

'Travesty' by Hayden Bradford

Chapter 2

My fatal beating occurred many years after the Baptist church sacked me. At the time of my death, I was fifty-five and still living at home with my parents. I pioneered the 'living at home' concept long before the young folk of today got onto the idea. I should have patented it.

Once the Adopted Ones had moved out, it wasn't too bad living at home. *Wind Between Ears* had run off to somebody's happy hunting ground. It was a vacant block of land beside the local Unemployment Office. This gave me cause for great celebration and much happiness. I danced, and now it was my turn to yell whoop-whoops. I also tried to take scalps. The bright lights of my tepee shone for days and nights, acting as a beacon of warning to the world; *Wind Between Ears* had moved on to screw up other people's lives – beware.

Though appearing most challenged in the brain faculty department (steroids can do that to you), *Speed* had enough common sense to migrate to a country where the good old 'roids' were almost legal. I must admit, I did miss him. As he mostly grunted and moved about with his knuckles dragging close to the ground, as a Neanderthal would have done, I was able to hire him out to school kids to exhibit as part of their 'early man show and tell' projects. I also hired him out to companies that moved furniture on weekends. Not that he knew what day it was. But, with his departure, those little money earners dried up for me.

Unfortunately, the *Whinging Aunt from Whining Hill* was still ever present, or perhaps that was omnipresent. No, that couldn't be right, she was no God. She was the Devil masquerading as an interfering old busybody. I did miss my battle of wits with *Speed* and *Wind Between Ears*. Sure, it was unfair – they were always disarmed, but I still had fun.

As it was only me living at home with Mother and Father, I tried on a number of times to worm my way into becoming Mother's favourite. I would tell her the Adopted Ones had died of stupidity. I tried to convince her that the Adopted Ones had left the planet as they had been abducted. I even used the old, 'They were run over while trying to steal hubcaps from passing motor vehicles!'

Each time, Mother would call up the *Whinging Aunt from Whining Hill* who always informed her to take no notice of me.

'Travesty is simply jealous because he doesn't have Unemployment Benefits in his DNA and he can't bench press ten times his body weight; ignore him,' the Whinging Aunt would say. 'Ignore him; it's not as if he's ever going to be one of your favourites.'

Many years prior to my death, I discovered working for a living didn't appeal to me at all. I tried it once. I had a job, but I didn't think I was very good at it, so I quit. I also became ill. Sadly, I contracted *Workitis*. I couldn't shake it. According to the medical profession, the illness doesn't exist – but what do doctors know?

Workitis was as baffling then, as it is today. It can only be identified by the medical procedure known as *self-diagnosis*. *Workitis* is far more serious than *Mondayitis*. *Workitis* is with you every working day of every working week. Strangely, on weekends and public holidays, *Workitis* doesn't bother you. I know, I could never understand it either. *Workitis* is also incurable; hence it ruined any chance of me going back to work. But I did so want to contribute to something, even if it was only my own wallet. So I took to gambling; it was

more fun, and more lucrative than work. Also, I could choose my own hours.

One of the early symptoms, which convinced me I had contracted this terrible illness, was the overwhelming need to sleep-in on most mornings. Mother blamed my laziness on the late nights of partying I did after my big gambling wins.

With time, my illness became worse. I found the very mention of the word *work*, sent my blood pressure into overdrive. This was always followed by a feeling of faintness and an over-powering need to lie down with the TV remote. Some mornings I was so physically drained, and so hung-over with Workitis, I had to stay in bed until way past lunchtime, watching TV or reading the magazines I kept under my mattress.

During these stressful times, I would scream, 'Damn you, Workitis; look what you have done to me!'

Upon hearing my screams of anguish, Mother would yell, 'Don't think for one moment you can get a ticket on the "feel-sorry-for-me train" that easily, you lazy, good-for-nothing, heathen scum! There aren't any seats left; some of your relatives have taken the spare ones. You'll have to wait for a couple of them to die. Toot-toot!'

'Oh, dear God,' I whispered, 'please hear my prayer...'

But, true to form, God never heard my prayers, let alone answered them. Shame really.

