

Chapter 1

Brendon Wilson was a light sleeper; it was a symptom of his condition. He was overweight and in fact would be considered, by medical standards, to be obese. This caused him to suffer from “Sleep Apnea”, a disorder affecting his breathing while he slept.

Unbeknown to him, he would wake many times during the night to subconsciously correct his breathing, his condition rarely allowing him to fall into a deep sleep. So when the drop of water hit the side of his face, he woke immediately. In that instant a searing pain filled his head, but then as quickly as it came, the pain was gone.

Was he dreaming? It was hard to tell. He felt alert but everything unfolding around him was surreal. He was observing the scene from above, looking down at a body lying in the bed. A rain soaked stranger stood over the body holding a pistol, fitted with, what Brendon presumed to be, a silencer attachment on the barrel.

As he watched the strange scene unfold, he saw a rose of blood emerge from a single entry wound at the temple, and trickle down the face of the body on the bed. It was then that he became aware that it was his face, and it was his body that he was observing.

The blood ran down his cheek to join the remnants of the splash of water, which only moments ago had awakened him, having obviously dripped from the stranger’s wet hair. The trickle of blood continued down through the corner of his mouth, to pool on the pillow supporting his head.

He suddenly came to the realization that he must be dead, and that he was experiencing what happens to a soul after death. He wasn’t alarmed or dismayed at what was happening to him. Instead, of the many emotions he was feeling, the strongest was curiosity, and as he wondered at what might happen next, he had an overwhelming urge to leave the scene and drift further away. However the curiosity kept him there and he knew instinctively that he was in control of where he wanted to be, and chose to linger with his family.

He found that he could watch his killer, as the dark figure quickly, but silently, left the room and padded down the hall, wearing only sodden socks on his feet and leaving wet footprints on the dirty, wooden floor, as he moved stealthily into Brendan’s father’s room and across to his bed.

As the stranger pointed the gun at his father’s temple, Brendon tried to shout a warning to the old man, however he could not make himself heard and he rushed at the intruder, only to pass right through him without contact as the killer pulled the trigger.

Ffutt! Ffutt! The gun flashed as his father’s body jerked and then was still.

The old man was suddenly with him in the ether, looking at him in complete confusion. Brendan pointed as the stranger in wet socks move down the hall to Brendon’s twin brother’s

room, and they watched helplessly as the gun flashed twice more and Grahame met the same fate as had befallen them.

The three of them were together now, drifting upward until they were suddenly outside and above the old house. It was raining heavily and the dark thunder clouds hung low in the night sky. The old man was in a rage, he screamed incoherently at the night, and rushed back to the house. He wasn't ready to leave.

As the twins watched their father approach the rear of the house, the intruder appeared on the back porch. Warren Wilson flew at him screaming, and tried to smash into his killer as he emerged from the back door, but he passed right through him. The killer didn't flinch or deviate, totally unaware of the apparition as he retrieved his rain coat from where he had discarded it on the way in.

The brothers felt detached from the reality of what was unfolding around them. They calmly watched the killer begin to pull on his rain coat, and then pause as another dark figure emerged from the shadows, pointing a shot gun at his chest. They watched unmoved as the firearm was discharged at point blank range, and their killer slumped back against the door in the throes of death.

This carnage erupting around them seemed unimportant to the twins. They turned from the scene with disinterest and looked to the heavens as a soft light became visible through the darkness. They moved toward the light, feeling a calmness they could not remember experiencing during the short, angry lives they had lived until this moment.

They were 37 that year and had been raised for 30 of them by their abusive, drunken father. Their mother had walked out when they were seven, never to be seen again. Increasingly isolated from mainstream society, and lacking in any emotional support from their bitter father. They had relied on each other for everything that a mother and father should have provided; security, guidance, and love. Their life had been tough but each had the other; they owed their father nothing and each other everything, and now they would remain together. Even death wouldn't keep them apart.

That same night as the tropical storm lashed the North Queensland coast, and some twenty-five minutes before the killer, Giovanni Puglisi was to carry out his deadly contract at the Wilson farm house, Dr. Geoff Brewer was dashing from his car in the doctor's car park, to the front entrance of the Cairns Base Hospital. The umbrella he attempted to hold aloft was close to ineffectual, as the rain sheeted down almost horizontally and lashed at his rain coat, soaking his shoes and the bottoms of his trousers.

As he passed through the hospital foyer, he saw by the wall clock that the time was 12:25am, and although his extremities were soaking wet, Dr. Brewer was his usual jovial self as he strode into the labor ward, at his customary *busy* gait.

