

In Deep Water

By Kat Powell

1976 - 1978

It was just over a year since she had run away, been a victim of domestic violence, been thrown out onto the streets, become a mother, and lost her baby. So much had happened in that space of time, it seemed much longer! Too much had happened, and Kathy wanted to bury all of it, just like her baby boy Stephen. Nothing was ever spoken about the baby, or the time she had been gone. It was as if nothing had ever happened, and Kathy was happy to leave it that way.

She loved her job working as a law clerk and spent most days in the courts and titles and stamp-duties offices, filing documents and hanging out with other law clerks, article clerks, and young lawyers. For the first time in her life she began to feel like a normal girl. She had her own financial independence that living at home with her father afforded her. He had asked for only a nominal amount of money for her board, so they agreed upon thirty dollars a week. Not having to worry about rent, electricity, and food costs meant she could indulge her passion for nice clothes for the first time in her life.

At lunch times she would scour the city shops, searching for a new outfit to wear to the nightclubs she and her girlfriends would attend every weekend. Her tiny, little, size-eight body meant just about everything looked good on her. The only physical reminder of her pregnancy were the stretch marks that looked like silvery streaks on her buttocks and thighs. Kathy liked that they were there; she felt they served as a reminder, a badge of honor, a permanent tribute to Stephen, her baby boy who had never had the chance to look into his mother's loving eyes.

“What do you think of my new dress?” Kathy said, twirling in front of the mirror. “I found it at Sportsgirl. It cost me nearly the whole week's pay, but I think it was worth it. What do you think?”

Sharon nodded her blonde head in approval and said, “It really suits you. That colour is perfect. You’re going to drive the boys nuts. I don’t know if I want to wear this now.”

Sharon looked down at her navy-blue, polyester frock with white piping around the collar.

“Maybe I should go and change into something else.”

“Don’t be silly. You look gorgeous in that dress. It fits you like a glove,” Kathy said as she did one final twirl in front of the mirror.

It was Friday night, and they were getting ready to hit the city nightclubs for a big night of dancing. Neither Sharon nor Kathy were big drinkers so they could go out on the cheap, and as Sharon was prone to saying, “Pretty girls never have to pay cover charge or buy their own drinks!”

Kathy could justify buying a new outfit every couple of weeks. She always felt her best in something brand new. She knew she had a bit of a clothing fetish, possibly from her early childhood, from going without the pretty dresses she saw her friends wearing, admiring them with more than a touch of envy.

Sharon was saving for an overseas trip so she kept to a fairly tight budget, but she was genuinely happy to see Kathy feeling good about herself. She knew some of what Kathy had been through and wanted her to enjoy being a carefree teenager, like she was. Together they made a fine pair; they had a wicked sense of humor, and rather than going out to pick up boys, they went out to have fun—and fun is what they had.

Applying the finishing touches to her makeup, Kathy looked in the mirror at her reflection. She did not see a pretty girl looking back at her; she saw the ugly, unlovable, little girl, the one whose mother would regularly say was evil and jealous. It did not seem to matter how many times Sharon or her other friends told her she was pretty and oh so cute; in Kathy’s mind they were just trying to be nice. When the boys at the clubs used to pay her

attention, Kathy believed they were only after one thing, and that thing had got her into more trouble than she ever would have believed before, so she avoided their advances.

“Okay, I’m done,” Kathy said, applying a smear of lipstick to her Cupid’s bow. Taking one last look in the mirror, she said, “Let’s use our fake names tonight, just for fun, heh?” She looked over at Sharon who was busy spraying her hair with more hair lacquer. Its noxious fragrance hung heavy in the air and made Kathy cough as she said, “God, Sharon, I pity any bloke who tries to run his fingers through your hair. They’ll get caught in it like a bug in a spider web.” She laughed and coughed simultaneously.

