

PROLOGUE.

With the rifle cradled in his arms he sat on top of the high ground alongside the highway where it ran through the cutting two hundred metres from the bridge across Scrubby Creek.

Hidden behind a low sparse bush he was invisible to motorists. His slouch hat had twigs and leaves stitched to it. His face and hands were streaked with dirt. The rifle had been painted in irregular stripes with non-reflective paint, light brown and grey green, the colours of the Australian bush. Hanging from his belt was a mobile telephone.

The time was six forty-two and according to the call two minutes earlier he should have less than a minute to wait.

He settled into a comfortable shooting position, eased off the rifle's safety catch and stared intently down the road to the bend five hundred metres distant.

The seconds ticked slowly away as he waited. The increasing warmth of the sun brought beads of perspiration to his forehead and to the palms of his hands. He dried his forehead under the brim of his hat with his shirtsleeve and wiped his palms on his trouser legs.

The car came round the bend, travelling fast.

He raised the rifle immediately but unhurriedly, knowing that the vehicle would take eleven seconds to travel the three hundred metres to the bridge. He watched it through the telescopic sight, checking description, registration plate and the driver's features.

Lining up the sight on his target he held his breath for steadiness and softly took up the slight slack of the trigger.

When the car reached the thin guide post thirty metres from the bridge he gently squeezed the trigger.

CHAPTER 1.

As the red On Air light in the Channel Five studio lit up, Christine Jordan looked straight into the eye of the central television camera.

"Good evening," she said. "I'm Christine Jordan and my first guest tonight is the Prime Minister of Australia, The Right Honourable Rex Marlow." She turned towards Marlow, her long, raven-black hair swirling lightly around the tops of her shoulders. "Welcome to Question Time, Prime Minister," she smiled, masking her loathing.

"Thank you, Christine. It's a pleasure to be here," Marlow replied, feeling perspiration starting to form on his forehead but not wanting to reach for his handkerchief straight away. Already he

could feel the back of his shirt becoming clammy under his coat. God, how he hated these TV studio interviews, with the heat generated by the stage lighting enveloping him. He should have pleaded a prior engagement because, apart from the heat and the physical discomfort, it was almost certain this tricky bitch would try to stick a knife or two into him.

When she'd made her request for the interview she'd said she wished to discuss the settlements for the Voyager disaster victims which the Attorney General's department had announced the previous day, but he knew from past experience that once these TV interviewers had you live on camera in front of an Australia-wide viewing audience, they could ask you anything they liked and pin you to the wall with embarrassing questions. He'd been foolish to agree. A weak performance tonight could drop him four or five points in the opinion polls and he couldn't afford that during the run down to the approaching election.

Well, she wasn't going to get the better of him. No smartypants female was going to make him look like a fool. Certainly she was very astute and on top of the TV ratings at present but she was still new in her job whereas he'd been in Federal Parliament for twenty-five years, a Cabinet Minister for nine of them and Prime Minister for these last two.

Christine noticed his uneasiness. That's good, she thought. I love it when they sweat. Well, suffer you swine. Tonight is for me. Tonight is retribution time. "Prime Minister," she said, "yesterday afternoon your Attorney General's department announced that a total of eighty-eight claims for damages arising out of the Voyager disaster were to be settled out of court for some forty-five million dollars. Is that correct?"

"Yes, Christine. Our Attorney General, I'm pleased to say, has worked very hard to bring this matter to a speedy and equitable conclusion and my Government is very happy to be generously compensating those fine men who suffered so grievously."

"I'm sure you are, Prime Minister," said Christine, green eyes flashing, "because these claims seem to have been in the Too Hard Basket for ages. As I understand it, on the tenth of February 1964, THIRTY YEARS AGO, our Australian aircraft carrier, HMAS Melbourne, accidentally rammed and sank our destroyer, HMAS Voyager, during night-time training manoeuvres off Jervis Bay. Eighty-two young crewmen died and over a hundred others were

injured, some very seriously. Is that right?"

"Yes, Christine. I'm not sure of the exact numbers but those were the circumstances."

"But THIRTY YEARS to settle these claims, Prime Minister? That's an awfully long time, isn't it?"