After shaking off his umbrella and shedding his rain coat at reception, he gave a cheery greeting to the nursing staff as he approached their station.

“Good morning Janet.”

He hailed the senior nurse on the ward, a Sister he had worked with for many years.

“How are you this fine morning my dear?”

They both chuckled at his reference to the weather.

“Good thank you Dr. Brewer, looking like a nice day outside, huh?”

Sister Janet Gordon continued with the irony as she returned his greeting.

“For ducks maybe.”

He chuckled again then shook his wet hair like a Labrador.

“It’s coming down in sheets out there. Life in the tropics, uh?”

Janet handed him a towel before giving him his patient reports, and as she tapped them with her finger, she added an observation.

“It looks as though you’ll have a juggling act on your hands this morning.”

She liked Dr. Brewer, he was a very good doctor with a pleasant, jovial demeanor and they had always worked well together. She had been at the hospital for about 30 years and he had been tending his patients there for about the same amount of time. Neither could be confident of who started there first, but they had developed a comfortable friendship and always looked forward to working together.

“Yes,” Brewer replied, “initially anyway. I have Mrs. Payne and Mrs. Faulk both in labor; they could very well deliver at the same time. In that case I might need a hand darlin’.”

He looked up from the list and smiled as he used the endearment; his habit was to use it in a fatherly way with all women he knew well, whether they were daughters, nieces or nurses, and the accompanying words were more in the form of a request than a statement.

Janet smiled as she turned back to her computer assuring the doctor as she did so.

“You know you can count on us Doctor Brewer, we are prepped and ready to go.”

“Thanks Darlin’.”

He waved the clip board in the air and added as he departed at his hurried gait, to examine his expectant mothers.

“I’ll let you know how we are travelling, as soon as I know.”

After detouring to change into his spare shoes and socks from his locker and don a cap and gown, Dr. Brewer washed up, and then hurried to his first port of call, Margaret Payne. He had know Margaret and Alan Payne for many years, they were Cairns people born and bred, and owned and operated his local nursery at Edge Hill, the suburb in which they both resided. He had not only been their family doctor since their marriage; he had also served in that role since they were children, and had watched them both become adults.

“Hello Margaret Alan.”

He addressed them both brightly as he entered the room.

“How’s our baby coming along?”

He dropped the chart on the bed and put his hand on Margaret’s swollen abdomen.

“Somewhat impatiently Doctor.”

Margaret replied, beaming at Brewer. It was obvious that she was pleased and relieved to see him.

He checked the contractions, dilations and the baby’s heart rate before giving her the verdict.

“You’re doing well Marg, I would say you are about fifteen minutes away,”

He turned to the nurse and added, “Get everything ready please darlin’, I’ll just check on Mrs. Faulk and I’ll be back.” He hurried to the room next door to find Jenny Faulk in a similar state of labor.

He hadn’t known the Faulks for as long as the Paynes, but knew them well just the same. He had become their GP when they had decided on a sea change and moved up from Sydney about three years previously. They had opened a graphic design business in the city and as with the Paynes; they were a good stable couple about to have their first baby.

“Wow Jenny!” he grinned as he finished examining her. “Your big boy is ready to greet us as well, isn’t he?”

The Faulks already knew the gender of their baby, as they had decided very early that they would like to know, and were all prepared at home for a bouncing baby boy.

“Am I glad to see you Doctor Brewer, how long do you think I have?”

She forced a smile through the pain.

“About fifteen minutes.”

The Doctor replied as he patted her hand.

“It’ll be touch and go between you and Margaret Payne next door. I think I’ll run book on who’ll be first, I might be able to make a quid.”

He looked up at David Faulk, the husband, and winked.

The humor and the Doctor’s calm demeanor helped to ease David’s nerves slightly, as he tried to adapt to the unfamiliar surroundings. He gave a nervous laugh, as he joined in the joke.

“I’ll take 20 minutes Doc, if you’re starting that book.”

They both had a chuckle as Jenny groaned in pain.

In the end it *was* touch and go; Justin Faulk was born approximately three minutes before Ryan Payne, with Dr. Brewer moving adroitly between births with significant help from Sister Gordon and her staff. The mothers were happy and well, and babies were healthy and perfectly formed.

The only extraordinary thing that Dr Brewer had noticed was that both boys had a similar, small birthmark at the left temple, just beneath their hair line. The marks were about the size of an entry wound from a 9mm bullet. However, although he found the marks strange, there were

no medical consequences to them, so he dismissed them as a coincidence of no significance, and thought no more about it.

