

2023.2

JOHN I COBY

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NOTE

2023.2 is the novel sequel to 2023.

That is why it begins with chapter thirty-one.

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Chapter Thirty-One

SLATER

1

It was late afternoon on *Wednesday, April 20, 2005*. The day had been stinking hot without a cloud in the sky. The light south wind that blew perfectly offshore across the five points of the long peninsula that is Noosa Heads had done little to cool things down. The temperature of the crystal-clear water, a bath-like twenty-five degrees, which was normal for that time of year, only made everything seem more perfect, more like it was all designed like that, like it was all meant to be for the surfers that were there.

Slater felt the overwhelming urge to leave the water. He looked around and saw that it was affecting everyone because everyone was paddling for shore and walking back to Teatree. He felt the powerful intrusion into his mind ... *'I've had enough ... I want to leave ... NOW!'* But the surf was perfect. Epic, eight-foot barrels peeled off all the way to the beach, which was some six-hundred yards away. This was no time to be leaving the water, this was a time to stay, but the compulsion was very strong, too strong, *'too strong for everyone else, that is.'*

He immediately discerned what was happening to him. He recognised it because he could do the same thing to others, just not with nearly as much *'industrial strength'*. He could control someone's behaviour with his mind if he wanted to. He had been able to do it for as long as he could remember, since he was a little kid. And as he became older, the technique refined itself and he became better at it, *'but nothing quite as dominating as this.'*

Slater felt that he could resist the foreign compulsion to leave if he chose to. He knew that he had that ability. But he was curious, inquisitive, *'what the hell is all this about?'* So, he went along with it and paddled out of the water. He climbed up the steep cliff to the walking track and followed the rest of the *'zombies'* towards Teatree Bay. He felt the impulse flush through him repeatedly, *'keep walking, don't look back ... keep walking, don't look back ... keep walking, don't look back.'* When he arrived at a spot along the track where there was some low scrub growing on the edge of the cliff, and from where he could get a clear view of Granite Bay in its totality, he slipped off the track and hid himself and his surfboard within the bushes. From there he observed the most astonishing event unfold, the most incredible thing that he had ever seen in his life.

The last rays of the setting sun had just shed their mystic glow across the water. The western sky lit up like it had caught fire. Spread out below him was Granite Bay, all painted in rich oranges and purples. The surface of the ocean undulated with line after line of clean, eight-foot swells that receded towards the horizon like liquid corduroy.

Slater crouched hidden from view and waited for something to happen. There was no one anywhere. He wondered if this was going to end in some type of big anticlimax.

'Maybe I'm having myself on,' he thought.

Then he noticed him, the solitary surfer left in the bay. He saw him plainly, and even though the surfer was at least two-hundred yards away, standing on the small beach that was semi-hidden nestled amongst large, granite boulders, half way out along the point, Slater recognised him immediately. It was Adam, his old, retired, surfer friend-in-the-water. He liked Adam, he liked him a lot and he loved sharing a surf session with him. Adam was one of the older surfers out there, *'but he carved'*. Like Slater, Adam never missed a good day at Granite.

It seemed that Adam hadn't been affected by the foreign compulsion. Slater's brain made some rapid deductions.

'The old bastard is either the same as me, or he isn't being targeted by the compulsion. My guess is the latter, which means all this is about him. Wow, this is getting really interesting.'

He compressed himself into an even tighter ball and pulled his board closer to himself trying to make sure that he was as totally hidden as possible. He then actively silenced his brain. He felt, instinctively, that whoever was setting up this scenario might very well be able to locate him simply by hearing his thoughts. So, he silenced them as best as he could and observed.

He watched Adam, who was standing next to his surfboard, take a drink from his water bottle. Slater then noticed him gaze out to sea and hold that focus. He looked out in that direction and spotted the thing that was grabbing all of Adam's attention. It was a very bright star, just above the horizon. His eyes shifted from the star to Adam, then back to the star, which seemed to have moved sideways, then back to Adam, who was still locked onto the star. Then everything started to happen. That star was no star and after a very short while it was no aeroplane either. Slater felt his heartbeat speed up and thump away inside his chest. He controlled his thoughts though.

