



## CHAPTER 34

### G'BYE

The weight of parting was falling heavily through us. We hovered around the doors to customs, Gupta and me sipping distilled spirits from a flask to squelch the sad and sweet pained emotions. Gelar pushed his hands deeper into his pockets. Mindy and Frannie smiled at us and talked to each other. Running out of things to say, waiting for the moment of departure like condemned prisoners, wishing the axe would fall so our heads could roll into the native baskets to be shipped off.

Speaking of decapitation, a well-dressed man walked up to me as I came out of the men's room. My gosh. It's Stan. He brought, get this, greetings from Fenster, and a gift. It was something special he preferred not to bring into the airport. I would find it waiting for me when I returned to Texas five months hence—naturally they knew my schedule. He handed me an envelope that contained a photo of a sword, a rather familiar looking sword I'd seen Fenster

swinging threateningly at me not a great many days prior. With the photo were official looking papers from an auction house certifying the pictured sword was an authentic Yanashi Wakazashi from the late 1700s. Stan said Fenster was handing it over with respect and in recognition of his defeat at our hands. He said Fenster would never have used it as he instantly faints at the sight of blood. Oh—that explains a lot, I thought, as a handful of scenes flashed through my mind.

I asked Stan who had retrieved the sword out of Crocashit territory. He said he did, but only after the zoo authorities had taken the reptile away. They herded him out the gate for a ways to a large maintenance access in the sewer system. Now he was with new friends and has many admirers—Crocashit not Stan. Stan got the crowbar too. That was thorough of him—I hated to think of a perfectly good tool like that just lying there in the sewer water until it rusted away.

Stan said Fenster was under psychiatric observation ordered by the court. At the time of handing over the sword he had committed himself to a rigorous schedule of meditation in the lotus posture. However since then, possibly due to the pain he suffered in his legs and back from the long hours of sitting, and the strain of all that he's gone through, he's deviated from that practice and now was following the way of Equus convinced that he is Phar Lap.

"Phar Lap?" I asked. "But Phar Lap is, was, a horse. I can see Waxo getting into being Genghis Khan or even the women, Robina and Joan Sutherland, but isn't becoming a race horse a long stretch?"

Stan acknowledged that was so but said Fenster had made that leap. It seems he and his fellow New Zealander, the chestnut colored Phar Lap, were both born in the town of Timaru on October 4th, 1926 (Same as my son Kelly—the month and day that is, not the year and town). Phar Lap and Fenster had identical astrological charts. Fenster insisted they were born at the same instant and had gotten it in his head they shared a soul of which they were, for a time, two simultaneous manifestations, one which passed away prematurely. He had been a rugby star in his youth as well but had

injured his left knee. It turns out he was not named Bobby by his parents, but Reginald. Bobby was what Phar Lap's devoted trainer had called him, and Fenster had taken that name on when he was a young man and had first become enamored with the heroic story of that spirited steed. Now he was refusing to stand up or eat anything but oatmeal, as close as he could get to horse posture and fare. Also he was insisting without success he be castrated by the guards as Phar Lap was a gelding.

I thanked Stan for going to all the trouble of coming to see me at the airport, and asked him to tell Fenster a few things. One, that I very much appreciate his gift and will hang it proudly on the wall of the barn when I return. See—I too live in a home for horses. Two, I had gathered from a reliable Internet source that recent research has shown Phar Lap did not die from nefarious causes but from a rare intestinal ailment, which was not even discovered and named until 1980—so he can stop hating San Francisco. And three, even though Buddhism does not use the concept of soul, in the permanent entity that keeps on going forever sense, I am nevertheless confident Fenster and Phar Lap always were and always will be indivisible.

“Oh yes,” I said to Stan in closing, “Tell him and... do you see Sid?”

“Every day.”

“Give him this message for me as well would you? And to you too and to all involved.”

“Most certainly.”

“Impressive treasure hunt,” I said tilting my head down in a bow.

