

## THE WIND CRIES MARY

in Fantastical Journeys to Brisbane

Ed: Geoffrey Maloney, Trent Jamieson and Zoran Zivkovic

2007

Published by: Izvori

MICHELE CASHMORE

[www.michelecashmore.com](http://www.michelecashmore.com)

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6,300 words

The woman trembled as I hurriedly pulled the outdoor furniture inside from the balcony. The wind whistled behind me, forcing its way through the gaps as I slammed the sliding door shut.

‘I’m sorry for overcrowding your room, but we need to bring all unsecured items inside. It’s just a precaution, because of the high winds.’

Her dark eyes filled with tears. ‘Are we going to be okay?’ she asked, her voice feeble.

Fear knocked at the back of my brain. I didn’t know how to answer her. ‘Try not to worry. Stay indoors at all times. Staff and management will keep you informed if anything changes.’

‘Changes?’

I looked at the desperation lined on her smooth, young skin, and placed a hand on her shoulder, attempting to reassure her. ‘Look, I’m sure it’s nothing to worry about. The last report I heard said the cyclone is expected to die at sea.’

It was a lie, but I could tell by her expression she trusted and believed me, hanging onto every word. ‘Try to stay calm,’ I said and left the room.

The wind tore at me, slamming into my chest, as I stepped outside. *Damn cyclone!* I was supposed to be in Brisbane in a couple of days. Nothing was leaving the island anytime soon, no plane, boat, least of all me. I thought of Mum: she needed me. I’d got the call two days ago, and had booked the flights, then Mary turned up. A

tropical depression which was turning into a bloody great cyclone, winding down the Queensland coast, with this island directly in its path.

Now the guests had been alerted and their rooms secured, my job was done for the day. I was heading for my apartment, when I saw a mop and bucket sitting at the far end of the terrace. One of my girls obviously in a panic, left the damn thing behind. I was fumbling with the keys to the storeroom, when the door swung open with a gust of wind.

*Shit.* I stared at Matt's hairy arse. Rachel was pinned beneath him. 'Get off her now!'

Matt stood up, and pushed his greasy brown hair off his face. *Jesus Christ.* He still had his shoes on, but his trousers were loose around his ankles.

'Rachel, get dressed,' I ordered.

Matt pulled his pants up and buttoned his shirt. He sneered at me. I found him particularly revolting. It wasn't just his acne-scarred face, or his oily skin, it was everything about him.

Rachel avoided my gaze as she pulled her hair back into a severe ponytail.

'Matt, get your arse wherever you're supposed to be – you despicable creep.'

'Well, that's the beauty of being the Supervisor of Mini Bar. I can be wherever I want to be.'

'Well, it's not here then, is it? Get out.'

He picked up his clipboard and headed for the door.

‘And, Matt, just so you know, I’ll be reporting this.’

‘Go for it. We’re probably all gonna die anyway.’

Yeah, I thought. We might. Then I’d never see Mum again. *Fuck*. I hated him, now more than ever.

‘And as for you...’ I turned toward Rachel.

‘Please don’t report this, Amanda.’

‘I have to. You can’t just have sex in the storeroom. What were you thinking? You were still on shift.’

She began to cry. ‘Please, I’ll lose my job.’

‘You should’ve thought of that before.’ The tears spilled down her face. She was a pretty girl, with rounded cheeks and large brown eyes, now filled with humiliation.

‘Unless, Matt forced you?’

Her eyes widened, making contact with mine before she lowered them. *Bastard*. The anger rose in me.

Rachel sobbed. ‘It doesn’t matter. Report me.’

‘Hey,’ I said, grabbing her around the shoulders, rubbing her arm, as if to erase Matt from her. ‘It’s all right. There’s nothing I can do about it right now, anyway. You can stay at my place until this cyclone blows over, then we’ll talk about what to do next.’

While Rachel showered, I found some fresh clothes of mine for her to wear. She was of similar height and build.

