

DEEP INTO DARK

DELPHINE JAMET



First published in February 2011. Reprinted twice in 2014.

Copyright © Delphine Jamet, 2015

Editing by Lori L. creationscolors@gmail.com

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher. The Australian Copyright Act 1968 (the Act) allows a maximum of one chapter or 10% of this book, whichever is the greater, to be photocopied by any educational institution for its educational purposes provided that the educational institution (or body that administers it) has given a remuneration notice to Copyright Agency (CAL) under the Act.

Published by Streetkid Industries
PO Box 356
Leederville, WA 6903, Australia
www.deepintodark.com

Cover and text design by:



www.oid.com.au
stuff@oid.com.au

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:
Jamet, Delphine
Deep Into Dark
978-0-646-54758-9

1. Street Children – Western Australia – Perth. 2. Street Children – Western Australia – Perth – Diaries. 3. Street Children – Western Australia – Perth – Interviews. 1.

Title
362.76099411
Printed in Australia by
[suburb, state]
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**THIS BOOK TOOK 8 YEARS TO WRITE AND IS 99%
TRUE. MOST OF THE NAMES IN THE STORIES HAVE
BEEN CHANGED BUT LOCATIONS REMAIN THE
SAME.**

It attempts to help you understand why and how some people end up on the streets, involved in drugs and crime.

Living on the streets can be very dangerous. Don't go there! If you hate living at home or you don't like your teachers, get help and talk to someone.

This book is in memory of Chelsea Lowry, Noongar Terry, Theo and all the people I once knew, more than fingers I have to count on. I will continue to write about the social issues that touched their hearts, and I thank them for all the memories, both good and bad.

The steps that echo down the alleyway
No sight, only sound
The chill in the air is piercing
Warmth is nowhere to be found

Rats patrol the ground
Cockroaches on walls
Preying on the innocent
The weak, should they happen to fall

The air is breathing
It's like a knife ripping at his throat
Laughter fills the alleyway
As the night begins to gloat

It's found another victim
Claimed another soul
Nowhere to call home tonight
As the night prepares to take another lonely soul

Kayaarn 2002

CONTENTS

PART ONE

Chapter 1	2
Chapter 2	24
Chapter 3	52
Chapter 4	72
Gallery	89
Chapter 5	94
Chapter 6	102
Chapter 7	108

PART TWO

Glossary	116
Statistics and Street Interviews	120
Full Interviews	132
Contacts / Websites	148
About the Author	154

CHAPTER

01

LEVEL
ONE



CHAPTER 1

BANG!

“EVERYBODY GET UP... RIGHT NOW! The police are on their way!” a man’s voice shouts, echoing through the vacant house. We jump up, dazed from the haziness of broken sleep. “GET UP, I SAID!”

I jump out of bed, fear filling my body. The freezing cold morning closes in around me. My pink blanket is scrunched up in the corner of the room with my mate Matt, passed out from too many pills. I slam on my shoes and tie my jumper around my waist before bolting out of the room. The bright torch in front of me shines into my face. It’s hard to see, blindness giving me dots in front of my eyes, so I take a left and run towards the back door.

“STAY INSIDE! THE POLICE ARE HERE!” repeats the man. I stop to look around, out of fear and a spirit of inquisitiveness. White shirt and black pants. Just another security guard trying to be a hero. The council was shutting its doors on us. They were determined to weed us out. We couldn’t exactly go anywhere, so we just had to find another squat. It was a vicious cycle we couldn’t escape.

I felt for my wallet, embedded in my buttocks from sleeping on it all night. My bike was in the kitchen, so I grabbed it. The back door hangs on one screw, a tight squeeze for an old person but easy for the young and small.

THUMP THUMP. “Come here!” A big hand grabs my shirt from the back. I push the security guard to the side and bolt through the gap, shoving my bike out first. The backyard was sand. Nothing grew. It was all dead, just like our spirits at five in the morning. It was almost summer, so the sun began to shine as the guard’s torch began to fade.

A girl screamed. It must be Sara. I think she slept in her bra last night! Laughter sounds.

CHAPTER 1

“Ha ha... did you see his face when I punched him in the head?” The boy laughs, unmistakably Matt. He bolts around the corner and flees with me. His messy blond hair resembles dreadlocks from the films of dirt and oil, and his face is black from sleeping with his head on the floor.

The small white picket fence at the front of the house is open and unlocked. I jump onto my bike and feel the shiny chrome against my skin, cool with the cold night the end of spring had brought.

“GO GO GO!” Matt shouts, running to keep up with me.

“GET HERE!” the guard yells, his 6-month pregnant- looking stomach slowing his efforts down. Ease down on the pale ale, old man!

Matt jumps onto the handlebars of my bike as I pedal like hell towards the car park at the end of the street. “I’m free balling!” He laughs, his eyes only slits, an effect of the additional cones he’d been smoking a few hours earlier. His red boxers flap in the cool breeze, his chubby body dirty from the unswept concrete floors. We’d found some old mattresses, but they stank of piss from the previous squatters.