Ignoring her, Sharon gave one final, short burst of spray and then stood back from the mirror, admiring her reflection. Kathy thought Sharon was possibly the prettiest girl she had ever seen. Her eyes were magnificent, turquoise-blue pools that reminded Kathy of a picture she once saw in a copy of her father’s *National Geographic Adventure* magazine of the Maldives. Her hair was like spun gold, with rays of golden light bouncing off it and illuminating her flawless complexion. Petite like Kathy but taller, with a full and firm bust that always caught the boys’ attention, Sharon knew she was a looker.

Yes, she truly is a natural beauty!

“Okay, tonight I am Rose Petal, and you’re Olive Green,” Sharon said with a giggle. “But don’t laugh when you say your name. Last time you blew it by laughing.”

“I know. It was so hard to keep a straight face, especially when that guy you were dancing with really thought they were our real names. He was cute, but so dumb!” Kathy said, laughing. “Do you want to practice our bus-stop dance moves before we go out? We haven’t perfected it yet. Remember, you crashed into me last time. You went right when you should have gone left, you dumb cluck!” Kathy giggled.

“No, I practiced when Countdown was on the other night. That won’t happen again, I promise,” Sharon said, with an air of certainty and a flick of her long, golden locks.

As they walked into Checkers Nightclub on Elizabeth Street in the city, the girls caught sight of their images in the tinted, mirrored tiles paneled across the walls, and neither looked their underage selves. Although Sharon was almost a full year older than Kathy and had her driver's license, they were both technically underage to be entering such an establishment.

Once inside, they headed for the bar and ordered their one alcoholic drink each for the night. Having a fancy drink in front of them made both feel more grown up. They would sit on this most of the night anyway, and one cocktail was all their limited budgets could afford; they would switch to water later on.

"Two fluffy ducks, please," Kathy asked the barman, who was decked out in a black-and-white checked waistcoat and sported an impressive moustache that no doubt was his pride and joy.

Taking a seat at a booth close to the dance floor, the girls happily sipped their drinks through long, pink straws, their glasses adorned with orange, plastic giraffes, and bopped along to the popular strains of Barry Manilow's chart-topping song *I Write the Songs*. When the next song came on, *You Should Be Dancing* by the Bee Gees, Kathy turned to Sharon and said, "I love this song. Come on, let's dance!"

Kathy loved to dance; it made her feel alive and free, and it allowed her to lose her many inhibitions. The dance floor quickly filled with gyrating bodies, rhythmically moving with the beat. The next song was Cliff Richard's *Devil Woman* and more people poured onto the already crowded dance floor, making it almost impossible to move. Kathy signaled to Sharon that she was going to sit down. Sharon was having way too much fun and stayed on the floor, dancing amongst the throng of clubbers.

He did not wait for an invitation to sit down. He just planted his cute arse in Sharon's seat as if it was his God-given right. Kathy was not impressed; she did not like guys who were full of themselves, and this one looked like he had tickets all over himself.

Looking her up and down as if deciding whether to purchase her or not, he finally moved his moustached face close to her ear and said, "Hi, I'm Jerry. Can I buy you a drink?"

Hardly an original pickup line!

"No thanks, I'm fine," Kathy said, picking up her cocktail and taking a long sip through the straw.

She was glad her fluffy duck was still half full; she did not want this cocky stranger thinking that buying her a drink was his entry ticket into her pants.

Unperturbed, he just nodded his head at her, flicking a long, wayward strand of hair away from his amazing, big, brown eyes and asked, "What's your name, beautiful?"

Kathy hesitated before answering; for some reason she did not want to use the funny fake names they had decided on, so instead she said, "My name is Kathy."

"With a 'C' or a 'K'?" he asked, temporarily dazzling her with a flash of brilliant, white teeth and a cute dimple as he smiled.

"With a 'K', it's spelt with a 'K'." *Now that was original*, Kathy thought, wondering why on earth he cared how her name was spelled.