The bright object approached Granite Bay in a snaking pattern, moving from side to side, about fifty feet above the water. As it got to within about a mile from shore it dimmed itself and shone with a softer, warmer light. Slater noticed how it lit the tops of the swells as it approached. He noticed how Adam just stood there frozen like a statue, like he was hypnotised, and watched the craft as it parked itself right in front of him, hovering no more than a few feet above the water. It was almond disk shaped, made of some kind of polished silver metal and it made no sound whatsoever. A portion of it was over the sand. Slater estimated it to be about sixty feet in diameter. He observed how a panel opened beneath the craft and lowered as a ramp until it nearly, but not quite, touched the edge of the beach, no more than ten feet in front of Adam.

Slater's eyeballs were literally popping out of their sockets. He was peaking with excitement. It took every ounce of self-discipline for him to keep his brain from exploding into an avalanche of thoughts. He couldn't believe what he was witnessing. He had never seen anything like this before.

He saw a man walk down the ramp and hop onto the dry sand of the beach. He watched the man and Adam stand face to face to each other. They appeared to have a short conversation, then, as unbelievable as it seemed, they hugged each other for a surprisingly long time.

After all the hugging, Slater watched Adam pick up his surfboard and carry it into the spaceship following behind the spaceman. After a couple of minutes, the ramp pulled up and the panel closed. The ship then slowly rose vertically into the air, not making a sound, becoming brighter and brighter the higher it got. When it reached an altitude of about a thousand feet, Slater suddenly, clearly heard a laughing voice inside his head.

'Ha ha ha, I know you are there, Slater.'

Shocked and surprised, he then heard the voice recite a short verse.

'Secrets you, secrets me

Secrets honour, secrets be'

As he watched the spaceship, it shot off at a near-vertical angle and disappeared into the twilight at what to him seemed like thousands of miles per hour.

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Chapter Thirty-Two

THE ACID QUEEN

1

After what seemed like forever, Slater's head finally bobbed up behind the broken National Park wave.

'Are you all right?' asked the American-accented female voice.

Slater turned towards the pretty, young girl paddling her surfboard past him and replied,

'Yes, thank you, it was quite painless.'

'You certainly got worked over that time, didn't you?'

'I sure did. I thought that I was never going to make it up for air.'

'Yeah, you were under for ages.'

'Have you ever seen National this good?' he asked her.

'Not really, but that's because I'm not from around here. It's certainly an insane day, though.'

As Slater started his paddle for Boiling Pot, he said,

'Hey, thanks for caring.'

She replied, 'Don't mention it.'

As he powered away from her, he thought to himself,

'Wow, what a fox!'

When he was out of earshot, she whispered in a hushed voice that only she could hear,

'I hope I'll see you tomorrow?'

'I hope so too,' he replied in thought.

2

Slater was an only child. He was born in Noosa Heads on *January 1, 1991*. His father, Rhett, a keen surfer, moved up to Noosa from the far south coast of New South Wales with his parents after a surfing trip to Queensland back in '89. It was on that trip that he met, fell in love with and subsequently married Aina, Slater's ravishing, Japanese mother who was the daughter of parents that survived the nuclear blast on Hiroshima. Unbeknownst to anyone on the planet, the nuclear holocaust triggered a tsunami of genetic mutations amongst the surviving Japanese population.

Slater left school when he was fifteen, not because he was stupid, but because he was the victim of a series of tragic events. Firstly, his grandparents on his mother's side suddenly died back in Japan. Some said that the nuke hastened their deaths, but nothing could be proven. Then, on the same day that the World Trade Centre towers came down, Slater's mum, dad and his grandfather, while driving, were hit by an oncoming semi-trailer whose driver was distracted by a bee that flew in through the driver's-side window and stung him on the neck. Their bodies were crushed beyond recognition after all eighteen wheels of the heavy semi rolled right over their car, converting it into a steel pancake. All *that* happened before Slater was even a teenager. He ended up living with his grandmother, Lucy, who remained his sole, surviving relative.

School for Slater was a strange affair. His teachers just couldn't work out how he knew everything. He always passed all his exams with 100 percent despite the fact that no one ever saw him study. He didn't need to because he was either a one-in-a-billion, chance mutation, a mutation triggered by the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, or he was the grandson of a hybrid child, a child formed by the union of an Earth girl and a fully-telepathic alien male.

