

just a
NOBODY

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JA HENRY

For my wife who has believed in me much more than I ever have myself. Her love and encouragement has brought us all to this work you are about to read.

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'One may smile, and smile, and be a villain,'

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

STEVEN BRICE

It's a strange thing – life. Sometimes you can crave it, like a drug. But there comes a time in everyone's life that makes you wonder why you bother to keep breathing.

Most parents tell their kids, 'When you grow up, you will be rich, happy, healthy and famous. You will live in a lovely home with a new car, family, and great kids. It will only be the best for you.'

But in truth, most will live a basic life and do nothing more than live, work, have a family, get divorced and pass away. Only a tiny minority ever becomes famous or infamous.

Steven Christopher Brice was born into one of those basic families. His family was poor, uneducated, and struggled to live week to week. This routine was standard for his extended family. His brothers and sisters went from school to home, then helped their mother and went to church on Sundays.

'Must be seen to be living a good life,' said Brice's father. So every Sunday morning they walked together to the Bathurst Church of Christ in William Street to be that family Harry Brice expected and demanded.

Harold Brice was a diligent worker, who came from a tough background. Harry's family battled through the Depression, where work and money were at an absolute premium for everyone who wasn't

wealthy. It taught him to be careful with his money, to drink, drown his woes and keep his family in line.

With five kids to provide for, money was always tight. A lack of education left Harry with little option other than to work from day to day, week to week, and earn as much as he could. But all he could do was labouring work, as he lacked the education and skills to do any better-paying jobs. This lack of skill and the seemingly never-ending seasonal work drove Harry to become a negative, angry, spiteful husband and father. The home was one of anger, violence, with a strict regime to be followed or the payback would be harsh.

Brice's mother was Ellen - that lady who did odd jobs for anyone in the street. She sewed, mended, ironed, and minded kids. Anything to help bring more cash into the home always came in handy for her family.

Harry Brice was a drinker who never shied away from using his hands to deal with his home issues and the five Brice children were exposed to violence and its associated issues at an early age. The home was not a happy one and as each child reached their late teenage years they left for all corners of the country. They worked hard, and they never wanted to look back on their past life. They nearly all lived as strangers from those teenage years onwards.

Steven was the youngest of five and the keenest to get away from home. His childhood was never something he wanted to remember or try to work out as it revolved around alcohol, violence and abject poverty.

One night in early April 1980 was the first stage of failure for the Brice family. Steven woke to his father screaming so loudly that most of the street would have heard the rant, word for word. All Steven knew was that his eldest brother had a bleeding nose, torn clothes, and was walking down the narrow hallway with all his belongings. His sister, Rosemary, was crying as well and was being hugged tightly by her mother. This was not normal, as Ellen was not known for her affection towards her children. It made the then nine-year-old Brice feel totally

confused. Something must have happened, but as the baby, no one wanted to say a word to him except his mother. 'Go to bed Steven, and shut the door behind you,' she said.

That night always seemed like the catalyst for the family imploding the way it did. Brice never saw his brother Terry in the home again. Rosemary Brice left just three months later, and apart from Ellen Brice's funeral, Steven never crossed paths with his sister. He knew that something had happened that night to fracture his family irreparably, but no one ever spoke of it and he only had contact with one family member, his brother Mark. The middle boy, Mark Brice, refused to speak about anything in the past when they caught up, so Steven Brice had no choice other than to file it away and accept that the Brices just didn't do 'family' like everyone else.

Brice was five-feet-nine inches tall, had dark-brown hair and brown eyes. He had no outstanding features apart from a scar over his top lip. Life had always been a battle, and Brice knew that only arduous work would give him the life that he wanted. The first few years after Brice left home were tough, but he worked hard and learnt many skills. He worked at anything he could find. The variety of work never worried him and a range of jobs from building, horse work and even delivery driving kept the wages coming in.

He never stayed in touch with his family except his older brother Mark and became somewhat of a loner, but in truth, he enjoyed the solitude. He did whatever he wanted to and travelled to any place that took his interest. Being alone gave him the peace and quiet he had never known as a child and young adult.

For the entirety of his adult life, Brice was really looking to settle down in one job and set his life up the way he wanted to. He always admired one of his neighbours, a man who worked as a police officer. Brice would think of the respect people had for the man and the way he always looked so good dressed in his blue uniform. So, after years

of moving from job to job, just as his father had done all his life, he applied to become a prison officer. The process took several months, and after three different trips to Sydney, the offer finally came via a phone call from the human resources staff. Brice felt a genuine pride after being accepted into the government position, as he knew he would be able to achieve the financial and personal goals he only ever dreamt of in his youth.

