

## **The Poisoned Jacaranda**

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The Poisoned Jacaranda

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### **Introduction: Sun, Sin, and Cyanide Down Under**

G'day, cobbers. Pull up a stump, crack a coldie, or maybe just brew a cuppa, 'cause I'm about to spin you a yarn that's as twisted as a Mallee root. This ain't no fairy floss story from the tourist brochures, all sunshine and smiling quokkas, though it kicks off in Melbourne, a city that can dazzle you with its sparkling Yarra, the roar of the G on a Saturday arvo, and the rich, dark scent of a thousand laneway coffees.

Nah, this tale, "The Poisoned Jacaranda," dives headfirst into the murky billabong that can simmer just beneath that shiny surface. It's about dreams turning to dust, about how that sun-drenched promise of a new life Down Under can curdle quicker than milk in a heatwave when ambition, lust, and a few too many dodgy deals get thrown into the pot.

We've got a sheila with eyes bigger than her heart, a couple of blokes who probably should've known better, and a spicy mix of passion, betrayal, and a desperation so thick you could smell it from Bondi to Broome. It starts with a whispered promise and ends with the flashing blue and red lights slicing through the suburban quiet, the air suddenly sharp with the metallic tang of fear and the bitter scent of something deadly.

So, settle in, lend an ear, and let's see how a bit of love, a lot of lies, and a dash of cold-blooded murder played out under the Southern Cross. You might wanna hold onto your Akubra for this one, 'cause it's a bloody ripper.

## **Chapter 1: Karked It in the Marital Bed**

Vineeta Nair, right, her voice all shrill and crackly, she calls Triple Zero, the blue and red lights soon slashin' through her drawn curtains. She tells the coppers her hubby, Sandy, snuffed it from a heart attack in his sleep, the words tumbling out between theatrical sobs. "Woke up this mornin'," she wails, the air already thick with her cheap perfume, "tried to give Sandy a nudge, but nuthin', just cold." Checked if he was still breathin' – nope, stiff as a week-old snag roll. She's carryin' on, the sound bouncin' off the bland beige

walls, "Who's gonna look after me little bloke now, eh? My old man's dead!"

The boys in blue rock up, their boots heavy on the porch, sussin' out a "possible crime scene" that just smelled faintly of stale air and fear. No sign of a blue, Sandy's just lyin' there peaceful-like on the faded floral bedspread, lookin' like he's in a deep kip under the dim bedside lamp. Vineeta sees the cops, their faces grim in the hallway light, and starts the waterworks again, a real torrent, "He was too young! What am I gonna do? Can't live without him, I tell ya! Just wanna die!" A policewoman, smelling faintly of sensible soap, tells her to pull her head in, keep calm.

Sandy's in his jarmies, a bit of white foam, like spilt milk, at his mouth. Cops ask Vineeta about it, their voices low and gravelly. "Oh, he knocked back a fair bit of whiskey last night," she bluffs, fiddling with a gold bangle that glints dully. "Didn't listen to me. The foam's probably from too much grog – the cheap stuff, smelt like paint thinner." When they ask for a post-mortem, the air crackles; she goes off her rocker: "No way! Don't cut him up! You think I did him in? Just shoot me instead! Don't want anyone touchin' him!" Her voice echoes, a bit too loud.

But the cops weren't havin' any of her palaver. They took the body, the zip of the bag a harsh, final sound. "At least let me come," she pleads, her eyes dartin' around, "Wanna be the first to know why he died." So, they let her tag along to the autopsy lab, the car smelling of vinyl and officialdom.

Later, Vineeta swans into the lab director's office, all fake tears and a tight black dress. The room smells of formaldehyde and old coffee. Drops her daks, the rustle of fabric loud in the quiet room, and says, "Look, mate, can ya give us a normal autopsy report for

me husband? I'll do anythin' for ya." The director, bit of a sleaze with slicked-back hair and eyes that lingered, his office lit by a flickering fluoro tube, says, "Righto, love. You'll have to have a bit of a party with a few of us – lab assistant, his boss, then me. Bit of a group session, eh?" The air filled with the scent of her desperation and his opportunism. Turns out, it was the "best sex in Vineeta's life," a grunting, sweaty mess on a cold vinyl couch. They found a truckload of cyanide – a faint, bitter almond whisper they ignored – in Sandy's heart, liver, and kidneys, but just swept it under the rug. Report, typed on cheap paper, said: "death caused by heart attack." Vineeta, dabbing her eyes for show, thanks 'em all for the clean slate, the clink of her bracelets a false note of grief.

Case closed. "Suspicious death" no more.

Vineeta rings her boyfriend, Nandan, to celebrate. The pop of a champagne cork, the clink of glasses, the sweet, sickly smell of cheap wine and stronger drugs – the works. First night Nandan stays over, the sheets still faintly smelling of Sandy, without worryin' about gettin' sprung. Sees Sandy's photo on the wall, a bland, smiling face. Nandan yanks it down, the glass shattering with a sharp crackle across the dusty floorboards. Tears the photo to bits, the paper ripping with a satisfying violence, and flushes it down the dunny, the gurgle of the water a final insult. "Ya bastard, Sandy," Nandan sneers, his voice a low growl, the room lit only by the flickering TV screen. "Wanted to kill me for havin' a crack with your missus, eh? Well, look who got done over! We got away with murder, easy as." Then he asks, a conspiratorial whisper, "But Vineeta, how'd ya swing the autopsy report?" "Had to get friendly with a few blokes at the lab," she says, her voice husky, lighting a cigarette, the acrid smoke filling the small room. Nandan goes crook, "You bloody tart! No morals, eh?" "Listen, darl," Vineeta

says, blowing a smoke ring towards the peeling ceiling, "if I hadn't, we'd both be in the slammer, smelling that lovely jailhouse disinfectant. I saved our bacon. Jail's a bloody awful place, ya know." Nandan gives her a massive hug, crushing her against him, the scent of her perfume mixing with his sweat, "You're a bloody genius, love. Thanks for savin' me."

## **Chapter 2: Off to the Land of Oz**

Sandy Nair, an IT bloke from Bangalore, the scent of curry and dust still clinging to his clothes, got a gig in Oz for a month. Melbourne blew his mind – sparkling like a new dollar coin under a blazing blue sky, the air crisp and clean, a world away from the smog back home. No pollution, the rumble and ding of free trams, friendly locals who said "G'day." He'd heard Oz was full of racists, and copped a bit from an Aboriginal bloke whose voice was rough as guts, telling him to rack off back home, but compared to Bangalore, Melbourne was paradise, smelling of eucalyptus and fresh coffee from laneway cafes. Smashed his English test (PTE) in a brightly lit, sterile room, and got his permanent residency sorted in four months, the official letter crisp in his hand.

## **Chapter 3: Colombo Airport Capers**

Flying from Bangalore to Colombo, Sandy was pretty chuffed with SriLankan Airlines, the gentle hum of the engines a lullaby. Colombo airport, though, was a shocker – tiny, chockers with a humid fug of sweat, spices, and jet fuel, the flickering fluorescent lights giving everyone a sickly yellow tinge. Security were a pain in the arse, their uniforms stiff, their questions sharp. An airline officer, his breath smelling of stale cigarettes, starts grilling him: