stood next to his cot and promised that I'd be back as soon as I found a job and was settled. I'd found a job within the month, but without Adam I was never going to be settled.

A few days earlier I'd called John at work and told him that I wanted to meet. If necessary, I was prepared to go down on my knees and beg him to take me back. If that wasn't possible I was hoping to arrange to see Adam every weekend.

We met under the Lidcombe railway bridge, a short walk from where I was staying. John drove a distinctive Volkswagen and was waiting for me. 'Hello John,' I said, getting into the passenger seat. He looked straight ahead as he lit up a cigarette. As trains roared overhead and monster trucks rocked us from side to side in the slipstream, my fate and that of my one-and-a-half-year-old son was decided.

'It's that Peter guy isn't it?'

'No,' I said, unable to look at him.

'Yes it is,' he grinned.

'Please John, let me come home,' I begged. 'Or at least let me see Adam. I'm going insane.'

'No way,' he replied, smugly.

A freight train rumbled overhead. My mind raced in all directions. *How did he know about Peter?* Then it struck me. John's father had very good connections with the Parramatta police. On the night I had left John I caught a taxi to Peter's flat in Lidcombe. A couple of weeks later two uniformed coppers had knocked on the door wanting to speak with a Kay Howarth, in connection to stolen goods. Surprised and intimidated, I stood back and let them into the flat, eager to cooperate and establish my innocence. They made a thorough search of the bedrooms and enquired after the

males occupying the premises. It wasn't until after they'd gone that I wondered how they knew my name.

Sitting in the car next to John I felt my anger rise. I'd been a sixteen-year-old unmarried mother when my son was born. For five months, during my confinement at St Margaret's Home for Unwed Mothers, I'd fought the nuns to prevent my son being taken for adoption. 'You can't afford to keep this child,' I was told time and time again, 'we have a wealthy family waiting to take him.'

It was true my family had abandoned me and I had no means of support. But I was sixteen and coming from a very primal place with regard to my baby. It was the first time in my life that I had any power and I was going to use it to stop them taking him. How would we live? I had no idea. All I knew for sure was that no one would love my son as much as I did and I didn't care how wealthy they were. Every night I got down on my knees and prayed to the Virgin Mary to send us some help.

John and his family had known I was at St Margaret's. They too had expected me to give up my baby for adoption, and never hear from me again. At the eleventh hour and, it seemed, by divine intervention, my Auntie Daphne had heard of my plight and intervened. It was quite ironic that the one person in my family with the least capacity to help was the only one who reached out. But Daphne's situation was very complicated and there was a limit to how much assistance she could provide in the long term.

In order to keep my son I was railroaded into marrying John. I soon discovered the haste to get us to the altar had been motivated by a threat of carnal knowledge, being brought against John by my grandmother, a crime which carried a three-year prison term. After the police interviewed me and learned of our plans to marry we heard no more of it.

During the eighteen months we were together, John and I had lived in a rough industrial suburb, with no phone, no transport and

I didn't have enough money to dress myself or my son. I had felt isolated and was struggling to cope, while my husband, seemingly oblivious to my circumstances, squandered his money on various hobbies. At one time he purchased a second car, an FJ Holden, and while he tinkered in the garage with his mate Graham, I made clothes for our baby with material cut from his old clothes.

John sat with the cigarette clamped between his teeth, blowing smoke in my face. 'I need to get back to work,' he said, bringing me back to the present.

'What about Adam?' I pleaded. 'He needs his mother.'

'He'll get over it,' he said, starting up the engine. As I turned and opened the passenger door, he added, 'And don't think of going to Aunty Daphne or Uncle Stan, they want nothing to do with you.'

'Please John,' I sobbed, 'if you let me explain what really happened, you will understand why I had to go.'

He shook his head and revved the motor. As he drove away I felt as if the lifeblood was being drained from me. A truck roared past and the male passenger in the car behind whistled as the wind caught my skirt sending it flying up over my knees. I felt as putrid as the filth being kicked up from the road, with my grandmother's prophecies ringing in my ears. *You'll go onto the street and hawk your fork, just like your mother.*

Enraged that he could threaten to take my son, I made an appointment in my lunch hour to see a solicitor in Rydalmere who left me in no doubt about where I stood. As I took a seat, I glanced at the statue of the Virgin Mary on his desk, lined up next to the photographs of his children.

'Your husband can turn you out with just your clothes and, if you have one, your sewing machine,' he told me, dismissing the notion

that I had a leg to stand on when I revealed that after leaving my husband I had been living in a flat with two men – Peter Ashton, a former boyfriend who had helped me to get away, and his good mate Deanie.

In 1967 this was precisely what the law allowed when women found themselves in my position.

When Peter got home that night I told him about the meeting with the solicitor. His reaction wasn't unpredictable, although I still wasn't prepared for it. 'You've lost your son. Get over it. You can have more children.'

I flew at him, unleashing a torrent of rage. 'None of you know what I went through to keep my son. I'll never get over losing him!'

Peter took his clothes out of our wardrobe, packed his bags and left the next morning.

Living so close to Adam, and not being able to see him, was going to tear me apart and perhaps drive me to desperation. I thought about just going and taking him. John's mother wouldn't have been able to physically stop me. But take him where? With no family support or child care agencies operating at the time, at least none that I knew of, who'd look after him while I had to work? Prostitution, it seemed, would have been my only option and my son deserved a better life than that. By leaving him with his father, I reasoned, he would at least be safe. He'd be taken care of. I felt that my circumstances had come about because of mistakes I'd made and my son shouldn't have to suffer because of them. Perhaps John was right. Adam was so young; he might get over losing me.

'You can stay here,' Deanie offered, putting his arm around me as I packed my suitcase for the ninth time in less than three years. The warmth and compassion from someone showing me sympathy caused me to collapse into a blubbering mess. He held

me until I was cried out and able to catch my breath. 'It's alright, I've got another jumper,' he chuckled tenderly, wiping himself down and handing me a towel.

'Thank you Deanie, but it's killing me not being able to see Adam. It's best if I go away.'

'I'll walk you to the station,' he said, picking up my sewing machine. We didn't talk on the way. There was no need to explain anything. Deanie was now my only friend in the world and leaving him with no idea of when, or if, we'd meet again would have been painful in ordinary circumstances. On that day, however, circumstances were anything but ordinary.