There it was. The first of the knives. He'd sensed all along that this bitch would try to stab him. He squirmed a little in his chair and patted the perspiration from his forehead with his handkerchief. He could feel it forming all over his big bloated body.

"Christine, our Australian Labor Party was not in government when the sinking occurred," said Marlow. "Our opponents, the Liberal/National coalition, were in power at the time and for most of the next twenty years. They blundered around for ages, holding two Royal Commissions to find out who was to blame. Then all the legal eagles came into the picture and the Libs thought it was too messy and they shelved it. They didn't care about those poor devils."

"Well, what happened when Labor came back into power? You were a Cabinet Minister then, weren't you? Why did it take another eleven years? Thirty years after the sinking occurred."

He could almost see the knife in her hand. He could almost feel its cold, sharp point pricking the skin between his ribs. Perspiration was soaking his clothing. He reached again for his handkerchief. He knew there was no valid excuse. Thirty years was a national disgrace. He'd just have to keep talking around and around the subject without ever answering the question.

"Christine," he said, trying to sound as composed as possible, "the only thing that matters is that my Government has compensated those fine men very generously. These claims average more than half a million dollars each. That's a very satisfying result for those fine men and I'm sure they're all very grateful."

"But THIRTY YEARS, Prime Minister?"

"Over half a million dollars each, Christine. That's what we've given them."

"But they should have been paid much sooner, shouldn't they?"

"Christine, when we took over from the Libs, the country was in a mess. We settled these claims very generously and as quickly as possible. We really looked after those fine deserving men. Over half a million dollars each."

Christine looked piercingly at him. A vision of her dead father, huddled in his wheelchair, flashed before her eyes. "I find that a very

remarkable statement, Prime Minister,” she said, “when I have here a note from you to the Attorney General dated two years ago, and authenticated by a handwriting expert as being in your own handwriting, which says, and I quote, Jim, put off these Voyager claims as long as possible. They're just a mob of whinging bludgers anyway, and signed, Rex. Would you like to comment on this, Prime Minister?” she added, holding up the note while Channel Five flashed a transcript on the screen.

For a moment or two Marlow was speechless. Hell! How had she got hold of that? Why hadn't Jim destroyed it? His body felt paralysed, his mind almost a blank. Then twenty-five years of parliamentary experience and training came to his aid.

“Christine, that's obviously a forgery,” he lied, straightening up in his chair and striving to sound believable. “I know absolutely nothing about it.”

“Well, Prime Minister, we might leave it to our viewers to decide on that,” said Christine. “Thank you for speaking with me this evening.”

And on that cue, Channel Five went to a commercials break.

Mark Radford, tall, fair-haired, walked out of the National Australia Bank premises in East Street and headed for where his Jaguar XJS Coupe was parked. He had just deposited to his current account the largest cheque he had ever personally seen, after he and his partner, Trevor Johnson, had sold their software company to one of the southern giants.

He knew he would miss Trevor and their daily and nightly involvement in the business but the deal had been too good to even consider refusing. It was nine years now since he'd said to Trevor over a beer one day in Yeppoon, well, if there's that much money in it, why don't we start up our own company. Nine years of hard, grinding, persistent effort. Longer than he'd stayed in any job and in any town since Tracey had died.

Together they'd forged a highly successful business, Trevor providing the technical expertise and Mark the commercial knowledge and marketing flair. After a slow inauspicious start in a tiny shop in North Rockhampton, they'd picked up several good service accounts and the business had started to flourish. Twelve months later they'd moved into larger premises and were employing four people. Now, at their time of selling, Rocky Resolutions was a

multi-million dollar business.

He looked at his watch. A little after three thirty. Time to go back to his unit and start packing. Also he'd ring his brother, Barry, in Townsville to let him know he'd be coming up there for a few days. He'd ring the Aquarius On The Beach as well, to book himself in and he'd ring Ma and The Old Feller at Kooralbyn, tell them the news and that he'd be down there in about a fortnight for a few weeks.

He could imagine the reaction at Kooralbyn. His mother would be ecstatic about having him home for a while but worried that he'd sold the business and didn't have a job. Several million dollars in the bank would not cancel out her fear of him being unemployed in these hard times with 10% of the workforce, nearly a million people, looking unsuccessfully for work.