We get to the end of the street. The engine. A distinct nasty sound that could turn our soul cold with fear. It was confirmed. The paddy wagon suddenly appeared from around the corner, slamming on its brakes, sliding out a degree and coming to a stop upon seeing us. They didn’t have to look any further – common place, common face.

“OI! Stop right there!” An officer jumps out as I slam on my brakes to avoid a misplaced kerb. Matt flies off the handlebars into a nearby bed of weeds. “Come here, Hayley!” the officer shouts.

Both cops jump out of the car, but I knew I had to save myself, leaving Matt behind. I race towards the car park, squeeze through the gap of wooden logs and head towards the Art Museum. Too easy, too experienced, not going to stop for something like that! Why do they always have to raid our squat? Do they want us to hang around the streets, our pockets filled with move on notices, begging for loose change to keep the drugs flowing to stabilise our emotions?

I look back to see Matt wrestling with an officer. He almost escapes, but the cop hangs onto his lowered boxers. Oh what a sight! I laugh and head to the malls.

DEEP INTO DARK

My wheels spin really fast, with a chain so cranky you can hear it a mile away. The sun begins to rise, and the heavy smell of smog quickly fills the air as trucks scoot through Murray Street Mall and its surrounding streets. I slam a scuffed Nike shoe onto my back tyre, narrowly missing a half-asleep commuter. He looks up in alarm before returning to sucking on his coffee cup like a child's bottle.

I slow down as I reach the corner of the Commonwealth bank and another mall, wary of any police cyclists who might suddenly come into view. I continue to ride, gazing up at the dark sky that's quickly changing colour. Strong hints of coffee and bakery products fill my senses. It's always so exciting to start a new week in the city when you have so much freedom, like no work or school. A fresh week of adventures, running amok in the city, money to make and new bags of Fruit Lexia (cheap cask wine) to OD on. What joy!

I take both my hands off the handlebars to adjust the black Nike cap sitting firmly on my cropped pink hair. The cool air whips past my ears as I reach the wind passage of Barrack Street. Commuters stop to check the traffic before confidently jaywalking across the street, hurrying to reach the place of work they so desperately don't want to reach. I head for the Supreme Court Gardens.

The homeless people sit on the lawn and benches, enjoying the fresh sandwiches, soups and hot pies on offer. A blue 4WD is parked opposite the Bell Tower, a long queue following it from the front. I dump my bike near the big tree and join the queue, patiently awaiting the feast that is the highlight of the day for so many.

It doesn't take long as Shirley from the Salvation Army, a small dedicated lady with soft white hair, works quickly and quietly, greeting the homeless with a warm smile. Inside the boot is an array of sandwiches, pies and orange juice, waiting to be served up in the plastic bags hanging from a hook to Shirley's right. "Hi, Hayley. How are you today?" Shirley asks.

"Good thanks, Shirley. And yourself?"

"Oh, I'm fine. Are you staying out of trouble?" she asks. I nod my head yes. "Here you go." Shirley hands me a white bag of food which contains two ham and cheese sandwiches without wrapping, a plastic-packaged sandwich, a piece of cake, orange juice and a pie.

"Thanks, Shirley. See you later."

CHAPTER 1

I walk over to a group of people sitting under the big tree, surrounded by empty food wrappers. Some are drinking VB beer and smoking cigarettes.

“Hey guys. How’s things?” I ask.

“Good to see ya again, girl! You staying out of trouble?” Terry asks, wagging his right index finger at me. “I heard you’ve been causing trouble again.” His fluffy white beard is covered in pie crumbs and cigarette ash. He has a warm smile to greet anyone, a smile full of life and happiness that hides his troubles. I give him a hug before sitting down to unpack my breakfast.

“I never cause trouble.” I grin. “The coppers just come over for a chat. You know what they’re like!” I pull out the orange juice and pie, hunger burning inside my stomach. My head feels light from the dizziness of no food and the excitement of the morning. The grass is slightly damp, but it’s refreshing.

“You should be at home, tucked up in bed, missy. I know the streets, and you shouldn’t be on them. You should be at home, still in school!” warns David. I look at him but don’t say anything as I begin tucking in, followed by a swig of orange juice. He sits up tall, his big dark eyes observing everything in his surroundings as he takes a drag of his cigarette, breathing in and out with clear signs of relaxation.

Terry takes a bite of his meat pie. “What would we do without Shirley? If it wasn’t for her, we would all be starving!” He takes a sip of his beer, his big smile returning when he lowers it. The cool amber fluid increases his sense of happiness and satisfaction. It’s often life’s simplest things that can make us feel this way. He grabs his bag of rollies from his slightly dirty flannel shirt pocket and then pulls a lighter from his tight black jeans. His dark hair, streaked with grease, shows signs of aging from various strands of grey. The hair hides a lifetime of living, secrets never to be shared.