Approximately a week later, at the precise time that the mass murderer, John Spait, was meeting his violent end on another stormy night, in a waterlogged cane paddock at Cowley, Dr. Peter Jamison, at the Mater Hospital in Townsville, would deliver a baby under very different circumstances.

Dolores Bradstreet was a heroin addict. She had tried to rehabilitate herself for the sake of her baby, but had failed, and now she lay unconscious on a surgery table in the Townsville Mater Hospital, about to give birth by caesarean section because she was too ill to give birth naturally, and was in danger of not surviving the procedure.

Dr. Jamison performed the surgery at about 10pm. It was a boy and the doctor knew immediately that the child was in pain. He held the newborn baby in his gloved hands and looked at the crying bundle with sadness, and for a split second he could have sworn that the baby had looked directly back at him in shock, before screaming his anger and pain to a world that would see him born as a heroin addict. The Doctor looked back at the mother, as the heart monitor changed its tone to a single elongated “beeeep!” indicating that the mother had gone into cardiac arrest. He handed the baby to a nurse and went to work on the mother. The team tried desperately to revive Dolores for twenty minutes or more, however it was all in vain and Dr. Jamison pronounced death at 10:25pm. The doctor returned to the baby and as he looked down at the crying child, he shook his head and mumbled to himself, as much as to the others in the room.

“This poor little bastard doesn’t stand a chance, a junkie, and as good as an orphan from the very start. We can only guess at how his life will turn out.”

He had seen his share of junky mothers, but each new case shocked and saddened him. The child would face no end of medical problems before it even left the hospital, as he felt the pain of drug withdrawal from the moment he was born, and then, depending on the mothers drug use throughout her pregnancy, there would be lifelong problems for the child. Among which could be, learning disabilities, immune system deficiencies, retarded growth and a myriad of other possible health problems.

Dolores had been in a very bad state, with little or no chance of bringing up the child. She had no idea who the father was and had no family to help with an infant. Therefore, before the operation and subsequent birth, she had agreed to put the baby up for adoption. The Sisters of Mercy had made all of the arrangements for the child, placing him with a good farming family from the Atherton Tablelands.

Gavin and Bridie Cloak’s farm produced Mangos, Avocados, and Macadamia nuts as well as supporting a small dairy herd. They were hard working community people, strongly involved in the church, and were seen as excellent candidates to love and care for the unfortunate child.

They had been trying for many years to start a family without luck, and while Bridie had fallen pregnant twice, she had miscarried both times. They had registered for adoption three years ago and were delighted when this opportunity arose; they were made aware of the mother's background and the possible problems that the child may have as a result, but this made them all the more determined to give the child a good Christian home.

About three weeks after John Spait had been shot and killed, whilst attempting to murder Jacob Shaunessy and Gabriella DeSare on that stormy night at the DeSare property, Gavin and Bridie took Lucas Cloak home to their farm, unaware that they were taking into their home, the reincarnation of that mass murderer.

Chapter 2

Jacob Shaunessy stood in the beautifully landscaped yard, surrounding a sprawling, old "Queenslander" styled house, a name bestowed upon the building style, for the state in which it had proliferated since the 1800's. The style of house was built with broad verandahs, and with its windows and doors aligned, so as to allow free passage for cooling breezes through the house during the hot summer months, common in Northern Australia.

Jacob was high on a hill, looking out at the now familiar views, which created a breathtaking panorama from his vantage point. They looked down across abundant cane fields to the small village of Kurrimine Beach, which lay between the foot of the hill and the ocean shore. His gaze moved from the village to the white sandy beach and out across the Pacific Ocean, and the nearby islands dotting its azure vastness.

It was just over a year ago that he had dreamt of this wonderful old house with its magnificent views, and the beautiful lady who lived here. In that dream, and subsequent dreams, Jacob had glimpses of another man's life from decades before, and had then discovered that he had been that man, Dario Braschi, in a previous life. He had learnt of his tragic death and of the vicious act of revenge that had caused that death, and he had been drawn into the bloody aftermath of a vendetta, which had its sinister beginnings some eighty years before.

Jacob reflected on the violent events and the circumstances which had brought him to this point in his life. Prior to these experiences he would have relegated reincarnation to the realms of myth and legend. Now having experienced all that he had; knowing the part that this phenomenon had played in solving the mystery of Dario's death, as well as having assisted in

the desperate defense of the families, he was convinced of its place in the cycle of birth and death. He saw this part of our existence as a wondrous thing, however would never forget the desperate struggle during which Wilson and Spait had met their mortal ends. Many had lost their lives in that desperate battle of souls, including Wilson's twin sons, Brendan and Grahame, and Sam DeSare's younger brother Marco, and Marco's wife, Gail.