She did not have to wonder for too much longer when he said, "My kid sister's name is Kathy, but its spelt with a 'C'."

A little sister, now that was an ice breaker, Kathy with a 'K' thought.

His disarming way had diffused her earlier opinion of him, and now she decided he was not arrogant, rather just someone who had more confidence than she was used to seeing. *Evie* by Stevie Wright and the Easybeats started playing, and without even asking he grabbed Kathy by the hand, getting her to her feet and walking her towards the dance floor. Sharon

was dancing with a really tall, thin, dark-haired guy wearing a pin-striped suit. Kathy could not help but think he looked totally out of place in a nightclub in that getup, but Sharon looked like she was really into him. Kathy thought he was probably a professional, maybe a lawyer or an accountant. Sharon always said she preferred brains to brawn.

Kathy was surprised Jerry was actually a good dancer. He could really move and looked like he was enjoying himself. Most of the guys she danced with in the past either barely moved or moved too much, making complete idiots of themselves. Not this guy. She started to think maybe this one was worth getting to know a little better. Just as she was contemplating this, Jerry flashed another killer smile. It was enough to push her over the edge, and Kathy made up her mind there and then, during the dulcet tones of Stevie Wright, to get to know him better—much, much better!

“Dad, I know he’s the one for me!” Kathy said with certainty.

Her father was at the clothes line hanging out a load of washing.

“He’s from Lismore, he’s a country boy who loves surfing, and he moved up here to work at the Queensland Newspapers. He’s a printer.” She stopped only long enough to take a breath and continued, “He asked me to move in with him, and I want to. I am in love with him. I really am.”

Her father stopped pegging out the clothes and took a long look at his youngest child, the little girl he used to call Tottie, and hoped this country boy would treat her the way she deserved. He could see she was in love, and he knew no matter what he said, she was headstrong and would do what she wanted. She always had, and she always would. He returned to the job at hand, and as he picked up a pair of long pants to hang on the line, he said, “When are you moving out?”

It was an old, weatherboard house on Bowen Street, Windsor. They had taken a twelve-month lease and were both so excited to be setting up house together. Jerry was nine years older than Kathy, who was only seventeen, but she had a maturity far beyond her tender years. She always thought that growing up in the theatre, mixing with people of all ages and sexual orientations, had made her appear much older. When her school friends were hanging out together, kissing and fooling around with boys, she was at rehearsals or in shows. Then her pregnancy ensured she grew up really fast, even though she still had the face of a baby.

She remembered the first time Jerry had seen her naked. His eyes immediately went to the fine, silvery stretch marks on her thighs and buttocks. He asked in a soft voice, “When did you have a baby?”

Kathy thought it was strange that he did not ask if, but when, and she was not about to deny that Stephen had existed, even if it was only for a few hours. She said in barely a whisper, “A little over a year ago. He died.” Nothing more was ever said.

Kathy still worked for the Brisbane city law firm during the days, and Jerry worked shift hours at Queensland Newspapers. Every afternoon he would head off to nearby Bowen Hills, where he would man the printers and return home just about the time Kathy was waking up, wearing his dark-blue overalls, smelling of printers’ ink, and usually wearing his fair share of it, too. Most mornings when they knocked off, they would gather in the car park and have a few beers, sometimes more than a few. Often Jerry would come home smelling of ink and beer, but he would justify it by saying that even though it was early in the morning, it was the end of their work day and that’s what all the blokes there did.

For Kathy’s part, she was not really worried. After all, Jerry was a happy drunk. He did not display any of the violent behaviors Peter did. She could not begrudge him having a knock-off drink, could she?

“Do you want a kid?” Jerry asked one morning when he had come home from work with a few too many beers under his belt.

“Are you serious?” Kathy asked, wondering just how many he had that morning.

“Yeah, but of the four-legged variety. One of my mates at work has a litter of German short-haired pointer puppies for sale, and I was thinking it might be nice to hear the pitter-patter of little feet around here. What do you think?”

