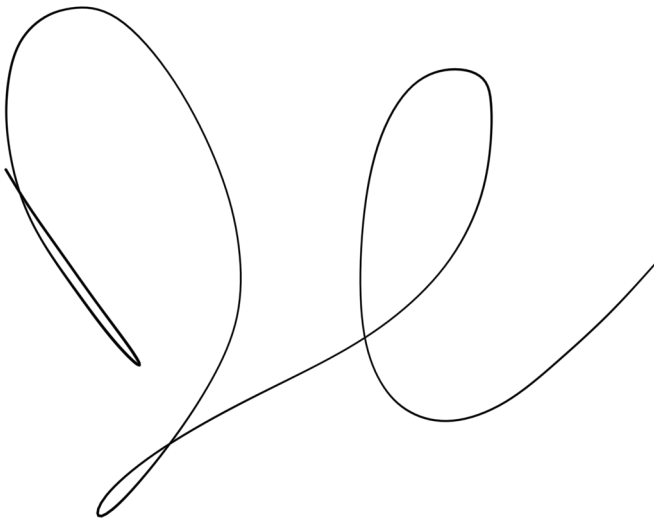


Ran Wicked

Derek Carter



Chapter 1

Beginnings

Australia is a beautiful place to grow up. There are wonderful beaches, amazing stretches of forest and tree lined streets. This is all within a few hours or minutes of the city centre. Sydney like most cities in Australia has a great urban sprawl that stretches out in every direction. Sydney was not a planned city it just kept growing and still keeps growing. To know Sydney you have to be able to navigate it and know basically how the suburbs nudge into each other. Public transport is usually pretty good though some areas are lacking. Overall though it is a great place to live. The follow-

ing story is based in Sydney but it doesn't find itself always in the best company or places. There are all sorts of little nooks and crannies that seem to be uncharted though some have found these places in their lives. Like everything there is usually a beginning and it starts on a beautiful sunny day in a beach side suburb of Sydney. The family were gathered around the dining table. The new edition a 7 pound baby boy was in the basinet near the window. His father was having a laugh a cup of tea in hand. The house was not far from the beach at all. The ocean was spread out below a park and trees. Some birds darted through the trees twirling after insects. The new baby boys sister sat on the edge of the chair a happy little ten year old. On the surface everything was perfect but there were hidden issues. She had already been beaten by her father countless times. In her heart there was pain. She loved her Nanna though. They were a guiding light. How did this come about? Why did she get beaten? Why wasn't the father held to account. Why did there have to be secrets? Why did there have to be shame? A shame that seemed to tear people apart. Shame like an explosion that fractured and maimed? The baby's mother had a big laugh she had bottled up a lot of the

problems in their lives. Their stories. There are always stories. Soon they were almost ready to go. There had been pleasantries and congratulations. The family was growing and everybody was proud. Suddenly a strong wind kicked up and a huge window pane fell onto the bassinet with a crash. Everyone was struck with terror. It was like for a moment the pain held in the little girls heart came to the surface. "Oh my...God.." his grandmother was at the bassinet first and there showered in broken glass was a sleeping baby boy without a scratch nor a care in the world.

If there is kindness where does it grow? If there is cruelty what does it sow? How do people break out of their troubles? What happens when suddenly they find themselves spinning out of control? Every story is different and truly we never know how they will react and if the pain will heal. The world is filled with struggle and there is so much pain that seems hidden but is always bubbling to the surface. The flash of light as though a bomb has gone off. But in this story there are no bombs or calculated cruelty. Though there are hidden issues that strand through our very DNA and makes us more human than human but can be a virtual explosion that slowly tears lives apart. Everybody

knows of pain and we try to avoid it for our own sakes but sometimes there are no answers. We look for those answers and hope we can find them. The industriousness of humanity looks for answers and truly we try to be our best and find those answers. The understanding not only of our own hopes and fears but of how our minds and bodies work which are locked away and which we try to unlock. With every mystery which there are so many we try to find a law that states why. The whole universe seems to be a mystery to be discovered and what of our minds? The mystery that seems to compel us and confound us. That is entangled within our own bodies. In the end though are there always answers? Well maybe yes and no. People are set on a course some with insight and some without. People make people who they are but they can't always be there for you. Sometimes they are there for you but you choose to do things your way. Sometimes the answer to the question is easy and sometimes it is not. It can be very problematic though when no questions are asked and nobody knows where they stand. Are they on my side or not? Is this even real? That masks the unknown that can come out of nowhere and not only take you by surprise but take away reason

itself. A living death that seems so terrifying and unreasonable. Suddenly you were there and now stands someone that I don't seem to know. Should I disown them? Do I know who they really are? Are they a threat and can science step in reaching into the body itself, finding a way into the mechanism of the mind? Creating a bridge through knowledge and study that makes people feel even more threatened but can sometimes change lives for the better. Sometimes bringing the mind back within the comfortable confines of reason and society. If only stories were so simple. They can be though, they can be simple. Sometimes people fall through the net of society. Sometimes people fall through the net of their own minds. We all fall though, we are all falling. That is just gravity though so we tend to fall together. Even those who seem to be outsiders are with us too but our minds are selective and we can choose to look the other way. This book doesn't really implicate anyone through names. People are there though but the story can be open ended. Maybe you already know the characters. Maybe you breathe life into them. Maybe they seem foreign to you and they are misfits who you would never understand. But this book isn't really looking for understanding.

It is probably more an array of questions. If we don't ask why, we may never know the answer.

Chapter 2

First memories

He looked down at the scene below. He and his sister were in a frightened huddle. For a moment he seemed to be peering down at the scene. How was this so? Had he died? Was he simply so scared he had left his body? This perspective he had was probably the safest place to be at a time like this. His fathers voice bellowed psychotically as furniture crashed to the ground. To him and his sister it was as though the whole house would shake to the ground. This was a moment of sheer terror they endured together and it etched itself permanently in his mind. His sister had endured more and as

though the ground had opened up beneath their feet they seemed destined for different paths. Was there a way to cross? A bridge in their minds? He slowly started to fragment little by little. His Dad was always a polarizing figure. He only saw his Dad without his sister every second weekend. They always walked everywhere which for a small child could be challenging but his father made sure every walk was interesting. There would be ducks to feed at the park or a museum to visit with displays. The dinosaur exhibits always piqued his imagination but also the elaborate displays of cells and other microscopic phenomena otherwise unseen to the eye. His Dad had been a science teacher at one stage and supplied him with textbooks. Seeing men and women in white gowns holding beakers and looking at microscopes, as well as microscopic worlds illustrated provided endless entertainment. As a child one can get lost in their imagination. The scientific illustrations were a cue to a world full of endless possibilities and discoveries. In one case he asked his father what one of the science museums displays represented. His father paused so the little boy answered imaginatively and rather abruptly, "it is a solar system isn't it?". His father looked to the side looked back and

simply agreed. Even though it was a display of a cell the imaginative answer was accepted as correct. The walks were far reaching to say the least. Not only did they visit established sites such as museums but also places dedicated to the less fortunate. His father had been a practicing social worker and had an interest in people from all walks of life. They would play ping pong in centres for the homeless or substance dependent people in the inner city. Mostly these excursions were uneventful but some became rather strange. One such strange visit was to one of his Dad's friends. After a rather long walk in unfamiliar territory they arrived at this friends home. Dad's friend talked of quite strange events which the little boy was unsure of. He talked quite extensively about the moon and signals that were being broadcast. It was the first the little boy had heard of it. The boy didn't really understand what Dad's friend was getting at and thought it was quite strange but nevertheless interesting. Dad's friend was a little monotonous in his descriptions and this made his claims a little too otherworldly and less convincing. His Dad's friends name was Steve and he wasn't really trying to convince anybody of anything. Maybe that was why the boy found the whole adven-

ture somewhat like a picture book or a TV show that had spilled into reality. On this day dreams and reality intermixed in unexpected ways. Steve lived in government housing which banked onto a park. The area itself was semi-industrial located near gas refineries and a busy port fifteen minutes down the road. The road in a way was a dividing line between a large industrial estate that stretched over a kilometre down the road and a stretch of housing including the government flats. As far as walks went this was a long walk through small shop centres and houses. Visually it was uneventful which was probably why once they arrived the park seemed like an oasis to the boy sprawling around the housing estates and setting the scene for all of the strange pronouncements from Steve. Memories over time can become indistinct and places revisited many years later can seem less evocative. What is missing though is all of the people from that particular time. They may have moved on or even died. People really make a place even more so than the buildings. The buildings at the time seemed like backdrops and really they were. Steve seemed to come in and out of his Dad's life. He became even less cohesive in his stories and seemed to be slipping ever more deeply into