That turn of mysterious and violent events, had naturally changed Jacob's life in more ways than one. It had convinced him that there was another world or dimension beyond the one in which we exist, but more importantly, it had bought him love. He had met, and fallen in love with the beautiful daughter of Sam DeSare and would now spend the rest of his life, however long that should be, with her.

The popping of a champagne cork bought Jacob back to the present. On his return from inside the house, where he had retreated to deposit his coat, he had taken a moment to reflect on the circumstances which had led to this day, remembering the incredible events of just over a year ago. However, now his focus was drawn to the celebrations taking place under colorful marquees, which were set up under two giant Rain Trees, whose leafy canopies gave shade to a large area of the lush, grassy yard in which he now stood.

It was Jacobs wedding day and it was the sights and sounds of the day that had prompted his reverie. He had experienced a similar scene before, in a dream given to him by Dario. It was here some forty-six years previously, in a similar idyllic setting, that Dario had celebrated his marriage to his soul mate, Luisa Perrone, the beauty of Jacob's dreams and the siren that had drawn him from Brisbane to North Queensland. Jacob looked across at her now, chatting and laughing with her niece who was also his beautiful bride, Gabriella. Luisa was now in her seventies and had been ill in recent years, but she was still a very beautiful woman, a gift her niece had also inherited; in fact from recollections Jacob had from his dreams, and from old photos he had seen of Luisa, Gabriella's likeness to her Aunt at the same age was incredible.

Gabriella looked in his direction at that moment and beckoned to him to come over. He smiled back and made his way through the throngs of well wishers to her side, and sat down at the table with Aunt Luisa.

"You look very handsome as always Jacob." Luisa smiled and patted his hand.

"Thank you Aunt Luisa, and you are looking radiant as well, you rival the bride with you beauty." He gave Gabriella's hand a squeeze as he said this, then continued, "I was just thinking to myself that you two were by far the most beautiful women here today, and there are quite a few beauties here."

Gabriella laughed, "You are an outrageous charmer Jacob Shaunessy." Then she said more seriously.

“Aunt Luisa has suggested we move in here as soon as we get back from the honeymoon, what do you think?”

Until now Jacob had lived in the renovated cane-cutter barracks on the DeSare farm and Gabriella with her parents in their farmhouse about 100 meters up the road from the barracks. They had managed to sneak many nights together since falling in love; however they now needed a home together. They had thought to live in the spacious and well appointed barracks initially, until they decided on an alternative, but had not yet decided where that might be.

“It’s up to you ladies.”

Jacob replied as he looked from one to the other.

“It would be more convenient for me; it will be less distance for me to go to work.”

He had been managing Luisa’s farm, with help from Sam and Roberto DeSare, Gabriella’s father and brother, since the end of the cane season last year. His parents had been cane farmers in Nambour and he had grown up in farming, until he went off to school at Nudgee College in Brisbane, and then to university to study business and marketing. When he chose that career his parents had given into developers, and sold most of their farm, except for a couple of prime acres around the family home. They had received way above market rates, enabling them to retire comfortably. He now found that he totally enjoyed farming life, and was happy to make it his career for the future, as long as Gabriella was by his side.

It was Luisa’s turn to speak seriously, “Jacob, there is something that you should know, and I think, on your wedding day, it’s probably the appropriate time to tell you.” She smiled and took his hands in hers.

“When I pass on and join my beautiful Dario, this farm and the bulk of my estate will pass to Gabriella, and of course to you. Dario and I had no children and his sister Andria was looked after many years ago with property in Townsville. So it will be yours, free and unencumbered. Dario and I wanted to build a family, a dynasty, from here, but we weren’t given the time. Now it is up to you. This responsibility could not fall to better than you my darlings.” She touched both their faces lovingly with her wrinkled hands.

Jacob was dumbfounded, he looked from Luisa to Gabriella and back again before he could speak.

“Luisa, this is too much for me to take in, are you sure about this?” And then he said to Gabriella. “Did you know about this?”

Gabriella smiled at him and said. “Yes, Aunt Luisa told me on the night after the Spait business, when we were here for the dinner. I didn’t say anything then because we were just getting to know each other.” Then she laughed. “And I wanted to be sure you didn’t just want me for my money.”

Jacob was silent for a minute as he stared out to sea, then he came back to Luisa and kissed her cheek and said with tears in his eyes. “You and Dario were the reason I came here all those months ago, and through that I met my beautiful Gabriella. That should have been

enough, but now this? I thank you from the bottom of my heart, no We thank you from the bottom of *our* hearts for this wonderful wedding gift, and we will try to live up to your faith in us.”

