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By Jimmy Brook

A MIST OVER THE WORLD

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The world is all happening, and all at once. Some things have good outcomes and some not so good. Whatever seem distant to each other, are often strangely connected.

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A MIST OVER THE WORLD

CHAPTER ONE

Today it was all happening. Jake was finally doing it. A trip of a lifetime was about to start, and he felt there were a million things yet to do. This afternoon he would be driven to the airport near the city, by his parents and his year long backpacking dream would become reality. Only twenty three years old, but full of enthusiasm. Each contingency was organised and as he looked again at his bags, he suddenly realised that he still had not given the taxation agent his donation receipts and that other thing they wanted.

Dashing out of the house, he drove quickly in his sister's car to the business centre, and climbed the stairs in the old two story building that contained offices and store rooms, and his tax agent's office. Not the flashy part of town but rents would be cheaper, he thought. As he knocked on the glass panelled door and started to enter, he glanced back and just caught a glimpse of a person coming out of a doorway and entering one opposite. He had seen that head and that particular jacket before in town. It belonged to the local coach of the Rugby club. Jake's father had pointed him out when they watched a game. He also had a bright yellow sports car. Jake thought his name was Danvers. Their paths had never crossed, and then the person was gone from his sight and from his mind.

Jake spoke to the young receptionist and couldn't refrain from mentioning his trip and in six hours or so he would be winging it over the ocean. She was nice and he thought if he ever had a steady girlfriend, she would be the type he would go for. Plenty of time for that after his trip. Maybe on his trip. As he started back down the corridor to the stairs, the door that Danvers had entered was partly open, and Jake casually looked in as he passed. The man had his back to him and seemed to be standing there. Then Jake had moved on and had just reached the bottom of the steps, when he ran into the girl from the chemist shop.

"Just getting a coffee," she said. "You all packed?"

"Yes," he replied. "Last bit of business done and now it will be all a different world for me."

She gave him a grin then looking over his shoulder, she said, "Morning Mr. Peters. I see you also went out for a coffee." Jake half turned and saw a man give a wave and disappear up the stairs he had just descended.

"Nice man. Has some sort of on line trading business. Nice view from his office. I took his medicines up there one day. Anyway, I got to go. Have a good one, and tell me all about it when you get back." With a pat on his shoulder she walked away. Jake thought that was a nice memory to take with him then decided he better get the lead out or his parents would be on tender hooks about the car trip being delayed.

They reached the airport in plenty of time to book in and say goodbye. Seeing a traveller in a bright coat, jogged his memory of earlier that day and he went to say something to his father, but big sister gave him another hug and the moment was gone. He waved and moved on through the portals that awaited him.

The last eighteen months had been a nonstop ride on a roller coaster. He saw places and met people in hostels and at casual jobs that never slackened. Britain had loads of opportunities for good work and for sightseeing and he thanked his lucky stars that his mother had a British passport to facilitate an infinite stay. He went by train around some European countries, and even sailed as a deckhand on a fishing boat off Greece. That was not easy on his poor back but it was great. In Milan, he met Willie Baker, an English larrikin who told him the snow in the Italian Alps was just great for snow boarding, and they should get on a train and go now. Why not, he thought.

They arrived at Bolzano on dusk and found a pizza restaurant to eat in. There they met two girls who both spoke English and offered them a room for the night. That turned out to go quite differently to what Jake imagined. After some wine and lots of talking, Willie said he was going to look at Merinda's stamp collection and said good night. When the other girl, who he knew as Angelica, offered to show him her book collection, the wine made any questions obsolete. Next morning the girls gave them breakfast and then said it was time for work and gave them all long kisses before showing them the door.

"How was that mate?" asked Willie.

"Interesting. First for me. Never even got to see the books she mentioned."

Willie smiled. "Just like Merinda's stamp albums."

They got a bus and finally it took them to the snow fields. Jake had never been on skis let alone snow boards but he was on cloud nine and would now try anything. They hired two snow boards and catching the lift, got off at the top stop and then Jake's confidence faltered. "It's a long way down and looks steep. How do you stop?"

