

## *Four Natural Disasters (One Outcome)*

### *Part IV* *(Prologue)*

It seems like most movies produced today have three basic plots.

#1 A former assassin or special forces guy's wife is killed, he looks for revenge.

#2 Hostages are captured in Afghanistan and must be rescued.

#3 Disaster

Others are historical dramas based on true stories. Jews and Nazis. Kings and emperors, fallen empires. For this story I chose disaster.

#### The Australian Bush Fire (Chapter 1)

Jake's dream was to retire in a peaceful environment and live the rest of his life healthy and happy. He had been resourceful and had adequate money for this. He researched many places for the best benefits. The Philippines were a top choice. South America also has many economical benefits. Parts of Europe and Asia were tops on retirees lists. After his divorce, he had been looking for a new partner. At first, he just wanted to find someone near him in the US. After posting his dating credentials, he did get some local responses. He tried to connect, but did not find anyone with similar interests. He was surprised when he got dozens of responses from all over the world. At first he was reluctant to even converse with anyone. He was not a spring chicken. In his late 50's, he was still in good shape and kept up his health with exercise and a reasonable diet. One woman in particular caught his eye. Her name was Olivia and she lived in Australia. He had never been there and was interested in snorkeling the "Great Barrier Reef".



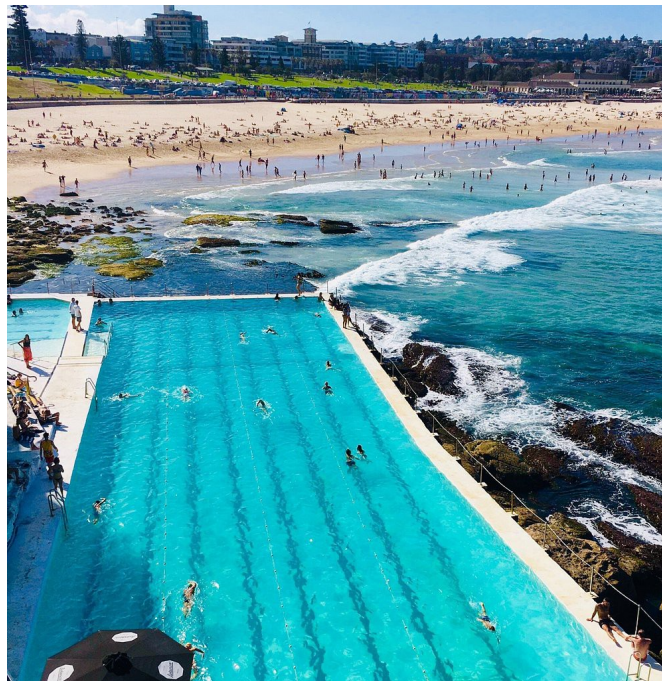
Olivia



She certainly looked much younger than the 40 years she claimed on her profile. As was usually the case, she divorced her husband for cheating with a younger woman. The husband must have been really stupid. She claimed to be the adventurous type and I was looking forward to meeting her. She was just the type I was looking for.

Never having been to Australia, I asked her to show me around the best tourist highlights in Sydney. These are the ones she chose for me.

Bondi Beach



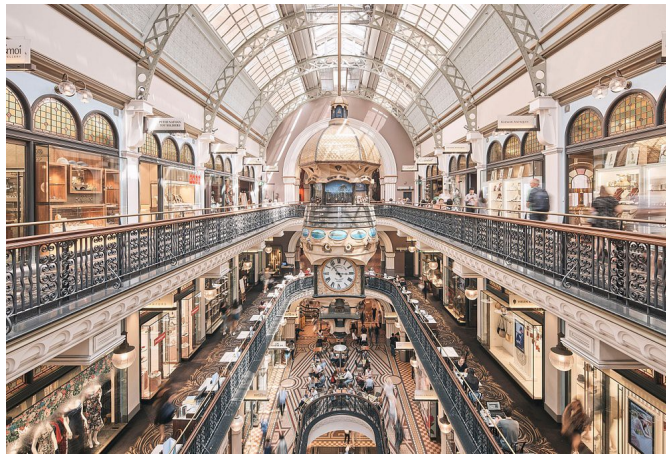
Look at that lap pool next to the ocean.