psychosis. It was slow and incremental. There was the odd occasion when the little boys father became agitated and aggressive. Luckily it wasn't directed at him but at a passerby. The boy became afraid at times like this. What would his father do? He knew a little of what he was capable of and it wasn't particularly good. There were definitely times when he could only look on and hope his father would once again start to act normally. Mostly this would happen fairly quickly and a crisis was averted. It was this constant movement from sanity to psychosis that left the boy lacking complete trust. Children usually crave trust and need a routine. With his father though anything could happen. There was something to be said for the shock people can feel when violence erupts. His mother would seem to drift off into a whole other dimension. She seemed unable to process what was going on around her at those times. The television was an escape. It would make her smile and reassure her. She had complex feelings but there was nowhere to nurture them. People are like gardens that need tending to become the garden they should be. She was a garden of rambling vines, trees and rushing rivers. The television was the moonlight in the garden. Her eyes the window of her spirit set upon by

wheels of fortune. The garden grows but not as one would expect. It makes me wonder if we will ever cease to believe in ourselves when the world keeps pointing away. It points to so many others that we forget who we are and finally we have no connection to ourselves or the world around us. We can't expect money to tend to our gardens but then the people who portend to seem even worse. You couldn't say his mother or father were bad people. But there had been bad things happening to them. The onset of schizophrenia and its destabilising influence was not something people had the expertise to solve or treat. At the time though even the professionals were finding it difficult to treat. The answer for some people is avoidance. Avoid the bad things. At times though the bad things come looking for you. His mother was quite sensitive really. She would keep a diary of poetic thoughts that kept her thinking of the complexities and life lessons that can derail us. There was a painting in the living room. A brutish painting that seemed to tell the tale of the family. Four flower types personas though two were the adults, one towering over the other in what looks like a fire. Each smaller flower attached to the larger flower like the children. There was a symbolism as if

suppressed looking back at you telling you the story. Art in this case was telling the story, the words held in the images telling everyone in the house the story but if asked it was just a picture. The symbols were held there but the stories around it remained as though cast in stone. Nobody knew but it seemed his fathers days were numbered. He was slipping away but not into death but a living death far from the goings on of the questionable rational world around him. There was a fire in his mind burning which sometimes came into reality and was engulfing everything in its path. Painting could be a way of exploring this reality, a way to create a set of symbols for what was becoming a painful process. It was one step away from the body and it was painless. It was a pointer to the truth but always a step way. The truth couldn't find the words or the representation and the truth was buried in the symbols. The truth was the body itself and its interactions. The truth was in the body and somewhere in our DNA. The storage compartment of the body itself and evolution. The painting in the same way stored the symbolism locking it in its physical space. The paint itself carried the pain and the pain was just a signal. It was a signal carried along nerve fibre. It was

physical. It could carry the signal.

Chapter 3

Awareness of time

His father told him that him and his mother would be divorced. He was only seven and an image of his father behind bars filled his mind. As a child he felt as though the concrete and buildings which he stood amongst would swallow him up. Sydney wasn't a big place but to a seven year old it can seem immense. Why his father chose to tell him about the divorce in this particular setting never really made sense to him. They were on a walkway above a freeway that fed traffic to the airport. There were large imposing public housing buildings accessible through a walking tunnel.

There was graffiti in the walkway and another main road was above the tunnel busy with traffic. It was quite far from where they lived. There was a woman who lived in the public housing. Dad was seeing her. They walked the hallways to get to her doorway. It seemed so foreign and lonely. The hallway seemed so long when really it wasn't. They seemed to laugh together but there was a nervousness. The place itself was lonely. There were people who needed to be together but they were on different paths. These places became a theme for him. There was a loneliness that crept up on him. His fathers behaviour had started to become more erratic. But there would always be a clarity. He would spiral out of control and then realign. Little did he realise that this was a process. It was the disease that was creeping up on his father. They were both starting to feel lonely. The world seemed to be more about concrete and cars. The tunnel it seemed was so literal. It was like a portal through which to travel. From mind to mind. In this organised functional world there were people who had problems being functional. The tunnel was just a tunnel. It wasn't sacred. Although it was functional. But it showed the truth of who they were. They were flesh and blood

in a world that was shaped to house, to feed and to function for the greater good but also to create hierarchies that in a way separated people. People had started to come apart from the inside. The DNA had become full of misinformation. There were sequences that kept the fabric of the flesh and tissue misinformed though there was no true ideal. Inevitably though everyone looked for the ideal. It was the teacher. It was the founder and in a way it was the dream informing reality. The perfect illusion. Once in a park his father kissed his forehead and it was as though that kiss made the sudden trajectory of his father harder to accept. It seemed that he soon lost all connection to reality and time seemed so cruel. The world was lonely he surmised. It was painful and life was delicate. The human body was so fragile and the world seemed to go by leaving so many stranded. His father would turn up on his doorstep. He spoke to his father but his father looked at him blankly standing at the door. He didn't move. The boy grabbed the phone to call his grandmother. His father simply walked away and disappeared down the street. A hole had opened up. He dreamt of falling through time. He fell through many ages seeing people in different clothes and in dif-

ferent settings. Then there was nothing. But really it was the whole universe. He had imagined himself as an old man. It was in a dream. He felt as though life had suddenly gone by leaving him looking back. It was probably only near his tenth birthday and time seemed to be creeping up on him. He was getting older and he had become aware of it. He was always racked with a deep seated fear. He felt as though people were animals. That they wanted to shape him. They wanted the round peg to fit through the square hole. He racked his brain. How would it work? How could he fit into the square hole. He wondered why he was so obsessed with this problem as a child. How could he fit in? In a world that wants like with like. When you were another shape. Another type. Beside the function and logic of these problems was the fact that we eventually would find somewhere. There was hope and for most part that is what gets us through. The fact that he had seen the side of functional normality gave him hope. But was it essentially false hope? The falling dream seemed to tell him that people had been here before. There had been pain all through the ages. It was nothing new but he was left to find his own path. There were no reassuring voices to tell him it would pass.

One day they came to Kings Cross and the rumblings of trains could be heard below. The boy asked his father to lift him to the ledge to look down at the trains. When he looked he saw so many pictures and words on the train lines. There was the grey pebbled walls covered in soot and grime. Though peering out cheerily was the colourful names and one which was a stark white seemed to stand out the most. It was elongated along the wall intersecting in itself. It was like looking through a lens. Down there though was constant danger. Even looking over the edge was dangerous. The trains careered along the track oblivious to the paintings. It was unfamiliar and strange but to a young eye amazing. His father put him back on the pavement and they continued their journey. Soon they would see the ducks and birds in the park. People would be feeding them bread and the ducks would crowd around pushing and shoving. There were so many things in the world it was all very exciting. Soon he would be home at his mothers and they would have dinner and he could dream of all of the adventures they had.

Chapter 4

Throwing stones

He had a good friend named David. They would look at birds bones and Davids electronics. They were both quite odd kids. They didn't seem to fit in. David lived in a sprawling house with his mother and father and grandfather. They lived up the road through a leafy set of units. He by the way lived in a small workers terrace that was quite homely. There adventures were always fun. One day David said "look what I've made" they huddled around a tiny matchbox and in it was a tiny glowing globe. It was literally a matchbox torch made of small electronic components. The sheer joy

of these discoveries was enormous. One day the little boy showed David what he had in a match box. It was the tiny skull of a bird that he had cleaned and placed in a matchbox. Their friendship knew no bounds and they had spent so much together on adventures learning about the world around them. They would sometimes jump fences around the area as they adventured. People would sometimes get upset but knew they just adventurous boys looking at everything they could. It was just adventure after adventure. The mood though in the area had started to sour. The local high school seemed full of trouble makers and these two primary school kids could easily get caught up in the problems of the area though at this stage they were too young. David's parents had seen the warning signs. Youths on the streets at all hours and stores getting broken into. The town itself was quite small and very historic. There were many terraces and old shops in the town but it was destined to change. Soon enough the area had started to become unsafe and David's parents decided to leave Sydney for Mackay in Queensland.