My shoulder bag was stuffed. I had Simon's sketches and a bunch of light souvies I hadn't gotten around to mailing back home yet—the senior ticket stub for the ferry to Rottneest and another for Ross's concert, brochures for places I'd been like the Swan Bells, the Freo prison, and the Perth Mint. There were a few new ones from the day before when Mindy had gotten that SUV and, with Gelly and Frannie as assistant tour guides, had taken Gupta and me on the countryside tour we'd missed when she'd been kidnapped. I got to see the

Vipassana Center though I didn't get to go into any building. Lovely place—spacious. Everyone must have been meditating.

A padded envelope Ross gave me at lunch was in there. There were six CDs in it—three copies of his new tango CD, *Paradise Café*—for Gupta, Frannie, and me. There were copies of another CD in there as well, one he'd made of six songs Gupta and I played with him with Frannie as the engineer operating the on off switch of his recorder. Generous of him. I made a mental note to try to drum him up some business. Let's see, how would I go about doing that? I could suggest that people Google Ross Bolleter and order his CDs online—or they could place an order at their local record store and suggest the store stock his wonderful creations.

Also in my shoulder bag were copies of two newspaper front pages I'd handed out to my mates at our private early get-together back at the nightclub. One featured the photo of Gupta in shock being wheeled into the ambulance. The other had an article on Fenster and the bust at Amenity including a great shot of him as Genghis Khan being escorted into the police station. Amazing—there was no mention of any of us—just the arresting officer, the guy who was tight with Samo. He and the cops got a lot of kudos and the Treasure Hunt Gang stayed out of the whole mess and testifying in court and being whacked and all. Are they really going to be able to keep all this from Rudy? Or maybe he knew—even at dinner. Oh well, all's well that ends without death and destruction—from my human centered point of view anyway. In the big picture I think it could just be said all's well regardless—every day's a good day. Back to the paper. It did mention Johnno—not by name but it was clearly him. An employee had turned on Fenster, would testify, and was getting a new identity. "Waxing on Waxo," read the headline. This informer had been arrested at The Maze where he'd refused to leave at closing time. The police had to go into the loggy thick of it and get him. He protested he was looking for his true love who was in there somewhere and it was very difficult for him to be convinced otherwise.

"That's my fault," said Mindy. "I still feel bad about that. He was sweet."

Gupta and Gelar looked at each other.

The paper quoted a local politician as saying Fenster was an evil man possessed of the devil. I'd agree with that if we define evil as harmful behavior born of greed, hate, and delusion, and the devil as the seeming self thus poisoned.

Mindy said when she was a little girl and Rudy and Fenster were not enemies, she always found Waxo offensive. She said he used to lecture her about morality one minute and tell jokes deriding Aborigines the other. Also, he made her listen to interminable boring opera records while he paced about proclaiming to her how superior the singer's voice was.

"Hmm. Wonder who that singer could be?" Gupta commented.

To me Fenster had that problem, the delusion I'd wondered about when first I met him—misunderstanding emptiness to mean that nothing mattered rather than that all phenomena, all behavior, though non substantial, is quantumly more real thus more significant than we perceive it to be—just not at all what we think it is—nor is it other. Emptiness might be beyond all dualistic ideas including those of good and bad, but I think our intentional actions matter more than we can imagine. There's a name for that—karma. Emptiness doesn't mean you can throw things out, things like morality. As Nagarjuna, the godfather of emptiness said, it's better never to have heard of emptiness than to overemphasize it—or something to that effect. But anyway, it seems Fenster's dealing with other delusions now.

Frannie looked over my shoulder at the newspaper. "There's an Australian newspaper and in it is an Australian gangster," she said, pointing to the photo of Fenster. "Oh," she continued, "and there's an Australian police station."

"And my gosh," I said looking around, "Australian windows and an Australian floor."

"And an Australian ceiling."

"And Australian mates," I said looking at our comrades.

"And thank you Davo for coming to visit and introducing me to such wonderful and interesting people," she said wrapping an arm around Mindy.