Sydney opera house



Queen Victoria Building



Have you ever seen a shopping mall like this?

Hyde Park Barracks



A UNESCO World Heritage site in the heart of contemporary Sydney, the Hyde Park Barracks is an extraordinary record of the living legacy of colonial Australia. Originally built to house convicts. I was fascinated with Australia's history of harboring convicts from England. The US should do

something like that too. Instead we keep our felons in a high end prison environment better than conditions that a lot of our veterans live in.

We went up to the Sydney Tower observation deck. Incredible view of all of Sydney harbor. I was more interested in observing Olivia's form than that of the landscape.



I wanted to do an off-beat type of tour. These two ladies gave us a private tour and description of the aboriginal life.



Something we would not get from the city museums. It was a story of survival and heartbreak as the colonization of Australia pushed her people to near extinction.

OK, touring has made me hungry. What kinds of foods are unique to Australia?

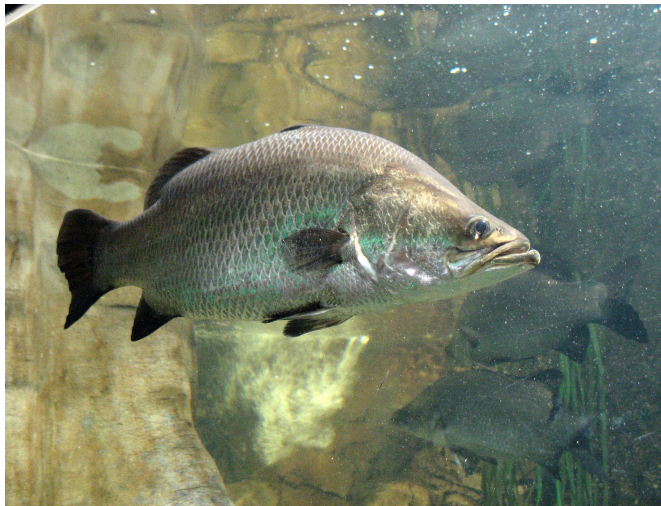


Vegemite toast



Not everyone liked this flavor. The avocados made up for any bitterness.

Barrimondi



Australia's best tasting fish. I have had it myself.

Tim Tam (an addicting chocolate biscuit)

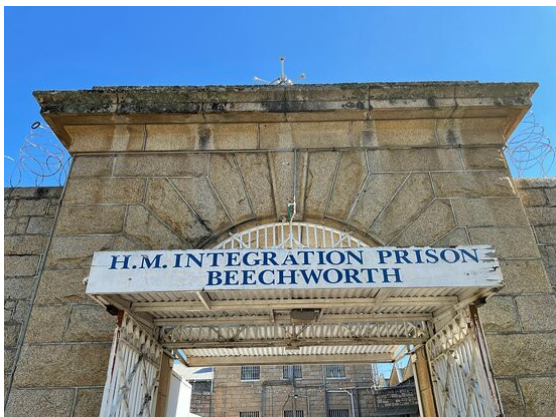


Here are two Australian deserts. Fairy bread and some kind of sweet pie



By our third “date”, we had cemented our relationship with a night of passion. This gave me new meaning to the term “down under”.

Now I wanted to experience an Australia different from the big city environment. How about we take a cross country road trip through the bush country? Route M31 was a good highway straight through to Melbourne. My ultimate goal was to take a ferry across to Tasmania. I wanted to look the Tasmanian devil right in the eye. Olivia, true to her purported adventurous nature, agreed. I was still interested in Australia's past as a penal colony. One of the most famous jails was the Old Beechworth Gaol (Means jail). It was right off of route M31.



Wow, this place looked more secure than Alcatraz.

Australia's history as a penal colony began in 1788 with the arrival of the First Fleet at Sydney, marking the establishment of the colony of New South Wales. This was a direct result of Britain's need to find an alternative to the American colonies for transporting convicts after the American Revolutionary War. Over the next 80 years, more than 160,000 convicts were transported to various settlements across Australia, including Norfolk Island, Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), and later, Western Australia. The transportation of convicts to Australia officially ended in 1868.