The classes were held at a training facility in Sydney. The training was as much common sense as it was learning, with all sorts of clauses and Commissioner's instructions. The teachers were all current prison officers with many stories to tell and experiences to pass on. Brice enjoyed every minute of his training and the day of his graduation was one he always remembered proudly. The fact so many families shared the day with the graduates brought some sadness to Brice, as he shared it with nobody but his classmates. Truth was, he just couldn't wait to start his new life and career.

His work placement began in his hometown and he loved he wouldn't have to move. Being sent to work at the Bathurst Correctional Centre was a stroke of luck that Brice just relished. His plan was always simple: watch and listen. Speak when spoken to and ask advice of staff you respect and trust. He barely slept the night before his first shift, as his excitement was almost out of his control.

Brice began his first day with an engrained work ethic combined with a sense of compassion, but with large doses of humour thrown in. As the years rolled by, Brice had an ability to talk to angry inmates and calm the situations he found himself in. He was always happy to work any shift and fill in at any post. And this is how his work life went for the next twenty years with no real incident. Brice was as happy as he had ever been. The money he was paid allowed him to live a good life and have all the things he had always wanted.

After forty-two years of life, Steven Brice was a man who was happy

and content with his lot. Excellent job, financially settled, small farm and a lovely setup with everything his younger self had only ever dreamt of. His love of horses had been there since an early age and being alone gave him the chance to take on and care for retired horses, allowing them to enjoy their latter lives being well looked after.

In 2011, he started a relationship and married a woman he loved. He truly felt his life was complete. His wife Jess was a member of staff that he had met at the Correctional Centre and even though there was lots of talk of her sexual dalliances with other men, Brice took her as he found her. He noticed none of her shortcomings, nor did he listen to gossip.

He told anyone who wanted to listen that she was different around him and he liked the way she made him feel. Brice never doubted her, and he was always happy to give her whatever she asked for. Those three years were as happy a period as Brice had ever experienced in his lifetime. He felt that every day was amazing as he had everything he had ever dreamt of and he had a wife he loved lying next to him. He openly told his friends that his life was fully complete, and he could never be happier.

Jessica Vale, or Brice, as she was then known, had a chequered past. She had moved constantly throughout her life and changed her address as often as she changed her sexual partners. By the time she arrived in Bathurst to start work at the jail, she had left a trail of sexual destruction across the state of New South Wales. Her liking was for men who were either married or in committed relationships. Her tally of affairs at her previous jails was well into the thirties, and the broken relationships that followed her were close to the same number.

She had been married three times, had four children to four different men, and had custody of none of them. She was considered somewhat of a 'firecracker' in the jail, as she did little except go off at inmates and explode at staff who did anything to raise her ire. So went the rumours

that she had even had sex in the jail at various times.

But Steven Brice had gotten to know a side of her few people ever knew existed, so he refused to accept or even listen to the stories about her. She loved sex and would have it almost anywhere at any time. She had been his first real girlfriend, and only the third lover in his life. It made him feel like a complete man, and he absolutely loved that. He told his friends that he finally felt normal.

His life had been one of loneliness, and a lot of that had been through choice. He just enjoyed being alone, no one to yell at him, and he always went wherever he wanted to. His father's attitude had shaped him in such a way that he never wanted children and the ties they would have to him. He just wanted peace, quiet, and freedom.

So, his friends often wondered aloud why he chose Jessica Vale. She was possessive, loud, angry, demanding, and rude. Jess had told him very early in their relationship that she had been 'doctored', so he knew having children would never be an issue, and he thought his life would be enhanced with her in it. He held that hope, right up until all the stories and rumours smacked him right on the chin.

After getting dropped home one Tuesday evening fresh from supervising a hospital escort, Jenny Griffen said to Steven Brice, 'Just open the gate you idiot, I will drive you down Bricey.'

But Brice didn't mind, and he thought the car might wake Jess. He thought he could check the horses on his way down past the shed and then go in through the laundry. The driveway was just over 600 metres from the road and Brice saw a strange car in the carport as he got closer to the house. Brice heard loud music playing inside the house, which was normal for Jess.

'Hip-hop rubbish,' muttered Brice to himself. But as he reached the laundry door, he saw a man he knew and despised pounding his wife from behind. Jess was being bent over the kitchen bench, wearing only black stilettos. The sex was violent, and Brice could hear her screaming

in ecstasy. Detective Sergeant Troy Austin slapped Jess' bare ass as he plunged himself deep inside her. He slapped and pumped her for over half an hour on that kitchen bench.