“She’s doing something she believes in, helping people on the streets, looking after everyone,” David adds.

“We’ll never get another lady like her. She doesn’t even get petrol, she does it all by herself. She feeds everyone.” Terry pauses and takes another swig.

“The people who live in the high-rise buildings think they can’t help streeties. They’re just a bunch of robots. Their life is so technical. Red

DEEP INTO DARK

light – stop, clock alarm – get up. They live by instructions. Living on the streets – it’s freedom. There, turn on a light – it costs you. Here, you get the sunlight for free. They turn a key in a door, watch TV, hear songs on the radio – and ALWAYS the same songs.” David shakes his head sadly.

“Disgusting. Australia has lost its dignity!” Terry declares. He throws the crust of his pie to the seagulls behind, who’ve been waiting for a feed ever since Shirley arrived. They squabble and fight, some standing on one leg in an attempt to gain sympathy with the food throwers. David throws a cigarette butt at them.

“They are arseholes living in it. They have no respect. The young things have no respect for their elders, they just sit on a bus all day,” David says.

Adam nearby pipes up. “By the year 2020, if you come and sit in a park, you’re gonna have to pay for it.” He opens his eyes, stoned to the eyeballs, and raises his head to lean on his elbow. Dressed in a dirty blue jumper and jeans, he’s the only one of the men wearing shoes. He rubs his eyes tiredly. Some of them slept during the day and stayed awake at night, fearing for their safety or working the dark to make a living. But most of the homeless were honest people.

“Take young people to a cattle station and let them earn their keep. Dad took me down and said ‘You’re staying here for twelve months.’” David takes a deep breath. “Too much bullshit in politics where the Prime Minister upsets himself arguing all the time, flying from country to country, but when a bloke wants to fly from A to B, the government won’t help him. The government’s going broke, that’s why they have the GST now. I’ve seen a bloke arguing over four cans of beer. He went to hospital, had a fight and in the morning, he asked himself, ‘What was all that for?’”

Terry looks on. “I’m drinking with the blackfellas in Townsville when this guy gets hit on the head with a flagon. He died in my arms, about twenty years ago.” His face suddenly shows no emotion as he reminisces about the past, all those memories suddenly beginning to surface.

“A mate died in my arms... my wife.” Adam looks on, sad and defeated.

“Can’t stop everywhere because you gotta have money. I walked barefoot from Coolangatta, and I threw my swag away.” David grins broadly. He suddenly looks more of a man. “Took me two and a half days. So hot, but I always carried water with me. Four people stopped to pick me up

CHAPTER 1

when I had my swag. They said ‘Where do you want to go?’ but I told them to piss off. Didn’t want to go anywhere – that’s what it’s like on the streets.”

I finish eating a sandwich before standing up and walking to the nearby bin to place my rubbish into it.

“Where you going, girl?” Terry asks me in surprise, looking up at me. “Are you leaving us?”

“Yep. I’m going to Passages (Youth Centre).”

David looks up. “What’re you going to do there?”

“Get some sleep. I’m so tired!”

“I want to go there,” says David. “You’re lucky. Promise me you won’t grow any older? Cos no one cares if you’re old. They don’t want to help. You young ones, you can get help cos they care. Now they’re just in it for themselves if they’re helping us. Can’t you take me?”

“I wish I could David, but you have to be under 25. I’ll catch you later. See ya, Shirley!” I yell.

Shirley looks up. “Oh, see you, Hayley. Take care of yourself... and stay out of trouble!”

“You too, Shirley!” I laugh.

“I’m too old to be getting into any trouble. I’ll see you tomorrow!” Shirley smiles.

I grab my bike and begin to pedal off. I look up to the rear of the Supreme Court Gardens and see the council watching the feed from their white ute. They’re making sure everything’s okay. You never know what trouble homeless people can bring, especially when we’re littering a tourist environment with our presence!

When I get to the malls, three foot patrol officers are present. Constable Klutz stops in front of me, his two partners by his side. Klutz stands up tall and attempts to stick out his chest as if he’s been bodybuilding. The little rugby man full of self-importance has the face of an Owl Monkey

DEEP INTO DARK

with crooked little teeth. “It’s been a bit quiet down at The Plakas!” Klutz states, referring to a kebab café frequented by the homeless and riff- raffs.

“All my mates are at Passages.”

“Where?”

“Passages,” I repeat, thinking about adding ‘a cop-free zone!’ to the end of the sentence but deciding against it.

“Your mate Corey and what’s his name?”

“Oh, they got locked up!”

“Yeah, I know,” Klutz replies with a big smirk on his face.

“You locked them up, didn’t you?” I ask.

“Yep,” Klutz says proudly, his two partners laughing. They walk off to continue to patrol the mall.