She was unbelievable. A real sweetie, but definitely unbelievable. He chuckled softly to himself.

In his orchard in Kooralbyn Valley, near Beaudesert, south of Brisbane, Bruce Radford was spraying his fruit trees to shield them from the dreaded fruit fly. With goggles, protective clothing and spray pump he looked like a typical hobby orchardist. He didn't look at all the type of person to be planning the overthrow of the Federal Government and major alterations to the nation's electoral system.

"Bruce! Afternoon tea!"

He turned round. Lilla was standing in the shade of the scarlet covered Poinciana at the rear of their house.

"OK," he called back. "Coming now."

He trudged back from the orchard and joined her in the garden room, a pergola-covered paved area on the western side of their low-set brick and tiled home. With its slatted roof, which could be opened or closed, it was a wonderfully cool place on summer days. Today was hot and dry but their garden room, with its luxuriant tropical plants, was a cool, moist haven.

"How's the spraying coming along?" asked Lilla, handing him his large mug of white tea. At sixty-four she was a good-looking woman who had obviously been beautiful in her younger days. After years of fighting the greying process with colour rinses her hair was now completely white and waved and curled to her shoulders. Bruce called her his Snow Queen.

"I should have it finished today," he said. He sipped his tea and

stared out across the valley. The view was breathtakingly beautiful. The valley browned off during the winter months from cold weather, frosts and sparse rainfall but now, after several months of storms and warm weather, the lakes were full and the grass was lush and green.

"I was thinking while I was spraying," said Bruce, "what a great job that Christine Jordan did on Rex Marlow last night. Nailed him to the woodwork, didn't she?"

"She certainly embarrassed him," said Lilla. "I don't think I've ever seen him so nonplussed before."

"She'd make a great Prime Minister," he mused. "Just the person to head up my new Independents' Party, kick out today's dreadful government and get rid of our disastrous two-party system."

He grinned at Lilla.

"Don't tell me you're on your hobby horse again," she said, raising her eyebrows. "I couldn't stand another session on the wrongs of the country and how to fix them. Let's just have a nice cup of tea and look at the view."

Before Bruce could reply, the telephone began ringing in the lounge room.

Lilla went to answer it. Their married daughter, Alison, rang regularly, as did their son Barry's wife, Leanne, while their elder son, Mark, who was still single, rang at infrequent intervals. Apart from them, most of the calls were from Lilla's women friends in the valley or from a handful of old timers in Brisbane and elsewhere.

He began thinking about Christine Jordan again and about his Grand Vision but he kept one ear cocked to hear who was calling.

"Mark! How lovely of you to ring!"

He could hear the excitement in Lilla's voice and his heartbeat quickened. He put his mug down on the table, rose stiffly to his feet, and went to join her in the lounge room. This was quite an occasion. Mark hadn't rung since he'd holidayed with them several months ago.

On his drive from Rockhampton to Townsville, Mark Radford was not in a hurry and the olive-green XJS cruised along comfortably with the speedo needle hovering around the hundred mark. He reached Mackay a little after midday and filled up with petrol at one of the numerous service stations on Nebo Road. He ate a hamburger and drank a mug of coffee in its cafe and then took off again.

He could have arranged to meet some of his old friends from the Racecourse Mill, where he'd worked for a couple of months several

years before, but he'd decided to give them a miss today. They would have wanted to have a beer or two ... or more, but he never drank alcohol when he was driving long distances. He would spend an evening with them on his way back south to Kooralbyn. Probably stop at Bundaberg for a day or two also.

The Bruce Highway was almost like home to him. For twelve years he'd travelled up and down it and worked in many of the towns from Brisbane to Cairns. Today, as he headed ever northward, with nothing to do but watch the road and the speedo needle, memories came flooding back.

It was just on 5.00 pm when he slowed at the sixty K speed limit sign for the run into Townsville. The Friday afternoon traffic was thickening as he wended his way through the centre of town, heading for the beach.

The fourteen storey Aquarius hotel is on The Strand, which runs from Ross Creek to Kissing Point, and he'd told Barry he'd check into his suite first, ring to confirm his arrival and then drive up to Barry's house. Barry wouldn't be home from the factory when he rang but Leanne and the girls would be there.