"Easy. Just fall off." Then Willie was gone in a blur of snow powder. Jake shrugged his shoulders and kicked off. Soon it got out of control. And as he headed off course towards a big rock, he felt it was time to fall off. Sadly for Jake, he was too late. Three days later he woke up to a body racked in pain. When a nurse gave him a tablet, it started to help, and he knew he was in a hospital.

No one seemed to speak English but a nurse came eventually and said a doctor was coming. Eventually one did. He didn't speak English either but he co-opted the nurse who did and was told that he had been badly injured. He had a head injury that needed specialist attention and something else in his chest, that escaped translation.

"Can I get a specialist here?" asked Jake. The nurse shook her head. "The doctor says it's how you say, a two way street. We don't have the expertise or the equipment for such, and you don't have the money to pay for it. Your bill so far is going to not help your headaches."

After more words from the doctor, she said, "you need to get special treatment and he recommends you head back to Australia as soon as possible. In two days you can travel." Then the doctor shook Jake's hand and left the room.

The nurse smiled pleasantly and then added, "a young lady is outside." Then she waved and left also. Next minute an apprehensive Angelica walked in. She stood for a moment, and when he smiled, she came over and kissed him. "I'm so sorry for you, "she said, "when Willie told me, I was how do you say, devastated."

"Where is Willie?" he asked.

"He stayed the first two days here then he had to go back to England for his work. I have a contact number. Yesterday I came but I too have to go back to work tomorrow."

Jake nodded. "Thank you for coming. They tell me I have to go back to Australia for medical treatment as soon as possible."

"I know. It will be best. I can book you a ticket today and a hire car to Milan. You might have to help out with the funds."

Jake had his reserve money in the bank and it would cover those things, he hoped. She finally left and came back that evening, to tell him it was arranged. He just had to talk to the travel agent and transfer some money. She dialled a number on her phone and gave it to him. The conversation was a bit disjointed, owing to the language, but finally he had transferred some money.

"I will miss you Jake."

"So will I."

She eventually left and he sensed there were tears in her eyes. He was lucky to have met her.

CHAPTER TWO

Lance Tebbutt woke early that morning. The sun was shining and he knew it would be dangerous to stay longer and try to sleep as he had to be at work early. Lance was a detective at the local police district headquarters, and today he was to baby sit some superintendent who was doing a regional tour. Not that he minded. Life was good and the area in and around his town was low risk, to use a term. That meant easy, on having a crime rate that was considered low, even acceptable.

He had been born here, went to the local schools and then to the city for better work opportunities. Joining the Force was the best move he had chosen.

He was moved about a little and then took on the challenge of a detective career. He met Lorna and they got married and she seemed happy. Only one daughter, Karen, but she was now at university in the city. Five years later, he felt the tension. His job often demanded all hours of the day sometimes and Lorna yearned for the bright lights and entertainment of a big city. He tried for a transfer but was told he had to wait in line.

Then one day he came home and was given the news he suspected may come sometime. If he couldn't find a job in the city, she would like to move there anyway. No yelling, just a mutual quiet ultimatum. He was not a real city person and the need to carry on in his chosen profession overshadowed a life, that would be good, but not strong enough to win. They agreed to a separation and still keep in contact. She left and two weeks later he was offered a transfer to his hometown. He took it. Karen said she understood and would visit him when she could.

Two years later, Lorna spoke to him on the phone and said the need for a finality in the relationship was now something she wanted. Karen had hinted about a friend her mother was often seen with, and he knew the only direction of any further life with or without her, was obvious. Twelve months later it was finalised and he moved on. He had since had two relationships with nice women, but had been wounded in some way by his marriage breakup, and that must have shown. They each ended after a time. But it was good, he thought. He would finally move ahead and settle down with someone.

Today would be his relaxation day, showing a senior officer the workings of his area. However, when he arrived at the station that changed. He had even straightened his office and desk up when the local commander rang to say that something had come up and the senior officer would make it next week instead.

"Oh well, "he said aloud to the photo of his daughter on the desk, "time to go out and have a real coffee and croissant." As he passed the front desk, the officer on duty, had just put down his telephone. "Excuse me sir, some one has just rung in and wants to talk to a detective."