'Please don't wait with me,' I told Deanie, numbly, when we reached the station. 'I'll be stronger on my own.'

As I watched him walk away he turned and waved one last time. Even at a distance I could see he was crying. Standing on Lidcombe Station, surrounded by nameless strangers, my whole life flashed before me. At seventeen I couldn't self-analyse or make any sense of the rollercoaster ride that had seen me lose my family, all hope of an education, and now my son, with the passing of only four years.

What would they tell him? I wondered. How would they explain my absence?

It took all my strength to pick up the Singer, which weighed more than my suitcase, and jostle for space on the train with standing room only. I placed the machine between my legs and with no handrail to steady myself I lurched from side to side, banging into other passengers. After a while it seemed pointless apologising. I felt numb, like someone picking over the blackened ashes of a house that had burned to the ground, searching for something to salvage. After all I'd been through, my son was the only real family that was truly mine and now he was gone. John and his family had no clue what we'd been through at the hospital.

Would they let him know what a good mother I was, and how much I loved him?

Little did I know it would be another fourteen years before I had an answer to this question.

'This bus terminates here, love,' the driver said, pulling hard on the handbrake and reaching behind his seat for a newspaper.

'Where am I?' I asked, checking to see if I still had my suitcase and the Singer. I'd been so entranced in my own thoughts I'd not paid any attention when I got to Central and had jumped on the first bus passing by.

'This is Bondi Beach,' he said, shaking his head, clearly bemused that I didn't recognise one of Australia's most famous landmarks.

As I stumbled from the bus I felt condemned, sentenced to a life without Adam. I wandered aimlessly with no idea where I was, or how I had gotten there. Perhaps I'd been subconsciously drawn to the sea where, like Prime Minister Harold Holt, I could disappear without trace.

As my head cleared I became aware of two young men walking towards me on the pedestrian crossing. One smiled shyly and whispered something to the other. His mate looked me up and down. 'Yeah, but it's a pity about the dress,' I overheard him say, with a chuckle.

His friend looked embarrassed but said nothing.

This seemed an odd comment to make. I was wearing what I thought was a nice dress. I'd made it myself and it fitted perfectly.

A short time later two girls, about my age, walked past. They too looked me up and down, before giggling behind their hands. They were wearing mini-skirts and suddenly I saw the joke. Having lived in the western suburbs most of my life, and in almost

total isolation for the past two years, I was way out of touch with the fashion trends of the cosmopolitan eastern suburbs beaches.

The aroma from the cafés along Campbell Parade reminded me that I hadn't eaten since lunchtime the day before. A black-board menu at the front of Enid's Café caught my eye: 'Tea and raisin toast \$1.00'. As I waited for my order to arrive I picked up a copy of the newspaper.

Looking at the *Sydney Morning Herald* jobs vacant advertisements, I wasn't sure what I was even qualified to do. I didn't type forty-five words per minute, and I couldn't present the Intermediate Certificate, both of which seemed to be minimum requirements for most of the clerical work going. I circled an ad for a job as a trainee at a film-processing laboratory in the city. I knew nothing about processing film, but I did have some experience working as a laboratory assistant. After I finished my meal I left the café, found a public telephone and got an appointment for an interview.

That night I slept in a cheap hotel a block back from the beach. The single bed, which sagged in the middle, was as comfortable as a collapsed banana chair, and between that and the noisy drunks stumbling up and down the stairs I hardly got a wink of sleep. The next morning I got up early enough to adjust the hem of my skirt. Even if I felt like Tess of the D'Urbervilles I didn't have to look like an outcast.

A little respect

The pungent stench of cat pee and piles of rotting waste assaulted my senses as I picked my way down a lane off Pitt Street. Once inside, the photo lab was surprisingly trendy, with black shag-pile carpet, red vinyl chairs, chrome and laminated office furniture. Framed photographs of half-starved fashion models with gaunt expressions lined the felt-covered walls. A pretty young woman seated at reception, painting her fingernails, looked up at me and smiled.

'Hello, I'm Jenny,' she shouted, trying to be heard above Aretha Franklin's big voice blaring from hidden speakers, that all she wanted was a little 'R-E-S-P-E-C-T!'

'Hello, I'm Kathy McNamara. I have an interview for the position vacant.' The name had just popped into my head. This was the beginning of my new life, a clean slate, a chance to start again; I thought I may as well have a new name.

Jenny pressed the button on the intercom.

'Robbo, the applicant for the job is here.'

‘I’ll be right there honey.’

A short, pudgy man wearing a purple paisley shirt, opened almost to the waist, gyrated to the beat of the music as he approached. He grinned, exposing a mouth full of nicotine-stained teeth. A shiver of revulsion swept over me.

‘Sock it to me! Sock it to me!’ he sang along with the tune as he danced around, looking me over as if I was a piece of livestock.

‘I’m Robbo,’ he said, ‘when can you start?’

My urge was to leave, but I needed the job.

‘Today?’ I replied, forcing a smile.

Jenny, whom I soon learned was from New Zealand, was on a working holiday with two girlfriends, Shirley and Cheryl.

‘We’re looking for someone to share our house in Bondi,’ Jenny told me later that afternoon when she saw me looking for rooms to let. I moved in that night.

Jenny, Cheryl and Shirley were from Gisborne, which sounded like an idyllic seaside village on New Zealand’s north island. They’d known each other since they were kids. Shirley and Cheryl were hairdressers, but were working as barmaids in Kings Cross. I tried not to show surprise. Barmaids were not highly regarded in those days and both Shirley and Cheryl seemed so prim and proper.

‘So, where are you from Kathy?’ Shirley asked.

I hesitated. I didn’t want anyone making a connection between me and the ghosts of my past, so I made the story up as I went along. ‘My family’s from the bush. I ran away when I was fourteen and haven’t been back,’ I said. Their eyes bulging at this reply, I couldn’t imagine how they’d react to the truth about me. I felt a deep shame, as if it was my fault in some way, that I’d lost my family and that I didn’t have an education.

After paying for my share of the rent and food and putting aside money to get to work, I had just enough left over to buy some material to make a new dress. Cut to a modest two inches

above the knee it was just long enough to conceal my stocking tops and suspenders. Pantyhose hadn’t hit the market yet and the more liberated young women were taking the lead from English fashion model, Jean Shrimpton, who’d shocked the country by appearing at the Melbourne Cup, with bare legs and no hat or gloves.