Thanks to his dad, Slater could swim before he could walk. He surfed his first Noosa barrel on his fifth birthday. He constantly got himself into trouble for missing school because he went surfing instead, but his 100 percent exam results tended to shut everyone up, or at least that was what it seemed like on the surface. No one, except for Slater and his grandmother, knew that when he needed to, he could control the thoughts, words and actions of his teachers at will. A typical visit to the principal's office went something like this.

'Slater, I don't know how much longer I am going to tolerate your total contempt for the rules of this school ... how do you do it, Slater? The school is so proud of your academic performance. Keep up the good work, son.'

3

It was *Thursday, May 6, 2010*. National Park, Noosa, was epic. It wasn't huge, but it was solid, and fast. Few surfers made the waves through to Johnson's. Actually, most of them couldn't even catch the speeding freight trains, and those that could didn't last on them very long. A handful of the surfers, mostly the locals, however were revelling in the extreme conditions. Slater was one of them. He surfed like he was born on a surfboard, which isn't far from the truth because the first thing his dad, Rhett, did when he brought

him home from the hospital, was lay him down on his surfboard and take a picture of him there.

Slater suffered some heavy wipeouts in-between the long, deep, slabbing barrels. The heaviest wipeout was the one where that stunning, American girl came up to him and asked him if he was OK. He remembered how the wave just wouldn't relent, wouldn't allow him to get his bearings and come to the surface. It seemed like it took forever before the white-water abated and let him place his feet on the sandy bottom and push to the surface.

4

Slater's Nana liked to get her lunch at 2.00pm. That was her main meal of the day so he always tried to be on time and he always tried to make it something special. Caring for his Nana was moderately restricting for Slater, but not when it came to his surfing. His responsibilities allowed him to get away for up to about three hours at a time. That meant that he could surf every day if he wished. He just timed his go-outs between Nana's meals. As a result, his sessions in those days never lasted more than three hours. And so it was on this day, this bizarre, inexplicable day.

He paddled out at Johnson's after parking his car up the hill a bit, in a spot that only the locals knew about. He hit the water at exactly 9.45am. He knew the exact time because he wore a special, solar-powered, surfer's watch on his left wrist. The watch had an analogue face with large, easy to read, hour, minute and second hands. He paddled out of the bay, past the pack sitting off the point at Johnson's, and out along the long point that is known as National Park. He paddled right to the tip of National, right to the spot called Boiling Pot, or 'The Pot', as the locals liked to refer to it. It was a dangerous place, very close to rocks and very unforgiving, and many injuries were sustained there. Only the best surfers took their waves from there, and the best of the best took them from furthest inside. That was where Slater surfed.

His plan for the day was to surf till ten minutes to one, get to his car at one, get home by ten past one and have Nana's lunch ready at exactly 2.00pm. Simple. He kept checking his watch about every ten minutes. He rode barrel after grinding barrel, getting creamed on at least one out of three waves. Then he had that monumental wipeout, the one where the girl came up to him. He surfed some more barrels, finally getting a rare one right around Johnson's Point, right through the Johnson's pack, all the way into the beach. He looked at his watch and saw that it was quarter to one, so he

decided to end his session there and then. He had a few minutes to spare so he sat down on his board and just took a little time to soak up the idyllic scene.

He got to his car at exactly 1.00pm, as planned. He tied his board to the roof racks and then sat behind the steering wheel. Just as he was about to turn the ignition key, he noticed it. He released the key and looked at his wristwatch. It said 1.00pm. He then looked through the steering wheel at the clock in the dashboard. To his surprise, it said 2.00pm. His face screwed up in confusion. He looked at his watch again and focussed on the second hand. It was ticking away normally.

Slater sat behind the wheel of his car for a moment. He was totally confused. He thought that the most logical explanation for the discrepancy between the two timepieces must have been that his wristwatch stopped for exactly one hour while he was out in the surf. But that didn't make any sense to him because that would have meant that he would have surfed for four hours. If there was one thing Slater knew intimately it was his body and how it felt after one, two, three and four hours of surfing. He knew exactly how much muscle fatigue there was after three hours of constant paddling. He knew that he didn't surf for four hours, and anyway, he checked his wristwatch about every ten minutes while he was out there and he knew that he would have noticed if his watch had stopped for an hour. He knew that he only surfed for three hours, there was no doubt of that in his mind.

In the end he decided that there was something wrong with the car clock, so he adjusted it back an hour, to synchronise it with his wristwatch, started his car and drove home to make his Nana's lunch.