Lance winced but that was his job. Probably some lady lost her cat. He took the details and saw that the caller was in the local hospital. Good opportunity to get out rather than talk on a phone. He headed out to the edge of town and found his way to the room he had been directed to.

The person in the bed wasn't a lady as he imagined, but a young man. Judging by the monitor and drip attached, he didn't look exactly in good health. "Excuse me, er Jake, I'm Lance Tebbutt. You wanted a detective and I'm your man."

Jake smiled weakly and the policeman walked over and grabbed his hand. He sat on the only chair in the room which was drawn up near the bed. "What do you want to talk about? No, I should be more polite and ask what has happened to you, first."

Jake's voice was stronger than his appearance indicated, and he told him. It was serious. He was off to the city tomorrow by ambulance to the St. Gerard's Hospital and a big operation. His brain had been damaged in the accident and it was not looking good. Only 50% chance of recovery the specialist had told him. Jake had been in the city hospital for five days, after he returned from Italy, and his parents had opted to have him back locally rather than wait for two weeks before the operation. The surgeon had been overseas. And there was something wrong inside his chest. A broken rib had damaged his heart vessel and that needed some surgery as well. The detective thought to himself, 'and I complain about a damaged tendon'.

"Well I maybe won't take up snowboarding anytime soon," and smiled. "Can you tell me why you wanted a policeman?"

Jake told him. It wasn't much really. When his family met him and fussed and talked as he was booked into the hospital in the city, his sister had rabbited on about things at home and something about a Mr. Peters being seriously assaulted and robbed. Jake never knew about this, had only now thought about it, and who he had seen that morning. He felt he should tell someone. After all, maybe waiting to after his operation could be too late.

Any thought that Lance Tebbutt had about a wasted morning, had now evaporated. The William Peter's case was unsolved and they had no idea whom could be in the frame. Lionel Danvers name had not come up from memory, but this was a lead definitely worth following. He thanked young Jake for passing on this information, and wished him all the best in his coming operation. "You'll be alright. Young fellow like you will come through fine."

Then he was on his way back to the station. He seriously hoped the young man would come through. He was too young to miss out on what life could offer such a younger person.

Back behind his desk, he gathered the files on the case and anything they had on Danvers, which was very little other than a domestic disturbance filed by a neighbor two years back. They would have to dig deeper on this person. Lance knew a couple of members of the rugby team, in particular the CEO, Brian Rigby. He put in a call. His wife said he was away for the day but to try around tea time. Then a head popped in to his inner sanctum. It was the other detective inspector assigned to the area, Tim Walters. "Want some outside action? Executing a search warrant on someone we are sure is behind those electrical robberies up north and a lock up in town."

One of those unusual days, Lance thought. He nodded and grabbed his coat. Two uniforms joined followed them out to a farm not that far from town. Lasher Leslie, as Tim called him, was the prime suspect and if they found any of the stolen property, it was not going to be Lasher's day. They banged on the door and it quickly opened. The scrawny man said he was most surprised that they would think he had any stolen goods. Told them they didn't need to have a warrant and could look around. He looked at the detective and gave a sly smile. Lance was looking at the man also and fancied he was not looking at the detective's face but over his shoulder. He noted the guick smile. They searched the house, which was not particularly tidy, then the outside sheds. Nothing. Just as Tim was about to call it a day, one of the constables came back from a shed and said he had seen something. They followed him back and the shed appeared empty. In a corner, behind an empty cardboard carton, was a small sealed retail package. It was a mobile phone, brand new. The list of serial numbers was scanned and it fitted one that had been stolen. Leslie protested that it wasn't his. Didn't know where it came from and so on. The detective just grinned and suggested he came back to the station and they would discuss it further. The two uniformed officers escorted him away in the wagon.

As Lance was pulling the front door shut behind him, he looked out and saw something familiar. It was a big pine tree and a farmhouse on the neighboring property. It was familiar. "Hang on Tim, that place over there. It was where I did a cannabis bust about six months back. Bloke called Henderson or Hennesy. Some big plants in his shed. Got a hefty fine and Good Behavior Bond."