When he picked up the telephone in his suite and rang Barry's number his watch was showing 5.27 pm. He was quite surprised when Barry himself answered the call. He was shocked when he found out why.

At the time Mark Radford was slowing for the run into Sarina, around eleven thirty in the morning, Rex Marlow, in his Canberra office, was ranting at his Deputy Prime Minister, Len Straun.

"These ratings are shocking, Len," he stormed. "The party's down to 37% with the Libs up to 44 and my own rating's down to 19. I've dropped eight points since that bitch hit me on Wednesday night. Damn her! We've got to fix her somehow, Len, or we're goners at the next election."

"It's certainly not too good at the moment, Rex," said Len Straun quietly.

"Not too good! It's a bloody disaster! We've got to do something about her. Any ideas?"

"Well, there's not much we can do, except perhaps don't do any more interviews with her."

"What! Just go away and hide? Come on now. Look what she did to Bill Williams when he did that. She crucified him night after

night for not being willing to speak with her. And she's made goats out of three others of our Ministers lately with leaked information, like she hit me with."

"Yes, she's a major problem. We're going to have to find out the source of those leaks."

"And quick smart, Len. We can't afford another disaster like Wednesday night. And why Jim didn't destroy that note of mine is beyond comprehension. I've told him one more slip and he's out! Stupid bastard!"

"Well, I'll organise an operation to try to find the source or sources of the leaks straight away, Rex. If we can close off her supply we should nullify her."

"I doubt it. Not completely. We've got to go further than that. We've got to get her off the air ... one way or another."

"But how?"

Marlow's face tightened into an evil grin. "Never you mind," he snarled. "I've got a few plans for this bitch. Now, get out of here. I've got a couple of phone calls to make to get things started."

That Friday evening, after Mark Radford rang his brother, Barry, from the Aquarius hotel, all the television channels carried segments in their news bulletins about the closure of the Anderson's Clothing Company in Townsville. Two of them also had five minute allocations in their later current affairs shows while Channel Five devoted the whole of its half-hour Question Time program to the closure.

The news had broken mid-morning with a media release in Townsville by the company's Managing Director and had spread quickly throughout Australia.

As soon as it came to her ears, Christine Jordan commandeered Channel Five's Citation 3 jet, organized her special camera crew and flew straight to Townsville.

Prior to landing, and with permission from Air Traffic Control, they circled the city and suburban areas and shot several minutes of aerial views showing Castle Hill, the main commercial area, Magnetic Island, the Breakwater Casino and as far inland as James Cook University, the Lavarach Barracks army establishment and the three thousand foot Mount Stuart with the local television and radio stations' transmission masts on its rugged summit. They also showed close-ups of the Anderson's Clothing Company premises spreading

over several hectares just south of Ross River.

After they'd landed, Christine stepped out of the aircraft's air-conditioned interior into the searing afternoon heat of a typical North Queensland summer day. It was like standing in front of the open door of a blast furnace. Her senior pilot, Jim Landers, helped her down the aircraft's folding steps.

“Welcome to the tropics, Christine,” he grinned.

Mark Radford grabbed his younger brother in a bear hug. “I'm so sorry, Barry,” he said. He turned to Leanne and gave her a friendly hug and a kiss on the cheek. “I told you he was a rotten accountant,” he joked. He then picked up their two daughters in turn, Belinda, aged six and Roseanne, nearly two years younger, kissed them, hugged them to him, twirled them around in the air and put them down again, squealing with delight.

As he followed Barry and Leanne through their house to the covered patio at the rear with its panoramic view overlooking Cleveland Bay, the two girls pulled at his hands, jumping up and down with excitement at seeing him again.

“Daddy's on TV! Daddy's on TV!” they both shrieked, each one trying to be the loudest.

“On TV, is he?” Mark asked. “He must be very important?”

“Oh no,” bubbled Belinda. “He's not important now! He's just got the sack!”

“Daddy's been sacked! Daddy's been sacked!” screeched Roseanne. “Isn't it great! Isn't it great! Now he'll be home all the time to play with us.”