5

'Where have you been, Slatey? Look at the time ... and I'm starving.'

'Sorry, Nana, but something strange is happening. Let me see your clock.'

He checked the time on the clock on her bedside table. It said 2.10pm.

'This is incredible ... I can't work this out ... wait a minute ...'

He ran out of her bedroom and proceeded to check every timepiece in the house. They all agreed. It was about ten past two. He returned to her room, sat on the bed beside her, scratched the back of his head and showed her the time on his wristwatch.

'See, Nana, it's only meant to be ten past one, not ten past two. Something has happened to all the clocks in this house,' he thought for a moment, 'and in the car.'

Most of the time, Nana liked to play the cantankerous granny. She thought it was funny. But just under the surface, just behind the façade, was an older woman of great

wisdom. She was like a deep well, the depth of which was impossible to fathom. When Slater showed her his watch, her face changed and became thoughtful and serene, and full of experience.

'This is a pretty good watch,' she said. 'I should know, I bought it for you and I know how much I paid for it. Watches like this don't stop.'

'It didn't stop, Nana, because I kept checking it, and besides, I know that I only surfed for three hours. My muscles get a lot sorer after four hours.'

'Look, you go and have your shower and make me my lunch before I starve to death. Leave your watch with me, I want to take a closer look at it.'

Slater gave her his wristwatch then raced upstairs to take a shower.

6

Her name was Lucy. She was the wild child. In *June, 1964*, she was sixteen and she knew that she was special, different, separate from all the rest. She never knew her father because she was the result of a brief, but passionate, love affair, which lasted for a whole summer of travel all over Australia, and beyond. Her mother, 'God bless her and her kind heart', never lied to Lucy, never, even if the truth was unpalatable. She got the father problem out of the way early, as soon as Lucy could comprehend the truth.

'Your father was the most wonderful man I've ever met, Lucy, but he told me right from the start, right when I first met him, that he wasn't going to be able to stay. Well, that didn't matter to me. I packed up my stuff and took off with him for the best, most amazing three months I've ever had in my life. And I got you out of it, and you keep my memory of him alive for me. I'm sorry, my darling.'

'Don't be sorry, mum, I know that I've always had a date with destiny, even before I was born it seems.'

'You are such a wise little child, Lucy, and I know where you got that from. You got it from your daddy because he was,' she looked down and shook her head from side to side, 'something else.' She then looked Lucy directly into her eyes and whispered, 'and from somewhere else.'

'I know, mum.'

'That's why you know, that's why you're special, that's why you can hear people think and feel their feelings. And that's why you can control people's behaviour at your will. Your daddy could do all those things as well. He said that it would keep you safe from danger and help you see the path to follow.'

They hugged and had a short cry together. Lucy's mum continued,

'There was a risk in becoming pregnant to your daddy, Lucy. He told me so. He told me that there was a fifty percent chance that you would be born a schizophrenic, destined for a very difficult life. But he said that there was a one in four chance that you would be a super person, with abilities way beyond everyone around you. Well, I took that chance, and here you are.'

'Thanks, mum, I'm glad you did. It was worth the gamble no matter how I would have turned out. I love you more than anything, mum, and I always will.'

7

Lucy was there at Sydney airport on *June 17, 1964*, in the pouring rain, hanging off the wire fence screaming her head off because The Beatles were in town. She was outside the Sheraton Hotel that afternoon and she spent that night with the band in their room where things happened, not the way people think, not the way the reporters said, not the way anybody said, but another way, a much more secret way, a much more honourable way, because honour was important to Lucy, and as it turned out, as she found out personally, it was also important to the band as well.

So, no matter how many stories have been written about the song, *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*, which was penned by John Lennon, no matter who says what the inspiration for it was, Lucy knew the truth and John knew it, and no one else ever did, or ever will.

Lucy left school at fifteen and lived with her mother between her many journeys to different parts of the world. On *January 14, 1967*, she attended the *Human Be-In* in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, with 30,000 other tripped-out hippies. There she witnessed Timothy Leary utter the words, 'Turn on, tune in, drop out'. That became one of her mantras for the rest of her life. On *August 18, 1969*, she was there in Bethel, on Max Yasgur's farm, for the three days of peace and music at the *Woodstock Music and Art Fair* where she dropped acid with Jimi and danced naked to Carlos. Back in Australia, she became known as 'The Acid Queen' amongst the clandestine, mind-trip culture of the late sixties.