'Why don't you get off your lazy backside and get a job? You're a disgrace to the family name,' Mother would say.

'I need sympathy, not a job. How about showing me the love?' I asked.

'Fat chance,' Mother answered.

Despite my lack of enthusiasm for most things, apart from gambling, partying and sleeping, I did at times show the community I lived in that I was trying to soldier on despite my illness. Weak from a mere twelve to fourteen hours of sleep, I'd sometimes drag myself out of bed and prepare a chicken and champagne breakfast. I'd set up a small camping table and chair on the nature strip in front of our house and have my breakfast. People drove past me on their way to work, fighting the morning traffic and, later in the day, fighting the same traffic in reverse. To these people I would raise a chicken leg and a glass of champagne in salute, reassuring my fellow humans that I admired their work ethics, and I was trying my best to recover. People stared at me from behind their car windows with surprise and astonishment. I think they were shocked to see a man with my medical condition out of bed so early and attempting to get on with life.

Nice people acknowledged my effort by blowing their horns whilst yelling at me. The horn blowing made it impossible to understand the words they uttered, I assume, words of encouragement. I was happy. I was demonstrating to the people it doesn't matter how afflicted you are with Workitis, you can always get out of bed for a chicken and champagne breakfast.

One Sunday morning in God's universe or Charles Darwin's paradise, depending on your belief system, I had risen early from bed, pumped out two calf raises on my left leg, and engrossed myself in analysing the horse-racing form for the afternoon races. My unfair, but wonderful, expulsion from the Baptist church, had forced me to become a non-practising Baptist. Therefore, *not* to bet on a Sunday afternoon was being *irreligious* and disrespectful to all non-Baptist gods.

On this Sunday morning, as with every Sunday morning, those who believed in the *Almighty* had also risen early to eat and dress, as this was their day to attend church with other like-minded people. At church they would all pray, sing, be jolly and promise to love

one another, whilst collectively ignoring the plight of the homeless and the starving. They would disrespect their own fathers, by praising someone else's father, who lived in Heaven. The sounds of my own father noisily clearing his throat in the bathroom filtered through to my bedroom.

Downstairs Mother prepared breakfast whilst merrily singing, 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.'

I yelled, 'No he doesn't! He hates us, especially those Roman bastards! He's none too keen on them.'

Mother retorted, 'Hush your heathen mouth, you ungrateful bucket of pigs' swill! After all I have done for you, you treat me like this. When Jesus comes back, he is going to get you good, boy. I'm going to tell him you were expelled from church.'

I replied, 'Seeing as you're going to church, can you ask Jesus or his old man who they fancy in the fifth race at the Valley this afternoon?'

'You mock him at your own peril. Jesus died for our sins on the cross and you mock him; how dare you!' Mother fired back.

I responded, 'Do you know how stupid that sounds? How could he have died for *my* sins? He's been dead for over 2,000 years. I wasn't born back then. When Jesus was running about the place flogging his stuff like an Amway salesperson, I hadn't committed any sins. Bit different now though, the *sins* I mean. When's he coming back again? I may need him to die again'.

Laughter erupted from the bathroom.

'Besides, if Jesus did die for other people's sins, more fool him for taking the rap for stuff *he* never did.'

'You'll never get to Heaven, you blasphemous, free-loading, lazy bastard,' said Mother.

I replied, 'My definition of Heaven is a winner at 20/1, that's Heaven, especially if I've got a shed load of the folding stuff on it.'

'One day, just you wait. One day, the *Whinging Aunt from Whining Hill* and I will get your father's hacksaw and cut you up, you bad child,' threatened Mother. 'You, who insult and mock everything religious.'

'That's a tad unfair. I neither insult nor mock religion. I merely point out the bleeding obvious. Based on my observations, this life is the only one we get. There is no evidence to suggest we're getting a second crack at it.'

'I just knew I should have beaten you more when you were a baby. When I get to Heaven, I'm going to tell God not to let you in, ever,' Mother snapped.

'You'll never get Heaven,' I said.

'Why not?' Mother asked.