Lance told him of the feeling he got when they arrived. "He was not smiling at you. He was glancing at that property. I bet that is where he has stashed the proceeds."

Tim was interested. "Problem is we need a warrant to search."

"No," chipped in his partner, "he is still on a twelve month's bond. Don't need one.

They felt something may be going right for once. Driving over, they radioed back for a couple of officers to come out and back them up. Henderson was sitting on the veranda and stood up when he realized who they were. "You're the copper that busted be for the plants. Won't find any on this place or any drugs. I'm on the straight and narrow."

"I'm sure you are Mr. Henderson."

"It was just for personal use, you know."

Lance just smiled. "I seem to remember you had more plants that an entire Bunnings store."

There was no reply.

"In any case we might just do a quick look around anyway. We were just checking on you that the Bond was being followed."

Henderson grunted and waved a hand about. They looked in the house as a matter of policy but were more interested in the outside store sheds. Nothing in two of them but Lance sensed the barely perceptible apprehension when they looked at the other one.

"Nothing in there, just boxes and farm stuff."

They still waited while he fumbled with the door and opened it. Just boxes and more under tarps. Tim lifted one of the tarps and saw the shipping cartons and retail packaging. Bingo. Henderson just hung his head and sat on an old case. "Just minding them for a friend. Know nothing about what they are."

"Well your so called friend just told us where they were, so when we get back to town, you had better have a good story."

Just then the other station vehicle arrived and whilst someone stayed to wait for a van to collect the items, the others headed back. It could be a very long afternoon. Maybe not.

Both men were interviewed and charged and were to remain in the cells until bail could be settled by a judge the next day. Lance was tired but he needed to make a call to the hospital. Young Jake was on his way to the city by patient transport and the operation should be underway tomorrow.

Tim asked Lance to come for a drink at the local bowling club after work and they did just that. Then Tim went home and his work mate decided to have a meal, but then saw Brian Rigby ordering a drink. He stood beside him and said hello.

"Gooday Lance my lad. Wife said you rang. She is playing the pokies with Helen, so I was going to have a quiet one. Sit over here and you can tell me what is on your mind."

"Off the record, I just want to feel around and get some background. Your coach, Mr. Danvers, what's he like?"

Lance saw the scowl. He wondered what that meant.

"Good coach. Lucky to have him. Personally, I keep my distance. Didn't recommend him for the job but got out voted. Turned out to do a good job, as I said, but I heard a couple of stories. Not on my Christmas card list, you might say. Splashes a bit of money around. Big house on the lake side about six months back. Where he got his money from, who knows. One story was he was in a scam on importing things and they turned out to be fakes. Just hearsay."

Lance smiled. "I'll keep it to myself. Something came up about a business deal, and we are collecting background."

Just then Brian's wife and her companion appeared, and after the usual pleasantries, Lance excused himself and went to the restaurant for his dinner.

CHAPTER THREE

Rain fell lightly. Angelica was late for work again and dreaded what her supervisor would say. Often it was a lot of yelling then it settled down. She crept into the museum and seeing no one, started working on the cataloguing she was involved with. At lunch break, she headed to the little corner café for a coffee and croissant. As she was taking her first sip, her mobile rung and she glanced at it. It was her roommate. "Bon Journo my friend. Having a lazy day?"

"And some Ange. Anyway, a letter arrived from Australia for you. Want to wait until you return, or shall I read it?"

"No, you will not read it, you nosy friend of mine. If it has come that far, another three hours won't make any difference. Cia."

She did wonder though. What news did it contain and was it good or was it sad. As she came through the door that night, she was breathing heavily. Angelica had almost run from the bus in her desire to find out what it contained. It was on the table and she tore it open and read the contents. It was not from Jake, but from his father. She felt the tears welling up. Then she calmed down and finished the page. He was still alive, but his condition was precarious. He may continue to deteriorate or he just might slowly recover. Jake mentioned her a lot to his parents, and they just wanted her to know.