Leanne moved in and rescued him. “Now, girls, quieten down. Uncle Mark and Daddy and I want to watch Question Time on the portable and if you two are very quiet and still you can watch also. And after that it's bath time.”

Barry handed Leanne and Mark glasses of ice-cold beer and turned on the portable television set. The Channel Five weather forecast was just finishing. There followed some advertisements and station promotions and then the aerial scenes of Townsville, shot from the Citation 3 jet that day, while Christine Jordan's voice introduced the program.

“Good evening,” said Christine. “Welcome to Question Time. I'm Christine Jordan and tonight I'm speaking to you from Townsville, the largest city in North Queensland, where today a very

sad occurrence has taken place ... an occurrence which should never have happened ... brought about by conditions which should never have existed ... conditions which have arisen through the stupidity and short-sightedness of successive Federal Governments ... our governments ... the protectors of our people ... of you and me.”

The aerial scenery speeded up a little and then slowed again as the views of the Anderson's Clothing Company factory came on screen.

“This scene,” she continued, “is the premises of Anderson's Clothing Company, which is about to cease business after sixty years of trading.”

The aerial views vanished and Christine Jordan appeared on the screen, filmed in front of the impressive main entrance to the administration building.

“This morning,” she said, “Mr Keith Anderson, Managing Director of Anderson's Clothing, announced to the staff and subsequently to the media that the company would cease manufacturing this afternoon and expected to wind up all its operations within the next few weeks. This is a shattering blow to Townsville, where the company employed some four hundred of its total staffing of around four hundred and fifty throughout Australia. Mr Anderson has agreed to talk with me about the circumstances leading to what must have been a very sad decision.”

Christine turned away from the camera and walked slowly through the entrance doors, continuing to speak as she did so. “I will later be talking to several now ex-staff members,” she said, “and to the Mayor of Townsville, several leading business people and members of the general public and finally with the founder of the company and still its Chairman of Directors, Mr Ted Anderson.”

The scene changed and now Christine was seated in a large office at an oval, glass-topped coffee table. Two men in light-grey slacks with white long-sleeved business shirts open at their necks also sat around the table facing the camera.

Mark Radford recognized the fair-haired Keith Anderson. The other man was his brother, Barry.

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” said Christine, turning to face the camera, “with me now are Mr Keith Anderson, Managing Director of Anderson's Clothing and his General Manager, Mr Barry Radford.”

As she introduced them the camera zoomed in for close-ups of each man. It then went back to wider angle encompassing the whole

group as Christine turned to speak to Keith Anderson.

“Mr Anderson,” she said, “for the benefit of our viewers, would you like to tell us briefly about the origin of this company and its great history before we discuss what has brought about its sad demise.”

“Well, Christine, this is really just the story of sixty years of one person's life, my grandfather, and of the people who worked with him.”

Keith Anderson then went on to outline the interwoven history of Teddy Anderson and the company he'd founded during the Great Depression. A company which portrayed the hopes, aspirations, and indomitable spirit of its employees as well as its owners.

“So I suppose, Christine,” he concluded, “you could say that the company sold its products to, employed and was truly representative of the Great Aussie Battlers. And that's the main reason why my grandfather, who's a lovely old fellow, is so upset and disappointed. He feels for his friends - our employees - not for himself.”

“Yes. I can well appreciate that,” said Christine. “Now, tell me, Mr Anderson, has the company been in financial trouble for a long time or has some sudden catastrophe caused this closure?”

“No. It's been a gradual deterioration over a number of years.”

“Very well then,” said Christine. “Let's get right down to the nuts and bolts. What went wrong? And when?”

Keith Anderson leaned forward pugnaciously in his chair. “When I joined the company fifteen years ago we were going great,” he said, “but the conditions that existed then have been changed ... mostly by our Governments. Many Federal Government decisions over the last ten to fifteen years have crippled numerous other businesses as well as our own.”

He then explained how reductions in tariffs on cheap imported goods from very low labour cost third world countries made it completely impossible for Australian manufacturers to be financially competitive.

“Also,” he concluded, “there has been the effect of high and increasing unemployment. We have always sold low-cost, sturdy basic clothing and our market has been at the cheaper end of the spectrum. And it has mostly been the poorer people who have lost their jobs during these last ten years - the people who used to buy our products but now can't afford to buy anything but food. When you've got nearly a million people, ten percent of the workforce,

unemployed and a Government which won't protect its own industries and their employees' jobs against floods of cheap imports then you have a country in very bad shape. You really can't imagine such stupidity, can you?"