Then one day David came over quite distraught. His family was going to move to Queensland a great distance away. They would move to Mackay and his

heart sank. Who would he adventure with? What interesting projects would he miss out on being a part of. Some events can be life changing. Besides his father now being more absent so too would his best friend. It was understandable in a way. The area was in a slow transition and the local kids would run amuck. The primary school was good but the high school seemed to breed criminals. There were drug dealers down the beaches and bikies running the local show ground event. It wasn't all bad but it seemed like it was probably going to get worse rather than better. It was a few years later when meeting some of the other local kids that things started to unravel. They were into sport which he hated and playing sport wasn't just a competitive venture but a baptism of fire. They would be cruel and purposefully hurt each other and make full contact hits just for a laugh. He was hating sport more and more. He would have loved to play piano but when his sister moved out the piano was sold. He started feeling beat up and paranoid constantly having nightmares about school and the other kids. Soon he was spending most of his time on his own. For a laugh he would wander down to a quiet street and throw stones at unit windows. He would smash telephone

booths. On one occasion he was simply wandering the streets when he came across a demountable in a school and proceeded to break into it. Inside were computers. He thought that maybe there would be games. He found a shopping trolley and loaded the computer in and wheeled it home. It seemed there was a hole in his chest. Not literally mind you he felt emotionally lost. Having no anchor can be a challenge for anyone. Drifting through life haphazardly and finding little joy in the day to day. He wheeled the trolley home and proceeded to enter his backyard which he used for any suspect activities. He plugged the computer in and turned on the monitor and its flat based hard drive. The whole thing whirled to life making a distinct beep before it finally had booted and to his disappointment there was a green screen in front of him with a blinking cursor. Little did he realise that like anything you have use some kind of commands or format to create a set of outcomes. A command could give you more functionality. In essence knowing what you were doing really helped. But he and the computer sat there staring at each other. Both wanting to know what to do next. His mother came home and saw the computer and proceeded to freak out. She told him to

get rid of it so he had to dump it down the lane. He had no idea what he had done or what he was doing but realised that the computer was not going to get him out of his rut. Technology was a way forward but it required knowledge. It wasn't intuitive but simply calculated falsehoods and truths based on binary logic. The computer couldn't explain the world but was a tool that symbolised. It provided a short cut to some truths but not to others. Some things only people could figure out and some things they would never figure out. The computer could store your crimes but not explain it. Would a computer throw stones if it could? Would it know why it did it? It could symbolise the act in a game. So in a way it could. In other ways it never moved aware from the primacy of symbols. The thrown stone was a symbol. David and Goliath. The world was so much bigger than our selves. We were always at odds with a bigger world. A world that could swallow us. A world where we could disappear into bureaucracy. Into our own troubles.

Chapter 5

Nature

At six in the morning the clear waters of Coogee would glisten. He would blow the water out of his snorkel as he dived a little further down amongst the rocks unearthing small shells. The water was cold but it felt refreshing and the early morning sun was gentle. The sand swirled as he moved a small rock. It was the sensation of gliding into this other worldly environment that calmed him and fascinated him. Small fish darted to and fro occasionally trying to nibble at his legs. It didn't hurt and soon the fish realised there was no point. Coogee wasn't always that clear. Rarely it

would fill with a tide of sewerage from the outfall in Malabar. After intense rain the storm water would build up and leaves and sometimes the carcass of a rat would appear. But in the right setting and on the right day it was perfect. Today was one of those days. He mainly loved the shallows as it was easy to see and make a quick dive. This was perfect for an inquisitive mind. The water was fascinating and he spent a few hours in his activities. His mother had met a Maori man and he was a gentle man so they had started spending a lot of time at the beach and at peoples houses having food. It was a good time for him because there was plenty to do and he was always busy. They went on holidays and saw fascinating rock formations and different places. In a way this provided the stability he needed to calm down and realise that life had its ups and downs. Even though he was a little bit of an outcast with the other kids everyone accepted each other and had a good time. The theme for him really was nature. Nature though treacherous was also fair in that it gave everyone the ability to survive and thrive but within the limits that seemed to always be moving. Nature was something that created a vantage point within which to think and see the world around

you. He remembered when in the better times with his father going to some of these places and seeing the valleys of trees spread out below. To be in there, to be right in the middle of the valley would be difficult unless you knew what you were doing but to see it from a vantage point was to see the bigger picture. The forever moving vantage point. Whether from space or from wherever, gave you a new way of understanding. You could see yourself as part of this huge beautiful world tinged with everything in between. The young boy had started to be in awe of nature. He had seen documentaries on nature's wonders and terrors but he was amazed by it. It really was amazing and this love of nature stayed with him for his whole life. He remembered fondly when his father had taken him places when he was still well enough to and now he got to go to many places. It was hard to sit in a car though for hours on end. Going up the east coast to Brisbane or the Gold Coast in Queensland. They were always looking at the world and seeing its beauty. There is nothing beautiful about the journey though. One day he had fell asleep in the car and he had a dream. An American Indian angrily walked up to him and put an axe in the middle of his head. He could feel the pain

in the middle of his skull. He awoke and could still feel the pain. Maybe his mind was telling him something. Maybe there was anger in the world that found itself in dreams as well as in reality. Maybe his mind had been split in two in reality as well in the dream. His head hurt a little for a few days then he felt better again. His life would be filled with dreams. He sometimes wondered what was more real? Dreams were harder to decipher from reality. There were places in his dreams that he would revisit. There seemed to be buildings and spaces that had a particular function. Borrowing from reality but being more of their own logic. The buildings in his dreams as they came and went were pointing to the role of human logic in a world of natural logic. Humans had to re purpose the world to make their logic function. To make sure they could impose their order. Dreams emphasised this for him. Nature was confusing in that it also imposed its own order, but it let life forms figure out their own logic to be able to create and survive. Humans had ordered reality and also their own dreams. Sometimes the world was clearer in dreams.

Chapter 6

1987

A year before he had started doing graffiti. He met up with a bunch of guys in the area who were known for this type of thing. He was determined to make a go of it. He didn't really understand what he was getting himself into. Cold nights sleeping in stairwells. Wandering the night at all hours and visiting some of Sydney's most notorious neighbourhoods. One of the biggest problems he faced was actually having the things these kids wore. Mostly graffiti artists in Sydney wore stolen goods. He wasn't great at stealing clothes it seemed too hard. Especially stealing

shoes. Most shoes were rolled off other kids in that they were stolen through intimidation and force. He really wanted a pair of nice looking sneakers and everyone had good shoes. A lot of kids did buy them too but at \$200 they were a fortune by the days standards. There were tariffs but a lot of it was prestige. They were designed for athletes at the time so were exclusive. He decided he wanted a pair and got a job after school and after months of saving finally had the money. The shoes were called Nike air Pegasus and they were a very nice pair of shoes. They were deceptively simple in that they had a greyed blue hue with a slightly darker blue swoosh. In truth they were maybe worth the money for design alone. They looked so out of place in the dusty hues of Sydney where everybody for some reason looked either like a rugby player or a loud colourful fashionista with a sweater on in the height of summer. Not to mention knee high fluorescent socks or any of the other standard loud colours people seemed into at the time. Well we could talk about short shorts which was the other fashion and last but not least singlets. At least the graffiti artists had some taste even though they were well over their budgets. Wanting the best wasn't new to him. When

he was young he always felt like he was missing out on all of the fun stuff. He would have loved a soda stream, a Gameboy or a console maybe an expensive ice cream or any sort of status enhancing item. He pulled the shoes out of the box. They were really a world away from where they were designed. This was Australia and the Leyland brothers wore khaki not Nikes. They seemed like an alien object in his rather simple home, a workers terrace with the utility looking mission brown carpet and sky blue painted walls. He put them on his feet, they were so comfortable and they looked great. He had a second hand LaCoste shirt he had bought from a second hand store in the city with a pair of tennis shorts. That was the only way he felt comfortable getting these rather expensive items. He just didn't feel like stealing them and was rather bad at it getting an official caution when he was caught in a store in Bondi with his mates throwing boxes of Reebok shoes out the window below. He felt like he had solved a real problem by saving and waiting which by the way took months but they were now his and he had bought them through hard work and sweat. Who can put a price on sweat? What is the price of sweat? It seems the main commodity we trade for things. That very

evening he took off to meet his mates. They weren't really surprised by his shoes because they were able to get these things a little easier. Sometimes they traded things they could steal but he felt good. He felt like he fit in at least. They decided to go to a Def Jam at the Hordern pavilion. They headed off and they had to walk because they had no money for the bus. They were hoping to sneak into the event if they could. They got to the Colonial Diner a kind of pin ball fast food drive in diner just before the pavilion. A bunch of kids saw them and they were a little older. They were kids from Waterloo, one of them saw his brand new Nikes. "Give me your shoes".....he said "no" but the kids mates crowded around and he had to take them off. They slipped off his feet and he had to walk home in his socks.