TOP FIVE ISSUES FOR A HOMELESS PERSON

(in the opinion of a youth worker)

1. Pressure from authority (e.g. getting moved on)
2. Lack of accommodation
3. Issues of safety
4. Basic necessities (e.g. food, shower)
5. Money sources and income

I decide to take a detour past the GPO in case my best mate Rob is sitting on his blanket with his little yellow Chihuahua ET — short for Extra Trouble. The sun is warming up the city, and the malls are full of casual people who aren’t immediately required at work. Café joints are beginning to fill up with the elderly and keen mums out to spend their husband’s money.

I get off my bike and walk up the three steps to join them. A little growl greets me as per usual. “Steady, little mate,” Rob says, as he roughly pats the little dog’s head. “ Good boy.” He looks up at me with a grin. His bushy orange beard could have done with a combing, his baggy clothes are covered with dirt and a range of odours drifts through the air as he

CHAPTER 1

sits contentedly in the shadows of the corridor. His freckled arms and hands are wrinkled with age, making him seem close to 60 years of age. But he was only 40! “Hey mate, how’ve you been?” he asks with a smile, his body shaking slightly from the effects of last night’s binge drinking session of Fruit Lexia.

“Yeah, good. Didn’t see you at the food van this morning!”

“Nah, I thought I’d go to Trambys (hangout) this morning. You know, a little change. Heard what happened, mate. Sorry to hear that!” He smiles.

Rob had once been happily married with two kids, but when everything fell apart, he’d started drinking heavily, and that was perhaps why he’d aged so fast!

“The squat?” I ask, unconcerned.

“Yep... those bastards are at it again. Shutting down every squat in town. They don’t want us anywhere. Where are we supposed to go?”

“Home?” I ask.

“We don’t have a bloody home, you dag!” he smiles, lighting up a cigarette that he made from cigarette butts people had dropped in the malls.

“But we are home,” I say.

Rob laughs and gives up, shrugging his shoulders. “You gonna come and sit down, mate? The TV’s on!”

The TV was the view from the GPO at the end of the corridor in Forrest Chase. We entertained ourselves for hours watching people go past, from commuters to school kids to local enforcers. Some streeties would come and go, and others were on a quest for drugs, some half stoned from the effects of too much weed or goon.

Soon Constable Klutz is back on the rounds. One of his followers has disappeared, but it’s clear he’s on a mission. ET jumps up on all fours, an angry expression on his face, his pointy white jaws ready to attack on command.

“Why didn’t you plead guilty?” asks Constable Klutz, quickly climbing up the steps and walking right through our TV. Rob had previously been arrested for an alleged assault whilst peacefully drinking on his own one night. “You were supposed to plead guilty!”

DEEP INTO DARK

Rob looks up. “Well... it’s in the hands of my lawyer.”

“Where are you squatting?”

“Down St Georges Terrace.”

“Whereabouts?” Klutz demands.

“Right down the bottom.”

“Well... you’d better make sure you take care of your dog!” Klutz gives him an evil look as he points to the dog, and his colleague laughs. Klutz walks slowly past me, giving me a smirk. I return the smirk and spit on his pants. His face goes blank before anger replaces it, and he stops dead in his tracks. Suddenly, he grabs my shirt collar in his fist and slams me against the wall. “I could take you to the cop shop right now,” he says, pausing for dramatic effect. “Next time I’m on shift and you rub me up the wrong way, I’ll arrest you and make you hurt so bad, you stupid bitch!” he says before shoving me away. Klutz and his colleague head back to the train station.

Rob looks shaken up by the whole event. A few tears form at the corners of his eyes as he pats his beloved little dog. He takes a drag of his cigarette. “Well, I think I’m going to go back to Trambys. I don’t feel safe on the streets with Klutz on the beat. I’ll see you later, girl.”

“Will you be back this arvo?”

“Yeah, maybe,” Rob says, standing up. He starts laughing. “I can’t believe you spat on him!”

I start laughing myself. “Neither can I. I’ve never spat on anyone before! I hope that’s not classed as assault.” He gives me a hug before grabbing his bag and placing ET on top, walking off in the direction of the malls.

“Look at me! I dress in JAG and Nike and you think I’m a low-life?”
– Cedric (homeless), 2003

I ride my bike to the youth centre, on the same street as this morning’s squat. I step through the unlocked security door, wheeling my bike into the corridor to rest it near the door. The long corridor is dark with noises of a stereo blaring in the far room and the TV competing loudly in the lounge. Pamphlets clutter the nearby bookshelves on my right as I make

CHAPTER 1

my way down the semi-lit hall towards the lounge room. The aroma of coffee fills the air, reminiscent of my home life all those years ago.