"No," said Christine, very softly. "You really can't."

She stood up, terminating the interview. The two men stood also. Christine shook their hands. "Thank you for speaking with me," she said. She turned towards the camera.

"And now," she continued, "I am about to speak with some of the staff who have just lost their jobs ... and their hopes for the future ... courtesy of our Federal Government."

Out in the huge employees car park, under the shade of large, spreading, scarlet Poinciana and pink Cassia trees, a large crowd of the company's ex-employees had assembled. The news had spread like wildfire that Christine Jordan from Question Time was coming soon to speak with them and although they had all been paid off shortly after lunch and were free to go home, over two hundred of them had waited patiently here in the stifling afternoon heat to see her.

As Christine came round the corner of the Administration building and into view of the car park multitude, the chattering of the crowd ceased and a great roar of welcome sent birds fluttering from the trees.

She looked a vision of loveliness in her cream linen slack suit with long button-through V-necked sleeveless jacket, elegant Cuban-heeled bronze and cream sandals, little round gold earrings and with a thin gold chain at her throat. As she walked slowly among them, her long black hair, worn loosely around her shoulders, glinted in the sunlight as it bobbed and swirled with her every movement.

"How long have you worked for the company, madam?" Christine asked an elderly lady in the first group.

"Oh, I've been with 'em for near on forty years, luv," said the woman.

"You must be bitterly disappointed at losing your job after all that time?" Christine asked kindly.

"More disappointed with that damn Government what caused it," spat out the older lady.

Christine turned to a younger woman whose eyes were red from crying. She looked no more than a teenager and clutched a sodden

hanky in her right hand.

“And have you been with the company very long, dear?” asked Christine.

“Only two years,” sniffed the girl. “And now I've got no job and a baby at home and my husband's out of work too. I just don't know what we'll do now.”

Christine moved on to group after group, a word or two here, a question or two there, her warm smile and obvious sympathy showing she cared deeply for their plight.

“Did the company really have to close?” she asked a fifty-year-old man from the Accounts Department.

“Oh, yes,” he replied instantly. “They had no option. They held on as long as they could, just to save our jobs for us. Old Teddy could have closed three years ago and saved himself millions of dollars, but he kept going, just for us. Now all he's got is that old house at Pallarenda and whatever few thousands they save out of the ruins.”

“What?” Christine was amazed. “You mean he's not a very rich man? That he sacrificed millions of dollars just to help all you employees?”

“Teddy? Rich? Geez, that's a laugh,” said a grizzled old yardman. “He never took much out of the company. Just enough for him and his family to live pretty well and to shout a few beers for us staff after work. One of us, he was.”

“And how about Mr Keith Anderson?” Christine was curious now. “Is he like his grandfather?”

“Yair. But in a different way. He's sort of got more polish. You know. Went to Uni and all that, whereas Teddy never finished primary school. But Keith's a good bloke just the same and he comes down the canteen and buys a few stubbies for us every Friday arvo. He used to, that is.”

Christine turned to another group, mostly women and girls from the machine rooms.

“Why did the company have to close?” she asked a heavily built woman perspiring freely in the sweltering afternoon heat.

“Cos the bloody Government keeps letting in all them cheap Asian clothes,” she stormed. “Aven't got the brains of a headless chook, they aven't.”

“And they won't do nothing about putting taxes on the imports, so we can keep our jobs,” said another. “They're giving all our jobs

to them Asians overseas. Soon we Australian workers won't have no jobs nowhere.”

“Well, what can we do about it?” Christine asked cunningly.

“Sack the bloody Government!” yelled a voice just outside the group.

“Yair! Sack the bastards!” screamed another.

Very quickly more and more voices joined the chant until the whole assembly was shouting in unison, “Sack the Government! Sack the Government! Sack the Government!”

Christine's cameraman, who had been filming mostly over her shoulder or from her side, catching close-ups of the people she spoke to, now backed away and gradually wide-angled the crowd into the middle distance until he had the whole assembly in view, framed by the scarlet Poincianas behind them and the pink Cassias on each side, while the chanting swelled to a roar and continued and continued.