Chapter 7

1988

It had been a fairly uneventful day all up and he wondered down deserted streets. It was a bright autumn day in Sydney the sun tempered by a cool breeze. He walked through the central business district. It was a Sunday and the city was dead in parts even more so heading past Martin Place. Soon people started appearing looking for ferries at the quay. He walked around as though in a daze that day but he had some plans to catch some trains from Circular Quay station and do some circuits of the city circle writing his tag on the trains. It was 1988 and the Australian bicen-

tenary was on the calendar though a lot of people he knew were not going to celebrate European invasion. A lot of the prominent taggers and anti social agitators were from Redfern and Waterloo. Their idea of a celebration was running amok. The escalator slowly delivered him to the platform and a train came thundering along the platform coming to a stop. He walked into the last car of the train and was suddenly immersed in a black scrawl that seemed to disfigure the carriage and carry his eyes in every direction looking for any distinguishing marks. The interior was illegible and immersed from top to bottom in black ink. There was nowhere to put a tag so he stood there and felt as though this was an epiphany. This car embodied the movement and momentum of his generation. They were going to push their agenda even if it was collectively meaningless although the black of the carriage was a skin of black ink. The skin that had at that point been mostly disenfranchised and at a time when colonisation was celebrated the trains became a collective hysteria. He knew and others knew that this was as bad as it had ever been. It seemed everyone was looking to deface to the point of complete breakdown of the blatant individuality of graffiti itself. They were

happy to disappear into the chaos of collective disdain. For him though it meant a lot more. It proved graffiti was an experience like no other. It was blinding and obsessive to the point where normal realities could be reset. Nothing mattered more than tags in that they were a heartbeat of rebellious zeal. This experience itself was proof that what was seen as form following function could be form becoming immersion. So many people were in effect lost in language itself and to fight back people had to use words to disfigure and transform space itself. There was a point though when graffiti became pointless. It opened up the possibility to be creative and maybe start a creative career but consistently it became more entangled in crime. The lowest point of all of this was the residual creep of hate crimes. With graffiti the door was open to anybody and so people came in sometimes with their own egos broken. There were people where graffiti was literally their only hope. It was all they had and then they realised that they were far from creative. The destruction was just that. It was defacement. It was ugly but it literally showed the collective hysteria on those black carriages. People had cancelled themselves out. They were ready to go in any direction. They had nothing

to lose but themselves. They would inevitably drag themselves down and others too. The experience itself though was immersive and seemed to drag the world into this disdain. A lot of the graffiti writers wanted to be creative and that was open to them but notoriety was sometimes more important. Because graffiti was permeable it allowed a lot of different ideas in but it was truly closed. The idea was to conform and so people had to fit in. The moniker of criminal at this stage became more common and the formative years of art and creative input had hardened to the concept of notoriety. In essence they were treated like criminals. Soon enough they actually became criminals.

Chapter 8

1989

It seemed like graffiti on the trains was a lot quieter from the year before. Only the most dedicated seemed to still be on the train system this year. There was an undercurrent though. They were both in full school uniform. Neat ties hair perfectly combed to the side. Two white boys walking down the streets of Redfern an indigenous neighbourhood in inner Sydney. They had been spending a lot of time doing graffiti together. Their dapper outfits a rouse for their real intentions of tagging trains and running into layups. Redfern wasn't exactly the kind of place you could just walk

around. Everleigh Street was the most notorious street in Sydney. A line of terraces that looked unwelcoming and decrepit with the occasional burnt out shell. They walked past the train station and headed around the corner from Everleigh Street to a small unassuming terrace house. Ronnie opened the door and they stepped in. There was a lack of furniture. On the floor in a huddle was a woman looking at her arms. Her head looked up "Who the fuck is this?" she shot out. She was huddled on the floor sitting up with a blanket. It was obvious she was a junky. It was Ronnie's mother looking half dead. Ronnie just said this was his mate and they pretty much had to leave nearly as soon as they had stepped in. They carried on tagging that day and eventually parted ways. Ronnie seemed to have some problems with aggression. They would be out tagging and he would just start bashing someone for no reason at all. It really freaked him out but he was too scared to say anything to Ronnie. Eventually he couldn't hang out with him anymore that year and they went their own ways but initially they were all about graffiti. The whole area from Redfern to Waterloo seemed to be steeped in aggression. If you went there at night you were highly likely to be bashed

by youths wandering the streets. Essentially everyone and anyone was a target especially outsiders. You had to know someone or at least know someone who knew someone otherwise you were in trouble. The day wasn't nearly as bad but closer to Everleigh street was no different at anytime. Anything of value was taken off you by force if necessary and the best way of getting around that was avoiding the area. Him and a couple of his mates would go to Waterloo which was just as bad as Redfern and paint along a set of walls late in the evening. It was a continual drama where at times a group of locals would spot them painting and chase them out of the area. It was amusing or seemed to be amusing but really it was dangerous. There was danger of hospitalisation or worse to be expected if they were ever caught. Luckily they never were and at times they had free reign to the walls where they painted. Waterloo was a graffiti artists paradise. There were very few police patrols and large walls on quiet streets. The police were never a worry, they always expected youths to be on the streets late at night. At the time it was quite normal. Youngsters were asked if they were stealing cars and if they said no they were left wandering. It was only if you were caught red handed that the police

would become involved. It was a dark night and two of the boys had gone to Central yards to do a panel on a train. This wasn't their normal routine it was the first time they had been to the yard. They climbed the fence and went down a hill into the yard. It was quiet except for a few diesel trains running quite far away. It may have been an engine they couldn't see it. A set of rattlers was laid up in rows. They went to the edge of the yard facing the tracks sprawled out quite deep. They started painting, it was a door to door that they sketched up. They filled it in grey, started the background in a salmon pink. Soon his mate tapped him and told him to look over. Down the end of the tracks was a man standing with a white beard far down on the tracks. They scrambled to leave running up the hill and putting their bag of cans in a clump of bushes. As soon as they reached the street a car screeched to a halt. It was obviously police and they started running. One ran up a one way street and the other ran up a road parallel. The police caught up with his mate. They cornered him. All they asked was are you stealing cars and he said no and the police drove off. Some how they managed to meet up again in a lane and relayed the story. They both went back to the yard

and finished their door to door. They were excited because Central was an unpredictable yard that was regularly raided as it was so close to Redfern and Waterloo where so many graffiti artists lived. They made their way back to Bondi Junction where they told their crew they had done panels at Central. Everyone was excited the whole crew took off to go and see. On the way they noticed a bike store with a back fence. They climbed over finding many new bikes and passed them one by one over the fence. In the end there were seven youth all on brand new bikes riding from Bondi Junction back to Central. It was a great ride and soon they were only a few minutes from Central. Out of nowhere a number of police cars swooped on the boys. There were undercover police and wagons the lot. They were all carted off to the cells and asked why they had the new bikes and what they were up to. Luckily someone had said quite loudly so all of the youth could hear that they had bought the bikes at the pool hall in Randwick so at least they were all on the same page. Parents were called and no charges were laid. It was five in the morning and each one of them was picked up or released. What happened to the panel nobody knew. There were no photos just stories amongst a

small group. They were difficult times to keep out of trouble when there was a lot of adventure to be had.

Chapter 9

1990

They were told it was marijuana and looked at it wondering how to smoke it. They had paid \$20 dollars for it. His mate wasn't going to share it. They didn't even really know what marijuana was. Little did they realise that this wasn't marijuana but probably some dried herbs. They tried to smoke it but then when a mate turned up he said "you guys got ripped off, if you want some of that stuff I can get it for you". They looked like idiots but they had no idea. They were at a painting spot that was for water storage. It had large grey concrete walls surrounded by trees. Con-

sidering a lot of the music they were listening to went on about drugs they were keen to at least try some weed. It wasn't a good look sitting around with dried herbs near a concrete wall trying to get high only to be told you were not only wrong but you were essentially ripped off as well. Their intentions were not just about trying to get high but about experimentation in general. They didn't want to miss out on anything if they could help it. The year was about painting new ideas and seeing what they could visually come up with. The year before had been a great year for all of the guys painting. This year they hoped would be better again. They weren't willing to put too much experimental work out there instead keeping it in local spots. One day he was in Randwick and Mike turned up looking very happy. He had a local casual job after school so had some money and Mike told him he had a surprise. Soon they were in the park and Mike pulled out a roll of tin foil. He looked up and asked "what is it?" ...Mike was still smiling. "It's weed" the delight in his voice was infectious. He didn't really know what to expect and soon Mike rolled a joint and they started passing it around. He drew on the joint and inhaled only to cough slightly. He suddenly felt light headed

and happy. He felt relaxed and he felt a rush in his brain. Soon they were all laughing at anything. Everything seemed so funny and they felt so good. They all started feeling incredibly hungry and headed to the local Chinese restaurant. They ate and they laughed, they were embarrassed but couldn't care less. It was pretty obvious they were all high. Everything seemed so great. The food was delicious and they enjoyed it immensely and mostly they didn't have a care in the world. Soon they all parted ways and he went to bed and slept very well. Normally he found it difficult to sleep and his mind would race whereas tonight he slept well and soundly. Finally he had tried marijuana and it was a great experience. It was an experience that paved the way for years to come. The problem though was what had started off as a great time eventually started to unravel. Little did he realise that his mind would start to unravel as well. The relaxation would then lead to confusion. Confusion to anxiety. He and his friends had opened a Pandora's box. For some it was ok. They weren't as affected but for most there were places they would head to and some never come back. They would walk that long arduous journey into addiction or madness. They would step over that edge

and start to fall from a great height. Really though it was from a great high and how far would they fall?