Not surprisingly, my new boss turned out to be a total sleaze. The first time he brushed up against my breasts in the darkroom I accepted that it was accidental. When it became routine it was impossible to dismiss. He’d been giving Jenny the same man-handling, grabbing her on the bum thinking it was a great joke. Jenny and I quit on the same day and went for interviews at the Chevron Hotel in Kings Cross. Barmaids needed to be at least twenty-one and I knew if they asked for proof-of-age I was sunk. I needn’t have worried; as it turned out, a pretty young woman with no experience could get a job as a barmaid with very few questions asked.

The first day in the Quarterdeck bar thirsty men, ten deep, tapped the counter with silver coins anxious to get as many schooners into themselves as they could during their lunch break. The experienced barmaids, who could pull schooners and top them up without turning off the fixed tap, attracted most of the customers and consequently most of the tips. Even after months of practice all I could manage was four at a time, yet my tip jar was always full. I suspect my youth and long black hair, which I could almost sit on, gave me an edge.

Working in a public bar was a real eye opener and the irony of my situation wasn’t lost on me. In an office job, a female could be groped and was expected to tolerate obscene language and sexual innuendo, but it was still considered a more respectable way to

earn a living than a job as a barmaid, where the customers showed us the utmost respect.

By 1969 the number of Australian soldiers who had been killed in Vietnam hit triple digits and the government was still refusing to call it a war. Baby-faced American soldiers, with spiky crew-cuts and pockets bulging with cash, poured into Kings Cross on rest and recreation leave. They were extremely polite and left enough tips in one night to equate to a week's pay. The downside of all this overpaid testosterone in uniform was the number of unmarried, pregnant girls that were left in their wake, many of whom suffered a dreadful fate in a society that promoted free love while denying unmarried women access to abortion or the contraceptive Pill. This period in Australian history stands out as producing what has become known as a 'bumper crop' of adoptions.

One night the banquet manager asked me if I'd do a shift in the ballroom. The Chevron was the first international-style hotel to open in Sydney. It was overtaking the old Trocadero as the preferred venue for shindigs organised by Sydney's high-society ladies, who got dressed to the nines and drank champagne, all in the name of raising money for children's charities.

When I arrived that evening there were more bums on seats in the ballroom than there were plates to serve them. Floor staff had to hover, ready to pounce on an empty plate, then race back to the kitchen to get it washed and ready for another meal to go out.

'I don't want that!' a woman snapped, bumping my hand as I passed behind her. The sloppy concoction of canned peaches and pink junket that I had been holding quivered and splashed over the side of the bowl, slipping silently into the vortex of her massive beehive hairdo. I froze, expecting a reaction. When she didn't flinch I realised she was wearing a wig, and discreetly kept moving.

A young man about my age, who'd been complaining all night, was getting up to leave. His table looked like a pigsty.

'Waitress,' he said, clicking his fingers in the air.

'Yes, sir,' I smiled, walking over to the table.

'Here's your tip,' he chortled, slapping a twenty cent coin into my hand.

Several of his companions laughed.

'Buy a book on table etiquette,' I said, placing the coin on the table. The laughing stopped as I abruptly turned and walked away. It would be over three decades, and in vastly different circumstances, until our paths would cross again.

Come where?

We were both clutching Joni Mitchell's debut album *Song to a Seagull* as we waited to be served at the record shop in Bondi Junction. 'Isn't she wonderful?' he said, smiling and tapping the cover of the LP. We struck up a conversation and he told me his name was Danny Frawley.

'What are you reading?' he asked, motioning to my basket, which contained a stack of books I'd just picked up from the library.

'It's a bit of an eclectic mix, Charles Dickens and some text-books on business strategy,' I said, thumping through the pile that was weighing down one arm.

'*Advanced Accounting and Business Management?*' Danny asked quizzically, running his finger along the spine of one of the books.

'I think it would be a good skill to have if I hope to succeed in business, don't you?' I smiled.

He nodded. 'Would you like a coffee?'

'Thank you,' I said, pleased that our conversation wouldn't end in the store.

'Here, let me take that for you,' he said, reaching down to help me with my basket. Over coffee we discovered that we had many interests in common. He invited me to listen to a live band at the Royal Hotel in Bondi. I told him that although I worked in a bar, it was a means to an end. I tended to steer clear of pubs after work. I didn't drink alcohol and I had no tolerance for drunken behaviour.

'Come on Kathy, Jeannie Lewis is singing, you'll like her,' he pleaded. I really liked live music and Danny was a big strapping lad whom I felt sure would stand between me and any troublemakers.

The pub was packed when we arrived. The stares from the blokes leaning against the bar seemed to strip me naked as we pushed and shoved our way through the crowd to where Danny's friends were sitting.

'Kathy, this is Jack Gazzard,' Danny said, introducing me to a mate of his, who was sitting with a woman brandishing a diamond engagement ring.

'Hello Jack,' I smiled, offering my hand.

Jack took a firm grip and his eyes bore into me as if he wanted to see right into my soul.

Once our eyes met, neither of us wanted to break the connection. Danny broke the spell. 'You can't keep her mate,' he said, nodding to Jack's hand that was still holding mine.

The next time I saw Jack was at the City versus Country rugby league match. The City team was thrashing the boys from the Country and Danny was screaming himself hoarse with excitement. 'Go the City!' Danny yelled, across the pavilion.

Jack was sitting a few rows in front of us and kept turning around trying to catch my attention whenever there was a break in the game. Even before the referee blew the whistle at half-time, Jack was on his feet and making his way over to where I was sitting.

‘Miss World,’ he said, reaching out to touch my hair. This comment appeared flippant and annoyed me. I didn’t see myself as being particularly beautiful.

‘Thank you, but you’re engaged,’ I said, rather curtly, stepping back and flicking my hair over my shoulder.

The following week the Bondi Royal football team won their final match and were celebrating at the pub. Jack was the captain of the team so I knew he’d be there. Danny didn’t have to plead this time. Jack smiled when he saw me. His fiancée was nowhere to be seen.

‘I broke off the engagement. I haven’t been able to get you out of my head,’ he said, smiling. That night he drove me home and we kissed goodnight. He asked me out to dinner the following week.