When they had both climaxed, Austin walked to the shower. Brice stood quietly in the shadows outside the laundry. He heard his wife yell out to Austin, offering him a cold beer, but Austin declined. 'I'm working ya dumb bitch. Do you want the police to breathalyse me, do ya?' They both laughed loudly.

Austin walked naked back to the kitchen and dressed back in his suit and tie. Jess cuddled him close, and they shared a warm kiss. Then the freshly showered and dressed officer headed out the front door and walked to his police-issued, unmarked silver Commodore and departed.

Brice waited until the Commodore had left the property and the headlights had dulled. He walked silently down the path to his stables. His entire life seemed such a wasted mess to him then. He broke open a fresh bale of lucerne hay and fed his three horses. Brice sat in the darkness and waited until his wife was asleep. He walked to the back door and sat quietly, pondering his next move. A cold beer, a hot shower and a good sleep were all he could muster that night, so he made his way to the spare bedroom, put on the ceiling fan and closed the door.

Brice's mind swirled with a mix of embarrassment, humiliation, and anger. But his anger was not like he thought it would be. The overwhelming feeling that was consuming him was one of humiliation. He knew that his co-workers would be whispering and laughing at him behind his back. He knew Jess would move on quickly and that would just rub salt into the wounds she had opened for him. But he also knew that working out an agreement with his wife had to be his aim now and settling things financially would be her main need. Brice knew that this was the most important part of his looming divorce and Jess would want a sizeable amount of money to leave him in peace. Until

this was done, he would have no chance of moving onto the next stage of his life.

That next day, a Wednesday, Brice went about his early morning chores, and when he had finished, he prepared himself for work. He showered in the spare bathroom, ironed his uniform, and packed a lunch. Brice picked up his transparent plastic work bag and headed for the blue Ford Trader and work.

Jess was on a day off, so she had the blinds closed and the air conditioner on so she could snooze off the hot morning in bed. The previous evening's events swirled in his head and sadness overwhelmed Brice as he drove towards the jail. But work needed a clear head, so he planned what he would say to his wife that night. He knew he had to tell her he had seen it all and end the sham of a marriage. But it made him sad, and he felt very foolish as he knew when it got out, everyone would say, 'I told ya so'.

During the day, he planned to find a quiet place and log onto a computer where he would type up a document that described each element of what he thought would be an acceptable offer to Jessica Brice. His only want was to stay at the farm he had paid for and apart from that, she could take a monetary settlement and leave with whatever she desired to take with her.

The day seemed like a normal day, with parade and idle chat between staff. Everyone headed into the jail and after a head check and the removal of inmates for court and escort, let go was done. Nothing was out of the ordinary, so after handing out mail and general duties of the day, the staff prepared to clear the wing.

Then in walked one of the managers and the world was changed in that instant. Assistant Superintendent Brad Scott was a 'retread'. He had been a prison officer on and off for thirty years. At one-point Scott decided he wanted to go out into the real world and work for himself. When that hadn't worked out, he had to contact his old mates to get

him back into the job. It was an old practice to have so much dirt on other staff that if the 'shit hit the fan', you could use that information to pressure whoever you needed to and get what you wanted. Scott was initially knocked back by the HR Department when he applied to come back, so he went as high as he could with his dirt file and eventually got rehired.

Scott had a reputation as a bloke who would sink his own mother to gain rank. He was also a total bully who was as 'fake as Dolly Parton's boobs' - a line Brice always used whenever he saw Scott striding around the jail. Brice could not stand Scott and that feeling was reciprocated, the bad blood going back a long way.

The worst aspect of Scott's personality was his ability to lie to people's faces without flinching, so much so that it was a standing joke amongst 'baggies' that the only time Scott lied was when his lips moved.

He had taken on a temporary role as the classification manager of the country region for six months. He took no notice of anything the staff told him; he only did as he pleased and was a true example of narcissism.

Scott entered B wing and strode arrogantly towards the wing office, right into Steven Brice's personal space. Scott said, 'Bricey, how are ya brother? Mate, can ya do me a solid and take this classo out to this crim and get it signed? He's gotta pack his shit as he's off to Goulburn.'

Brice responded, 'Does he know about this?'

Scott snapped back, 'He already knows about this. Just get it signed as he's on the truck today. Can ya manage that?'