She did not have to think for long. Kathy really loved dogs, and the thought of having their very own to bring up from a little puppy really appealed to her. She could not contain her excitement. Throwing her arms around his neck, she said, “Yes, I would love a baby of our own, of the four-legged kind of course!” She kissed him and started planning for their new addition.

Just like expecting parents, they spent weeks preparing their home for the new puppy’s arrival. Purchasing leads, water and food bowls, a pet bed and toys, they were ready and waiting for their little boy. Together, they had chosen his name, Kraut, in honor of his German heritage. Kathy was so happy when the little bundle finally arrived, she could not contain herself. And she had never felt closer to Jerry before.

Finally, her life was starting to resemble what she had always dreamed and hoped it would be—a partner who would love and treat her well, and a child to love; even though Kraut was a dog, he was her pseudo child and Kathy loved him with all of her heart. She even thought one day soon Jerry might pop the question and ask her to marry him. She was ready to say yes.

“I’m going to buy a boat!” Jerry announced one morning after he got back from work. “One of the guys at work is selling his fourteen-foot runabout cheap, and I reckon it will be a lot of fun to go out on the bay in. We can head off early Sunday mornings and go over to Stradbroke Island for the day. We can even take Kraut with us, and it will be heaps of fun.”

Kathy was a good swimmer, but she was concerned about such a small boat in the bay. She had heard stories about how treacherous it could be for the inexperienced, and Jerry had never owned a boat before, nor had he ever crossed the sandbar in Moreton Bay, a treacherous feat.

She did not want to burst his bubble, though; he was in such an upbeat mood and most certainly wanted to hear enthusiasm, not the voice of reason. So instead of saying what she really thought, she said, “Sure, how much does he want for it?”

“I can pick it up with the trailer for four thousand, and it has a sixty horsepower motor,” he said, his excitement building with the prospect of becoming a boatie.

She knew he was not asking permission to buy a boat; his mind was already made up. She threw him a smile and said, “Well then, picnics on Straddie, here we come!”

It was getting close to Christmas and they both planned to take holidays. Day trips out on their little runabout spent exploring Moreton Bay were calling their names. Kathy’s previous concerns about Jerry not knowing anything had disappeared from her mind.

“Can you take next Friday off work? The boys at work have hired a barge for our Christmas party, and they are going to motor around the bay for a big piss-up. I’m going to tie our boat up to the barge. We can leave whenever you’ve had enough because they will probably get pretty messy,” Jerry said, laughing.

“I will have to pull a sickie, but sure, I’d love to go,” she said, happy to have been included in the shenanigans.

Friday came, but the days leading up to it dragged. Finally, it was here. “No, Kraut, you can’t come today, baby,” Kathy said as the dog darted for the open front door. “You have to stay here and be a guard dog, okay?” She closed the door and headed out to the driveway where Jerry was waiting in his old Valiant. The little runabout was trailered to the back.

After she climbed into the front seat, Jerry used his column shift to pull out of the driveway. Kathy moved closer on the bench seat and put her hand on his leg. “Well, we couldn’t have asked for a better day for it,” she said, looking at the blue, cloudless sky.

“Yep, we’re going to have a fun day out there, that’s for sure.” Jerry patted her lovingly on the knee.

Once out on the water, Jerry pointed the little runabout in a northeasterly direction and they drove across the huge expanse of water that is Moreton Bay. As it was still early in the day, and a weekday, there were not many boats out on the water. They felt as free as birds as they jugged toward the tiny speck of land far ahead that was Dunwich Island, once an asylum ward for the sick and poor.

Jerry, who was accustomed to having early morning drinking sessions, looked behind him at Kathy sitting at the aft of the boat and said, “Grab me a tallie, would you, darling? I’m getting thirsty.”