‘I’m sorry Jack, I’m going to Queensland with my girlfriends on Sunday morning,’ I said, feeling as disappointed as he looked. ‘But, we’re having a farewell party on Saturday night, if you’d like to come?’

A house party at Bondi was always a risky business. The word would go round the local pub that it was ‘on’ at a certain address and anyone carrying a guitar or grog could get in. The parties usually ended in drunken brawls. We needed to get our bond back, so our party was by invitation only, and we’d asked two giant Maoris to watch the front door and persuade gate crashers to leave. Jack arrived with his mate Richard, who was already staggering and looking for a fight. I suggested to Jack that he take Richard home. ‘I’ll come with you if you like,’ I offered.

We took Richard home and instead of going back to the party we parked at Bondi Beach. The full moon lit up the water like a cosmic spotlight.

‘You’re so beautiful,’ Jack said, pulling me across the bench seat of his FJ Holden.

‘Everyone looks beautiful in the moonlight,’ I said, snuggling into his arms. This was the first affection I’d had in a while and I struggled to hold in my emotions as I recalled the last time I’d felt Adam’s small arms around me. On the last day we’d spent together I had been sobbing and Adam had pressed his soft face against mine, his tiny lips quivering, ‘Mum Mum’, as he stroked my hair.

‘I don’t want you to go,’ Jack said, burying his face in my neck and sucking in a deep breath. ‘You smell so good.’

‘I have to Jack. It’s all arranged and besides, after today I have nowhere to live.’

Jack got a travel rug from his car and we lay on the beach until dawn. I wasn’t popular when I got back to the house, but passionate kisses and watching the sun rise with Jack was worth the cold stares from the girls who were in the yard bagging piles of bottles and tinnies and looking the worse for wear. Cheryl had a shiner; she’d stepped between two drunks going at each other. Inside, the house looked like a tsunami had swept through it. *There goes our bond*, I thought, picking up broken glasses and cigarettes that had been stubbed out on the carpet.

Everything I owned still fitted into one suitcase, with room to spare, but the other girls had twelve pieces of luggage between them, which didn’t improve the grumpy disposition of the coach driver taking us to Queensland. Four barmaids, three with funny accents, arriving in a country town expecting to find work at the local pub was an ill-conceived plan. Standing by the side of the road with thirteen suitcases and a sewing machine, trying to hitch a ride south must have amused the locals no end. We got lucky when a transport truck heading to Sydney gave us a lift. When he realised that none of us was going to put out for the ride he dumped us just outside Surfers Paradise. We hung around there

for a few months, but work was spasmodic, and we all agreed to head back to Sydney. We got our jobs back at the Chevron just in time to watch the first moon landing on the 17-inch black-and-white television above the bar. A cheer went up as Neil Armstrong took a giant leap for mankind. I was cleaning the bar when Jack walked in.

'Hello Jack. It's nice to see you. I'm sorry, but the bar's closed,' I said, trying to sound casual.

'I haven't come for a drink. Richard and I have been to every bar in Sydney trying to find you,' he said, pushing a mop of hair back from his forehead.

Jack drove me home that night, and every night after that. Upon our return to Sydney the girls and I had rented a house and as I was sharing a room with Jenny, intimacy with Jack wasn't possible. After a couple of weeks he was getting frustrated and hinted that we get into the back of his car one night. I bridled at the suggestion.

'I'm sorry, you're right. Would you like to go away for a weekend? The Newport Arms has a good restaurant with a sunset over the water.'

We got to the Newport Arms in the afternoon. It was still a bit cold for a swim for my liking, but the day was warm so we lay around the pool reading until it was time to get dressed for dinner. This was the first time Jack had seen me without clothes on. He was wearing his swimmers and I tried not to be obvious as I checked him out. Jack used to run and work out every day. Where his fitness was concerned he was borderline obsessive, I just wished he didn't smoke. But in those days it seemed that everyone but me smoked and I had to suffer in silence.

I sat between his legs with my hair pulled over my shoulders, shivering with pleasure as Jack's hands massaged my back and neck. Wearing only his thin Speedos I could feel his erection pushing

against the cheeks of my bum. Suddenly he jumped up and dived into the icy cold pool.

'It's not too bad,' he said, when he surfaced.

'Enjoy your swim,' I laughed. 'I'm going to take a hot shower.'

At dinner Jack pulled out my chair and I was trying to act grown up as the waiter handed us menus.

'What would you like?' Jack asked.

There was nothing on the menu that I even recognised.

'Lobster mornay, thank you,' I said, taking a punt and hoping it would be like eating a giant prawn.

'Good choice,' he said. 'I'll have the same.'

When the lobster arrived, in its shell, topped with a bubbling cheesy concoction, I kept my cool and followed Jack's lead. He ordered wine and I tried not to screw my face up at the bitter taste. After dinner we moved across to the comfortable lounge chairs by the window while Jack had a cigarette. It was too dark to see across Pittwater, but the luxury boats rocking hypnotically on the marina of the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club gave a feeling of being at an exotic holiday destination, light-years away from the world I grew up in.

'Would you like a coffee and liqueur?'

'Yes, thank you,' I said. I'd never had a liqueur in my life, but thought it was time I became a bit more adventurous.

'Tia Maria, with cream, is that alright?' Jack asked, motioning to the waiter.

I nodded politely, hoping I looked more worldly than I felt.

Two tiny glasses, barely a mouthful, arrived with a thin layer of cream floating on the top. *Do I drink it in one go? Or sip it?* I wondered. We chinked glasses and Jack took a sip.

'I could learn to like that,' I said, with an urge to tilt the glass right back to savour the last drop.

'Good, I'll get you another one.'

After the second glass of liqueur, on top of two glasses of wine, my face felt flushed and the dread I'd been feeling about what was to follow, lessened. Perhaps that was Jack's intention.

Wanting this night to be special I'd splurged almost a week's pay on a white lace and chiffon negligee set. It looked nice, but I had no idea what feeling sexy was all about, I just wanted to get it over with.

'Am I hurting you?'

'No,' I smiled, and for the next few minutes I thought, *please hurry up.*

As Jack rolled off me he asked, 'Did you cum?'

Come where? I had no idea what he meant.