She cried. There was nothing she could do. Her job was all she had and she was battling to pay the rent. Then inside the envelope she saw a SIM card for a

mobile phone. Turning the letter over, was a postscript. 'We've put some money on this for you to ring him.' She cried again.

Indeed, the specialist had told the parents he had serious doubts about a good outcome. Still anything could happen and to keep hoping.

CHAPTER FOUR

Back in Australia, Lance was not sure which way to move ahead. Five days had gone by since the excitement of a closure on the stolen property but nothing on the assault on William Peters. He had tried some avenues but nothing. The person known as Danvers was an enigma. Then a call from his supervisor had summoned him to the upstairs office.

"Lance, maybe you can't do much more on this case. We all have tried. Best put it aside until something more concrete comes up."

"Perhaps. I just have a feeling that there should be some clue. However, I will move on. Thanks Sir."

Back at his desk, he had just sat down when a thought struck him. 'If it is something to do with fakes, and Peters was an importer, maybe some connection there.' He picked up the phone and rang the Fraud Squad in the city. After a bit of buck passing, he found himself talking to a Charlie Sunyotu, who had a very clear but Asian accent. Yes, the name Dennis Danvers rang a bell. He would call back shortly. The minutes ticked slowly by and he jumped when the phone rang.

"Thanks for calling back so quickly, Charlie. Any luck?"

After some minutes and social questions about life in the country, Lance hung up and thought about what he had learned. Not a lot, really. Lionel Danvers 's name had come up when investigating some importing fraud but not enough to warrant any further checking. It was more a mention by some person but seemed to have no substance. There was however some one who mentioned

there were people making enquiries about fake items and they might blow the lid on that. No names but one was rumored to be very upset and lived outside the city.

Could be William Peters. Perhaps. Time to find him and have a chat. The business had closed down after the assault and it took a couple of calls to real estate agents to finally obtain an address used to finalise business by his accountant. Lance rang and a young woman's voice answered. It was his grand daughter and she said he never went out now or did very much, but come over anyway. He did.

The house was old but had a nice view of the lake. He was shown into a room with large windows and William rose to meet him.

"No, sit." Lance went over and shook his hand. It was not strong by the feel of the grip. Closer, the body looked frail, but the eyes were bright.

"Is it about my attack?"

"Not sure, but it may be connected, Mr. Peters. In your statement that you made some time later, you had little recollection of what happened or who had attacked you. Has any thing come to you in the months since?"

He did not answer straight away but looked out at the garden. Then he spoke but did not turn his head. "They robbed me of my life and my business. I need my daughter almost every day to care for me. Walking is difficult and the headaches just never go away. I wish I knew."

Lance felt a pang. Firstly, the young lad, and now this gentleman. Life can be unkind. "We never give up, but in your case, nothing has come up. That is until now. Have you ever had dealings with a Lionel Danvers? He's a local."

Again, that pause. "Forgot about that man. Never had anything to do..." He stopped. There was a quietness except for some cups rattling in another room. Probably the daughter. "It is vague, but his name seems to jump out then go away. Porcelain. Yes, that is it. I used to import vases and such. That was a time now long ago. Sorry. There were imports that were sold off as genuine, but they were not. I was trying..."

He stopped again. The policeman wanted to shake him along but knew he had to be patient. Then he realised, Peters was talking, more to himself that the visitor. "I talked to people. Lots of people, and was quite open about my disgust that the industry was being made disreputable. Don't know what happened. It is so hard to drag my memory into gear. Yes. Danvers. Some one told me, forgot who, that he was bringing in vases, and they were being sold as originals but were fakes. Probably not illegal but not right either."

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Then there were footsteps and his daughter came in with a tray and tea. "I didn't know if you wanted something to drink. I have coffee in the kitchen" Lance stood up and thanked her. Tea would be fine, he told her.

There seemed to be nothing more to be gained, and he stood to say goodbye. Peters seemed to be away again, looking at the garden. He made it to the hall when there was a call from the gentleman. "Neal. Neal Younger. He was who told me. In the city somewhere." Then quietness. He thanked the girl and left.