On the blanket-covered couch, Sara, Josh and Matt are sitting or lying down. Sara is a fourteen-year-old, slightly chubby girl with short brown spiky hair, baggy jeans, a small top and a pierced left eyebrow and tongue. She plays with her tongue ring every now and then, running it through her lips and then tapping it on her white teeth, as she sets her attention on me. She's leaning towards the arm of the double seater couch on the side closest to where I'm standing, her legs resting diagonally towards the TV. "When did you get your tongue pierced, Sara?" I ask.

"What you tripping on? I've had my tongue pierced for ages. I just got a new eight ball on it cos I swallowed the last one," she declares.

"You know it's not good for your teeth? They get chipped and stuff?"

"What do I care? I don't plan on being around forever." Sara returns her attention to the blaring TV.

Josh, who is 11 years old, is lying down on the double couch on the opposite side. He looks up at me briefly before returning his gaze to the TV. He has a shaved head and a gold ring in his left ear and wears a long-sleeved shirt, baggy jeans with a torn patch at one of the knees and very scuffed skate shoes. His silver key chain hangs loosely out of his right pocket.

Matt, 14 years old, has a red baseball cap sitting firmly on his blond hair, his ears sticking out from beneath it like a goblin. He wears loose-fitting shorts that hang over his knees and a baggy T-shirt. His eyes are closed and faint snoring sounds are coming from his open mouth.

I walk into the kitchen. Julia, 17 years old, is sitting at the table from where the stereo is blaring, drawing a tag (graffiti) on a white piece of paper with a black texta. It looks really good. Youth worker Shelley is talking to Michael. She's sipping a piping hot coffee while he washes the dishes. "Hi, Hayley." Michael looks up. "How are you?"

"Good, thanks," I reply.

Shelley spins around and looks at me. "G'day, Hayley. Staying out of trouble?" Anyone would think I was a regular trouble maker as much as everyone seems to ask me this.

DEEP INTO DARK

“Yep,” I say, straightening up my baseball cap.

Matt suddenly appears. “She’s lying.” He grins. “I seen her getting busted again.”

“I was not! They were just searching me. It wasn’t my fault. It always happens,” I say, defending myself.

“Why were they searching you?” Shelley asks, putting a hand on her hip.

“I don’t know. They know I don’t do drugs, but I think the coppers are just trying to find an opportunity to lock me up. They love giving us a hard time.”

“Get used to it, girl!” Matt grins, walking up to me and placing his two hands on my shoulders. “The government pays them to give us a hard time. We’re dole bludgers, remember? Losers of society!”

“You don’t even get Youth Allowance yet!” I say.

“I know. That’s why I go around stealing cars and breaking into people’s houses. The government doesn’t give me any money, so I have to go out and earn it!” He smirks.

“No talking about crime in here, please!” Michael puts the tea towel down on the counter. “You know the rules. If you want to talk about that type of stuff, go outside!”

“Yeah, we know the rules!” Matt sighs. “Well, I guess I’d better get going. I’ve got to get enough for my shot before the day runs out. If I don’t get arrested, I’ll see you later.” He grins.

“See ya,” Michael says, turning back to the sink.

I return to the lounge room. Josh has since gone, so I take his spot, his position still warm and crumpled in the blanket. Seconds later, Josh returns. “Oi! That’s my seat!” he tells me.

“Not anymore, Josh.” I close my eyes.

“Okay guys, we’re closing for lunch now,” says Michael, walking into the room to see who’s still present in the youth centre. I open my eyes and attempt to stifle an escaping yawn. “Five minutes, Hayley,” he says, returning to the kitchen.

CHAPTER 1

I stand up with less energy than I had before I started the morning's sleep. I walk out towards the entrance of the corridor where my bike has since fallen to the floor. Pulling it up, I open the front door to the bright rays of sunshine. Cars zoom past on the busy street, and reality sinks in. I wipe the tiredness from my eyes and listen to my grumpy belly telling me it's time to eat again.

Outside the Plakas Café in the city, 16-year-old Jazmin is sitting at a table, drinking from a Coke, looking tired and depressed. Her hair is freshly dyed black, matching both her mood and her clothes. She stubs out her cigarette and pulls out the pack for another one.

"Hey Jaz, how's things?" I ask, dropping the bike near the table and taking a seat with a fresh kebab I'd just bought.

"Oh hey, I didn't see you there."

"Where is everyone?" I ask.

"I don't know. I was supposed to meet them at 12, but no one's rocked up."

"I haven't seen you for a while!" I reply as I chew my first mouthful.

"Yeah, I got locked up. Armed robbery. Stupid, I know but I'm not going to do it again," she says, running a hand through her short hair.

"What happened? Tell me."

"A couple of weeks ago, I was at home with my cousin Sam. I'd had a shot of heroin and some pills, and I went for a shower. These boys came over, and there's nobody in the lounge room. They stole \$50 from me and half a stick of marijuana. All I wanted before I went to bed was to have a cone and then go to sleep. I didn't really care about the money, but one cone they could have left me, you know! Because I've been off my face, my cousin and me have gotten the idea in our heads to go do an armed robbery.