Lifting the lid off the coolite esky, she took out a large bottle of Fosters beer and passed it to him. He expertly removed the top and took a long guzzle. With his tallie securely wedged between his legs, he motored the boat further across the bay.

“There they are!” Jerry screamed above the noise of the outboard, pointing to a barge slowly and methodically making its way through bay towards them. He was excited to see his work mates approaching, and Kathy could tell there was a lot of camaraderie between them. The little runabout sped towards the cumbersome barge and within minutes was tied up alongside it.

Once onboard, Jerry and Kathy were greeted with hugs and beers were thrust in their faces. Kathy quickly realised she was the only girl there, and although she was thirsty, she declined the offer and sought out one of the few soft drinks in the large esky.

The skipper of the barge motored towards the shallow waters just off Stradbroke Island so the rowdy passengers could swim and walk along the sandy beach if they wished. Kathy watched the intoxicated printers with amusement as they would jump overboard into the crystal-clear waters, just long enough to empty their bursting bladders, then haul themselves back onto the barge to commence drinking once more.

“Hey Two Hands, grab me another beer, will ya, mate?” a man with a shock of red hair shouted. His nickname was Bluey.

Kathy could understand why Bluey had his nickname, but she could not work out how Two Hands had earned his. Turning to Jerry, who was by now as drunk as his co-workers, she innocently asked, “Why do you call him Two Hands?”

There was a chorus of inebriated laughter, and a fellow known as Rough Nuts slurred, “Hey, Two Hands, show the lady why you’re called Two Hands.”

Without any further encouragement, Two Hands dropped his stubbies and revealed the source of his well-earned nickname.

“Now you know, love. It takes two hands to hold that bloody snake he’s got shoved in his shorts!” Rough Nuts added.

The drunken group of printers were in fits of laughter, and Kathy was not sure if the source was what old Two Hands had just revealed, or the bright-red face she was now sporting. She thought it was most likely the latter.

She was getting hungry; it was well past lunch time, and she had not seen anyone eat anything. They seemed hell bent on getting as pissed as they could. She climbed into the little runabout and took a ham-and-cheese sandwich from the picnic basket she had packed earlier that day. Jerry was not interested in having anything to eat. He was enjoying the buzz from all the liquid amber he had been throwing down since early that day.

“Hey Jerry, how about we start thinking about heading home. It’s getting late, and Kraut has been locked in the house all day. I’d love to take him for a walk before it gets dark,” she said, hoping he would agree.

“No. I’m going to take the boat for a spin first, and then we will head home,” he said, polishing off the tallie he had opened only five minutes earlier. Then he joined Kathy in their little runabout.

Kathy knew the moment he started the boat up and was driving as fast as he could, performing aquatic doughnuts in the water around the barge, all he really wanted to do was show off in front of his work mates. He was acting like a fool and she did not think it was funny at all, even though all his drunken, idiot mates laughed and cheered him on. She wanted to scream out, “Don’t encourage the fool!” but instead she silently hung on for dear life.

After several minutes of circling the barge, he headed further out to sea, straight for the notorious bar crossing, renowned for its hidden sandbanks. Jerry was a novice and had never even been in these waters before. In what appeared to be a sea of contrasts, the still waters they had been idly enjoying earlier in the day transformed into a veritable wall of white water coming straight at the little craft and its occupants. The tiny boat was pitched back and forth as a huge volume of water hit it, throwing the vessel into hideous angles and slamming down with such ferocity that Kathy screamed in pain. Her arse repeatedly came down on the hard seat.

She suddenly realised just how insignificant they were against the might of Mother Nature. *We’re going to die!*

Once back in safer waters again, Kathy screamed at Jerry, “I thought you were going to kill us both! You’re a stupid bastard for doing that. I want to go home now!”

Jerry ignored her; he was distracted by the well at the aft of the boat that was rapidly filling with water. They were now in shallow waters thanks to a sandbank, and the little boat stalled and would not start. He said, "Hop out of the boat. The bung is missing. I need to empty out some of the water in the well."