Chapter 10

From the outside

If there was a theme it would be ‘movement’. Everything was moving but it wasn’t just the obvious. He seemed to be happiest in transit. Walking was a thread that followed into the movement of the bus or train. The destination was irrelevant just the journey itself that was held in moments. This kind of state was the modern world’s triumph. From steam engines to jetliner’s and the television complimented it all making the eyes move, though it feigned real movement and seemed so real and so relevant. His walks had become homages to the modern world though it

was entangled with his own feelings of isolation. He wasn't really alone though he had distanced himself and his state of mind was..... It seemed that the darkness was all about highlighting the small glimmers of light through curtained windows. The real trials were hidden behind curtains in rooms. These rooms connected to each other connecting each person as though in a place. So many points in space. Something you could point to on a map perhaps. There was an identity though truly it was private. It hid behind walls. In this case the world was dark. It was a little cold. Maybe the ink inside himself would spill out onto the world. Maybe this would all become perpetual darkness. Possibly these walks would become a story or maybe they would fade just like the ink eventually did. The act of walking down the suburban streets seeing the lights was a constant chase of the moment of movement it was only later that he realised that all of those people were maybe as lonely as he was. Even though they were arguably in a place on a map and he had the same problem. The world which seemed to be all in his mind became the real place he existed within. His mind was set against him and called on him to fall off the map. To disappear in the hope he

could once again find himself.

It was a Thursday night and he had set off from the city to walk his way back to Rosebery. This walk would take a circuitous route and take a few hours. Then he would head back east to Randwick which would take maybe an hour and a half. All the while putting his graffiti tag here and there. The walks though long let his mind wander. He could think about whatever popped into his mind. His mind was always active. Before he slept it seemed his mind would race and he felt it hard to unwind. This may have been why he would walk at all hours of the night as sleep was simply something that happened when you were completely exhausted. A deep rushing world of dreams that left you groggy when you awoke the next day. What these walks did was highlight his active mind. Everything seemed out of reach and the suburban dreams surrounding him slipped into every waking corner of his life which seemed unreal. What he really sought in his life was peace. Even in the most lasting peace people seemed to want to break it. Their own flaws became the flaws in peace itself. We were all broken and breaking but outside the streets were quiet and really they were peaceful. Why he thought, did I

have to think this way? Was it the Hollywood movies and television episodes that highlighted the odd one out? The potential hero who if made the wrong move would fail? The reality was that it was a loop and people had described these things as a mind. Suddenly his own insignificance became an obsession. He had to leave a mark and he hated the world for disregarding this. Each graffiti tag that disappeared only made him more determined to find a place. Everyone needed somewhere to belong. Unfortunately the streets were owned by somebody else. It was collective ownership or state ownership and you eventually had to find your place on the map. The world worked in certain ways but his mind had other plans. He had inherited a different perspective and for that he set to walk and move. He saw a frame or a box and really there were many like him who saw these structures but getting into the frame was too real the real Hollywood moment or Disneyesque cliché was that he was living in a dream.

It wasn't the dream of money and fast cars but instead a perpetual state of waking sleep. The world itself was the dream and difficult to manipulate or touch. His legs were slow and when he ran he felt he hadn't

moved. In these states of mind he felt aloof and seemed to watch the world as though it was a movie. Would he be the hero or fail before he had even began? The onset of madness can be like this. An indistinct set of ideas and possibilities that seem to become immersive. It is sometimes called a fog that slowly appears making seeing ahead even harder than before. We don't really know what the future holds but for the mad they start to think they know. They imagine the world is against them. Slowly shutting them out. Their terror becomes their reality. The paranoid plot. It must be more than just a fog though. Soon they simply see shadows. An abstraction. A hole. A metaphor. Seemingly they feel they know too much. When really they know nothing but semblances, and indistinct shapes and forms. He had written graffiti on the world around him and in a way graffiti started to be written in his mind. The black ink ran in his mind, the words made nonsensical sentences as they were written. It was really a story in the world that he had projected but also injected. It was like he had filled his body with ink and words and they seemed to spill out onto the world. The graffiti seemed to grow in his mind and the story became larger and larger blotting out reality.

He hadn't created language though. It was forced on him. Words were at once his freedom and his cage. The fact was that everyone was affected. They were brought together and ripped apart all through words. Words that seemed cobbled together and words that were wrought as though in steel. There was also the simple walk through a wealthy neighbourhood. Looking at the houses and passing through parks. There were the bus stops with nobody waiting. The occasional bus going by and the steep hills. Maybe a private school kid walking through the park. There was freedom in walking. You were free to walk anywhere you wanted within reason.

Chapter 11

On the bus

He saw his face and in a way recognised him as a type of person he had known. What type of person? Maybe someone who had chosen a difficult path or found themselves on one. Did they mean to get addicted to heroin and spend years battling addiction? Did they mean to get locked up in gaol and spend years in its web of associations? It was all in the past now but it was written on their face in their voice and mannerisms. He had seen him recognise his face written in the tight muscle wasted cheeks and was like “how are ya bro?” they both knew each other but maybe

had associations through graffiti. In a way they didn't really know each other that well. They were never close just graffiti associates that were known to others that were entwined in the talk that happened in methadone clinics or gaol mental health clinics. "Did you hear about M?" they had already said their intros introducing tag names to kick start memories. Maybe it is better to be forgotten. People say you can't hide from your past but he was doing a pretty good job of it. He had no associations, no trail but graffiti but today you didn't see it. It was a picture on the world wide web or on a platform a double tap paradise of fifteen minute fame. He hadn't seen anything he was still on the streets and in and out of methadone clinics and gaols. But only visiting. "M is brown bread" he looked perplexed but pretty much knew what he meant. "He died in gaol" he kind of trailed off. He wanted to tell a full story but they were on a packed bus and it was difficult to get it all out in one go. "He should have stayed in protection" he looked around as though recounting the story in his head as well as trying to recount it out loud. "He was in protection but he got out" all he could say was "oh shit". There were doubts it was true there was no evidence but they

promised to look into it. “I gotta mate I can ask” if it was true which it was hard to tell for sure as nobody had heard anything but rumours. They would have to do a dedication piece and he brought up S who had a very unsavoury criminal record fuelled by drugs and things that nobody wanted to be associated with. They exchanged numbers and he knew he kept his phone on silent for those 2am phone calls on a week night. “Who is it?” he sounds exhausted and says “Its D mate, did you talk to your mate” it was 2am and he couldn’t think what he was on about. That though was just a thought it didn’t really happen but could have happened in a parallel universe. That happened though but it isn’t confirmed. “What happened?” he trailed off as he had hit the pipe and he was drinking “M mate, was he brown bread?” The truth though was unclear. Nobody in this situation really wants to know the truth. The other story was he had gone interstate after getting out. Earlier that evening he asked his mate if he knew anything. He had only known that he saw him earlier in the year and he got transferred to another gaol. He wasn’t brown bread after all? Maybe he was toasted in another state or in protection maybe he was turning up for work and nothing particularly

bad had happened. Ok maybe.

Chapter 12

Music

Even though he had slept a little badly the music was soothing. His sister sat on the piano playing that morning and he awoke to it. He felt like a king who had this wonderful act performed daily though soon it would stop as his sister was going to leave home very soon. Once his sister had left home there seemed to be a strange replacement for the beautiful piano music. His neighbour, an only son to a Polish immigrant had discovered electronic music and would jam with his friends sometimes into the night. They were not particularly loud but his bedroom was right next to

his neighbours. The sound carried through the walls. It was a strange cacophony of noise and music. It had musical elements but seemed like something off a movie set. It was science fiction and fantasy, the clanging of invisible space craft. His dreams had become a movie set. His neighbour seemed aloof, he was unfriendly maybe he was paranoid or secretive. He would park his Bedford van overlapping the pavement in front of the terraces and not utter a word. A hello was folly as he simply looked away not replying. Was he so absorbed in his tinkering that he couldn't be friendly? The interesting thing he hadn't understood that this man child in front of him was in a lot of ways a threatened species. He had to remain out of touch so nobody pulled him into line. He probably had a job but who knew. Also he was at least thirty an only child living with his mother. In Polish culture this was quite normal until a man married and sometimes the arrangement didn't change. Why was he a threatened species though? He was in a way doing his own thing. He was his own person doing away with normal routines. He had his Bedford van and his mysterious soundscapes. He could escape the harsh realities of normal everyday life. What worked

against him in the end was his love of danger. He had a bike that he rode too fast down dangerous traffic infested hills. This was another act to soothe the boredom but it seemed it went too far as after one fateful ride he never returned. A car pulled out suddenly and he came crashing crushing under its wheels. He died suddenly and tragically. His mother now without her son slowly went mad in her old age. It was a true tragedy. Strangely though the neighbour also found an interest in electronic music. In its strange intensity. In its noise. He knew though that you had to hide your interests from a world that would run you down figuratively and literally. All for just being a little bit strange. Hearing the energies that nobody else wanted to hear. For fear of being singled out.

