

## Chapter Two – Australia Present Day

### *The mysterious remains mysterious*

Lena awoke the next day ready for her investigations into the mysterious photo. She had to go to work later in the day, but her morning was free to study, ponder her life choices and of course to ring her friend Milo. She had not spoken to Milo in some time and was a little reluctant not really knowing what he would think. Would he want to help her with such an investigation? Would Milo be able to help? As Lena sat on her bed thinking about everything that has happened, a whorl of thoughts and questions were buzzing through her head at a hundred miles per hour.

Lena got out of bed, had a shower, got dressed and dragged herself, still a little tired, into the kitchen. She made herself a fresh pot of coffee, poured some into her mug to drink and went and sat on the lounge sipping every mouthful. On the side of the lounge was her Nan's photo with the strange man in it. Who was he? Why was he there? How was it possible that a strange person would appear in her Nan's photo? She had more questions than answers. She flipped the photo over in her fingers as she had done the day before. The photo was old and a little dishevelled in the corners. There was no writing on the back of it, nothing. Just a photo from the 1980s as ordinary as anything, except it contained a strange mystery.

Lena thought why me? Why had Nan come and showed me the photo and entrusted me with it? Lena had a cousin named Trish and an aunt why not them? Why were they not given the photo to investigate? Nan had asked them, but not given them the photo. Maybe it was because they did not have a friend who is a photographer?

Lena had to call Milo. Milo was in his 20s and was a photographer and book shop owner. She had met him at an archaeology event where he was taking photos and they became friends after that. Milo was of medium size build, dark brown curly hair and of average height. He had an absolute love for photography. To help pay for his creative passions he also ran a book shop. The book shop was his second love, and by combining the two he was able to make enough money to live comfortably.

Lena picked up the phone and dialled his number.

'Hello,' said Milo into the phone.

‘Hello, Milo?’ asked Lena a little nervous.

‘Yes, is that you Lena?’ Milo could understand the voice on the other line and knew it was Lena’s.

‘Yes, its Lena. How are you?’ she asked really excited. He had remembered her voice even though they had not spoken in a while.

‘Good, Good.’ He said. ‘And you?’

‘Yes, um, I actually have a question I would like to ask if that’s ok?’ Lena did not wish to impose. She wasn’t even sure how to raise the subject and thought jumping right in was the only way.

‘Sure. What’s the question?’

‘Well. I received this photo from my grandmother yesterday and it has this strange man in the photo.’

‘Strange man?’ asked Milo wondering what on earth she was on about. It certainly was not something he expected.

‘Yes, um, I am not explaining this well I don’t think, but.....’ Lena didn’t want Milo to think she was a total psycho just yet. ‘My Nan came over yesterday with this photo to show me. The photo was taken at Nan’s house and in it are family, but also this strange man and she doesn’t know who he is or why he is there. I was thinking it might be something to do with the image itself? I was hoping you could look and see if there is some explanation about who the man in the photo is? If it’s an overlay or trick with the camera?’

‘Wow, I have never investigated photo’s before that much! Sure, I would be happy to have a look. I take photo’s mostly, but happy to have a look if you like?’ Milo sounded a little excited at the mystery that lay ahead of him.

‘Yes, that would be wonderful. I really appreciate your help! I didn’t know who else to turn to. I mean we don’t know who this man is or how he ended up in the photo and it’s a real mystery. I thought of you. I thought since you take the best photo’s maybe you might have some ideas?’

‘Are you doing anything today?’ asked Milo a little eager to see the photo for some unknown reason.

‘I have to work this afternoon, but nothing until then. Can I come over to your book shop and show you the photo?’ Things were moving a little quicker than Lena thought they would be, but Milo sounded eager.

‘Yes, by all means. You can come and check out the book shop and give me your thoughts about the place,’ said Milo a tad excited. ‘How about you stop by on your way to work and we can have lunch?’ asked Milo.

‘Sure thing. I will be there,’ said Lena. Milo and Lena ended their phone call and Lena went to do some light reading.

\*

Later that day on her way to work she dropped by to visit Milo with her photo in hand.