“Thank you for being such a fine hostess and putting up with the little inconveniences.”

“All in a month’s play.”

“I leave you with your new Apollo and Dionysus as well,” I said. “He seems to be worthy of you. I may now depart with peace of mind.”

“And here’s a little something for your trip to Asia,” she said as she handed me a small box wrapped in a piece of thick, uneven purple and green material painted with orange swirls. Inside were vials of local oils—Eucalyptus and Emu, herbal potions, hand labeled with an explanatory sheet. Also there was a little delicately painted metal sewing box—too thin to contain spools—just some wound loops of thread, needles, tiny scissors, a few buttons.

I told her to give my love to her family, especially, my voice briefly cracked, to her mother. I gave her a little surprise gift to hang on her wall. It was a familiar quote—in a miniature frame and calligraphed in beautiful tiny script by Techo. It read:

*Whatever you would do or dream to do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.*

Frannie didn’t know it yet, but she was about to get some good news. She’d won the lottery—sort of. Not an official Australian lottery but the Treasure Hunt Gang Lottery. Earlier that night, when she’d gone off to pick up Gecko, and Gupta had said there was something he’d wanted to talk to us all about, what he had to say was he wanted to split the money he’d received from the Mint, the 300,000 Australian, split it with all of us, since we all were in on the whole thing together and each was as deserving as the next. To make a short story shorter, following his lead we ended up deciding to give the bulk of the bundle to Frannie to do the improvements at the home for her somewhat challenged Mandurah friends. The loot minus a humble share for each of us was tucked away in Vargas’s bank. It was all ready for her to use with Vargas as a trustee and advisor to help her spend it wisely and to make sure she didn’t get screwed by some shysters. I smiled and

told her I knew something she didn't, that she'd learn soon,  
and she couldn't get out of me.

A long haired young backpacker walked by carrying a guitar  
case. Gupta went up to him and, thanks to a delayed flight  
and the natural generosity of this friendly Perthite stranger,  
Gupta sang one more song for the road in the sky—not only  
for us but for a large assembly of mutually waiting folk.

*Oh my doll, I dream of you  
And the garden wall reveals you too  
In the wind that winds the blue  
I remember who was there  
Who took the time the time to care  
To one so fair, to one so few  
I declare hon  
I love you  
Yes I do  
In the clear, in our brew  
And as your wings lift up into  
I let you go to fly off where  
There is no need to have to wear  
The garment or the shoe  
And dear indeed as memory bleeds  
I'll long remember you  
Oh yes I will  
Into the veil, beyond the hill  
Until I fail here is my heart  
It will disappear but there you are  
There's no accounting for the stars  
That stare at us until  
We are the blinking, slowly sinking  
To the ocean then  
To meet again  
As the family, flower, as the friend  
As the lion devours the prey  
Indra's dancing net within  
The changing partners, women men  
From children born anew  
Such lands will lead us to*

*Of all places  
Always home  
Always touching, always lone  
Freed by breath and held by bone  
You lift me and you blow out then  
A daffodil into the wind  
I'm floating out into the light and love  
Throughout  
Our new faces  
Always home  
Always touching, always lone  
Always perfect, Always shown  
And going on and on and on and on  
And on and on and on*

Gupta handed the guitar back with a bow of the head. Mindy gave him a kiss and said, "G'bye good man."

"It's been more interesting than the average vacation," Gupta said. "You were a heavenly hostess." Then turning his glance. "Frannie. Gelar."

"Gupta," said Gelar.

Last hugs all around. "Bye Gelar," I said. "Bye Mindy. Bye Frannie. I lost my quokka stubby but," I lifted up my pants cuff, "the hemp cord is still around my ankle."

"Me too," said Gupta.

"You didn't lose a quokka stubby," I corrected him.

"G'bye Davo," said Frannie. "Be in touch. Come back to George What."

"What? Oh—yes, you remember. Bye Frannie again." I bowed with my palms together—I can't help but do that.