'Because I'm *not* going to tell God you died,' I answered. 'I won't even tell the police or the church minister. I'll leave you where you lie. God won't know you died. How'd you like them apples, baby?'

Ahh, there is something special about the sound of silence.

My God-fearing parents ate, dressed and came up to my room to tell me they were leaving to commune with the great Creator. Well, Father did. Mother came up, spat at me, and mumbled something about how I was destined to go live with the Devil. The backfiring and the rattling of the family FJ Holden (yes, the same car), told me I had the house to myself for a few hours. I settled back into my form analysis.

Within thirty minutes, I had finished and placed my bets for the day via the internet

using my online-betting account. With my parents gone, and to help me unwind from the rigours of thirty minutes of gambling analysis, I usually made a call each Sunday morning to the agency, and asked for a home delivery. One of the benefits of being a successful gambler is one has the ready flow of cash to be able to participate in whatever the agency offers.

On this morning, her name was Karen; at least that's what she told me when she arrived. But, you never know with agency girls; it could have been a false name. Karen was younger than I was. Slim and tanned, she was. Her light, yellow dress, with the hemline falling discreetly at upper thigh level, fluttered in the morning breeze as it gave way to a nice pair of legs. Her long auburn hair fell loosely over her shoulders and her eyes displayed a vacant look of 'Here we go again'. I figured her good-looking cleavage had to be part of a great set of boobies. In one hand she carried a bag, which housed the products she used for her specialised trade.

Whilst chewing a big wad of gum, Karen warmly, affectionately, lovingly, and showing I mattered to her, asked, 'What'll it be love – cash or credit?'

'Cash,' I answered.

Karen told me she was twenty-one. The age gap between us didn't appear to bother her. Money never discriminates. We went upstairs and into my room. I saw the racing form guides I had been working on earlier strewn over my bed. I suggested to Karen we adjourn to another bedroom for my *horizontal* folk-dancing lesson.

I placed an AC/DC CD in the player on my table, cranked up the volume, and then we went into my parents' bedroom. I knew Karen found my finely honed athletic body an attraction as when I undid the belt of my trousers, and my stomach hit the floor twice, before bouncing back into place, her face went pale and she was lost for words. I was a sight to behold. I briefly explained to her that *once* I'd had big chest muscles, but my Workitis illness had made them slump to my stomach. Her face still stayed pale.

Karen never found any words until I removed my shirt. As she looked, she declared loudly, 'Look at your man boobs; you've got bigger tits than me!'

We climbed into the bed of magical times, and I told Karen of my fitness regime. My two calf raises each morning on my left leg is what makes a body like mine I pointed out. Yep, I thought, as I tried to find my penis for her, Karen was one lucky woman to have me for an hour. I had read the day before in one of my magazines that sometimes the man should pleasure the woman. I think Karen was most flattered when I asked her where her G-spot was.

The look of shock on her face told me this could be the first time a man had taken the time to *consider* her pleasure.

She hesitantly answered, 'I'm not sure; maybe I didn't bring it.'

Karen, who by now was helping me to locate my penis, was most grateful when I reassured her it was OK, she could bring her G-spot with her the next time I called up the agency and they selected her to visit me. The tears of happiness that welled up in her eyes signalled to me how much I had come to mean to her in a short time. A few moments later, we both gave up trying to find my penis and Karen reached into her bag and handed me a strap-on.

In a hurry to have me, Karen from the agency said, 'Stand up, look in the fucking mirror, lean backwards, find your dick, put it in the plastic and let's stop mucking around here; I'm a busy girl.'

I did as instructed. Some women like to take charge in the bedroom. It gives them

power I've heard.

Karen whispered, 'Hurry, be nice and quick,' confirming my earlier suspicions. She was smitten with the big fellow.

My parents arrived home suddenly. I didn't hear the car. AC/DC music was still reverberating throughout the house.

Karen was also moaning in my ear, 'Please, please, never mention this to anyone, ever!'

Both my parents mistook my choice in music for the noise a cat makes when its tail has been jammed in a door. Given we didn't own a cat made their assumption puzzling to me. They rushed upstairs to rescue the cat we didn't have and caught me in the act – the unfinished act. For a moment, I thought things were going well. They stood, just stood, and looked at us; both appeared gobsmacked as the blood drained from their faces.