The Old Beechworth Gaol, a historical site in Victoria, Australia, is significant for its role in Australia's penal history and its association with the Kelly Gang. It operated from 1864 to 2004 and has been a focal point for stories about infamous inmates, including Ned Kelly, his mother Ellen, and other Kelly Gang members. The gaol also played a part in the broader development of Victoria's penal system during the gold rush era.

During the year 2023–24 was the Australian summer season of extreme bushfires. The spring and summer outlook for the season prediction was for increased risk of fire for regions in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

Above average temperatures and below average rainfall occurred for most of Australia. The fuel load growth was elevated due to above average rainfall associated with prolonged La Nina atmospheric conditions over the previous 3 years. A significantly dry and warm winter over much of Australia in 2023 elevated the fire risk associated with these fuel loads.

Our drive along route M31 placed us right in the middle of it.



Jake noticed some smoke up ahead on the road they were driving on. He kept going for a little while then noticed the smoke was heavier and also off to the both sides of the road in the direction he was traveling. He told Olivia we had better turn around. This looks ominous. When he turned around, he saw the route that he had just traversed was also on fire and the fire was spreading exponentially. They were now caught right in the middle of an inferno with nowhere to turn. Olivia, remember that lake we past not long



ago? Our only hope is to reach it in time. He accelerated as he drove back into the firestorm. The flames were all around them.



Even the kangaroos didn't know where to run to. He reached the lake, but fire had engulfed the entire lake and surroundings. Olivia said, why don't we get out of the Jeep and jump in the lake? That won't save us. The fire is sucking all the oxygen out of the air. Even if we were in the lake, we would suffocate and our heads would explode from the heat. There is only one thing to do. You have your seat belt fastened? Without explaining, Jake aimed the Jeep at the lake and accelerated as fast as he could. He hit the embankment and the Jeep went airborne. He landed in the middle of the lake. Fortunately it was only 20 feet deep. The Jeep immediately began to sink. It landed on the bottom, but the roof air pocket still had breathable air. Thank god the construction of the Jeep was adequate enough that only a little water was leaking in. They could see the lake surface through the moon roof. It did look like Dante's inferno with its crimson colored sky. The fire had engulfed the lake just as he had suspected. We must remain here as long as possible. After 20 minutes, the slow leak had let in enough water so that only their heads were above it. It was time to make a break for it. On the count of three, take a deep breath. I am going to roll down the window. When the Jeep is full of water, I will be able to open the door. Luckily the Jeep had manual roll down windows. Electric windows would probably not have worked submerged. Jake opened the door and both were able to swim up to the surface. The fire had burnt itself out and normal air had returned. They made it to the shore, but stayed in the water. The ground was still too hot to walk on.

A ground firefighting crew eventually came by and gave them a ride to Melbourne. How did you survived the inferno, one firefighter asked? Jake

just said we held our breath until the fire died out. The firefighter looked at him and shook his head. He knew that was a lie. No one could have held out that long. Jake will have to report the loss of the Jeep to the rental company when they get back to a town. He had bought the extra insurance.



Jake's wallet was soaked, but all his charge cards were still OK. They got to a hotel and reserved it for two nights. He didn't spend any time looking for the best. The first one with an occupancy sign was the one he signed in to.

As luck would have it, it was just the place they needed to regain some sense of sanity. They were close enough to town to walk. All their clothes were trapped in their suitcases at the bottom of the lake. Still soggy from their lake adventure, they sludged into town and bought new clothes and toiletries. This was a bed and breakfast inn. The elderly couple who ran it heard of our harrowing experience. They treated us as if we had been their long lost children. Sipping wine on the veranda was a truly healing remedy.







The room was cozy and the whole place exuded old country charm. The view of UN-burnt grass and trees was an especially welcomed sight.

After two days, they had regained their composure. We might as well continue on to Tasmania. That was our intended goal so we should just keep going. Olivia, the good sport that she was, said OK. The ride across in the ferry took 8 hours. This time I wanted something upscale. This Movenpick hotel fit the bill. Nice view of Hobart.







