

Chapter One – Australia Present Day

Let the adventure begin

Lena Ruther's was sitting on her bed at home looking at old photographs of her childhood when her mobile began to ring. She answered her phone to hear her grandmother on the end of the line in a state of excitement.

'Hi Lena,' said her grandmother Rose Smith. 'I have something extremely important to tell you.'

'Hi Nan,' said Lena. 'What do you have to tell me?' Lena was 24 years old and an archaeologist by trade, but working in retail.

'Well I was looking through some of my diaries and photo collections from when I was younger; I stumbled across something extremely important. Can I come and visit?'

'Um, when?' Lena asked in shock at the suddenness of her grandmothers' request.

'What time suits you?' asked her grandmother Rose.

'Anytime tomorrow, Sunday works for me. How about 10am?' Lena replied and asked.

'Ok, well I will come over then and give you the news,' Rose sounded really panicked and excited at the same time. It was rather unusual for her grandmother to ring suddenly with the intention to visit. Lena assumed that the news she had to share must be really important.

'Right, see you Nan,' Lena said as they both said their goodbyes and Lena put down the phone knowing her Nan would be over at 10am the next day.

Lena was so excited that her Nan was to come and visit as she had not see her in a while and had been busy doing her uni studies and her retail work. Lena was an archaeologist and had recently finished her final year doing a PHD on the Maya pre classic culture and was in the process of looking for a role in the field while also doing another degree, a business degree as a back up plan and to learn more about working in a leadership role in the archaeology field.

Lena lived in a small house just north of Brisbane. She was almost about to have her next birthday and was turning 25 and was extremely excited about it. And now seeing her grandmother was something she was really looking forward to. She loved her Nan and didn't feel she got the opportunity to see her enough.

Lena went and made herself a cup of tea and sat down to ponder what to do with the day. It was a warm Saturday. Lena was so beautiful, with blonde shoulder length hair, blue eyes and of average height and build. She absolutely loved her archaeology, but while that was wonderful, she had to work in retail to support her passionate endeavours.

Prior to her grandmother calling Lena had got out her photo collection and had images sprawled across her bed of her small house. She picked up a book on the Maya to read while she sipped on her tea, sitting there on her bed surrounded by her photos and her memories. Her mother and father had moved overseas when she turned 18 and therefore, she grew up really quickly learning to fend for herself moving out of home at 18 and having to look after herself while living with her parents as an early teen. Lena had also travelled overseas when she started uni. She earned her money to go and volunteer on a dig site over in Belize by working in retail.

Why was she so passionate about the Maya? It was not really that she just instantly developed a passion for that culture, but she had studied them at Uni, travelled over to Belize and then became a specialist and loved it. Prior to her passion for the Maya, she loved a range of different cultures and while her brother was off making an idiot of himself getting a criminal record, she was studying her history.

There were many times she was working 40 hours a week while studying her life away following her creative interests. Now she had finished her PHD she had time to go and actually find a role in archaeology. However, because of her specialty finding work in Australia was the hardest thing to do. She could become a lecturer at a university or go and work in a museum as an assistant curator for their Maya exhibitions. Finding one of those roles was elusive and when those roles did become available everyone who was anyone in the field would fight tooth and nail for the

opportunity. Most archaeological roles in Australia were related to indigenous heritage or early European settlement from the 1788 arrival. There was a small demand for cultural heritage and native title experts, but being a specialist in a foreign culture made finding work a challenge. Lena had already applied for roles in archaeology and heritage officer roles to no avail and was spending her weekend thinking about her future. Thinking about what roles she would actually want to have or not have and it was tiring on her brain. She had finished high school, gone to uni, got temp jobs in retail to support herself and also did a bit of work as a tutor at the uni and now she was at the beginnings of her professional working career at the age of 24. Many of her non-archaeology friends were already established in their respective industries, but not Lena she was a professional student and researcher.

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The next day her grandmother arrived around 10am holding a plastic bag that had a number of goodies in it. Her grandmother Rose Smith walked into the house and put the plastic bag down onto the lounge and sat down next to it with a big sigh. The lounge was a three seater with lots of space. Rose was a slim lady of average height with light brown short hair that was turning a shade of white, and she had brown eyes. She was so beautiful in her day winning lots of beauty pageants and competitions.