Chapter 13

Misadventure

There were always the local lads on the streets. We never picked it but T was to start modeling. G wasn't though. He was a local inspiration. He never bragged or big talked. He was just too busy to bother. You couldn't call him humble. He was just a local guy following his interests. You would see them somewhere or other. In a way you just said hello and asked what they were up to. They had style. T had a lot of style. That's what got him into modeling. He could wear fashion and pull it off. They were a mystery in a way. They delved deeper into things. They found

themselves social climbing. Everyone wanted to climb socially. You wanted to get somewhere, you wanted money probably more than fame. Some of us wanted fame more than money. Graffiti seemed a hot ticket. But for G he had done that so long ago. Rumours abounded about him though I never even knew he had ever done graffiti. Then one day I saw G doing a small wall in Bondi. He was deep in concentration. It wasn't what other guys were doing. It was the artwork for the original Vertigo records label with a UFO. At the time I had no idea what he was doing. I said hello but he was so deep in thought that he looked up briefly and was back into it. To me that was the first time I had ever seen him with a spray can. Truly I was clueless. Graffiti was letters not a scene. T would never do graffiti though he may have. He was more of a skater. Though he was too on point to ever really be anything but what was hot right this second. The fashionista. Eventually as the 90s started getting traction it was 1995 or thereabouts and there I was outside a fashionable bookstore confronted with G, T and F all looking flash in the sharpest suits. I couldn't hide my surprise. "What the hell are you guys up to?" they laughed and told me they were working at the airport. They

just zoomed straight past us all. We were all starving artists while these guys were living the high life. They looked like they had made it. This was serious. Not too long after I saw F at a pub in Darlington. He was depressed, he was in a bad way. I asked him what was wrong and he told me G and T were dead. We were all heartbroken. It seemed the high life had been the end. There were numerous rumours around how they died. T died somewhat suspiciously. There were a few reports. There was a bus driver who saw a sports car veer to a halt. Someone who matched T's description was thrown out of the car. He ran across the bridge and simply jumped off the side. A suicide but with an unanswered twist. It was labelled suicide. There were drugs in his system. The bus driver never caught the licence plates. He was too in shock seeing the events unfold. G died after falling from his balcony. There were drugs in his system as well. Another young lady also died who was known to them. Suicide and drugs. It seemed like all three were linked but the police couldn't find clues as each had ended their own lives without any sign of force. Each though had high levels of drugs in their systems. High enough to let suicide be a factor. The funny part was they were

not big drug users. The most likely scenario was drugs were forced into them to promote a suicide. From flying high to death. My opinion of drugs really sank and especially that of the people who peddle them. They could take a life away in moments. Whatever really happened may never be known. It was a chapter in their lives and they seemed above everything. They may have climbed too high.

Chapter 14

Lost sites

Sydney was full of factories and power stations. In some ways with the lack of public space came a feeling of oppression. It was worse for some than others. Growing up in a town that seemed divided by factory walls and warehouses where for entertainment there were abandoned sites with burnt out cars and rubbish didn't seem good at all. Eventually though with the coming of globalisation these sites were closed only to then become high rise housing. It was a visual assault but while these sites lay empty there was a place to adventure in. The old power stations and warehouses

lay abandoned and you could re purpose these sites. One way of doing this was holding illegal parties or doing graffiti or doing photography on site. These were essentially lost sites where decades of peoples work was finished. It was strange to go to these sites and find the control rooms. Technology in this time was physical. It wasn't simply a keyboard and pointing device. It was a series of switches and other forms of input. Dials were turned and sometimes connections were patched through wires. It was quite banal to the people who worked these machines at the time, for youth who were used to representations of technology on television, the site of control panels built into what seemed to be that of a ships cabin was amazing. An arc of physical technology. The old seemed to be superior. It wasn't that technology was better but it was a vision. The vision of technology in these sites was forward thinking while the state of technology was becoming consumerist and modular. As these sites disappeared so did the memories. Memories of sites eventually clouded only to be found in photographic records. Sydney had been to an extent saved from the factories and warehouses where some sites became public space or places to meet or shop. The children who had grown up in these sites

of decay and abandon were now adults with memories of a different world. For one I would sometimes have dreams of these places. The dreams seemed to be asking did these sites really exist and where could I possibly find them. Where did the lost sites really belong. A lot of the operators of these sites were probably quite old or maybe dead. The lost sites were now simply memories. Some sites though were repurposed. Most demolished. In recurring dreams places seemed to temporarily exist again. In the end I realised that yes these places had existed. They reached back in time and gave a false view of their purpose. They were essentially utilities but they were a sign. They were a sign of a past that seemed forever to disappear. Even in new hands the sites had lost their original purpose. They were simply a shell. The human mind can wonder and can take the past forward but in dreams it seemed the true nature of these places existed. They were engineered to keep the lights on or to keep goods, or ship goods. Everyone in these places though dreamed. They probably dreamed of other worlds. All of these other worlds were in a way lost to reality. We needed to keep the lights on, the power on. But when the lights went out a whole other

set of places seemed to be more real than anywhere else.

Chapter 15

An anarchist thread

Somewhere in his head at least there was a place that was needing a dose of reality. It was the bitter pill though. Reality seemed so demeaning. Full of pecking orders and laborious boredom. Should we send them to a private school? It wasn't even a question to be honest everybody knew the answer was yes. You were mad not too or just poor. You didn't want to be either. The mindless days of public schooling, getting high or simply ignoring everything that would help you in life. The ultimate target in this case was your foot. Put it in your mouth or just shoot it into oblivion. That was

it though. The beautiful days kept going. The sun was shining and the birds were darting through the trees. It looked beautiful but in a way it was simply run of the mill. The birds darted around for insects and the insects darted around for food. They were on the ultimate conservative tread mill. If they stopped and thought about it they would starve. Who said they could think anyway? The scores of tragedies, self made were just as belligerent. If they stopped and realised they were just darting around for their next meal rather than living they may not know what to do with themselves. Addictions and afflictions coupled with the spectre of reality. Culture was the real addiction. The one you needed the most. It was also the affliction tugging at you for answers making you aware that you were far from any good. Your dreams were not real. Or you had to make them real which of course would probably be a nightmare to be fair. You weren't allowed to be anywhere but in the mass mindset. If you escaped it you were lucky but in the end you still had to behave. That was it though, he couldn't do it if he tried. He met people and they tugged at him as if to say 'come back down to reality'. He wasn't high though. There were the other dreamers who were

simply off their faces but it landed people in all sorts of trouble. He lived in dreams. Dreams guided him. The dreams showed him what needed to be done. There needed to be a sense of anarchism. A kind of logic that demanded freedom from everything. There was no freedom though. There was always a leader. Leaders were everywhere. They seemed to have agendas that were more about aspiration. That's it he thought. I am aspiring to dream and show people what it is to be mad. To be out of the ordinary. To exist in ones mind.

Chapter 16

Awakenings

The toilets smelt of stale piss. They were also sites of sexuality and homo-eroticism. A lot of young men felt threatened by their own sexual fluidity. They were angry at themselves for sexuality in general. They had no idea of sexuality really, they knew simply an agenda of fear from the specter of sexual freedom. Why were some young men so afraid of homosexuality? It could have been from representations of aids but there was more to it. In a sense he knew sexuality was fluid. It was also repressed. In a lot of cases homosexuality had even been a crime over the years. It was a crime of pas-

sion. The fact that it could be criminal or was under the radar made it attractive for thrill seekers. They could meet and indulge. In some ways the fear of homosexuality was a carry on from Catholicism in that there were victims who then found themselves carrying out their victimhood. This though was isolated but also strangely popularised through jokes and word of mouth. This in a lot of ways made some violent young men feel they could be vigilantes but they were in the wrong headspace anyway. He on the other hand liked the idea of places becoming sites of sexual fantasy and could understand the thrill. The way a site could be repurposed. It had nothing to do with victims until of course the violent young men bashed the gay men. They felt validated by nothing more than their own ignorance and lack of understanding. They knew though that the gay men were having a good time. They were free to explore their sexuality whereas the young men had no idea. They were stuck. They were not free to explore their own sexuality. Soon enough they lost their freedom to be active members of society. They were criminals and murderers. They had come crashing down on what was a bid for freedom by homosexuals. These sites were chosen because they were

a risk. They were far from conservative staples of marriage and children. In a way the agendas of repressing homosexuality that had been enacted were creating a moment for the repression of sexuality to explode into violence. If you were truly afraid of aids you wouldn't draw blood. They were afraid of their own sexuality. They were afraid of themselves and their own lack of freedom. They were carrying violence into what were places of freedom. It was a dangerous freedom but an attractive one. There was always a fear of getting caught. Caught being a sexual being that was fragile and oppressed by opinion and at times the law. Lets not forget the other popularised idea of 'the wall'. A place where addicted young men sold themselves for sex. This also created a lot of ill will but it had little to do with men meeting in toilet blocks but powerful men using addicts for sex. The dirty places created a sea of misunderstandings and innuendo. It was a recipe for disaster when all people really wanted was understanding and freedom.