I placed a steaming cup of tea on the table for her when she came out. The singlet I lent her looked a little baggy on her narrower frame.

‘I’m really scared,’ she said.

‘What of? Matt?’

Her eyes met mine briefly before she averted them. ‘He told me that cyclones happen all the time up here, but this one, Mary is particularly nasty. He said we’re all going to die.’ Sobs choked her, disrupting her flow of words. ‘He said, that by fu... I mean having sex with him, I’d be safe. I’m sorry, Amanda. It sounds so stupid. I don’t know why I believed he could protect me.’ Her top lip trembled and she wiped her tears with the back of her hand. ‘We’re going to die, aren’t we?’

I hugged her, pulled her head into my shoulders and stroked her thick brown hair. ‘No – we’re not.’

‘How can you be so sure?’

I wasn’t. I was terrified of cyclones too, not that I’d been in one before, but I had seen footage of what Larry had done to the coast of Far North Queensland. It scared the shit out of me.

I squeezed her shoulders. ‘Come on, drink some tea, it might help.’

I switched on the radio and soft music filled the room. I glanced at the calendar. Wednesday had been circled with pink highlighter along with my flight details to

Brisbane. Two days, that's all. But how I was going to be on that plane was anyone's guess.

There was a knocking at the door. For a moment I thought it was just the wind, but then it opened.

It was Matt.

I jumped to my feet. 'What the hell are you doing here?'

'Got stranded. It's pretty mental out there.'

'Do you think I give a rat's arse? Get out.'

Matt pulled a bottle of bubbly from beneath his shirt.

'Do you think this might make you feel better, girls?'

'Not likely. We don't want to look at your ugly face,' I said.

'Hey, Rachel,' Matt said, 'if you don't want to have a drink with me, there's a party in room fifteen. I think you'll make it without being blown away.' He gave me a sardonic smile. 'Perhaps you'd like a drink with me instead, Amanda? We need to talk about what happened.'

'Save your explanations for the boss. Do you want to talk about it, Rachel?'

She shrugged. 'Not really. But I wouldn't mind the company of the others, if that's alright with you?' She waited for my nod of approval, then ducked around Matt, giving me a smile of thanks before she headed out the door.

‘Well, Matt, you may as well join the party because I’m not interested in anything you have to say. You’re not going to change my decision, if that’s what you think?’

‘How about just one drink?’ Matt asked.

‘I don’t want a bloody drink. You shouldn’t even be here. So why don’t you get your hairy arse over to your quarters, hey?’

‘Because there’s a huge mother fucker of a tree fallen right across the road. So guess what – you’re stuck with me.’ He flashed a smile which still didn’t make him even remotely appealing.

‘You’re not staying here. So take your booze and get.’

He laughed. ‘You’re scared, aren’t you?’

‘What - of you? I don’t think so.’

‘The cyclone.’

‘Aren’t you? After all, didn’t you tell Rachel that we’re all going to die. Isn’t that how you convinced her to have sex with you?’

‘Maybe. But it doesn’t mean I’m scared. It’s the tropics – what do you expect?’

I fell silent. I didn’t know what to expect. I lived in Sydney. I’d quit my job as office administrator for a three month stint in the Whitsunday’s, with the intention of travelling on to Asia. But six months later and an offer of a managerial position, responsible for a staff of nine and maintaining three hundred-odd rooms, I was still

here. And then the phone call, just last week from Mum. The words ‘cancer’ and ‘terminal’ rang in my head.

It seemed the world had gone suddenly silent when Mum said, ‘Amanda. Talk to me. Are you still there?’

But I hadn’t been able to talk. It took every ounce of courage to choke back the tears. Mum sounded so brave over the phone. I knew she was being strong for me. It had been maybe twelve months since I’d been to Brisbane. Then I’d planned Asia without even seeing her first. *Shit*. Now she was dying.

‘Amanda?’ Matt said. ‘What are you thinking about?’

‘None of your business. Just leave.’