'Would you like a cup of tea or coffee Nan?' asked Lena. Lena lived in a small house with a small living room with lounge suite, small dining table and kitchen and two small bedrooms and a bathroom. It was all she needed. She was too busy working and studying to even consider the need for maintaining a larger home.

'Tea thanks,' replied her Nan Rose. Lena went over to the kitchen to make the tea.

'What did you want to show me?' Lena asked as she was preparing the tea.

'Its something I discovered in one of our photo albums that I wanted to show you, something isn't right.'

'What do you mean?' Lena asked a little confused.

'Well when you finished preparing the tea I will show you,' replied Nan.

'Ok,' Lena said dipping the teabags in and out of the cup. Lena took out the tea bags and put them in the garbage bag and then took the tea over to her Nan and placed it on the side table. She went and sat beside her Nan on the lounge.

Her Nan Rose took out the photo albums from the plastic bag to show Lena. She was interested in showing Lena one photo in particular.

'You see here in this photo,' Rose was pointing and showing Lena a photo from her collection. 'That's your mum, aunt, my parents and me. You see in the background who is that?' Rose was pointing to the back of the picture where there was a man standing behind other family members and obviously she had no idea who he was or what he was doing in the photo.

'I don't know,' Lena was shaking her head not having a clue who the man she was pointing to was or why he was in the photo. Hell, she had not even seen the photo before in her life. 'Is he your uncle or a distant friend or relative?' Lena asked.

'Not that I know of and I really don't think so.' She said trying to recall her past.

'Well, can you ask someone? Nan, Sorry I don't think I can be much help here. I have not seen this picture before in my life!'

'I have asked around already and know one knows who that man in the background is and its worrying me a little,' Nan sighed.

'So know one has a clue who that man in the photo is?' Lena looked puzzled. 'Were you all visiting a place and he was there at the time?'

'Nope,' replied Nan. 'That photo was taken at our house,' she replied sounding confused. 'I don't recall much about that day, but I know I have never seen that man before and I have no idea who he is or why he was in our photo!'

'What about getting the photo tested? Could it be just trick with the camera?' Lena thought that might be an idea if her Nan had asked everyone. 'What did mum say about it?'

'Nothing, she couldn't remember being in the photo,' Nan shrugged.

'Right, well then why don't we get it tested to see if it's a fault with the image? I mean how is it possible that a total stranger you do not know would be in one of your photos if it was taken at your house Nan?' Lena was so confused and thought it must be a trick with the film or something.

'But look at it. It doesn't look like a fault with the image. There are all of us in the photo and then that strange man in the back next to my parents. You can see him

clearly and what his wearing, pair of pants and a shirt. Lena I am sorry to bother you, but it has been worrying me and playing on my mind for days now.'

'Ok, well then did you want me to do some enquiring about the image?' Lena asked. 'Because just looking at it now I am of no help!' Lena wanted to provide her Nan with all the answers she needed and couldn't. Hell if her mother couldn't help, how was she supposed to?

'Yes please,' replied Nan.

'Ok, well I will see what I can do,' Lena replied. It was a long stretch, as she had no idea what she was supposed to be doing about identifying the extra man in the photo. She had no idea where to even begin. She took the photo from her grandmother's hand and sat and looked at it. There was her mum, aunt, her Nan and her Nan's parents and then another man standing next to her great grandparents at the back.

The man was wearing a plain white shirt and black pants and he looked different from everyone else in that photo. The problem was, the photo was taken at their house, they apparently didn't have anyone working there and there was no explanation as to who that man was. The man had a small grin, but was just standing there with his arms stretched down by his sides and you could not tell much else from the image.

Lena sat there flipping the image over with her fingers, looking at its damaged back and front. The image was not in fantastic condition so figuring out anything about it was an exciting adventure for her. Then she thought of asking her friend Milo a photographer.

'So Nan, do you mind if I take this photo to a friend of mine to see what he thinks? He owns a small bookshop and he is a photographer,' Milo was a year older than Lena and had recently brought his own small second hand book dealership to help support his passion as a photographer. He might have more ideas than Lena was having and it was worth a try, she thought.

'Sure, just don't damage it dear,' said Rose. 'As you can tell, its not in great condition as it is and please let me know what you find.' Rose sounded rather excited now, as it was another avenue of inquiry for her.