Milo’s bookshop was a small shop in a larger complex of shops with street frontage. He had a range of both new and second-hand books all cramped onto shelves packed tightly into such a small space. Rows and rows of long, tall shelves full to the brim with books for as far as the eye could see. His book shop was long and narrow.

Lena made her way into the shop, greeted the man behind the cash register asking for directions to see Milo. He directed her to the back of the shop where there was a small doorway. On the door read: Milo Maro’s Photography. Well the name worked well for his business thought Lena. She cautiously knocked on his door.

‘Lena,’ came a cheery male voice as the door swung open. ‘Please, come in!’ Lena walked into the small office that was Milo’s small little space. The room was small, with a window, and a desk and some chairs. To the left in the room was another door that led to who knows where. ‘Its so good to see you. Please sit down, would you like a drink?’ Milo ushered Lena to sit in a small chair on the other side of his desk.

‘Yes, it’s good to see you too Milo. I would love a cup of tea,’ greeted Lena. She was excited now and glad that she had made the effort to call him. Lena hated speaking on the phone to people she had not seen or heard from in ages. It made her uncomfortable and nervous. Milo went to get her some tea. ‘I have the photo here for you to look at if you like?’ Even now, she did not know if she should show him the photo.

‘Yes please,’ replied Milo coming giving Lena some readymade tea indicating to the milk and sugar on the table. Lena took the elusive photo out of her handbag and gave it to Milo to look at and investigate. He looked at the photo in his hand and just stared not knowing what to think. ‘Who are all these individuals?’ Milo was looking at all of Lena’s family in the photo. ‘Which one is the mysterious unknown man?’

‘That one at the back is the unknown. The rest are my family,’ replied Lena so matter-of-factly.

‘Right. Well that’s interesting. Just looking at this photo he does look a little out of place. He is a little faded see?’ Milo was showing Lena pointing to the photo.

‘Yes, actually he does!’ Lena was a little surprised because she had not noticed. He looked a little lighter than others in the photo. How was that even possible?

‘I am guessing that your Nan did some investigating about the photo?’ asked Milo.

‘Yes, she did a fair bit of investigating and asked my mum and aunt to no avail. I think I was her last hope at finding any information.’

‘I am sure you were never that Lena! Look I have a friend who is more into photography and photography software than I am. Can I show him? He has some software that can identify differences with photo’s and see if a photo has been taken on second hand film and things like that,’ said Milo.

‘Actually, that would be good. I am open to any ideas. Its just I promised my gran I would find out who the man is for her.’

‘I see, well I will do my best to help,’ said Milo as the two of them were siting their sipping on their tea. Lena’s eyes were exploring the room around her while absorbing Milo’s words. She loved the photographs she could see mounted on the wall near the window.

‘Thanks, I really appreciate your help. Are those your photos?’ Lena said pointing to the photos on the wall.

‘Yes. I take photos for all occasions and even scenic shots of wildlife.’

‘Wow, you should be so proud. I will always put you first when I need some photos taken,’ said Lena feeling inspired by the images on the wall.

‘I am proud. I love taking photos, it’s my passion.’ The two of them finished chatting about what they were doing and working on. Lena was happy that she might have an answer to give

her gran about the photo. It could be an overlay or something to do with taking the new image on second hand film. That was one of the ideas that Lena had thought of originally in her mind when she thought of contacting Milo. It could be something to do with the film as an example, the film may have been used twice. How on earth that was possible regarding her Nan's photo was a mystery, but it was certainly a possibility. It still did not explain who the man was though.

'Are you right to come to lunch with me?' asked Milo.

'Yes, that would be wonderful.' The two of them got up. Milo went into the next-door room and came back out with a bag. 'Are you ready to go? What would you like for lunch? My treat for helping me with this photo,' said Lena.

'Um. No. No. I will pay,' said Milo. 'I haven't answered your question yet. I have to contact my friend first so.....' Milo took a breath. 'Anyway, I love helping.'

'Seriously, Milo I will pay. I am so grateful for your help. How about we go to that pizza place down the road?'

'That sounds wonderful,' replied Milo as the two of them walked out of the bookshop and down the road to have their pizza for lunch to discuss the photo some more and for Lena to give Milo feedback about his bookshop.