Matt laughed. The pupils in his eyes seemed to dance. ‘Come on now,’ he said in a patronising tone. ‘I can help you.’ He raised an eyebrow. ‘Were you just thinking about your mother?’

My mouth hung agape.

He laughed again, he blinked and I thought his eyes looked black. ‘Ha, gotcha. It’s not hard to guess. Most girls think of their mums when they’re scared.’

I threw a cushion at him. ‘Fuck you.’

‘Yes, please.’

‘Get out. Get out now.’ I stood and opened the door. I gritted my teeth and glared at him. He grabbed my arm, pulled me away, and slammed the door shut.

‘Come on, Amanda.’ Instinctively, I reached for my mobile; I had security on speed dial. *Shit*. No signal.

‘Matt. I’m not in the mood for this. What do you want?’

‘Two glasses.’

‘What?’

‘Well,’ he said holding up the champagne. ‘Unless you want to drink straight from the bottle?’

‘I don’t want a drink,’ I yelled, aware of the rising panic in my voice.

‘Maybe. But you want to get to Brisbane – don’t you?’

‘Um, in case you haven’t noticed - there’s a fuckin cyclone going on out there. How the hell is having a drink with you, you of all people, going to get me to Brisbane?’

Blood rushed to his cheeks. ‘Get me two glasses.’ His voice was deep and aggressive. But instead of frightening me, he just made me angrier.

I scraped the chair back on the lino as I went to the kitchen. I slipped a paring knife into my jeans pocket. The biggest knife I owned, then returned with two glasses.

‘Happy now?’ I said sarcastically as I placed them on the table.

I glared at him as he poured the drink.

‘Come on, Amanda. Just one drink. It’s not like we’re going anywhere,’ he said, indicating the storm as it continued to rattle the door. ‘Just listen to what I’ve got to say about getting you to Brisbane, and your mother.’



As the bubbly liquid filled the back of my throat, I felt more relaxed, more in control, knowing I had the knife, and less anxious about the pending cyclone even though the winds howled in the trees outside. Gusts got caught in the gaps of the doors, rocking my small room, rattling the glass in the window panes.

Matt touched the top of my hand when I put the empty glass back down. Everything felt a little hazy and his voice more distant.

‘That’s a good girl,’ I heard him say. *Good girl*. I stared at him. Something shifted outside my vision, his face seemed slightly contorted. I blinked and then it was just Matt pouring champagne.

Fear pricked at my spine; something was wrong, wrong with me, wrong with Matt. Perhaps he’d drugged me? *Slimy bastard*. Between the cyclone and Matt, I didn’t know what scared me more. I didn’t want to die, especially not before seeing Mum. I had no idea what I’d do once I got there, besides hold her hand, be there when she had her treatment. *Shit*. I didn’t really know, and now Mary had put everything at risk. The room shook and shuddered under her fury. If she hit the island directly, it would be goodbye to everything. I picked up my phone, still no service.

Matt broke the silence. ‘Come with me, Amanda. I’ve got something to show you.’

‘I’m not going anywhere with you.’

He grabbed my arm. ‘Oh, yes you are.’

A tingling, like all my nerve endings were exposed, sped up my fingers. I tried to twist out of his grip, but it was too firm. The sensation of floating inside a vacuum of something intangible gripped me with fear.

#

The wind whipped my hair, the lashing strands stung my cheeks. Matt was talking but I could barely hear him for the screaming of the wind. Then I heard a snapping inside my eardrum. Everything went deathly silent, the roaring in my ears finally stopped. Before I could understand what was happening, I was in a clearing beneath a large canopy of eucalypts. Matt's voice rung out, echoing against the eerie silence of the sudden stillness. The trees barely made a hush, even though I could hear the storm raging beyond the perimeter.

I glared at him. 'How the hell did we get up here?' I yelled.

'Take your clothes off,' Matt demanded.

'What? You can't be serious.'

He threw me to the ground. 'I said, take your clothes off.'

'And I said, fuck off.' I scrambled away from him and a broken branch stabbed me in the back.

'Not until you understand what I'm trying to do. If you'd just listen to me. I can get you off this island. You want to see your mother, don't you?' He closed his eyes and swayed slightly as though in trance. 'In fact, it's really important that you see your mother, much more than just a girl thing, isn't it?'

Tears welled in my eyes when I thought of the last phone call we had. The news she delivered crept up my spine and pricked into my brain. I was in shock or denial, but I'd raced off and bought airline tickets anyway. I had to see her.

'What do you know about my mother?' I pulled myself into a sitting position.

'I know that you want to see her, real bad and I can do that for you. It's a bit like astral travel, I suppose, but in a real sense.'

'You're off your rocker.'

'I can take you beyond the astral and into the real, without catching a plane, a bus, or a boat. But there's a catch.'

'Of course there is. There's always a catch.'

He leaned over me, pushing his knees into the sodden leaves and brushed my cheeks with his hair. Even though I couldn't stand him, he smelt enticing. I resisted the energy prickling at my skin, and rummaged in my jean pocket for the knife.

'We have sex and voila! You're in Brisbane, with your mother. My desire is fulfilled, and so is yours.'

I shook my head. 'You really are a nutcase. I always knew you were a sleaze, but you're a fuckin freak.' I laughed. I was bordering on hysteria, as I slipped the knife handle into my palm. 'Do you really think I'm that stupid?'

'Come, Amanda.' He reached out his hand to pull me up.

I lunged forward, stabbing him in the hand.

His scream tore at my eardrums.

#

The popping sensation thrummed in my head. My hearing had dimmed and in my giddiness I dropped the knife. Then I was back in my room, except all the furniture was distorted, bent out of shape. Something was wrong with me, or my vision. Droplets of sweat fell from my face, then everything cleared. My hair clung to my head from the damp. My skin felt taut and battered from the wind. My thin shirt was clinging to my chest, revealing my sports bra beneath. I wiped my face, and sniffed my hand. I'd brought back the earthy, damp, smell of dirt as it permeated my skin. I reached for my back where the branch had stabbed me. My hand came away bloody, but nowhere near as bad as Matt's hand.

'You just stabbed me. You bitch.'

'Can you just leave?'

'No.' He grabbed a tea towel and wrapped his wound. 'Aren't you curious?' he asked, his voice gravelly and more threatening.

'About what? How one minute we're in the bush and the next we're back here. I figure you drugged me, you pig.'

Matt looked at me with a knowing smile. He laughed. 'I took you into the bush in an attempt to prove to you that I can shift time and move beyond the astral into the real. Here, have a drink.' He poured another glass of champagne.

‘Stick your drink. I’m going upstairs. Anything to get away from you.’ I stepped toward the door. Matt got there first and pushed his back up against it. The heat of desire suffocated my senses, as I leaned into him, attempting to push him away.

‘Matt, move your arse.’

‘I suggest you sit down and shut up.’

‘Stop playing games with me, Matt.’

‘I’m not playing games – I’m deadly serious.’ His eyes flashed, black.

I laughed. ‘Ooh, am I supposed to be scared?’

‘Are you mocking me?’

‘Moi? Yeah, you bloody creep. I want to get out of this room. I want to hear a weather update.’

‘I’ll give you a weather update. Cyclone Mary is now a category three. If your senses were as developed as mine you’d know that she’s intensified since this afternoon.’

He blinked and his face shifted as though I was seeing double. Dizziness overwhelmed me. I fell backwards, onto the bed; the haze of alcohol and the smell of Matt rocked my senses. It was sensual and evocative - so much so, I thought I might almost give in to him.

‘Matt, I...’ The room spun. My temples throbbed with a dull ache at the back of my eyes.

Matt leaned over me and whispered, ‘Tell me, you want me.’

I closed my eyes against his ugliness. Anger rushed into my veins. I wanted to lash out and rip his poxy skin off his face. But the more I resisted him, the stronger he seemed, more overpowering.

‘Amanda. Tell me, you want me.’

When I opened my eyes, he was almost on top of me, pulling my damp shirt up, stroking my skin beneath. It tingled. I writhed against his touch. I didn’t want this. Every time I closed my eyes I drifted into the same vortex as before. A silent cone of nothingness, as though I were trapped between floors in an elevator with no escape. It frightened me. I fought my repulsion and kept my eyes open.

‘Say it,’ he insisted, while straddling me, running his tongue the length of my belly. *Oh God*. I couldn’t stand this.

‘Fuck off.’

Searing pain burned at my temples and a vision played in front of my eyes like a video with bad tracking. Mum was in a hospital bed, hooked up to drips and a monitor. She looked frail and deathly white. The weight of Matt bore down on me and, the more I fought him, the clearer the images of Mum dying became.

‘I want you,’ I screamed.

At that moment, my voice rang out, echoing inside my head, shaking my body. Everything around me shifted. Out of nowhere candlelight flickered around the room, against black walls as though inside a cavern. My sheets felt silky instead of the cheap poly-cotton. Matt’s face glowed in the dancing light, his scarred skin less obvious. His

bare chest glistened with an oily sheen. He kissed me passionately. I found myself kissing him back with equal passion, moving my body against his. He tucked his hands beneath my buttocks and raised me toward him. I touched the firm muscles of his stomach, feeling his strength, and I knew he could hold that position for a long time. When he entered me, I screamed out, closing my eyes, revelling in the ecstasy. My orgasm mounted slowly, and each time I thought I was about to climax, Matt would do something to stop it, pulling me back.

My world shifted.

I was standing outside the old Queenslander, my mother's house, and my heart quickened. It was true, I was in Brisbane, but it still didn't feel quite real. Then suddenly I was in Mum's room. She was sitting on the bed, rummaging through a shoe box that had been decorated with flowery paper. She pulled out a bunch of envelopes and began sifting through them with her long elegant fingers. Her nails were painted a pretty pink.

'Mum,' I said quietly. Almost too afraid to speak. *Was I really here?*

She continued sifting through the envelopes and smiled when she found what she was looking for. It was a letter from me.

'Mum,' I said louder.

She held the envelope in her lap and listened as though she'd heard something, then shook her head and returned to my letter.

Matt was riding me hard now, the orgasm rising to a pitch. If it didn't happen soon, I'd move past the 'screaming of desire' phase into 'God let it be over' phase, but still I stood in my mother's room with a thin veil between her and me. Every time I pushed against it to reach her, I'd be pulled back to the room filled with the raw act of sex.

Then John, my stepfather came through the door. 'What are you reading?' he asked my mother.

She looked at him and cried. 'I'm worried about Amanda.'

John sat next to her and squeezed her shoulder. 'I've just heard the weather update. It's still a category three, but they're confident at this stage that it'll ease off into a rain depression.' He kissed her on the cheek. 'She may not get here as soon as you'd hoped, but she'll get here.'

The room began to fade as I felt myself being pulled back by Matt's mounting orgasm. He had delayed me too often; my desire to come had dissipated. I felt a rush as his heat surged through my body, yanking me through the cavern. The candles were petering out, and the black walls were becoming brighter. I sat up covered in sweat, feeling the aches from the sex that was rougher than I would've liked. Matt was lying beside me, grinning.

Matt! Ugly Matt, mousy hair, oily eyes and acne scarred skin. My body shook with disgust. I couldn't believe I'd let him touch me, let alone have sex. I ran to the



bathroom and vomited. When I returned to the room, Matt was dressed, sitting back at the table.

I wrapped the dressing gown around my sore body, tying the belt tight. ‘Why are you still here, you pig?’

I swayed, then touched the bench to steady myself.

‘Are you okay?’

‘Don’t talk to me, you creep. What did you just do to me?’ Revulsion swept over me, making me feel so sick that I gripped my stomach. I thought I’d vomit again.