"We went across the road to a certain shop. She's taken blood out of her veins. We went over there, held them up. We didn't get anything for it because it's my first time. I freaked out, so I ran. We'd gone home, gone to sleep for three or four hours. Then I walked out of my room to get a drink of water, still off my face. The cops booted down the door, guns to my head. I dropped to the ground because they had guns – I've had

DEEP INTO DARK

bad experiences with guns when I was younger. But I dropped to the ground. Sam's asleep with her boyfriend in her bedroom.

"They dragged her out by her hair, smashed her face on the ground, cracked all her teeth – the top and bottom half of her front teeth have all split and there's only the top half left. I heard her scream, so I got up on my elbows and knees to get up, and they dropped a boot into my gut. I was five and half months pregnant to my boyfriend. It was kicking and everything. They dropped a couple of boots into me, broke my ribs AGAIN! I lost my baby, and they took me straight to hospital. I ended up having an hysterical attack in the back of the paddy wagon and passing out. I woke up in my vomit in hospital, and they'd cleaned me up because the baby was dead, and it was the size of a female's fist – a foetus, and it was dead! They took me to East Perth (lockups) and then to Rangeview (juvenile detention)," Jazmin explains in a state of shock. No wonder she was depressed!

"Are you going to make a complaint?" I ask.

My kebab suddenly seems tasteless.

"At the moment, I'm in the middle of a complaint... formal complaint, a charge against the cop who hit me. I'm going to charge him! I've got proof because I had people around me. And I was a witness to my cousin getting hit, getting her head dropped on the ground, breaking her teeth. She had caps put on them. Compensation! They fixed her teeth up for her! For free! I stood up in court and swore. I said to them, 'Yeah, they did that' because I'd seen it. I heard her scream, mate! She spat blood all over them. She's gone to Adelaide now. The cops got done for that, and she reckons when she comes back, she's going to stand up in court for me!"

"So you reckon you can win against them?"

"Oh, hell yeah!" Jazmin replies, anger and determination replacing her expression of shock. "That was my baby, and now it's gone!"

Matt walks up to the table with a smile. "Hey Jaz!" he says, hugging her before turning to me for a hug. "What are you guys up to?" he asks.

"I was just telling Hayley about the cops killing my baby."

"Oh yeah, I'm sorry about that!" he says, looking at her in sympathy. "Hey Hayley, I'll give you a story." He sits down on one of the spare

CHAPTER 1

chairs. “When I was 12, I was pulled up for drunk and disorderly. I got to the police station where I was belted by about three cops, giving me two broken ribs. When I went to court, I had sixteen charges. I got done for disorderly conduct, and all sixteen charges resulted in three months in jail. Then I was out on parole. When I went to report, they told me I had a breach, so I was locked up for another three weeks. Then the judge said, ‘We’ve found another three charges on you’ and I think it was for drunk and disorderly again, assaulting police and resisting arrest. I’m on parole now because I’ve assaulted five police officers with grievous bodily harm on four of them. I got two weeks prison for that.”

“How does that relate to my story?” Jazmin asks.

“Well... those cops deserve all they get!”

“I’ve lost my baby, and you’ve assaulted five cops. That doesn’t make sense.”

“Yeah, well, come on, let’s go find some drugs!” Matt suggests.

“I agree, come on Hayley” Jazmin says, getting up from the white plastic seat.

“Nah, I’ll pass.”

“Hey, can we borrow your bike?” Matt asks. “Yeah, alright. Just look after it, okay?”

“Hey sis, you know me. I’ll protect this bike with my life.” Jazmin jumps onto the handlebars, and Matt pedals off down James Street. “See ya!”

I finish eating my kebab and head back to the GPO. The usual routine is to go over to Forrest Chase to see who’s in town, but no one is there. I’m usually alone, me being different and all. If I was into drugs or stealing cars, I’m pretty sure I’d be around someone all the time. If I was easy to get laid, I’d probably never be alone. But I’m none of that. Just me and my bike and alcohol. Drifting from friends to friends. I never even really committed a crime, if you don’t count getting charged for no helmet or riding in the malls!

Rob is back sitting at the GPO. He doesn’t look happy through his bouts of cigarette smoking.

“Good to see you’re back. You wouldn’t believe what happened!”

DEEP INTO DARK

“What?”

“Well, all my stuff is missing from me squat. I went over there after I had my coffee at Trambys. I reckon Klutz has gone in and stolen all my stuff!”

“But you didn’t tell him exactly where your squat was!”

“Doesn’t matter, mate,” he says, depressed, patting ET roughly. ET went to bite him, but Rob pulled away just in time, returning to smack ET when the dog wasn’t ready. “They could always check the cameras. It wouldn’t be that hard to see where I’m squatting.”

“And no one else knows where you are?”