'Yes,' I said, hoping that would be the right answer.

Jack lit a cigarette. With his free hand he ran a finger along my profile. 'God, Kathy, you're so beautiful. I love you so much,' he said.

'Jack, my name is Kay,' I said, feeling rather stupid that we'd just made love and I hadn't told him my real name.

Jack and I hadn't discussed contraception and I was never more pleased to see my period. I made an appointment with a general practitioner at Bondi Beach, who was well known for dispensing prescriptions for the Pill without asking too many questions. Some Catholic doctors wouldn't prescribe the Pill but this man was a flamboyantly homosexual Jewish doctor, who chain-smoked, fainted at the sight of blood and drove a convertible Rolls Royce, all without having to pull on a rubber glove. I had to wait for my period to finish before I could start taking the Pill, and then allow fourteen days before having sex. Meanwhile, I tried to get Jack to wear a condom. 'That's like taking a shower in a plastic raincoat,' he laughed.

It's time

Jack was still living at home, and probably because I refused to have sex in the car, he suggested that we get a flat together, splitting everything fifty-fifty. We found a nice unfurnished flat above a supermarket on Bondi Road. The outgoing tenants wanted to sell all of their furniture, including a teak stereo record player. I did the haggling and we bought the lot for under \$100.

The domestic arrangements for men and women living together seemed to be set in stone. Jack made himself scarce while I did all the housework – cooking, washing and ironing – and tried not to turn into a nag to get him to remember to take out the garbage. I considered myself fortunate that Jack didn't leave the bathroom looking like a cat had been shaved in the hand basin and picked his clothes up from the floor and put them into the laundry basket.

Jack never enquired about any of my previous relationships. There wasn't much to tell. Even though I'd been married and had a child I remained as naive as anyone could be about sex. Any notion that I would derive any pleasure from the act was far from

my thinking. One afternoon we made love on the lounge-room floor, in broad daylight, which was daring for me. Jack knew I was shy and blushed easily.

‘Say “fuck”,’ he teased, smiling down at me.

‘Jack, stop it. I can’t say that word.’

‘Well say “cunt”,’ he said, with a wicked laugh.

‘Jack!’ I slapped his chest. ‘Stop that. I *can’t* say those words.’

‘She’s a strange woman, my mother,’ Jack commented, as we drove over to Bronte for me to meet his mother for the first time.

Mrs Gazzard was a Catholic and Jack said she wasn’t impressed that we were living in sin. Most of Jack’s friends were Catholic and looked down their noses at Jack and me living together without being married, while they had sex in the back of their boyfriends’ cars. Every now and then one of the girls from our group of friends would disappear to ‘visit an aunt in the country’. It was an expression I knew all too well. I didn’t want anyone preaching good old Christian values to me.

Jack’s parents had only recently separated after thirty years of what Jack claimed was a loveless marriage. He was their only child. His mother was the deputy matron at Waverley Hospital and she was the model of lickety-split efficiency. Numerous school portraits of Jack, a Waverley College Old Boy, and holy pictures of the Sacred Heart lined the walls. Statues of Our Lady and St Anthony shared shelf space with porcelain dogs, miniature shoes and Toby jugs of all shapes and sizes.

‘So, Kay, where are you from?’ Mrs Gazzard started her grilling as she placed covers onto the lounge before we sat down.

‘My family are from Nyngan, but we also lived in Parramatta,’ I replied.

‘Oh,’ she said, pulling her mouth into a disapproving pout,

making me glad that I hadn’t mentioned Herne Bay, the hostel where immigrants, displaced persons and Aboriginal families like mine went when they had to wait for government-assisted housing.

Throughout the meal Mrs Gazzard watched me like a hawk. I was grateful for Auntie Daphne, who’d been a stickler for good table manners. ‘People will judge you by the way you behave at the table,’ she’d warned, showing me how to break, rather than cut, a bread roll.

After the meal I helped with the dishes while Jack packed some personal things from his room. Mrs Gazzard continued her interrogation and seemed to relax once it was established that I was Catholic. Her acceptance of me was sealed when I told her I’d made the outfit I was wearing.

In spite of Jack’s dire warnings with regard to his mother, I sensed that behind the exaggerated attention to social graces, beat the warm heart of a mother who adored her son. ‘Thank you for a lovely meal Mrs Gazzard,’ I said, as she walked us to the car.

‘Please call me Peggy,’ she said, leaning forward to kiss my cheek.

‘Well you were a big hit, she’s never done that before!’ Jack chuckled as we were driving away.

‘She wasn’t so bad,’ I said, ‘she does love you, you know.’

‘She’s got a funny way of showing it.’

Jack’s mother kissed him and called him ‘Pon’, which she explained was short for Johnnie Pon, a nickname she’d given to him when he was a baby. His bedroom was immaculate and there wasn’t a speck of dust on his football trophies. She’d cooked us a wonderful meal and slipped an envelope containing some cash into his hand as we were leaving. I wondered what Jack was expecting from his mother. This was evidence of affection I couldn’t even relate to.

As I got to know Peggy I could see that she had a very complex personality. She was agoraphobic, xenophobic and more superstitious than my grandmother, which I wouldn't have thought possible. She had a bogeyman for every occasion and opening her front door was like trying to break into the Royal Mint. Surprisingly, one thing she loved to do was swim, and on her days off she took a dip at Bronte Beach.

'So you're not concerned about sharks?'

'I swim in the bogey hole, sharks don't get in there,' she said.

When we dropped Peggy home after a swim one day I asked Jack where his Aboriginal connection came from.

'We don't have any boong blood as far as I know,' he said. 'Mum's often made cracks about her black gin legs, but always said she had Irish heritage.'

Jack wasn't racist; his language was just typical of the insensitivity and ignorance with regard to Aboriginal people at that time, and it wasn't unusual for people of Peggy's era to conceal their Aboriginal heritage if they could get away with it.