Matt laughed. ‘Perhaps I should go upstairs and check on Rachel.’

‘Don’t you dare.’

‘Well, Amanda what is it? I either stay here with you or I go upstairs.’

‘God, Matt. What more do you want from me?’

‘Orgasm.’

‘What!’

He walked toward me and whispered, ‘You can speak with your mother next time. You can press through the veil, but you need to take the next step.’ The tips of his fingers brushed my cheek.

‘You disgust me. Get out.’

He laughed. ‘You know where to find me, if you change your mind.’ The wind whistled when he opened the door. Mary’s rage blew the curtains and knocked over a glass as he left.

#

I showered, scrubbing my body till it turned pink, in an attempt to rid myself of Matt. Dressing in clean clothes made me feel mildly human. Still crying as I stripped the bed, I felt so disgusted and anguished by what had happened. None of it really made sense.

Tiredness knocked at the back of my brain and the ache behind my eyes intensified. I turned up the volume of the radio to hear the latest weather update. Mary had increased to a category four. *Jesus Christ, how bad can this get?* There was still no talk about evacuation. I couldn't stand hearing the sound of the cyclone alert over the radio, it grated on my nerves. I kept switching it off, but then I couldn't stand the thought of not knowing.

Everything felt surreal, especially the fleeting visit with Mum. Watching her sitting on the bed, reading my letter brought more tears. I desperately needed to see her. Matt had said, that orgasm would allow me to crossover, so why didn't he let me the first time? He knew I was close.

Trying to make rational sense of everything defied comprehension.

I heard voices in the distance. A door slammed. The wind howled and something outside banged repeatedly against the verandah. The distinctive cyclone warning blared on the radio again, piercing my ears, all my senses so heightened it hurt my head. The broadcaster's unnaturally calm voice said the forecast was unchanged. Cyclone Mary and her fury were still heading for the island.

The door blew open. Matt stepped inside, his hand still wrapped in the bloodied towel. He kicked the door shut behind him, then pushed me onto the bed. When I went to sit up, he pressed his knee into my chest.

‘What the fuck do you want now?’ I yelled.

His damp body sidled up to mine. He breathed against my neck. He smelt inviting, earthy, and of eucalyptus.

*What was I thinking?* But a fog clouded my brain, and my voice of reason.

‘Amanda,’ he whispered. ‘I told you, I can get you to Brisbane. You just have to trust me and let me bring you to orgasm. If you continue to fight me, then you can’t crossover.’

Then it dawned on me. Part of me, like Rachel, wanted to believe him, believe that I could go back to Brisbane and stay there.

My legs felt weak. He was truly fucking with my reality. The desire that had revolted me so much, burned in my belly, and again I wanted him.

He ran his hand across my breast, squeezing my nipple. Shivers shook my body.

‘That’s my girl. Go with it. Now, let me take you to your mother. I know you saw her through the veil. She’s dying, isn’t she?’ He raised his eyebrows, confirming his cleverness. ‘How could I know any of that if I didn’t have the power to take you there – huh?’

The scent of him filled my senses, and I drowned in his black eyes, this time giving in to him completely. I sighed heavily and let him take me down into the well of lust.

I closed my eyes and slipped into the dark place. Candlelight flickered around the walls. The soft glow danced across Matt's face. His fingers played lightly upon my stomach, and pleasurable goose bumps prickled my skin. He teased me with his tongue when he went down on me, which only increased my impatience to get it done. I needed to step through the veil. Finally, he penetrated me with an arrogance that I let him own, so I could fulfil my own need.

As my senses heightened, so did my awareness, and then I was back in my mother's room. She was standing by the dresser, brushing her hair. A large clump fell out into her hands. *My God. She'd only just started treatment, and already her hair was falling out.* I wanted to cry, but I needed to concentrate on getting across to her. Mum sat on the bed heavily, burying her face into the pillow, muffling her tears. I scanned the room for John thinking he may be in the bathroom, but she was alone.

A cry caught in my throat. 'Mum.'