"May I?" I said to the local hippie, put his guitar strap over my shoulder and strummed and sang:

*We'll all be back together when she's bloomin'  
When she's bloomin', when she blooms  
We'll all be back together when she's bloomin'  
When she's bloomin', when she blooms*

I was a little teary-eyed and waving walking backwards with Gupta who then grabbed me and cried out, "Thank you!"



“Thank you!” I echoed.

“Thank you!” he said rather loudly in my face and then he called out “Thank you!” to our friends who called back, “Thank you!” and then he threw back his arms and yelled “Thank you!” to the whole airport and then “thank you!” to the ceiling and “thank you” to the right and to the left and to the floor. Strangers were calling “thank you” back to him. I had to get him out of there. I was afraid we were going to get arrested for being too gratefully weird in a post 9/11 security situation. And as I dragged him out of sight, one last quick wave and glance—with Frannie.

On the plane and in the air Gupta and I relaxed in our luxurious first class seats, shoes off, stretching, sighing, wiping the corners of our eyes.

“That’s sort of the way your thank-you book is toward the end,” he said.

“What do you mean?”

“All that thank-you-ing.”

“Huh. Yeah. I guess. Sort of. Not quite. I forget. Uh—how do you know?”

“I read it at Frannie’s just a few days ago.”

“Really?” I said all excited and proud, “I didn’t notice that. Well, it seems like an appropriately significant theme to repeat. I repeat it all the time.”

“Yes, I know. And I fell under the influence.”

“Wow. You read it. That’s great.”

“Well, the last chapters.”

“What do you mean, the last chapters.”

“I just read the last chapters.”

“You what?”

“I think you heard.”

“That’s awful. How many?”

“Six, seven. Read them from the back in. Sorry to let you down.”

“How could you do that?”

“I just wanted to get a feel for it.”

“Why not the first chapter?”

“I like to read the last chapters of books.”

“Well gosh...”

“Don’t whine. It’s unbecoming.”

“I give up—okay,” I groaned.

“Say thank you,” he admonished me.

“Thank you.”

“You know, Gupta,” I said after a bit of silence, “on the flight in I had this dream, this vision of all the dangerous animals of land and sea attacking me in Australia—spiders, snakes, sharks. Oz is just like everywhere else—it’s the two-legged animals that are the most dangerous.”

“Like kangaroos?”

“You know what I mean.”

“Emus?”

“Okay—it’s the occasional two-legged humanoid that is most dangerous.”

“Like Mindy?”

“Hmm. Right.”

“Well, that’s enough love for a while.”

“I sympathize,” I said.

“How easily we become victims of insatiable desire and romance propaganda. And look at what the in-flight movie is—*Sleepless in Seattle*,” he said.

“Better they had that Australian TV show, *Love is a Four Letter Word*,” I replied.

“Yeah, that’s a Dylan song,” he went on, “But no, they’ve got to fill our minds with the endless lie. It’s a sickness. Happily ever fiction.”

“Yeah. Mad Magazine did a spoof on ‘happily ever after’ with examples from fairy tales—I can’t remember—you know—long time ago—like Prince Charming getting soft and fat, drinking beer and burping and Snow White in hair curlers bitching or whatever.”

“Like how many of the loving couples we were with tonight do you think will be together a year from now?”

“Hey, usually I’m the cynical one about love,” I said.

“Just trying to build up my resistance. Never again. It makes me cringe to think of some of the stupid, embarrassing things I said to Mindy in my idiot love dream. I’m gonna miss her for a little while longer though I’m sure. And I’ll certainly never forget her.”

"I'll miss Francine too. But the chemistry is not painful grieving like yours. It's a little sad and sweet—like missing my boys."

A stewardess glided up to us, oh—that same luscious stewardess who had distracted Gupta so thoroughly on the flight over. His head jerked so fast to face her I was worried he'd twist it off. She was thoughtfully concerned about his wounds, which he milked for all the attention he could get. So much for dispassion.