'I've sold the car,' Jack announced, walking through the door carrying a motorcycle helmet. As Jack only had a learner's permit and couldn't take a pillion passenger I decided to get a motorcycle of my own. Not since the day that I got my first bicycle had I experienced the exhilaration and independence that I felt riding away on my brand new Honda 125. Pretty soon most of our friends, including Danny, had motorcycles and we'd get away on trail rides along the back roads of Wisemans Ferry. In those days it was unusual to see a female with her own bike. People would gawk in amazement when I pulled off my helmet, shook out my hair and unzipped my leather jacket, exposing an 'It's Time' t-shirt, worn without a bra, in support of the election of Gough Whitlam. The dashing leader of the Labor

Party would soon put an end to twenty-three years of conservative government; the impending election was to be the first time I would vote, following the 1967 Referendum that gave Aboriginal people across Australia the right to vote. For me it also represented a personal power that no one could deny me, and I took it very seriously.

Life with Jack had evolved into a comfortable routine. We never squabbled over money or argued about trivialities. He taught me to play chess and it was a challenge to beat him at Scrabble. We shared similar views with regard to politics and human rights, and we both loved books, art, animals, music, political satire and Edna Everage, whom Jack reckoned was a send-up of his own mother. And it was true; the genius of Barry Humphries was that he captured a little piece of every Australian suburban housewife, including my own grandmother who had a penchant for plastic gladioli and 'manners' on the street.

Underscoring this outwardly blissful existence was an inner turmoil, which kept me on tenterhooks, inhibiting me from going to certain places for fear I might meet someone from my past. I was pleased that Jack had no interest in the Royal Easter Show or motor sports, where I'd have more of a chance of bumping into someone who knew me.

It was a Sunday in July 1973 when my two lives intersected irretrievably. Outside the wind was howling and the rain pelted down, drowning out the record player. It was a good day to be indoors reading the newspapers. An article caught my eye. It wasn't headline news, nor was it bad news, but it had a profound impact on me. The Whitlam government had introduced the Supporting Mother's Benefit. Prior to this announcement it was the absence of financial support that facilitated thousands of babies born to unmarried mothers being surrendered for adoption.

Suddenly I was overcome with thoughts of how different my life, and that of my son, would have been if this support had been available when we needed it. A flood of scalding tears rolled down my face, dropping from my chin onto the newspaper, causing the ink to run down the page. Jack was absorbed in his book and didn't notice. I went to the bathroom and when I came back he looked up and out of the blue asked, 'What would you say to us having a baby?'

We'd been together about four years by this time and hadn't even discussed getting married, much less having a child.

'Jack, we aren't married.'

He laughed out loud. 'What's being married got to do with anything?'

This was the day I had been dreading, when I'd finally have to come clean and tell Jack the truth.

'Jack, there's something I have to tell you,' I said nervously, taking his hand.

'You've had a baby who died. Yes, you've told me,' he said.

'No Jack, I have a son, Adam. He's seven years old and lives with his father,' I could feel my bottom lip quivering. I hadn't talked about Adam with anyone in my new life.

Jack sat, expressionless, as I told him the story. He stared at me for a long time before he spoke.

'I don't want another man's child. I want you to have my children. You lost your son, now move on.'

'This isn't just another man's child,' I was almost shouting. 'Adam is my son. I'll never move on without him. I'll never have another child until we've been reunited!' I picked up my helmet and keys and without stopping to get into my wet-weather gear I stumbled out the door and rode down to North Bondi. I parked on the headland overlooking the Little Mermaid, a bronze sculpture sitting on the rocks off the point. I faced off against the blustering southerly, as

an icy tempest of salt spray, wind and pelting rain hammered down on me like a thousand sharp knives cutting me to the bone. White-capped waves rose high into the air before crashing down on the Little Mermaid. I felt a strange empathy with that lone figure taking a pounding from the elements, but standing her ground, refusing to be dragged from the rocks into the raging sea.

'Adam!' I cried, a desperate chant swallowed by the wind. I needed to say my son's name out loud, to hang onto him in any way I could.

The moment Jack suggested that I forget my son and move on, I knew our relationship was over. Yet I couldn't bring myself to leave immediately. I was hoping that when he had time to process the situation he would change his mind. He didn't. The push I needed came a few months later when Jack's mate, Bruce Cornwell, moved into our flat. One day Bruce brought his girlfriend back to the flat. She had a vaguely familiar face. He introduced her as Carol, but as we got talking I came to know that Carol's stage name was Carlotta, the hostess of the famous Les Girls' all-male revue at Kings Cross. One of my best friends growing up was a male called Ray, who liked me calling him Rhonda. We used to dress up and sing Judy Garland songs. The boys in our area treated him pretty rough, and he took some savage beatings. Talking with Carol I realised how brave she was to live her life honestly in a society that still upheld laws against sodomy, and where poofster bashing was considered a sport.

More and more our flat became the party venue, where I worked to prepare enough food and make the place nice, only to have everyone get drunk, or stoned, and leave me to clean up the mess. To top it off, Jack and Bruce started going out through the week and not inviting me. Jack always came back stoned. He'd started to let himself go. He gained weight and grew a scraggly beard that

reeked of a sickly mix of tobacco and marijuana. His hair, parted in the middle, fell to his shoulders. I woke up one morning and realised I was living with a bloated, hairy, dope-smoking hippy who never remembered to take out the garbage.

'Here, buy yourself something nice,' Jack said one night, pushing a wad of cash across the table. At a glance I could see the bundle contained mostly fifty dollar notes, which had only recently gone into circulation and had a distinctive colour.

'Where did this money come from?' I asked.

'Don't be like that. It wasn't stolen. We've been selling weed in the wine bars,' he said casually, as if living with a drug pusher was something that I shouldn't be concerned about.

'Jack, this has to stop or I am out of here,' I said, before going to bed.

It didn't stop. Jack was hooked in more ways than one.

Riding a motorcycle meant I couldn't take everything with me when I moved out, and I had to make several trips back to the flat. On my last trip back to pick up my sewing machine Jack looked sheepish when he answered the door.

'Do you have another woman here already?'

'Of course not,' he said standing aside to let me in.

Bruce Cornwell and two rough-looking characters I'd never seen before were standing around the dining table. Pretending not to notice the white powder in plastic bags and a set of scales, I picked up the sewing machine and left without a word. Jack followed me down the stairs.

'Kay, please come back, I love you,' he said, reaching out for my arm.

'Do you think I didn't see what's going on up there?' I said, pulling away and strapping the machine onto the luggage rack of my bike. I caught a glimpse of him in the rear-view mirror as I rode away.