By the age of twenty-two, she had slowed down somewhat, although that should be taken as a relative term only. In *1970*, on a trip to Byron Bay, she met Tim, the boutique cheese maker from Kangaroo Valley, just south of Wollongong. Tim was in Byron visiting some friends and scoring a few of the legendary barrels. The thing that attracted her to

him right from the start was his calm and peaceful nature, as well as his looks. He was tall, over six feet, lean, muscular and tanned like a native, because he was a 'gun surfer', with long, past his shoulders, blond hair. The other thing that attracted her to him was his leather shoulder bag, which just happened to be full of dried Psilocybin mushrooms, all harvested out of the cow manure on his cheese farm.

Lucy and Tim got on like a house on fire and she moved in with him, on his farm, that same year. They made cheese together. She introduced a new line that they only ever sold to their friends. They called it 'Blue Meaney'. That was one popular cheese around Kangaroo Valley and the surrounding South Coast.

8

Now, Dave and Ned were two local cops who used to get their lunchtime sandwiches from Thelma, the lady that owned the sandwich shop in town. Well, there is a story that might or might not be true, no one will ever know for sure, that Dave and Ned got their sandwich cheese swapped by the local town joker, named Frankie. Dave and Ned called him 'fucked Frank' because they reckoned that he was one tinny short of a six pack, 'cause he just took too many drugs'. They harassed him at every opportunity and made him the butt of all their jokes. Sometimes they even slapped him around a bit for no particular reason and every now and then they locked him up overnight. One night, in a mindless blind-drunk stupor, they urinated on him through the prison bars and then made him mop up the mess afterwards.

Well, Frankie just loved his Blue Meaney cheese and he loved Thelma as well. That's why he hung around her shop so much, but she didn't mind because she was basically a simple girl, and very kindly. So, Frankie was hanging around Thelma's shop when he saw Dave and Ned roll up in their patrol car and it just so happened that Thelma was out the back doing something personal and private. Well, Frankie had a brand-new packet of sliced, Blue Meaney cheese that he had just bought off Lucy no more than an hour before. He remembered how Lucy warned him to be careful with that batch because it was at least five times more potent than the usual stuff, because she was 'experimenting with it'. She reckoned,

'I wouldn't take more than about a quarter of a slice at a time, Frankie, if you know what's good for you, otherwise they might be picking you out of some tree somewhere, sometime next week.'

Frankie laughed because he really loved Lucy's sense of humour. So, while Thelma was doing her stuff out back, Frankie noticed the two sandwiches, that she had already prepared for the two coppers, sitting on the counter all wrapped up nice and neat. All of a sudden, Frankie got the look of the devil about him, and while there was no one around he unwrapped the sandwiches, ate the cheese out of them and, while sniggering and chuckling to himself, replaced each slice with two slices of Lucy's Blue Meaney cheese. He did his best to re-wrap the sandwiches as neatly as possible and put them back where he found them. He then retired to the pinball machine in the corner of the shop and waited for the 'bastard coppers' to come in.

'Hey, Dave, look who's here, it's fucked Frank.' Ned placed his hand on his crotch, 'You want some of this, fucked Frank?'

The two coppers laughed out loud. They were about to go over to the pinball machine to give Frankie a couple of clips around the ears when Thelma appeared from out the back. Even though Thelma was a petite lady, she intimidated the two policemen and they always behaved themselves whenever she was around. That might have been another reason why Frankie hung around Thelma so much.

Well, to cut a long story short, they found the patrol car two days later on the side of the road in the middle of the treeless Hay plain, out of gas. That was about a thousand kays away from Kangaroo valley. It took another three days after that before they found Dave and Ned. The policemen were discovered on top of a hill, near Lochiel, South Australia, by a hang glider pilot that went there to go flying. He found them shivering naked, both wrapped in one blanket, mumbling incessantly in some foreign language that no one could understand.

Dave and Ned never returned to police work. They were discharged on medical grounds. Dave became a longhair hippy and joined an ashram in Nimbin, in northern New South Wales. He went on to make some of the prettiest candles anyone had ever seen. Ned, after spending three years going walkabout all over the Australian outback, with a swag on his back, began to study to become a Baptist Minister, but failed miserably at that and got kicked out of the course because he was too rebellious. He finally moved to King's Cross in Sydney, hooked up with the Mission there and devoted the rest of his life to helping the lost and downtrodden.