On the screen, Channel Five used four minutes of the car park coverage and then went to commercials. Next they showed brief sections of Christine's interviews with the Mayor of Townsville, several leading business people and two minutes of short questions and answers with passers-by in the city's mall.

It was quite obvious that the whole population was shocked and saddened by the closure. For a city of just over a hundred thousand people, to lose four hundred jobs was an economic disaster, particularly during a recession with an already alarmingly high level of unemployment.

Another commercials break followed and then the station screened her interview with Teddy Anderson for their closing segment.

Christine Jordan sat in a cushioned cane chair on the concrete-floored patio of Teddy Anderson's modest, low-set bungalow at Cape Pallarenda.

She felt the tranquillity of the surroundings enveloping her. She looked across the beachfront road at the peaceful scene of small wavelets lapping on the sand with the large bulk of Magnetic Island a handful of kilometres across the bay.

To her left, beyond the Quarantine Station, the cape jutted out towards the island, seemingly only a stone's-throw away. The sea breeze was beginning to die as the late afternoon moved onward

towards sunset. It was still very hot, but nowhere near the furnace-like, exhausting heat in the factory car park that midafternoon.

Teddy Anderson, tall, thin, eighty-six years old, still quite active but now slowing in his movements, came carefully through the fly-screened front door with glasses and a large jug of iced water.

He placed the jug and glasses gently down on the small coffee table. He moved slowly around the table, sat down in another cushioned cane chair next to Christine and poured water into the glasses. Christine accepted one gratefully. Her camera crew kept working. Theirs were thirsty jobs.

“Thank you, Mr Anderson,” said Christine. “I was just dying for a cool drink. It gets very hot and steamy here in the tropics, doesn't it?”

“It sure does, girlie,” he answered. “Specially this time of the year. Great place in midwinter though. Hardly ever need a jumper.”

“No. I suppose not.”

She paused, her gaze sweeping the view from the tip of the cape across to the island and beyond to the massive Cape Cleveland on the far side of the bay. The air was so clear, the sky so blue, with just a few puffy white clouds.

“This is a beautiful spot,” she said. “How long have you lived here?”

His forehead crinkled in thought. “About thirty years. Since a few months after Colin, that's my son who died, was married. Jane and I had just over two years here before she died also. She got cancer, you know.”

“Yes, I heard.” Christine's voice was very soft.

“She loved this house, and the view. We used to sit out here in the evenings, just looking at it ... watching kids playing on the beach. It's a lovely place. We had two great years here ... just the two of us.”

He was silent for a few moments. Then he straightened perceptively in his chair and looked at Christine again. His eyes were a little misty but his voice was firm.

“Anyway, that's not really what you came to talk about, is it? Let's get on with it. What would you like to know?”

“Well, first of all, I suppose today has been somewhat of a tragedy for you, with the closure of your business?”

“No,” he said. “Not really. Not for me. It's a tragedy for the staff and it's a set back for young Keith and Barry, but they'll move on. They're two good boys. They'll be OK. But I'm very sorry for all the

others.”

“The employees?”

“Yes. Some of them have worked with me for more than forty years and those older ones will never get another job. Not nowadays. Their lives are over. Their working lives I mean. They're going to spend the rest of their lives in poverty. That's what's a tragedy.”

“It certainly is,” Christine agreed. “Still, you must feel very proud to have created and built up such a successful business during your lifetime. Did you ever envisage, when you started off, Mr Anderson, that you would be employing over four hundred people sixty years later?”

“Hey! What's all this Mr Anderson business, girlie? Call me Teddy. That's what everyone around here calls me. OK?”

“OK, Teddy,” she smiled.

“And as for being proud and all that. No, I'm not proud. It wasn't me who made this company such a success. It was all those friends of mine who worked with me. In the early days, when we were a small operation, we had a lot of fun doing what we did. About a dozen of us originally ... all young girls and boys ... having fun, working our guts out and making a quid. None of us ever made a fortune but we all had food to eat and a few beers on Friday nights.”

He took a sip from his glass and stared unseeingly out over the bay.