Her body shook with quiet sobs. Instinctively I reached out to her, but my hand was caught. It felt like I was pressing against the latex of a balloon, all rubbery and stretchy in texture. I pushed and prodded at the veil without success, then I heard Matt. 'Surrender. Surrender to me.'

I slipped back into the cavern and Matt's eyes, the colour of ink, never left my face. His penis swelled inside of me, vibrating against my vaginal wall, sending shivers up and down my spine, passion and pain all rolled into one. I was teetering on the edge of orgasm when he stopped moving. The desire for release ached inside of me.

I screamed, 'Don't stop.'

Matt smiled, withdrawing slowly, stopping, and then plunged into me, so deep, the orgasm ripped at my body. My fingers caught at a tear in the veil.

'Mum.' I called. She stopped crying, and looked around the room.

I continued to tear at the veil, while my body, back in the cavern, shook and shuddered under the weight of Matt.

Then I was through, sitting on her bed. She reached out and hugged me.

'Amanda? How did you get here? I mean what? How?'

'I'm not really sure. I don't even know how much time I have. I just needed to see you.'

'Why are you naked?'

*Oh, shit.* I grabbed Mum's dressing gown hanging from the back of the door and wrapped it around me.

Mum turned up her nose in a distasteful way.

'What's wrong?' I asked.

'Oh, nothing. You just smell a bit funny.' She laughed. 'Probably all the chemo, it's upset my senses.'

I smiled as if to humour her, but I knew it wasn't the chemo. It was me. I knew that I was coming from a place that wasn't quite right, a place that didn't fit well with the world. It was something I didn't understand. It had to be some type of magic or just a drug induced hallucination. I couldn't tell except it felt real. This was real. I could feel her frail body next to mine, her rapid breathing. I looked into her tired face that hadn't quite given up hope.

'I still don't understand how you can be here. Am I dreaming?' she asked.

I pinched her. She looked at me frowning.

'You felt that, right?'

'Yes, it hurt.'

'Then you're not dreaming.' I wrung my hands in my lap and said, 'Listen Mum, I don't have much time. If I don't make it off the island, I want you to know that I tried to. I tried really hard. I love you so much. I don't want you to die.'

'Darling, we're all going to die. Just some of us know when. I'm sure the cyclone will become nothing more than a rain depression. So John and I expect to see you as soon as the planes are flying again.'

A strong tug of energy came from Matt, pulling me away from her, as his orgasm neared.

'I have to go.'

We hugged. I didn't want to leave, but I was slipping or falling, I couldn't tell which. The dressing gown fell to the floor, then I was behind the veil. She called my

name into the empty room. The expression on her face told me that I'd gone. The last thing I saw was John, reaching out for Mum trying to calm her, picking up the crumpled gown I'd left behind, and listening to her recount what had just happened. Then I was back down the tunnel of flickering candles, past the black walls, and in my room with Matt, naked, sweaty and spent.

I dived out of bed and raced for the bathroom, hugging the porcelain bowl for the second time tonight.

I wanted to run. Run away from Matt, from me. Where was I going to go? Mary was coming and I couldn't change that.

*Or could I?*

I brushed my teeth to rid the vile taste of vomit from my mouth. Splashing water on my face, I looked at my tired reflection in the mirror, and whispered, 'I'm going to find a way to see you again, Mum.'

#

Matt was lying on his back, naked, and asleep when I returned. I switched on the overhead light, forcing him awake. 'What are you doing?' he asked, shielding his eyes.

I crawled along the bed then climbed on top of him. His penis was already growing. I closed my eyes fighting back the nausea. *I can do this.*

In a sleepy daze, he reached for me. Continuing to writhe against him, I unwrapped his bloody hand, and used the tea-towel to tie his hands above his head. I stroked his chest with one fingernail. 'I want to fuck you all night long.'

He smiled and tried to pull his arms down to embrace me. ‘Let me go. I want you on your back.’