Frankie ended up marrying Thelma after she won twelve-million dollars on the Lotto. They raised two beautiful kids on the dairy farm that Thelma bought with some of the money. They were truly the happiest family you could ever hope to meet in your life.

9

Lucy became pregnant and gave birth to Rhett in the *spring of '71*. They named him after Rhett Butler, the character from Margaret Mitchell's, Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *Gone With The Wind*. They lived on the farm in Kangaroo Valley until 1989, which was the year that they moved to the warmer climate and perfect waves of Noosa. That was where Rhett met Aina, the Japanese beauty who was out there with a group of her Japanese friends on a three months surfing trip.

The keen Japanese surfers had Noosa wired. They used to rent a house for the whole surf season, usually from February to July, and dozens of them came and went and surfed the place for varying periods of time. The Aussie surfer boys absolutely drooled over the stunning Japanese girls, but didn't know how to approach them. Rhett, however, had no such problems. He married Aina on *March 30, 1990*. Slater was born nine months later.

After the tragic death of Tim, Rhett and Aina in the car accident, Slater ended up living with his grandmother, Lucy, in the family house in Tewantin, the town located a few kays up the Noosa River. They lived there for about another five years, when on *June 22, 2005*, a man knocked on their front door. He was a local solicitor. He asked Lucy and Slater to make an appointment and come to his office as soon as was practicable. They visited the solicitor the next day. He informed them that he had been instructed to turn over trusteeship of a trust fund, which had previously been run by Slater's old mate-in-the-water, Adam, to Slater. Slater and Lucy became the primary beneficiaries of the fund, which was worth over twenty-million dollars. Adam had also left a recommendation of an excellent accountant who had been taking care of the family's affairs for over fifteen years. He would guide Slater in the finer points of running the trust. The solicitor also handed Slater a sealed envelope, which was a personal letter from Adam. It read,

Dear Slater,

I guess everything to do with me has come as a bit of a surprise to you. Let me assure you that everything that has happened has been no less a surprise to me as well. I was told that you witnessed my departure from Earth. I was also told that you were meant to see it. Look, it's a long story and I'll tell you about it someday, for sure.

Listen, Slater, I know you are telepathic because I've been told that you are. I am not, just so you understand, but my son, Ben, is. It was Ben who picked me up that day in Granite Bay, but that's another story as well. Something big is coming, Slater, something huge, and something is happening behind the scenes, between us and the ETs, who are human like us, but it's all good, mate, it's all really good. They've been on your case since you were born. Every full-telepath that is born on Earth attracts their attention. The telepaths are the golden seeds of our planet and you are one of them. They have done things to you and they have plans for you, all good plans, good for you and good for mother Earth. That's all I'm going to tell you because someone is coming to look after you in the future. She will let you know when she arrives so don't suspect everyone you meet, OK?

Slater, I can't tell you how much I enjoyed our surf sessions together, especially at Granite, and how much I miss them now, although you wouldn't believe the places I've surfed since the last time you saw me.

Enjoy the trust fund, boy, and I recommend that you and your grandmother move into my old house in Noosa Waters. It has a jetty and direct access to the river and the points. There's the rubber duck there on the slipway that you can use to go surfing in. You've seen me in it plenty of times. It's great for Granite; just drop the pick off the break and paddle over.

Listen to Andrew, who has been my accountant for many years. He is smart and totally trustworthy and will look after your interests as if they were his own. You might consider renting your Tewanin house. Andrew can help you with that.

Finally, we WILL meet again in the future, have no doubts about that, Slater, and we will surf together at breaks you can't even dream about right now, but that's another story as well. Wait for the girl, she is coming to be with you, although I understand that the meeting is still some years away. Take care of your grandmother and surf plenty of those perfect Noosa barrels for me.

Your friend in the water,

Adam.

PS. Show this letter to your grandmother and then burn it. No one else may see it.