Father broke the icy silence first. 'Way to go, my boy! That's how to pray, the good old missionary position. I hope you've got someone underneath your stomach!'

I'm not sure what upset Mother the most. Catching me doing the deed, catching me doing it in their bed, or Father seemingly granting his approval for the activity I had now begun to pursue with great haste, in the hope that I could finish before Mother fully recovered from her shock. I knew she was going to overreact to a situation which could be sorted with good manners, diplomacy and another couple of minutes (for my sake). But, I should have known none of this would be forthcoming.

My plea of 'Can you come back later? I haven't quite finished', went unheeded and merely served to make Mother hysterical.

There is nothing worse to a man in his mid-fifties than the sound of his mother becoming hysterical whilst he's trying to finish shagging a twenty-one-year-old prostitute named Karen. It's off-putting, and to be honest, rude. I think Karen was most upset by the proceedings.

Mother moaned, 'We came home for my Bible. I forgot it! What do I find? I find this disgusting, vile, inappropriate filth happening. You don't even use your own room, and you're on my side of the bed, you filthy little heathen man!'

'Mother,' I said. 'Lighten up, grab your Bible and go back to church. I'm nearly done here. I'll tidy up afterwards.'

Mother wailed, 'Why, why, why? In my house, why do you resort to lust? God forbids lust! The minister warned us last week about lust; it's sinful.'

In desperation I argued, 'I had a vision God wanted me to share the love – that's what I'm doing.'

Whilst Mother and I conversed by way of the spoken word most loudly, Father knelt on the floor beside the bed, not to ask God for my forgiveness, but to gain a better look at Karen, under the guise of asking her what footy team she supported. Mother grabbed him by the scruff of his jacket and sent him flying backwards.

'Pick yourself up, man,' Mother hollered to Father. 'Pick yourself up and beat him with the ironing board (who keeps one of them in their bedroom?), the heathen sex maniac he is.'

Father grabbed the ironing board and commenced pounding my body as I yelled, 'She has a twin sister!'

'Really?' replied Father.

He stopped beating me and put down the ironing board.

Karen decided whilst two was OK, three's a crowd, and four's a big crowd. She

therefore decided to withdraw from further participation in my horizontal folk-dancing lesson, by crawling out from underneath me. She grabbed her clothes, complimented Mother on her Sunday dress, and made her getaway by the time-honoured way of the *bolt*.

No such bolt for me. Mother yelled at my father to keep pounding as she fell on her knees and prayed for the sin of my deeds not to be held against her.

Karen yelled as she ran out the front door, 'Don't you ever call me again! You lot are loopy! Plus, I have two sisters, we're triplets.'

What is it with women who play hard to get?

I yelled after her, 'Wait for me! I want to come with you.'

Karen hollered back, 'As if I'd ever get off with a fat prick like you!'

'Give me back my money!' I hollered.

Father said, 'I'll chase after her – for your money.'

Mother said, 'No you won't. You will stay here and continue to beat his body, otherwise you'll be restricted to nookie-nookie on your birthday, and Christmas Day *only*.'

Father looked at me in one of those father-to-son ways as if to say, 'Sorry son, but if I only get laid twice a year, I'll end up complaining like the *Whinging Aunt from Whining Hill*,' and he commenced the pounding again.

Mother, now leaning over me and attempting to push the iron, in its entirety, into my mouth, began to quote scripture on *why* having sex out of wedlock is for sinners.

Spitting out the iron, I yelled, 'Sex out-of-wedlock must be allowed! Look at Adam and Eve. They never married and they had kids!'

'They would have been married!' Mother declared.

'Who married them? There were no other people on the Earth. On the sixth day God only made those two. It says so in the Bible,' I replied.

For a moment, I thought I might have won the round on a technicality, as Mother stopped with the iron and the scripture. But, she was just catching her breath as she stretched out her free arm, and attempted to place one end of the iron cord into a power point.