Back at his desk, he jotted down some notes. Nothing to put Danvers in the frame for the attack or robbery but he was up to something dodgy. He then thought about what William Peters was left with, and shook his head. Time to move on. Never get involved with witnesses. Difficult some times. Another call to Charlie Chan he thought. 'Cut that out. That is not how I am.' His thoughts were sometimes off the track. He got on to Charlie Sunyato on his second attempt, and asked him about the name Neal Younger. This time there was no getting back to him later. "Yes, respected importer. You found something?"

"Not against Younger. I would like to talk to him though."

With the contact details, Lance rang and had an interesting conversation. The business man had some details of complaints (somewhere) and he had spoken to William Peters a long time back about it. Police business escalated for Younger and it just got put aside. He had not heard about Peters being attacked, and was a little shocked. Lance asked him could he send any details and asked that the name of Danvers not be mentioned to anyone, as it was an ongoing investigation. Now things were taking some direction, he thought, and went up to appraise his superior of the development.

Next day, an e-mail arrived and attached was a whole load of documents. Noting the item that was marked and the note in the margin, gave the detective a big smile. A jug was imported and a certificate of authenticity was signed by a L. Danvers, with some post script initials that Charlie said had been now re checked and were not any university graduate awards. In addition there was a complaint by the buyer to the police that it was not only a 19th century reproduction, but that a confirmation received yesterday from the overseas supplier, that the genuine article was still on display in a museum.

The Fraud Squad were happy to let the local boys bring him in, as it might help the more serious case of the assault and robbery. A call to his boss then with that agreed to, one to Charlie to say thanks, they would like that.

One hour later, Danvers was in the interview room, yelling and banging his fists that the business of the jug was all a set up. What the police, particularly Lance, wanted were his finger prints. He was charged, and immediately after prints were obtained, compared with the unidentified ones in Peter's office and on the heavy desk weight that was used in the assault. They were a match.

When Danvers was told the charges were now to include something much more serious, he went pale, then demanded a solicitor. Tebbutt knew it was a case that would put Danvers away for some time. The evidence would be enough.

Three hours later, the solicitor told the police that his client was willing to accept a charge of affray. His client and William Peters had a mild disagreement and had fallen. He regretted not calling an ambulance or being available. He was panicked. Lance was having none of that. It was callous and calculated.

That night, the detective went around to William Peter's house and told the sick man and his daughter. She cried and thanked him so much. Peters didn't say much, but there were tears in his eyes. Finally he raised himself out of the chair and stretched out his withered hand. "Thank you."

There was still time left to make one more call. There was apprehension in his voice when he asked for Jake's father. He had heard nothing but in times of crisis or stress, it could just be that he had not been told.

"Thank you for calling. A tough week for us. Jake is still going strong but when he can be his old self, or like it, is another question. That is what we were told the other day. It may take six months or a bit longer but the doctor is sure he will finally get back to what he was. He is coming home in two weeks or so but

may need 24 hour care for a little while. Colonade House will be able to provide six weeks respite and rehab."

Lance told him of the arrest and the important part young Jake had played in facilitating that. The news may be a bit of good that could help in the healing. The detective had known of Colonade, as a lot of people had. Last year the old brick building, next to the Nursing home, had been donated to them for the express purpose of helping young people recover from illnesses and the like, and still have care in an environment suitable for their own age. There were only half a dozen beds, so it was limited to who could be accommodated. Its focus was on accident and serious medical issues.

Lance saw Tim, his counterpart, at the front desk. "You heard we finally wrapped up the William Peter's case?"

"Yes. Good result. How's that young lad going, you mentioned? The one who came a cropper on the snowboard."

The other man told him. Then Lance had another thought. "Just curious. What's the origin of Lasher Leslie's name? Odd nick name."

Tim smiled. "Goes way back. Nothing to do with whips and such. He could never get anything right. Always mixing things up and getting into trouble. Everything he did he always lashed up, I was told, and the name Lasher, stuck."

They both laughed and went their separate ways.

That night, Lance had a dinner date with Wendy, a friend of a mate. He felt good about her from the first time he met at a BBQ. Maybe life would be better. He certainly hoped it would for a couple of other locals, young and old.

Jimmy Brook

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