“Sandy knows...” he says, referring to his on- and-off girlfriend who was more moody than a bipolar chimpanzee on Redbull. “But I don’t think she would have done anything.”

Sandy suddenly appears, walking past the GPO. Rob jumps up, cigarette ash flying as he runs after her. She starts to run, but he stops her, and they proceed to have an argument. Rob seems quite angry, but I don’t blame him. Three minutes later, Klutz appears and walks over to them, interrupting their heated conversation. Sandy walks away, and I watch Klutz speaking to Rob with such hate. Rob must have retaliated in some way to what Klutz was saying as Klutz suddenly shoves him back. Rob becomes angry, declaring his innocence and saying he hasn’t done anything wrong, throwing his hands up in frustration.

I pick up ET, who is becoming upset not knowing where his master is. His terrified body shakes with little growls every few seconds, and I cuddle him in my arms and try to keep him calm. By now, Klutz has shoved Rob against a wall and is handcuffing him. I walk up closer to hear what’s being said. “You’re under arrest for disorderly conduct,” Klutz says with a smirk.

“But I haven’t done anything wrong,” Rob protests.

Klutz begins patting Rob down, which makes Rob angrier as he tries to stand up from the wall he’s being pushed against. Suddenly Klutz kicks Rob in the shins and trips him to the ground. The handcuffs are so tight, blood begins to seep from both of Rob’s wrists. His glasses fall to the ground. “Whoops, slight accident here,” laughs Klutz as he stomps on the glasses.

CHAPTER 1

“That was no accident!” yells Rob with anger, his red face brimming with tears. A blue paddy wagon rocks up. “ET! Where’s ET!” Rob begins yelling. “Where’s my dog!” I walk over to him, but four cops now standing with Klutz, making sure I don’t get any closer than metres. “Look after my dog! Look after my dog!” Rob yells. I feel like crying myself. I want to abuse and bash those cops who just don’t care. They’re happy and self-congratulatory about arresting another homeless person. I hate them so much at that moment. I want to hurt them and do something really bad to them. How dare they do that to us? Every day, they try to arrest us for hanging around. It isn’t fair. The hatred pulses through my veins, and I hold ET tight, as if daring the cops to try to remove him from my hold. One of the homeless guys, Carl, leads me back to the GPO, fearing I’ll be arrested for being connected to Rob, the world’s most harmless homeless man.

We doubt Rob will get bail, so Carl takes ET and his bag to the lockups whilst I stay at the GPO. The cold hard concrete chills my bones but doesn’t cool my anger and hatred. I don’t know what to do with myself, but I still have a bit of money on me, so getting drunk seems the most perfect solution I can think of.

It’s dark and cold. The lights shine brightly in Forrest Chase, from what I can see in the square of Myers. Occasionally people walk past, but the city is pretty much closed for business. It’s getting late, and I’m all alone. A cold wind whips through the passageway, the loneliness settling in. I try to envision Rob in the cells of the lockups, hoping he’s okay and hoping he’s at least reunited with ET.

I look in my hands and see the shiny glass surface of a 375 ml Jim Beam. I’m feeling sick, but I take another skull of the bottle – it’s all I have. My only happiness. The liquid burning at my throat is like a mix of acid and coke. I’ve always hated the taste of alcohol – and especially bourbon – but all I care about now is getting drunk. Losing my mind, never remembering, feeling at peace. I wipe my mouth with my jumper, tears cascading, unstoppable. The lights of Forrest Chase become blurred, an improved perception of my reality. I don’t like seeing faces or places anymore. I didn’t want to see it like I should.

A patrol car drives by, the occupant sizing me up before driving off. I scull the remainder of the Jim Beam. The police car drives off, and I throw the bottle against one of the nearby columns. The noise echoes. Tears fall fast, and I hold both hands out in front of my face, trying to figure out what I’ve become. There are times when you wonder why you’re

DEEP INTO DARK

still alive. You ask yourself what you want to achieve by not dying. You look at a bridge, and you think 'I could.' Each day is filled with pain, and drinking is the only way to overcome the hurt that can't escape, no matter what. When you speak to other people, they think they're on your wavelength, but you know they're not.

I stand up and walk over to the smashed bottle, grabbing a shard of glass before dropping to my knees. I lift up my left sleeve, blinded with tears. I run the glass up and down, following the veins, flexing my arms and empowering the streams of blood to drip harder and faster. No one understands, if they even care. I need the pain, I deserve it. It makes me feel stronger. People who've never been there have no hope of understanding. They think we're crazy and we should all be locked up in a mental ward. Seeing the blood run comforts us, and that comfort can't be achieved so easily in any other way.

I stand up, wiping my wrist on my jeans before pulling my sleeve down to cover the cuts. I pull out some sunglasses from my pocket to cover my tears, and I start to walk towards the malls. Out of frustration, I begin kicking some shop windows. I dizzily sit down and start to cry just as Constables Shane and Dallis suddenly come into view from around the corner.