Chapter 17

Boxes for people

The world had changed, commerce had quickened and people could browse a catalogue on a device they held in their hand. They felt that everything was in fact malleable and packable. Reality on the other hand was messy and couldn't be just be boxed and labelled. There was a lot of ingenuity though to package. Public image had become a package as well in that you could glean values and attitudes from profiles on the internet. Suddenly everyone could be graphed sorted and manipulated. People had given up on feel good fights. There was nothing but data and calculation. We all

could be bought even with no cash being transacted. It was free but at what cost? Everything you did was within the confines of an algorithm and they would try and box you. The reality though was things in the world were messy they had a level of unpredictability. The fight to impose order and control was tightening. We were going to bring unpredictability to a halt. We could control it from within your own home. We knew everything about you. Everything you did was recorded and ordered while catalogued. People were notorious for repurpose, they could change something even if it meant their downfall. At the same time the real world had lost control. People were always distracted. They had their faces in a screen while graffiti artists took over space. As they marked surfaces. But there was always someone watching. There were eyes everywhere. When you got a knock on the door they had matched the photograph to the close circuit television footage. You had been caught and we knew you were there. We knew what you were thinking. The battle of culture was at hand. They gleaned your profile and said you fit into this section of our belief system. You are the threat. The weapon that may explode. Even though they were wrong they knew.

They knew what they could get their hands on. Data. It was all data to be fed into machines. The big problem with this was we were still human. We couldn't really be impartial. We had bias and our own past to deal with. If only life came with a manual. For some people though it did. They had ceased being human. They had no empathy any more. They couldn't deal with reality. Reality was the real enemy. They had been trying to kill reality for decades. Maybe finally they had a real chance. Only in time would we be able to tell.

Chapter 18

Immigrants

The explosion shook the interior of the church, people huddled terrified. There was screaming, the young boy and his mother had instinctively dropped to the floor. Dust filled the church and had started to settle. The young boy was new to Australia. This type of event was quite rare but it only made it more shocking. The injured were helped by onlookers and soon the police and ambulances had arrived. The young boy and his mother had come from Romania to start a new life and this wasn't the start they needed. The boys mother was well educated and spoke four languages, the boy

on the other hand took a while to grasp English. They lived in the western suburbs where they were greeted with suspicion and some malice from locals who called them wogs. Soon they moved to Coogee beach where there was just as much derision but where the boy picked up a reputation for resourcefulness. His mother worked in a textile factory and money was tight though they had enough food and a nice unit to live in. The boy as he grew started a few schemes where he would steal tools off worksites and sell them at the local pub. Usually he could be found in the car park with his customers negotiating a price. This in a way was what helped him get by and compete with the other kids for a little prestige. Prestige it seemed was for television or movies and everyone wanted some. The truth was there was little to be found in Coogee. The older kids seemed like thugs and the surfers seemed arrogant though some were friendly enough. The most exciting event in the area by the way was put on by drug dealing bikies. Another chance for some excitement where dollar coins were slotted into arcade machines for what was a temporary high. Still though no prestige but at least there was some fun at least for as long as your skills allowed on the arcade games.

Soon you were out of dollar coins and you were still hoping for some prestige. Maybe you were the best arcade player on a certain game or had a new BMX bike then you at least had some prestige. The young boy understood this quite well. He needed prestige and if he could get it through the stealing of goods he could at some stage enjoy some limelight. It wasn't great though if you stole from the wrong person or if rumours got out that in fact it had been you that had stolen the new BMX bike. Notoriety comes with a price and the young boy grew to know this. You had to be organised and able to take calculated risks. Everyone knew of him and in a way most people avoided him but sometimes paths cross. When they met they had both acquired an interest in graffiti and it seemed their reputations would grow at different times and in different ways. They knew in a way that this wasn't really an art form, but a way of life. The experience of the explosion and hardships of fitting were always at the back of his mind. Experiencing Australia as an immigrant was difficult. Sadly this is an ongoing theme but people find a way to fit in even if it is illegal.

Chapter 19

Mascot

Mascot seemed to be neither here nor there. It was close to the airport. It was also not too far from the city but at this particular time it seemed to be lacking trees and shrouded in warehouses. There was a coal train line that was fed by the port in Botany and in a wrecking yard were retired red rattler trains. These trains were sought after as a canvas for graffiti artists. They were an indian red so a white tag would stand out. Almost anything jumped from this surface. There was a man who for no apparent reason had befriended a young graffiti artist. He would load him and his

mates into the back of his combi ute and ferry them to the wrecking yard in Mascot. There were always rumours that the man was a little too friendly to the boys but they didn't seem to care when a ride was offered. Off they went loaded illegally into the back of the ute. A crash would have probably meant multiple deaths. They all had to be fast to hide though the police would rarely have cared. Soon though he moved away and the boys had to find their own ways to the wrecking yard. It managed to get boring after a few years and soon the trains were scarcer. The red rattlers were still in service for a while longer but as they retired some were kept in Redfern and others scrapped in Mascot. The wrecking yard itself was an imposing place with twisted wreckage and crushed cars stacked on each other. Very rarely would they enter the wrecking yard itself instead walking down the coal train lines to the trains. At one stage the trains were in a magnificent line stretching as far as the eye could see. Each train had some graffiti on it. Some of it great some mediocre. As the line of trains dwindled so too did the interest. We seemed to have the whole place to ourselves at one stage with eight carriages left and so we sprayed them with our names. Our names

were really a form of imaginary jousting. We felt we were making a statement every time we painted something. We imagined ourselves as larger than life and in some ways our impact became just that. The legend grew until it was something whispered in primary schools and in high schools. It became ominous. How could something so benign as painting a train grow into something else? It was all about associations, a lot of them unwanted and unthought of. Maybe a young man full of violence thought that the names were cool that they represented their own twisted understanding so they took it and ran with it. There were no initiations or ceremonies simply young boys dreaming that they could be famous or notorious as graffiti artists. There was always someone who took things literally and they in a way lacked the imagination to follow the art form. They couldn't imagine themselves in any other way. If there was a broken door they simply walked through it, sometimes taking the door off its hinges. They were angry. In a way many young men were. They didn't understand that they could change the reality they were in simply by using their imaginations.

Chapter 20

Park Side

It was early morning, he woke up very early as he had to ride his bike down to Coogee to see his friend Kathy. They were only twelve but had known each other since they were born. There was Kim as well. The three of them would spend a lot of time together. Mainly weekends and school holidays were spent together. This particular morning he awoke and felt refreshed. His bike was a bit big for him really. He managed it well and it had become his favourite way of getting around. Getting the bike out of the house was tricky as he lived in a small terrace. He had to manoeuvre around the

tight door way. Soon he was in the park and hopped on his bike riding in his usual awkward fashion. There was a park right next to his house at the top of the row of terraces and another bigger park near the cemetery up the road. He made it to the next park only to see a group of men at the base of the park somewhat far away standing around what was unmistakably a border with a white sheet over it. A sudden chill came over him. He wondered what had happened. How could someone have died in such a quiet park. Things like that never happened in his area. He slowed down and came to a stop surveying the men in the distance. Was there a park side killer on the loose? Some maniac who was wandering the streets? He soon picked up pace again and was on his way to Coogee. It was such a beautiful day he thought and when he got to Coogee he forgot about the body in the park and the men around it. The image though was ingrained in his mind. He felt that maybe the area wasn't as safe as he thought. Only a year later he heard a song by Schooly D from the New York gang Park Side Killers and that moment he had seen the body came back to him. He didn't know this stuff could actually be real. It was mostly movies and television where stories played out

not in the real world. He didn't realise they were inter-linked. He was too young to really understand. Soon his young friends stopped tagging Rebels of Crime and had started tagging Park Side Killers. In a way it was like they were living in their imaginations. They were far from tough. They were a bunch of kids but it was their imaginations that helped them shape the reality around them. They were in their own minds taking charge of their art. They would paint a lot. The problem was the people who took it literally. They wanted to be tough. They wanted to prove they were tough. It took a while to realise that this wasn't going to work. Not when people thought they knew what the crew stood for. It was all about the art and the power of imagination sidetracked by people with none of the above. Soon there were hard drugs and fighting was rife. Where did the power of imagination disappear to? Where were some of these kids headed?