She followed Jerry's instructions, still furious about his drunken behavior and their near-death experience. He started emptying water out of the well. When he successfully emptied most of it, he repeatedly tried to restart the motor. After several attempts, it finally spluttered back to life. Kathy was standing knee deep in the warm waters on a sandbank, watching on. Without a backward glance, Jerry drove off in the little boat, leaving her in the middle of Moreton Bay, miles from shore, miles from another living soul.

She stood, with water lapping around her knees, watching the little boat until it became a small speck on the horizon. *He's just messing. He will come back for me, won't he?*

She kept watching until the little boat disappeared into the blue completely. Her greatest fear was now realised; he was not coming back for her. She was completely alone. She started to cry, her salty tears running into her mouth, and considered how once again someone she loved had chosen to treat her so horribly. Yes, her mother had been right, she was unlovable. She was ugly. She did have a green streak running through her. As drunk as Jerry was, he had decided to leave her there to die.

There was no point in screaming; there was nobody there to hear her. There was no point in swimming; the nearest shoreline was many miles away. What was worse was that she knew that the waters she was in were full of sharks. As the tide began to turn and the shallow sandbank she was once standing on started to fill with water, she thought about death and if anyone would even notice. Would anyone miss her, mourn her, or care that she was no more?

The sun began going down. Soon it would be dark. It was getting deeper. The water was near her shoulders now, and soon she knew she would have to start treading water. Kathy

was afraid. She hoped death would come quickly. She had read that drowning was the most peaceful way to die—that once your body is done panicking and fighting to stay alive, your brain accepts death and peacefulness transcends upon you. She hoped this was true. She did not want to experience the pain of a shark attacking and eating her piece by piece.

Kathy began talking to God, who she thought had forsaken her. She screamed, “Why am I so unlovable? Why do I have to suffer like this?” She did not expect an answer. She was angry with Jerry, she was angry with her mother, and most of all she was angry with God!

The water rose further, and she could no longer feel the sand underneath her feet. Kathy started treading water and mentally preparing herself for what was about to come, her death. She listened to the sound of the birds flying overhead, returning to their safekeepings for the night, the only witnesses to her final moments. The sky’s hue slowly darkened to a chalky mauve as the sun set, and her mind went back to the monsters of the deep, remembering all of the documentaries she loved to watch and how predators fed at night.

She prayed again, “Please God, I don’t want to be taken by a shark. Take me gently, peacefully if you have to take me, but not ravaged by a shark.”

Were her eyes playing tricks on her? Was that a little boat in the distance? She could just make out something far away, near Dunwich Island. She began frantically waving both of her arms in a sweeping pattern, her legs propelling her body up and out of the water to give her as much height as possible. Something returned to her in that moment, hope.

Tom and Mary Baxter lived on Dunwich Island, and every afternoon, just before sunset, they would venture out in their little tinnie to check their oyster leases. Mary spotted something on the horizon and thought to herself it must be a water bird, but then something made her stare a little longer. She said to her husband of more than thirty years, “Tom, look over there. What is that?” pointing in a north easterly direction.

Tom was about to dismiss Mary's question without even looking, but for some reason he could not explain, he did not. "I think it's a bird, Mary," he said, an air of doubt hanging over the word "think."

"No," Mary said, "that is someone in the water, Tom. That's a person. We have to go over there and help them."

Tom did not need to be told to do that; he had already altered their course towards whatever had captured both of their attentions.

Kathy watched with tears running down her face as the tinnie, once a tiny dot on the water, drew closer and larger. She was screaming as loudly as she could, "Help! Help! Please help me!"

Mary could not believe her eyes; it was a girl, and a young girl at that, abandoned in the middle of the bay. She knew if it were not for her spotting the girl, she would most certainly have drowned or been eaten during the night. Mary shuddered at the thought.