'I will,' replied Lena with a look of doubt that she would be privy to find anything let alone solve her Nan's perplexing challenges. 'Is there anything else you can tell me about our family, your side of the family? I don't know much about our family history and anything might help me figure out whom that man is!' Lena had never asked about her family history until now because she was busy focusing on her studies.

'Where do I start? Well, what do you want to know?'

'Well why don't you start with everyone in that photo,' said Lena pointing at the people in the photo.

'Right. Well that lady in the front is your mother Janet; she was young then about 18. The lady next to her is your aunt Elsie and she was about 20 in that photo. She had a beautiful blue dress on if I recall correctly. I am standing there on the left and those two behind us are your grandparents Ruth and Alexander and they were over visiting us for the day and Ruth, my mother has no siblings. My father has one brother named Pat. He had a sense of humour let me tell you! He was far from serious; the complete opposite to your great grandfather Alex who was so serious and stern. Alex, my father, was a strict serious type and I loved it when Pat came over because it was a change to have some humour in our house. Don't get me wrong, I loved my Dad, but it was a great change with Pat around. The house went from serious to fun in less than a minute. When Alex was young he went off to join the Navy and worked his way up the ranks, then he met my mother Ruth.'

'Right and that man in the photo is definitely not Pat? Or another relative?' asked Lena excited to hear about her relatives. She remembered visiting family when she was a child.

'Absolutely not! That man is too young to be Pat, Pat was only 2 years younger than my father and he was in his sixties in that photo. Also, as I said, we did not have any staff working for us or anything like that so I have no idea who that man is,' said Nan sounding puzzled about the mysterious man. 'Oh and I remember our neighbour took the photo and he is no longer alive, so there is no point asking him either!'

'Right. Well what about aunt Elsie? Did she know that man?'

'Nope. She was single and again that man is wrong age entirely. He looks about 40s I think. Even looking at his clothes, he looks different and not a fit for Pat. Anyway, I remember clearly Pat was not there that day and that strange man doesn't even look like Pat. That photo was taken about 30 years ago in the 80s and the quality isn't good, but he looks about the age I was in that picture. My husband, your grandfather Joe wasn't there that day. I know for sure there was no other man at our house.' She sounded so adamant that it was scaring Lena considerably. Lena's thought it was a fault with the film, but Rose dismissed that idea. The next step for Lena was to take the image and show it to her friend Milo. What else could she do?

'Another thing Nan, I don't suppose you have the film for this photo still do you?' Asked Lena hopefully.

"Nope, I looked everywhere and I never found it,' she sighed.

'Right. Well I will take it to show Milo some time this week then and see what he thinks. What about the other photos you brought over,' Lena added pointing to the bag and albums.

'Oh these, yes they are mostly of your mother in her early days. Here is one of her at school', Rose indicated pulling out a photo and handing it to Lena. They worked their way through the remainder of those interesting photos that were full of fun memories and exciting times. One of the photos was of her mother playing tennis in a very short white pleated skirt. Lena's mother Janet looked beautiful and always younger than her real age. Lena didn't even know her mother had played tennis and there she was with her beautiful brown hair following in the breeze, fit and healthy with a tennis racquet in hand.

Lena enjoyed going through the photo's her Nan brought over and discovered many new things that she did not know before. When they had finished reminiscing Lena and her Nan Rose put the photos back in the bag except for the one with the mysterious man in it and she placed that photo on the side of the lounge ready to show Milo. Her Gran finished her tea. While they were both going through the photo's

Lena had brought over some biscuits for them both to eat. They finished the small plate of Moorish biscuits and then her Nan had to leave. It was important for her Nan Rose Smith to actually find answers to her questions about that mysterious photo, it meant so much to her.

'Lena, I trust that you will find out more information for me won't you?' Asked Rose.

'Yes, I will do my best Nan.' Said Lena secretly hoping she would, but deep in the pit of her stomach butterflies were flurrying around with her lack of self believe in finding answers for her Nan. How was she to help? How was she to actually solve her Nan's most mysterious challenge of finding out who that a man in a photo was? A photo she had never ever seen before? She would do her best to help and that would have to do!

Lena and Nan Rose both said their good byes. It was a short, quick visit but that was all that was needed this time around. Rose had to go shopping and Lena wanted to start on her next project, finding out who that mysterious man in the photo was and how he came to be there. Let the adventure begin mumbled Lena to herself as her Nan departed.