She yelled, 'God must have married them in the Garden of Eden!'

'Rubbish!' I replied. 'Show me where God is in their wedding photos?'

'Don't be stupid, boy!' responded Mother, as she gave up with the iron and threw it to one side. 'Everybody knows Adam and Eve never had a photographer.'

'Then where's the proof they were married? No photos, no God saying he married Adam and Eve, no witnesses, and nothing on YouTube about it. You have no argument! God wasn't there and neither were Adam and Eve, and there was no Garden of Eden either. Besides the Bible is full of crap. It wants us to believe that Adam stood next to a naked woman and went for a piece of fruit instead. Come on, you can't take it seriously. Anyways, you and Father did it before you got married; I'm the proof of that. I'm the best thing that has ever happened to you.'

Mother went still, quiet, momentarily confused perhaps, unsure how to react. She sighed, a long sigh, turned and walked deliberately, purposefully to the bedroom door. Here she stopped, and shut it. Father, witnessing the change in Mother's demeanour, stopped pounding me and backed away, placing the ironing board in front of him, as if for protection. Mother turned, faced me, sighed again, and then went fucking ballistic. She went straight through Father's security board, knocking him over. Out of the haze of pieces of shattered ironing board falling to the bedroom floor, emerged something I had never seen before. Mother had flames coming out of her nostrils and her ears; she made loud

guttural sounds I could not decipher, and *this* was hurtling towards me.

I said loudly, 'Oh, bugger!'

Father, covered in the remnants of what had once been an ironing board, looked up at me from the floor and declared, 'You're buggered!'

To escape the mother of all cruise missiles, I rolled sideways from the bed and bounced along the floor on my stomach. I stood up to run to the closed door, but stumbled over Father's slippers and fell. I tried to get up whilst Mother started to kick the living crapper out of me.

Suddenly, Mother realised she was witnessing my fully exposed, naked, fifty-five-year-old body, as I rolled to try and get away from her madness.

'Hang on; hang on a minute. What do we have here?' she screamed to Father. 'Look at him; look at him! He's got the curse of the donkey! He's suffering from donkeyitis!'

Father looked and I do recall him saying, 'Wow! That's an impressive-looking Johnson, you've got there, son. You're just like your daddy!'

Intent on moving with the same electrifying speed as a Tour de France cyclist does on illegal drugs, I staggered to my feet whilst hollering, 'It's a strap-on. I'm wearing plastic; it's a fake!'

Seeing me trying to escape, Mother went stark raving crazy; her hair stood on end and began to smoke. She started to froth at the mouth, and the veins in her neck looked as if they were going to pop out. Herein lies the problem with my escape plan. I had staggered almost upright to run as fast as a deer would do after coming face to face with a lion. As I did, one of my feet stepped on the strap-on. The elastic band holding the strap-on in place stretched right out and then, as if possessed by a force, the likes unknown to humankind, the plastic doodle holder sprang back with a twanging sound. The strength behind the recoil was exceptional. It was so powerful, it knocked me over backwards and once again I fell. Except this time, the back of my head came to rest on the pointy end of the iron.

My parting thought. Bugger! I wonder if death is a fatal beast.

Let Us Pray

Hey God

If you're there

I think I'm dead

Just thought I'd let you know

I've always believed, really I have; I love your work

Amen

The Prophecies of Chapter Two

- Living at home when you're fifty-five is probably overrated.
- Beware of Workitis; it can strike at any time.
- Paying up front for services can often lead to disappointment.
- If you're still living at home, use your own room for certain activities.
- If buying prostitutes, see if you can pay half now, half afterwards.
- Do not leave irons lying around; they can be dangerous to people's longevity.
- The force behind the rebound of a strap-on brings tears to your eyes.
- Try not to get your mother hysterical.
- If you see a person doing the Indian dance for unemployment benefits, give *Wind Between Ears* my regards.
- You'll know her the moment you try and talk to her. She can't put a complete sentence together, without stopping and thinking in-between phases.
- Better still, say nothing. Throw rocks at her instead.
- Love only hurts when your parents come home early and catch you at *it* in their bed.