“And we never really had any forward planning back then,” he said. “When more people wanted our clothes we just brought in more people to help make them. The company just grew by itself in those days. We didn't plan it. Not back then.”

He paused again and took another sip.

“But it changed a bit when Colin took over. He was a real smart kid. It mushroomed while he was alive. And afterwards, when Keith took over also. He's another whiz-bang. He's got brains, that boy ... and guts. Anyway, I'm rambling. What was it you asked me again?”

His eyes twinkled as he smiled at Christine.

A really loveable old fellow, she thought. No wonder all the staff adored him. She smiled back at him.

“You've answered it all, Teddy,” she said. “But now I have a hard one for you. Four or five years ago you were a very cashed-up company, and today you're gone. What went wrong?”

He looked across the bay. He was silent for what seemed a long time.

She was conscious of the length of the pause and was on the point of asking him again when he started.

“Everything's different now, girlie,” he said quietly. “There're too many rules and regulations now. If I tried today to walk the streets begging for old clothes and material and me and some mates were turning them into new clothes, working twelve hours a day under a high-set house in the suburbs, the Council and the Unions would come and close me down. It's a free country here, until you try to do something. You can do what you like as long as you do what you're told. You know what I mean?”

“Yes.”

“You're right, though. We were a cashed-up company a while back. I should've closed down then and gone fishing. That's what I should've done.”

“Why didn't you?”

“I made one big mistake. I thought the Government would see and understand what was happening to this industry. See the big, increasing flood of cheap Asian imports undercutting our Australian factories and threatening our jobs and livelihoods. But they didn't. None of them. Or else they didn't care.”

“Yes.”

“I thought, and so did all the others, that the Government would increase tariffs on these imports to protect our own people's jobs, like all the other countries protect their own industries. But they didn't. They reduced them! Can you imagine that? They're stark raving mad! The lot of them!”

“Did you talk to the Government?”

“Talk to them? You bet we talked to them! Individually and as an industry. And do you know what they said?”

“No.”

“They told us we had to learn to become competitive! Some Asian manufacturers' wages to an employee are as low as two to three Australian dollars a day! Our rates are close to a hundred! And the Federal Government says we have to learn to become competitive! To get smarter! They need their heads read. They're a mob of idiots. The whole damn pack of them.”

“But are other Australian companies in the same trouble?”

He looked at her in obvious disbelief. Then he laughed softly.

“You've gotta be joking,” he said. “Don't you remember a year ago the House of Jenyns closed its factories in Ipswich and Wynnum

and took their manufacturing offshore? Four hundred Australian employees lost their jobs. Their jobs went overseas.”

“Yes. I do remember now.”

“And eight or nine years ago, Stubbies Clothing, in Brisbane, employed some seven hundred people and now they're down to about a hundred. And they'll close soon. You see if they don't. There's another seven hundred jobs of ours given to other countries! No! It wasn't us! It was the stupid, rotten Government! They have single-handedly almost wiped out our industry!”

He looked away from her, his eyes moistening, his head drooping a little.

Christine felt for him in her heart. She must finish now. She didn't want to upset him any further. She must be almost out of time anyway.

“Teddy,” she said gently, “thank you very much for speaking with me. I really enjoyed meeting you and letting our viewers meet the man who made the company. Tell me, what are you going to do now?”

“I'm going fishing,” he said, brightening. “See that young boy down there on the beach, with the two rods and the creel and the tackle-box? That's young Eddie. Keith's boy. My great grandson. He's named after me. We fish for an hour every sunset off the beach here and then Keith picks him up. He doesn't catch much yet, but I'm teaching him ... just like I taught all the others ... Keith, Colin ... and Jane.”

He rose stiffly from his chair and walked with Christine to the front gate.

“Good bye, Teddy,” she said kindly.

“Good bye, girlie.”

He turned away, crossed the road and wandered slowly down to the beach. At eighty-six he was in no hurry.

The young, curly-haired eight-year-old turned to meet him. They hugged each other. They picked up the rods and gear and trudged off along the beach in the last of the dwindling sunlight. An old man and a young boy - gone fishing.

The cameraman gradually faded them away into the distance with his zoom lens as Christine signed off the program.