Chapter 21

Journey

Soon everything looked familiar even though none of it was. It was late at night and he was walking the streets again. It wasn't that the familiarity was truly familiar. What was actually familiar about the urban night was the streets, pavements and houses lit from within. Curtains were closed to the world out in the dark though there were lights even here. Everything was paved, tarred and organised down each street. Cars occasionally went past and cars were parked all along the streets with a small gap for driveways here and there. Sometimes a cats eyes could be seen reflecting

light from under a car. Bats would screech in the tree lined suburbs. There was an attraction to the dark. The darkness seemed to be highlighted by light itself though before there was this heavily organised scene there would have simply been the stars and the moon. The journey at this stage was more important than the destination. As far as he knew there was no destination just shadows and glimpses of light in the darkness. There was something to be said for the dark it was the place people could truly be lost in. They could lose themselves here. They could simply walk from place literally unknown. Only if a police car came by would he need to explain. Though if he dressed indiscreetly even a police car would pass by. They were looking for trouble not the lost though you could argue they were after both. Even the trains had the same feeling as walking in that it wasn't really about destinations but the journey in between that left you simply in a state of curiosity. Where was I? Where was I headed? Did it really matter? I seem to be on a journey nonetheless. I am in transit. I am moving from place to place though they are not the places I thought they were. There was a sort of magic even here amongst the lost. There was the magic that maybe you were the narra-

tor of your own movie. Maybe you had become the projected light in the dark cinema. A kind of actor of journeys. Your graffiti implement was simply telling the story of your journey. I am here, even though I am lost I am here. For some though that was the point. They wanted to remain lost. They never wanted to be found again. They were drunk on this heady journey. Reality was cast aside for shadows and dappled light. The way the trees broke up the light was part of this beautiful journey not necessarily into the world but into ourselves. Truly we had lost ourselves in our own private world. A world where we no longer knew how to navigate with the stars. The stars were washed out by city lights and really we had little time to understand that they were above us and could bring us understanding in a world where you bought your plot and closed the curtains.

Chapter 22

Assault

He dropped out of the window and hit the ground lightly. It was one story down and he took off as the police entered the building looking for him in response to a local assault. He was always in trouble and couldn't turn away from a fight. His mother was always on his case. It didn't help and in a way eroded his confidence. He wasn't really that bad but there was a lot of emotional turmoil in him. His father had left the family as he had a series of problems. His mother was big on being polite though it was really an excuse to simply get offended. They were in a rough area where

you had to be tough simply to get by. Nearly everyone in the housing commissions was ready for a fight. It was just how it was and soon he had become disliked by the local gangs. He was a dangerous fighter in that he was rather small and skinny so he could be unpredictable. His nose had been broken countless times though so that was a sign he meant business. This part of Maroubra was the toughest part of the eastern suburbs and as far getting into trouble went this guy was on a long stretch to gaol. As he looked back at his unit he found a spot to hide as the police came charging out to their patrol car hoping to catch him on the run. He knew the area better than the local police. He simply went down some side streets and came to a stairwell that was well out of the way and waited. The other night was a difficult one. He was with a friend and they ran into a couple of local boys who started a fight. He hit the guy right in the jaw and he started to run. They ran after the two guys who arrived at their home. Soon a grown man came out with a huge dog and set it on him. He ran head-long into traffic with the dog in chase and the dog was cleaned up by a car. They decided to get out of there but the guys who started the fight and the father of

one of them contacted the police and told them it was an unprovoked attack that then killed their dog when they set it on them. It wasn't even a case of their word against his as he already had a huge charge tally from the police for assaults. The truth was he couldn't win. All the locals got in on the act and even though you are not supposed to rat on someone they did it knowing he would end up back in gaol for another stretch. This demonstrated just how much he was hated and he hated them back even more for telling the police it was his fault. Soon enough though he started to seriously hurt people using any weapon he could conjure whether it was a pole or golf club. Anything would do and his hatred only grew. It seemed the cycle of violence only grew until everybody had blamed him for everything. He wasn't blameless though as they may have started it but he felt the need to finish it. Soon enough though the tables turned and he was the one starting it and when it came down to it, it was finished in gaol.

Chapter 23

Vandalism

It was hard to know what was going through his head. He had problems at home. His mothers boyfriend was an alcoholic. He was abusive. His father had been psychotic and he hadn't seen much of him. His father wasn't responsive in a normal way. His mothers boyfriend abused him verbally constantly. It was physical before he could hit back. He had a growth spurt and soon was quite psychically built. He had a medium build and was fit. It was hard when there seemed to be nobody he could talk to. He literally started vandalising almost blindly. It was a release. There was a

fear in him though that he had lost control. Each time he smashed a window or broke something he felt like this was the only way to find solace. Instead of wanting comfort he wanted to share his anger. It would be hard to say every vandal would be the same or have the same reasoning. What can you do when you don't see doors opening? You can feel sorry for yourself or you can fight back. In a way vandalism is taking on society. It is the crashing noise of glass that is the conversation that wasn't there. It was the voice you could hear. It told you things were as bad as they seemed. There at the same time is no excuse because society also wants to punish those that break the law. They want to hear the answer from the judge and jury. They wait to hear their answer even though your reality had become a mess. There were constant fights. He was egged on. He threw things. It was always his fault and soon he started to believe it. He was undisciplined and selfish and soon his acts reflected this. He was alone as he wreaked havoc. All he felt though was fear. He was afraid that he may not find the inner peace we need to grow. The window that smashed on him as a baby was now smashing from his own hand. He had become the wind. He was unpredictable and needed to

hit back or be hit. The smell of alcohol on someone's breath was enough to make him want to set things straight. He wasn't even a violent person. Eventually he left home and had a lot of counselling. It worked though as he learnt how to analyse his own thoughts. He could conclude that those thoughts were leading nowhere. He understood that the times he embraced the chaos he was lost. Lost to his own self. He was trying to shatter the reality he was in. This reality had clouded his mind and the glass simply was his interior world that had shattered. It would take years to understand that he wasn't selfish but simply misguided. There had been no guiding hand instead there was the noise of judgement following him wherever he went. He was both guilty and innocent at the same time.

Chapter 24

lost memories

There was every possibility that the site had been over there. Somewhere past an abandoned lot behind a set of abandoned warehouses. It should have been there anyway. At least that is what he could glean from dreams. There was always a place where a sixteen year old could find adventure. Maybe he was older? Anyway nobody could remember and he definitely couldn't retrace his steps decades later. There was no way back to be honest. He had filled out. Pressing mortgage children growing. His youth had simply vanished and it seemed like it happened overnight.

Memories though were dangerous. He laughed at his daughters description of her teacher. She described her as though she had been locked in a cupboard since the 70s and got out not realising decades had passed and she was still in her same clothes. It seemed as though dreams were more real than reality these days. The only problem with dreaming was you had to at least be asleep. Though it could be argued he had simply been asleep his whole life. Asleep to the pressing issue of change. It couldn't be avoided although if you wanted to you could partially avoid it through denial. Stupidity helped marginally but he couldn't rely on it. Drugs could have helped but he never had a thing for drugs at least not recreational drugs. It was difficult as all of the best coping mechanisms were not his thing. Then something occurred to him. He wasn't actually any of the stories or ideas he thought he had been. It was all simply a great big mess. Nobody had spoken about certain things from the past because everyone had to deal with the fact that everything was changing all of the time. He had tried to reach back and really it was quite a sorry attempt. All of the constants of money, career and other hoop jumping was just another way of coping. His grandmother had not been

keen on him doing art because how would he cope being immersed in a reality that did not even exist in the larger world. It was a dare for truth in a world fed on lies. Lying though was the best mechanism there was. Hard drugs were definitely a lie. Wasn't art the biggest lie of them all though? Like the ancient story of the painting that looked so real a bird simply flew into it and died from the collision. What did it matter anyway as he was simply forgetting if any of this even mattered. There was a possibility, just maybe that art was the lie that knew it was lying.

Chapter 25

Finding a voice

The boys sat in the park with their cassette player blaring the group Public Enemies cassette 'Fear of a black planet'. They had a case of beer on hand and they sat in this limbo state of not even realising what they were doing. It wasn't that they understood American culture, far from it. They had no idea about American culture but it was attractive in that the germ of radical thought was blaring through the speakers. Collectively they were tired of the conservative hum drum of Australian society which is known for its bellicose sentimentality dredged through every facet of its

society. Television was enough to make you want to turn your cassette player into a loud blaring scream to make it all stop. The kids in the park had the right idea but they didn't have the understanding at least in this particular setting to make this into something that would be beneficial to their lives. Especially if we consider the paths that some of them would take landing themselves hooked on hard drugs and doing time in gaol. The idea of radical thought was actually alien to most of them. They were temporarily freed from the drudgery of the everyday of life because of radical thought that had been passed through many intellectuals trying to improve society overall. This moment to simply 'get pissed' lost the core ideals that were there to challenge the powers that be. To increase freedoms and as it were 'fight the power'. The funny thing is about all of this is everything is actually art but there was a lot of bad acting too. Bad acting as in television that is. Nevertheless acting bad was also a big part of it. Soon the police arrived. The police made the boys turn down the music. They confiscated the alcohol. One of the boys cheekily turned the cassette player up full blast to the indignation of the police officer who promptly turned it off. The sad part of

the story is the police officers thought they knew what was good for these boys. They needed they thought a good kick up the ass. That though was the problem with Australian society that really these boys found hard to escape. Not every victory was on the rugby league field. Not every victory was swimming for gold in the Olympics. There were real victories in culture. There were victories in the arts. There were victories in music. They were everywhere but you needed a voice. Who was going to give them a voice? At the end of the day you need to work it out for yourself. There were plenty of opportunities and attempts by well meaning people to capitalise on the dissent. At the end of the day we were all lost in stories. We could find ourselves in a story but inevitably it was better if we were writing the stories ourselves.