As Tom idled up beside the girl, he silently thanked God that he and his wife had been in the right place at the right time. "What on earth are you doing out here all alone?" Tom cut the motor to the tinnie.

Without waiting for her to reply, Mary quickly offered up, "Are you alright, dear?"

Tom reached out to Kathy with big, strong arms that had seen their fair share of manual labor and gently grabbed her around her tiny wrists, dragging her wet, exhausted body into the little boat as his wife quickly threw a dry towel around the girl's shaking body.

"Thank you, thank you," Kathy said in barely a whisper.

With tears welling up in her eyes, Mary placed a loving hand on the girl's shoulder and softly asked, "Are you alright, dear? I am Mary, and this is Tom." She glanced towards her rugged husband. "How did you come to be out here, all alone in the water like this?"

Kathy looked into the face of the motherly angel and told her about Jerry's drunken shenanigans.

"My God, you could have died out here. He tried to murder you, love!" Tom said, shaking his head with anger.

Kathy knew he was right, but for the first time she truly realised Jerry had attempted to murder her!

She explained the entire events of the day as something far chillier than the lapping waters sunk into her bones. Now all she wanted to do was phone her dad to come and get her. Tom and Mary pointed their tinnie toward the Cleveland Marina to deliver their little passenger to the safety of her father.

"Oh my God. That's Jerry, there!" Kathy said, pointing at the runabout floating untethered near the Cleveland jetty.

As they pulled alongside it, they spotted Jerry in a drunken coma sprawled across the seat of the little boat. Tom tied the tinnie to the end of the jetty and helped Kathy and Mary out, then said, "This arsehole isn't going anywhere. I will deal with him in a minute. Let's get you sorted first, love."

Once on land, Mary led Kathy towards the only phone at the marina, asked for her father's phone number, and dialed.

There was only one car in the now abandoned car park, and Tom checked with Kathy to confirm it was Jerry's. With a nod of her wet head, Tom went back to his small boat and took out the knife he used to shuck his oysters. He stalked back to the car park and, with a look of satisfaction, watched as all the tires on the car and trailer completely and utterly deflated, at least one puncture the exact size of his knife evident in each.

Bill arrived at the marina in record time. He normally abided the road rules, but today was not a normal day. Tom and Mary briefed him on what had happened as Kathy, no doubt

suffering from shock, sat huddled in the towel. Tom pointed to Jerry's boat, which Tom had securely tied to his tinnie. It quietly bobbed. "The bastard is in a drunken stupor. I tied his boat to mine. He must have been so drunk he couldn't even tie the thing up. He's not going anywhere, mate," he said, pointing toward the car and trailer practically sitting on rims in the empty car park.

Bill wanted to hurt Jerry. Tom, who was also a father, could understand but said, "I'm going to take her old mate out for a little ride with us, tow him out to sea and leave him there. When he does eventually wake up, he won't know where the hell he is. Hopefully he doesn't have much fuel left, after all the hooning around Kathy told me he did today, it must be just about empty. The best thing you can do is get your daughter away from this maniac. Take her home. She needs to keep warm and get some rest."

Bill nodded. He knew Tom was right.

"I have to go back for Kraut, Dad!" Kathy said, tears falling from puffed, red eyes. "He is my baby, and I don't want to leave him."

As much as he wanted to take his daughter straight home, he knew she would not settle until she had seen her dog once more, so he drove to the old, weatherboard house in Bowen Street, Windsor.

"Tottie, just pack a bag with a few things. I'll come back and get the rest of your stuff tomorrow," Bill said as he watched Kathy cuddling an excited Kraut.

She knew she could not take Kraut with her, that this cuddle was going to be her last, and she sobbed thinking about leaving him behind. She had to be strong. Life was cruel, and she was starting to learn that she had to toughen up.

As she closed the front door behind her and walked down the creaky, old steps, she never looked back!