Slater still remembered the poem he heard in his mind when Adam left the planet. He understood the importance of secrecy and did as he was instructed and burned the letter after Lucy read it. He and Lucy moved into Adam's old house at the end of July, 2005. They rented the Tewanin house just as Adam had suggested. The management of that,

and everything else to do with the trust, continued to be attended to by Andrew, the brilliant accountant with whom they enjoyed a pleasant business relationship, which included a delicious lunch once every year in the middle of August. Andrew assured them both that they never ever needed to worry about money, ever again.

'You'll have to find something else to worry about, you poor things,' he always used to joke with them.

Lucy and Slater settled into their new lives quite effortlessly. Slater's main focus remained his surfing, while Lucy developed her interest in painting and the study of the history of art. Her favourite painters were the 19th-century impressionists, like van Gogh, Monet and Cezanne. She adored Modigliani. She read Irving Stone's classic, 1934 biographical novel about Vincent van Gogh's life, titled *Lust For Life*, and to this day it remains one of her most inspirational books. She also saved an especially warm place in her heart for Jackson Pollock, the famous, American abstract impressionist, 'who set me free' she always used to say. She liked to make art like Pollock when she was 'inspired' out of her brain. She liked the total freedom of the technique of making paint fly onto the canvas and she loved how she could use whole-body movement while doing it. Watching her doing it, Slater thought that she looked like she was 'tripping like a jazz dancer' around the giant canvas lying on the floor of her huge, paint-spattered studio. And she *was* dancing, usually to one of her favourite bands, like Santana, which she played very loudly through her top-shelf, Bose, surround-sound speaker system.

Unfortunately, Lucy's Jackson Pollock period came to an abrupt end in *August, 2009* after she was skittled by a police car, which was being driven by a drunk cop racing home to catch a football game on TV. It all started after Lucy and Slater moved into Adam's house. Lucy found Adam's old inline skates under the stairs and immediately tried them on. They were a couple of sizes too big, but they were OK, so she decided to go for a skate. She fell in love with the sport and ended up buying a pair of top-notch, Salomon skates for herself. She liked to go on long, thirty-kilometre, cross-country skates around Noosa. She always said how the Noosa area was like a Mecca for skating, because it was so flat and there were so many cycleways everywhere.

Well, the cop that ran her down, and the rest of his cop mates, covered up the fact that he was intoxicated and even sent Lucy, who was laid out in hospital with a broken back, a double fine for skating on the road without a helmet and for obstructing a police officer on duty. Lucy refused to pay the fine and a court hearing was set for *February*,

2010. The judge presiding over the hearing was old man Terry (take no prisoners) Lawson. His honour had the reputation of a junkyard dog. Andrew arranged for Lucy to be represented by one of the finest barristers in Queensland, named Barnaby (the black rat) Bratt QC. Barnaby devoted a generous amount of his valuable time to Lucy's case because Andrew was one of his best friends, and he advised Lucy to plead guilty and pay an insignificant fine. Lucy pretended that she was going to go along with the tactic. On the day of the hearing, Barnaby himself wheeled her into the courtroom. When everyone was seated and a hushed silence descended over the courtroom, the charges were read out by the judge. Then he asked the question,

'How do you plead?'

Now, Lucy made it a point to never use bad language. 'It's part of my yoga,' she always used to say. There was a silent pause in the courtroom as all eyes turned towards her. Then she gave her reply.

'Your honour, why don't you go and fuck yourself?'

Shocked gasps were heard all around the courtroom. Barnaby buried his face in his hands as everyone else faced the judge, whose eyes looked like they were about to catch fire and then pop right out of their sockets. Everyone in the courtroom sat open-mouthed as they watched old man Lawson puff up like he was about to explode. But instead of exploding in a fit of rage, he began to struggle with his speech as if he was being restrained in some way. Eventually he got the words out in a most courteous voice. He declared,

'Case dismissed, and the court wishes to apologise to the defendant for wasting her time.'

Then his face turned to rage as he glared at the two policemen sitting at the back of the room and growled,

'I'm going to get you bastard, son of a bitch coppers if it's the last thing I do. I promise you that!'

He smashed his gavel down so hard on his bench that it broke into two pieces. After it was all over, his look changed again. His face took on the appearance of a man who couldn't believe that he'd just said what he did. He looked at Lucy and she looked at him, right in the eyes, and everyone in that courtroom saw how he physically shook as a wave of fear passed through him. In a much more subdued voice, like he was speaking to her only, he added, 'I'll get them, I promise.'

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