Luisa put her hand once again on Jacob’s cheek and said. “I know you will Jacob, but you don’t have to do anything for me. It is yourself and Gabriella that you focus on now and what will be, will be. You are family, and you were Dario, no one is more deserving or fitting to take over the reins here. I am fortunate that you are here and in a way Dario now has a second chance to make our dream come true.”

Gabriella joined them in a group hug as she said, “It’s settled then, when we return from the Whitsundays, we’ll move in.”

“Yes” agreed Luisa, “I’ll move into the guest area on the left wing while you are away, That’s like another house over there and there’s plenty of room here, you will have the house proper and it’s other five bedrooms to fill with children.”

Gabriella smiled at Jacob and said to her Aunt, “We’ll see what we can do.”

In the autumn, 10 months after they were married, Jacob Shaunessy was in the delivery room at the Innisfail Hospital, waiting anxiously at Gabriella’s side, as she squeezed his hand and strained mightily to give birth to their first baby.

As they were both in their early thirties and wanted children sooner rather than later, Gabriella had abandoned birth control soon after they were married. She thought that it would take a while for her body to adjust, however within a month she fell pregnant, much to everyone’s delight.

And then he was there, Ethan Nathaniel Shaunessy, Nathaniel for Jacob’s father. He was a big, healthy boy at 3.8 kilos, and cried heartily as soon as he was born, he also managed to pee on everyone close to him, as Jacob held him for the first time. He was a beautiful boy with dark hair like his parents, with his father’s brown eyes.

Naturally Gabriella, Jacob and the whole Shaunessy/DeSare extended family were over the moon. Jacob’s parents, Nate and Kath Shaunessy, had made the trip up from Nambour for the birth, as they had the previous year for the wedding. It was a joyous time.

When they brought him home from the hospital Gabriella could not contain her pride and excitement at showing the baby to her Aunt. Luisa was quite fragile now and a little ill at times, but she was overjoyed to meet Ethan, she held him in her arms as she sat in her wheel chair and with tears of joy in her eyes she said to Gabriella and Jacob.

“You know, on the night that he was born, Dario came to me in a dream and told me about him, he even told me that his name was Ethan and that the soul that came to him, was an old and gentle soul; one who did not need to return and had not been back for a long time. Dario said that this soul had chosen to join with Ethan, to help with the tribulations which our

family still faces. He said that the vendetta from the Acerbi Brothers may be over but there could still be danger from their protégé. Ethan will achieve important things in his life and this old soul is here to help him.”

Gabriella pulled a chair up beside her Aunt.

“You mean Aunty that souls can choose not to return? I thought you just popped into the next available vessel being born.”

“Oh no,” said Luisa, “There are levels of existence, the lower levels must return to learn more and become more enlightened souls, but those who have achieved the higher levels can choose if and when they return. It is up to them, most choose to stay in the spirit world, but some return to help new souls to achieve important goals from time to time. Dario said that you Gabriella, Jacob and Ethan had been chosen by this soul and he would always be beside Ethan to guide him wisely. Dario also told me that our baby is, and always will be, very sensitive to the spirit world. If he chooses to, he will be able to sense others that have gone before, and have contact with them. He is very special our Ethan.”

Jacob looked up from his new son.

“Well, that won’t surprise me. With what most of the family has experienced over the last couple of years. I suppose we should be thankful that Ethan’s reincarnation is a good bloke.”

He said this with just a little sarcasm. Even after all he had experienced and witnessed, and although he loved Luisa dearly, he still had trouble believing such things could happen. He thought as soon as he spoke that he sounded harsh, and that perhaps the reason behind his skepticism was the fear that it could all happen again. He softened his tone and smiled as he said to Luisa.

“We’ll have to explain a few things to him down the track, I suppose.”

Gabriella took his hand in hers and smiled back, to show she understood his feelings, and then turned back to her Aunt as Luisa spoke again, her brow furrowing with concern as she relayed more from her encounter with Dario.

“Jacob, he also told me that some of the malevolent souls that we encountered, when we found his killers are still close by. He says not to be alarmed, as their protégés are too young to cause us trouble at the moment and that their influence may diminish over time, but we must be alert. He said that he would watch over us and come to us if there is a need.”

The conversation took a bit of the shine from the celebrations, as each of them remembered the horror of some two years previously. However, as Luisa said, it would be years into the future if anything were to come of it, even if anything did happen. So everyone soon pushed thoughts of the past into the background, and they cracked the champagne and celebrated the new joy that had come to their lives.