He tried to wriggle free of my hold. And before he lost his erection, I mounted him swiftly and smoothly, rocking back and forth. I knew it wouldn’t be long, before I was pressing through the veil. Back in Brisbane, by my mother’s side.

‘Amanda. Stop!’

‘Why? I’m giving you what you want,’ I said.

‘I don’t want this.’

I felt his penis shrink inside me. *Shit. Not now.* I climbed off him and lay on my back, spreading my legs. ‘Come on then. Is this what you want?’

He pulled his hands to his face and tugged at the cloth with his teeth.

‘No,’ I said, grabbing his hand and pressing my thumb into the wound. Fresh blood spurted, running down his wrist.

His face flushed with anger, he whipped his hands over my head like a noose, and pulled me into his chest. His blood was sticky and wet against my neck.

‘Fuck me,’ I yelled.

Popping sounded in my ears and everything shifted for the final time. We entered the darkened cavern. I didn’t have to worry about looking into his ugly face anymore. Candlelight was kind to him. Then I was back inside Mum’s room, looking through the bubble. It was dark. John and she were wrapped in each other’s arms, sound



asleep. In that instant Matt pulled me back, his orgasm near. I wrapped my thighs higher around his hips and squeezed his penis hard with my pelvic muscles.

He stopped suddenly. ‘What the hell are you doing?’

‘I’m not ready,’ I said gripping him a little tighter.

‘So?’

I pressed my hand against his chest, then released my grip on his penis. He pushed hard, plunging deeper.

In a rush of anger, I rocked him sideways until he was on his back. I straddled him, feeling his penis swell inside of me. ‘Take me to the clearing. Where the eucalypts are.’ I nibbled his ear, teasing him. ‘I liked it in there,’ I lied.

He smiled, and pulled me toward him, his bloodied arms still moist against my skin.

#

The ground beneath the eucalypts was dark and damp, littered with branches from broken trees. Matt yelled out several times as they dug into his back while I continued to ride him hard. My orgasm was mounting—*almost there!* I reached behind my head and pulled his hands away from me, squeezing into his wound.

Matt screamed in pain. ‘For crissake, Amanda!’

*It was working.*

His black eyes moistened against my gaze. He pushed at my shoulders trying to stop my rhythm, but I continued to work him.

As my desire increased to a fever pitch, he still managed to control his ejaculation. My need for release was close, yet his was not close enough. I could tell by his face that it was becoming more difficult for him to control.

I raised my buttocks slightly, and placed my hand between his legs, squeezing his balls. Pressing my finger firmly into the base of his penis, Matt groaned with relief and despair as the irrepressible orgasm took hold.

With increasing urgency, I continued to ride him before he lost his erection. I yelled with pleasure, the release wracking my body as I ripped through the veil.

The tug of energy from Matt grew weaker.

Finally in Brisbane, back in my mother's room. Relief washed over me reducing me to tears. I'd made it, leaving Matt behind, powerless.

I was so tired and exhausted. My body felt different as though I was tainted with something not right. Like all the cells were altered somehow, all my senses heightened.

I slipped into the bathroom to clean myself up and find a bathrobe to wear. When I looked into the mirror, I looked through into another dimension. It was as though I were seeing everything through a fish eye lens, all slightly elongated and distorted.

Rushing wind and forceful gusts spilled into the clearing, scattering leaves. The trees bowed and swayed against the fury. Matt was whimpering where I'd left him, alone in the dark. His body was bruised and bleeding, his nakedness exposed to the

in Fantastical Journeys to Brisbane

[www.michelecashmore.com](http://www.michelecashmore.com)

Ed: Geoffrey Maloney, Trent Jamieson and Zoran Zivkovic

[www.michelecashmore.blogspot.com](http://www.michelecashmore.blogspot.com)

2007

6,300 words

Published by: Izvori

elements. He raised his arms in self-defence against the backlash of Mary, and screamed my name. Mary snatched it up, spitting the syllables out like litter in her path.

I smiled.

ENDS