"Don't kick the window," Shane tells me. The constables continue walking up the mall. I jump up angrily when they're twenty metres away and begin kicking the windows again and the two constables immediately spin around and walk back to me. I sit down on the yellow bench outside the 24-hour Macers, the sunglasses covering my tears.

"Why're you kicking the windows?" Dallis asks.

"We can arrest you for disorderly conduct," adds Shane.

I sit quietly as the tears begin to fall, hating them so much. "So what's happened tonight?" Dallis asks.

"Nothing," I reply.

"Why are you crying?"

"I'm not," I say, wiping my cheek with my sleeve. Both constables stare at me.

"So what are you doing tonight?" Dallis asks.

CHAPTER 1

“Just hanging around. I’m waiting for my brother to pick me up. He’s gone for a drive,” I lie.

“And is he coming back?” Shane’s expression is a picture of uncertainty. His good looks could have opened up many doors for him. He leans his tall frame against the nearby bench. He looks the type who could have made the AFL but instead opted for a career in policing, hoping to make a difference like so many others before him.

“Of course. You can leave me alone now.” The constables don’t say anything for a few seconds and just watch me.

“Stay out of trouble Hayley” says Dallis. “You don’t want me to arrest you again.”

I walk towards the train station and stop on the bridge just before the art gallery. I look over the edge to the road to see cars speeding up and down. I stand on the brown ledge, the cool windmaking me feel unsteady. Suddenly I jump off, landing on the windscreen of a taxi. It slams on its brakes, and the windscreen shatters. The taxi slams into the wall of the Art Gallery, its back wheels spinning out towards the train station. A police car appears from Beaufort Street, its lights and sirens blaring before stopping with a loud screech less than a metre away. The siren quiets, but the lights still flash.

BACK TO REALITY

I’m back on the brown ledge. The two constables watch me from the bridge down the road. I jump back down to the ground and run towards the Perth Cultural Centre, the two cops bolting in the same direction. “HAYLEY! Stop right now!” Shane yells.

“HAYLEY! We’re talking to you. Come here!” shouts Dallis, who was likely to have been panting by this stage. Fitness is not his forte, I don’t know how he manages in this job!

The constables continue to run after me. Tears begin falling hard. I run down the ramp towards the Fuel Café before jumping over the rail and hiding behind a bush. The two constables run past, down the ramp and disappear towards the busy streets. I step out of the bushes and jump the rail back onto the ramp, heading towards James Street. There’s no sign of the constables. I head to a well-lit car park on my right. A man is standing in the entrance. “Is Joann working tonight?” I ask him, hoping my security guard friend is on shift for hugs and a chat.

DEEP INTO DARK

“No, not tonight. Oh... I didn't recognise you for a second there! How are you?” He stands at my height but his posture seems bad. His thin hair flaps in the breeze of the cool night. I hear the cars tooting their horns in Northbridge to my left. It's all too quiet.

“Surviving.”

“What's been happening tonight?” he asks me in concern. He wears a white shirt neatly tucked into his pants, like a schoolboy.

“Oh, nothing much. I just drank a bottle of Jim Beam. I don't know why I'm still around.”

“Look, I'll tell you something. I think we have a lot in common. We've both had a bad past.” There's a lot of care and love in this man.

“Did you get over it?”

“No, these things... you never get over. You just learn to live with it. It doesn't matter what drugs you take or how much alcohol you drink, you've just got to learn to live with it. I've got a disease called motor neuron disease. I've got about three years to live. It's a disease of the nerves, and they get eaten away. After two and a half years, three, your body breaks down and kaput... that's it. I've already used up twelve months.”

“I'm sorry,” I say. I suddenly feel a lot more respect for this man. Here I am wasting my life away when he was having his ripped away from him before his eyes!

“Don't be. People ask, ‘Why me?’ Well, who else is it going to be? You can always find someone who's worse off than yourself.” The man's eyes shine with forming tears. “I have a daughter who recently entered a poetry competition. See, she loves poetry just as much as you like your writing. Well the other day, she received a letter from the competition saying she was in the finals. She doesn't care if she wins, it's just getting that far that counts. I'm so proud of her. She's really going to be someone.” He pauses. “I'm just saying, look around. You'll always find someone worse off than yourself. So stay as strong as you can. You can be anything you want to be. Have a good night.”

He shakes my hand slowly but firmly and returns to the car park office, where he's working the night. His walk is slow, and his nerves shake

CHAPTER 1

every now and then. He paces his steps, concentrating, as I watch him walk away. It's the last time I ever see him.

I turn to face James Street, feeling so much better. Suddenly all my worries seem over. I'm not facing a death sentence, I just have some petty issues. I feel more confident and determined to sort my life out. I wipe my tears away and head to the local park to get some sleep.