Soon she was off doing other duties so it was possible to talk with him again. But he didn't want to hear what I had to say. I'd found an article on the Coriolis Effect in the airlines magazine. It had sad news for Gupta. There is indeed such a phenomenon, but it only applies to large weather systems like cyclones, hurricanes. He was right though that they went clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere and counterclockwise in the Northern. But alas, the Coriolis Effect didn't apply on a small scale. How one got out of a bath or how the inside was designed was what determined which way the water swirled when draining from a tub. It even mentioned the demonstrations at the equator and said they were a trick, determined by how the guide turned when holding the jug.

"So," I said, changing the subject to something less disappointing, "do you think I could write about what happened to us and plug Singapore Airlines and other commercial things like um Emu Beer now? Get a book deal? Make a little something on the side for product placement?"

"Maybe so. If your favorite products won't go for it, just sell out to the highest bidder. Dow Chemical. Wal-Mart."

"Or just for the joy of writing it—if I can't sell out."

I pulled out my notebook and turned back to the first pages. "Here—look," I said. There was a long list I'd been adding to the whole trip—starting with Singapore Airlines.

"What a head case. Ah—give it a try. It was a slightly more eventful trip than I'd anticipated. You'd better say it's fiction though. Don't want to get anyone in trouble."

"Nobody would believe it anyway."

"That's true," he said with a laugh. "That all couldn't have happened. It was a Fig Newton of our imagination."

“And there’s another good product placed,” I said, writing it down.

“You’d probably have to self-publish.”

“POD.”

“Die urinating?”

“No silly—print on demand. It’s what’s happening with vanity publishing these days. It’s great. Don’t have to invest in stock—it’s printed on demand. And—I could fill it with darlings and not let anyone kill them. Cause POD books don’t sell much anyway and what the heck. And add a lot of drawings and a CD of songs. And do podcasts and put it on the web for free. Anything I wanted. Whoopee.”

“Use Simon’s art.”

“Good idea.”

He took his wallet out and counted his Australian dollars. “Let’s not forget to exchange money at the airport,” he said.

“Wait, wait, wait,” I said as he started to put his wallet away. “Bring that back out.”

“My wallet?”

“Yeah.”

“Why? No! You want to count my money and do all sorts of unnecessary and neurotic calculating.”

“No. Not the money. I want to look in the wallet again. Come on.”

“Okay. Here.”

“Just open it up—that photo.”

“Oh—that’s Belfast mom and Calcutta dad.”

“Your father’s a cardiologist.”

“You’re not psychic,” he said. “I told you that the first day I met you.”

“I recognize him!”

“You do? Mmm—all Indians look alike.”

“No they don’t. Where does he live?”

“California.”

“Where in California?”

“Well, he was in LA and then he moved to uh—Petaluma. Where’s that?”

“That’s like twenty minutes from the barn where I live.”

“Oh.”

“Gupta, your father did my angioplasty.”

Just then our lovely stewardess came over to see how we were doing.

“Oh hello there,” Gupta said.

“Gupta! Can you believe this! Your father saved my life.”

He didn’t hear. She inquired if we would like something to drink.

“Uh—sure,” I said, “Jamison’s—no ice.”

“Me too but ice,” said Gupta staring at her. “Thought you didn’t drink on planes.”

“I don’t—usually. But Gupta,” I continued, “can you believe that it was your father?”

“That’s great,” he said gazing at the stewardess who was getting a bottle out of a cabinet not far from us.

“I mean, what are the odds?”

“Well, someone had to do it. He lives in California—so do you. He does them all the time.” He smiled at her and she smiled back.

“Well, I think it’s the most amazing coincidence.”

“Huh? Uh—take your medicine and get plenty of rest,” he said continuing his fixation on the lovely stewardess as she handed us our drinks.

I gave up on words, and sat immersed in a feeling of unshakable lonely affection for all my friends, for everyone. I gazed below at the distant bright fishing boat lights, which slowly vanished into the thick blackness out the window of this fabulous silver bird streaming in the big empty sky toward Asia.