Dressed to impress

My leaving Jack coincided with Danny wanting to move out of home. We decided to find a place together and settled on a nice house in Bronte. When I arrived home from work one evening three motorcycles were parked in the driveway. One Husqvana was Danny's and the Kawasaki belonged to Myles Stivano. The other bike, a brand spanking new Huskie, I'd never seen before. The laughter, and the smell, was coming from the kitchen. Danny and Myles were sitting on the floor giggling like schoolgirls. This was how they introduced me to Noel Christensen. Between them, they'd blackened every pot and pan and splattered spaghetti sauce up the walls and over the venetian blind, but still hadn't managed to make something to eat.

'Katie, cook us some dinner, we're starving,' Danny badgered, with the stupefied grin of someone who'd just smoked a joint.

After I knocked them up a simple meal I started to clean up the mess. Our landlord lived downstairs and was always popping in unannounced. He was a fastidious man who'd probably have freaked out to had he seen the state of the kitchen.

‘Man, that was sensational,’ Myles said, wiping his plate clean.

‘She’s a great cook,’ Danny said.

‘Yeah, just like my Aunty Flo,’ Noel chimed in.

The nickname stuck. It was shortened to Flo, but Danny and Noel never called me anything else after that. To Myles I remained ‘The Princess’.

‘Myles Carson Stivano, that’s a pretty fancy name for a black-fella. Where’s your mob?’ I asked.

‘My mob? Oh no, I don’t have a mob,’ Myles said, with a nervous laugh. ‘See that?’ he went on, pushing up his sleeve, ‘white skin, like my arse.’

‘Thousands might believe you Myles,’ I teased.

We’d been living at Bronte a few months when an old school mate of Jack Gazzard, with close connections to the local police, called to ask if I knew where Jack and Bruce were. ‘If you see Jack, tell him to get going. The cops are looking for him.’ I didn’t have Jack’s phone number, but I found out where he was living and passed on the message. Many years later I read that Bruce ‘Snapper’ Cornwell went on to become the largest importer of heroin in Australia. He was convicted and sentenced to twenty-four years in prison.

I maintained my friendship with Jack’s mother, Peggy, and although she must have been broken-hearted when Jack just disappeared and didn’t even bother to say goodbye, she never spoke of it. I had more empathy for her loss than I could afford to express.

She called me at work one day to tell me that her mother had passed away. It was the first funeral I’d ever been to, and remains one of the saddest, with only me, Peggy and her sister at the graveside. They stood apart as Peggy quietly cried. I put my arm around her and tried to imagine what it must feel like to have had a loving

mother and to watch her coffin being lowered into the ground. It’s a pain I was spared, but strangely, I envied it.

Myles Stivano had recently become engaged. His fiancée’s sister, Christine, was looking to share a house. Danny and I had a chat with her, and agreed that we’d find a bigger house to accommodate the three of us. We found a four-bedroom place in Rose Bay. The parties were endless and Christine and I were always left to clean up afterwards. Danny and I clashed over this and I told him I wanted to break the lease. We had to go to a solicitor to sort out the details, and when the paperwork was completed, Danny pushed past me and left without a word.

To lose Danny’s friendship was devastating. I remained friends with Christine, Myles and Noel. I’d affectionately dubbed them and others in the gang the Lavender Hill Mob – not unlike the characters of the British film by the same name – but even so, after the fall-out with Danny I felt that I needed to get away for a while.

I’d quit bar work a few years before and was working as a book-keeper with a freight forwarding company in the city. I was almost going out of my mind with boredom. A friend had recently gone to work as the bar manager at a pub in Coffs Harbour. He said their books were in a dreadful mess and asked if I would come up and sort them out. The job was asking for more practical experience than I had at the time, but I’d continued to study through the library and had gained a theoretical understanding of advanced accounting. The job in Coffs would give me an opportunity to put the theory into practice. It took about three months to straighten out the books, but when they offered me a permanent job I declined. Instead, I moved back to Sydney and found a flat in Centennial Park.

By this time I was twenty-four years old and still trying to get a foothold on an opportunity to develop a career. My motivation was not about money or status for its own sake, I was driven by the need to make something of myself. I was determined to become someone my son would be proud of when we were finally reunited. If we had to be separated, I wanted to make sure some good came out of it.

Scanning the positions vacant advertisements in the *Sydney Morning Herald* was a ritual. Formal Wear Hire Service was advertising again for an assistant to the accountant. They were looking for a man, but I didn't let that stand in my way. I'd applied for the same job about a year earlier but was unsuccessful and I think I knew why. Females were expected to wear dresses, stockings and carry handbags, whereas I had worn slacks, a leather jacket and carried a motorcycle helmet into my interview. This was too liberated at the time, even for a trendy company like Formal Wear that was at the cutting edge of hiring the suits and gowns for weddings and other formal occasions. They'd recently won a prestigious marketing award and with a network of retail outlets Australia-wide, I felt that the company may have the career prospects I was seeking.

'Hello, I'm Ross, darling,' the receptionist introduced himself after replacing the receiver. Ross had the most engaging blue eyes and a mass of golden curls framing his face, reminiscent of an Italian Renaissance painting. It was unusual for a male to be handling reception duties in 1974 but Formal Wear Hire Service was an unusual company. For starters, it was owned and operated by a woman.

'Hello Ross, darling, I'm here for an interview.'

The company's general manager, Oliver Whitehouse, was

just as I remembered him but after my makeover I bore little resemblance to the person he'd interviewed previously. The long black hair had been left on the cutting-room floor; a set of falsies concealed the badly chewed fingernails. The slacks, leather jacket and helmet were replaced with a smart outfit from Maria Finlay's Double Bay boutique, teamed with a pair of Pierre Cardin shoes and matching handbag. I'd cleaned out my bank account to get this job.

When I arrived for my interview, Oliver was taking a phone call and motioned for me to take a seat. His body groaned with effort as he reached across the desk to retrieve a small pair of scissors from an onyx ashtray to snip the end of his cigar.

'Yes, yes,' he spoke to the caller, not shifting his eyes from me.

Oliver's head looked like a jack-o'-lantern plonked onto the shoulders of his massive frame, flattening any neck he may have had. Thick rippling waves of oiled, silver hair glinted like a corrugated iron roof in the bright sunlight streaming through the window. Furrowed lines of concentration ran in parallel tracks across his wide brow, and laugh lines around his mouth and eyes indicated he was a deep thinker with a robust sense of humour. The food stains on his necktie, draped over a wide girth, suggested a man who liked his tucker. After he finished the call he perused my resume. I felt myself blushing, fearing that he'd seen through the disguise.