What does Tasmania have to offer visitors?

Tasmanian Treats:

They are known for their fresh seafood. How about these abalone and a smorgasbord of various delicacies.



Oysters on half shell



There were too many food varieties to show. Many scenic views like Wineglass bay.



There he is, the Tasmanian Devil  
I did look him in the eye.



Here is Olivia at the ocean's edge in Tasmania







Fresh veggies and fruit at the Salamanca market

## Bruny Island

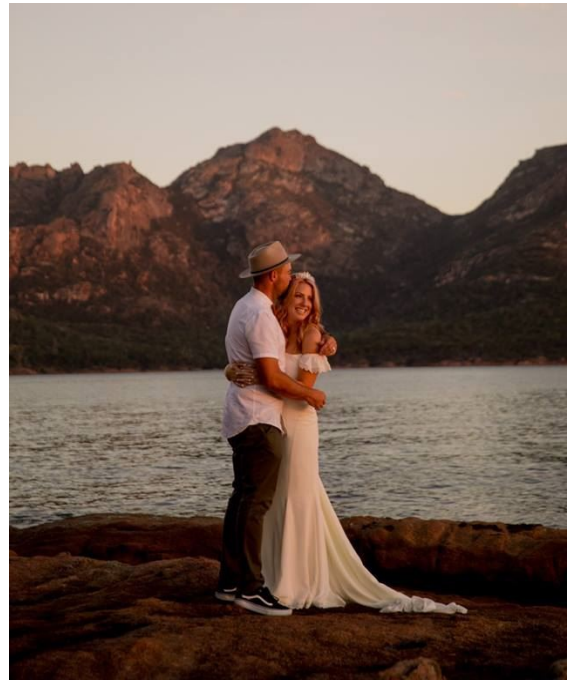


Bruny Island has a deep history. Starting around 40,000 years ago indigenous ancestors (the Nueonne) settled here. This was before Tasmania even existed. The culture proudly continues as the oldest living culture in the world. Abel Tasman first sighted the island realizing that it was separate from the main island. He named the main island after his boat the Tasmania.

I mentioned to Olivia that Wineglass Bay looked like an ideal place to hold a wedding. Don't beat around the bush Jake. What are you implying? I am implying that I hope that you would marry me here. Surviving a near death experience has formed an unbreakable bond between us. Will you marry me? Yes, Jake I will marry you.



Another stunning view of Tasmania



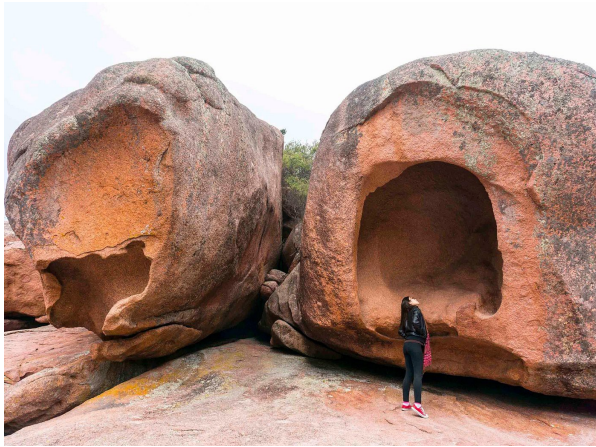
I opted for informal attire. No one would be looking at me anyway. Olivia was the attraction. Her sister flew here to attend the wedding. Her parents were too old to fly from their European home. We would visit them at another time.

Not wanting to drive back to Sydney over the same burnt route, I purchased my dream sailboat shown below. A 50 ft. catamaran. We sailed it from Tasmania back to Sydney.





We spent our honeymoon seeing the rest of Tasmanian tourist attractions.  
Some unusual rocks



Now that my sheila is my missus, I am once again a happy man.  
Though it is not as common as it once was, “sheila” is the Australian slang for girl or woman. It originally came from the Irish name Síle, which was exclusively used with women. Missus is the common name Aussies use for their wives.

That is how I ended up with an Aussie wife living in Sydney harbor on my dream boat.

**The End of Part IV**