'What makes you think you can do a man's job?'

That was a relief and a question I'd anticipated.

'Mr Whitehouse, as I understand it, the job is for an assistant to the accountant. There's no heavy lifting involved so I don't see how any man could do a better job than I could, just because he's a man.'

Grinning, with the cigar clamped between his teeth, he pressed the intercom on his desk.

‘Peggy, I have someone I’d like you to see,’ he said. Things were looking up. Last time I hadn’t been invited to see Mrs Levy, the company’s founder and CEO.

Mrs Levy’s office didn’t have a desk; it was more like a sitting room. Several comfortable chairs were placed around an ornate coffee table, stacked with fashion magazines and a vase of fresh flowers.

Mrs Levy checked me over from head to toe. After a few perfunctory questions she offered me the job. Perhaps she appreciated my audacity to apply for a position that advertised for a male, or maybe the Norma Tullo suit worked in my favour.

‘Hello, I am Rebecca, darling,’ an exquisite redhead in a figure-hugging dress greeted me when I arrived for work on my first day. The eyes gave him away. No two people would have eyes like that. The transformation from Ross to Rebecca was otherwise seamless.

I reported to Oliver Whitehouse and he spent some time with me going over the company’s recent history. He also told me that Mrs Levy’s husband, Warwick, had cancer and didn’t have long to live. Although Mr Levy didn’t play an active part in the company, he came to the office when he could and was always in good spirits.

Mrs Levy seemed to surround herself with homosexual men, whom she called her ‘boys’ and whom she treated like children. Unfortunately, some of the boys took advantage of her trust. I’d only been with the company a few months when I discovered that the invoices from the dry-cleaning service exceeded the sales dockets from the stores. This meant that more suits, or bridal gowns, were being hired each week than were showing in the sales figures. From what I could see, it involved a number of branches. I told my boss, the accountant, about these discrepancies.

Early next morning Mrs Levy’s booming voice echoed off the

rafters of the converted warehouse offices. ‘Get out of my sight, you fucking idiot! You’re fired!’

My boss had made the mistake of mentioning my findings to Mrs Levy, also taking the credit. Perhaps he’d expected her to be pleased to know that the people she loved and trusted were robbing her blind; this information would have broken her heart.

It was very disconcerting to see a grown man cry as my manager packed his bag to leave. I was promoted to his position, which I thought was a great joke when I realised that anyone with advanced bookkeeping skills could do the job that came with an executive salary and a company car.

Dealing with threatening letters and harassing phone calls from creditors soon consumed much of my day. I’d only been in the new job a week when it became clear that the company was in trouble, the biggest unpaid creditor being the Australian Taxation Office. Even a total revamp and weeding out the thieves may not save it. It was annoying that I’d been given this appointment when the senior management must have been aware of the situation, but I played Mrs Levy’s game, each morning presenting her with the sales figures bound in the suede leather journals.

Meanwhile, I quietly scouted around for another job. I felt a bit guilty about this as I’d recently poached Vicki, the marketing manager’s secretary. Vicki had been with the company for a week before we actually got to speak. We met in the ladies room one morning and she told me she liked working with Formal Wear but didn’t have enough to do. She had previously been a court stenographer, took shorthand verbatim and typed 120 words per minute. Her boss, Chris, just wanted a pretty face sitting outside his office to make him cups of coffee and fetch his lunch. When I told Oliver that we’d lose this brilliant young woman if we didn’t give her more work, he gave me the go-ahead to let Chris know that he was losing his tea lady.

‘Peggy won’t stand for this!’ Chris said, storming off. That was the last I saw of him.

Vicki and I hit it off from the outset. She wanted to relocate to the eastern suburbs and we decided to find a house to share. We found a delightful colonial sandstone cottage in Bondi. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. Two mature women living together is pretty easygoing after living with men. Women understand why we put the toilet lid down and no one has to nag about the garbage going out. Vicki and I never had a problem keeping our working relationship separate from our friendship, but as her friend I felt obliged to level with her.

‘There isn’t a great future for anyone at Formal Wear. If a good job comes your way, I’d take it if I were you.’

‘I’ll stay as long as you need me,’ Vicki said, loyally squeezing my hand.

One morning I was going through the job ads in the *Sydney Morning Herald* when Oliver called me into his office.

Here it comes, I thought, the gig’s up.

‘Please take a seat, Kath.’

He took a deep drag on a cigar and tilted his head back, sending billowing clouds of smoke into the air. He didn’t seem to be in any hurry to put me out of my misery.

‘I’d like to recommend you for the position of National Sales and Marketing Manager,’ he said, finally.

This offer of a promotion, although flattering, was the last thing I was expecting. There didn’t seem to be any point beating around the bush. ‘Oliver, I am very pleased that you have this confidence in me, but I have to ask, why are you offering a promotion when the company may not exist long enough to get my name onto the business cards?’

When Oliver laughed all of him had a good time. Cigar ash went everywhere as he tried to regain his composure. ‘That’s

what I like about you – you see through the bullshit and cut right to the chase,’ he said, sweeping the ash from the desk with his hand. Then he leaned forward, whispering, ‘I have a plan,’ before leaning back and taking another drag on his cigar. It was going to take something very innovative to salvage the company which, from what I could assess, was already insolvent. He went on to explain the concept of franchising to me, an idea imported from the United States. While multinationals such as McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken had started a trend, it was yet to take hold in Australia.

‘Before I put you forward for a promotion I’d like to send your personal details to a man called Haigwood Masters,’ Oliver went on. ‘He’ll be able to tell me if my instincts about you are accurate.’

‘What kind of personal information do you require?’ I asked, suspiciously.

‘This may sound strange, but I need two photographs – one in profile and one of your face – and three samples of your handwriting.’

If Oliver had a plan to save the business and needed me to pull it off, I was in. I agreed to have my photograph and handwriting sent to Haigwood Masters for an assessment. *After all, what could anyone learn about me from a photograph and some handwriting?*

I called my friend Noel Christensen, who took the photographs at his office on Bronte Road.