Brice walked out of the wing office and directly to the stairwell entry, up the two flights of solid metal steps and headed to cell forty-seven in B 3/4 wing, on the second tier. He flicked through the paperwork to the section that needed to be signed, grabbed a pen and walked towards inmate 967890 Walkers cell.

'Walker mate, I just need you to sign your classo. Here's a pen, just

sign on that left-hand side there and date it. It's the 23rd today, mate.'

Tyron Raymond Walker was an Aboriginal man, who stood five feet, six inches. His height was on the short side but was boosted by a muscled and toned body that trained five hours every day. Squats, curls, leg work, weights, boxing, and jogging five kilometres were Walker's normal daily routine. His face showed a litany of scars from innumerable fights and his torso was like a notice board of stab wounds from those fights in custody.

Walker had been incarcerated most of his life, in either juvenile or adult custody. He had a terrible temper and had a police record for so many offences that it ran into twelve pages. It ranged from assault to drug and motor vehicle offences, with the most serious of his crimes being a murder, which was the cause of his latest jail term. Walker had stabbed his father to death over a six-pack of bourbon. He had been sentenced to sixteen years with a non-parole period of twelve-and-half years.

When Scott conducted the classification on Walker, the inmate had only recently completed the fourth year of his murder sentence. For reasons only known to him, Scott had given Walker a minimum-security classification. But after he made the classification, staff complained it was not appropriate for Walker as he had refused to be involved in any programs to address his criminal behaviour, and had multiple internal charges for violence in the jail. Added to this was the fact inmates weren't allowed to be given a minimum security rating towards the start of their sentence due to the seriousness of the inmate's charges.

Scott didn't like being challenged over his work and hated Brice as he was one of the staff who complained about Walker's classification. Scott had reportedly been given a written warning from his boss over the decision. He took everything as a challenge and had no intention of letting Brice get away with questioning his decisions.

Walker read the classification document, then looked up at Brice and again read the new decision on the paperwork.

‘Who did this chief? Coz I’m not leaving here today. No fuckin way. This says I’m now a maxo. I’ve lost my minimum classo and getting tipped to Goulburn. Are you dogs for real? I ain’t goin. Get the squad. I will punch every one of you dogs.’

Walker turned away as though he was going to walk back into his cell, but instead he lunged at Brice and stabbed him in the face with the black pen. He immediately threw a barrage of punches and, as Brice fell to the ground, kicked, and stomped on the defenceless officer. Brice was unconscious as soon as he hit the cold metal tier floor. The assault continued unabated, with fists and stomps reigning down on the crumpled blue shirt that quickly became a dark claret coloured mess.

Brice’s duress alarm, which sat on his left hip, sounded loudly and flashed on the screen in the control room. The usual response was, ‘that’s a false alarm’, but not this time.

Senior Officer Carmel Jackson called over the two-way radio as soon as the small duress tilt activated on Brice’s belt. ‘Attention staff, we have a man down alarm in B wing, on Officer Steven Brice. That duress is showing on the top tier of B 3/4 wing.’

Response officers, Martin Shaw and Darren Barnes were two highly experienced officers with both having over thirty years of experience behind them. They ran as quickly as they could up the wing stairs, as they could both hear there was an incident unfolding inside the wing. The other security staff responded to the duress alarm on Brice’s belt and made their way as quickly as they could to B wing.

The sound of the rushing footsteps on the heavy metal stairs warned all on the tier that the response squad, known as IAT, was also coming. Walker was stomping on Brice’s head as the staff arrived. Shaw tackled Walker, making contact with his upper chest. Barnes went in lower and hit him around the hips. Walker went down onto the tier floor, but was still struggling and fighting Shaw and Barnes when the other staff arrived. Walker only stopped when he was sprayed with CS gas in the

face by Nathan Glenn, the first of the IAT staff to arrive.

Walker screamed constantly throughout the incident, 'You dogs, you fucking dogs'.

The entire tier was a crime scene with blood everywhere and Brice motionless. Shaw yelled down the radio, 'Clinic we need a full medical response in B 3/4 now. Officer seriously assaulted, and he's nonresponsive.'

The set routine was quickly put in motion with response packs collected and taken immediately to the scene. When the nurses arrived with an officer escorting them, they quickly assessed Steven Brice. The nurse in charge was in shock, as she was a friend of Brice's, but did what she could.

Kim Bishendon, the NUM for the day, put a neck brace on Brice to stop any movement, and padding and bandages were applied to Brice's head and face. The treatment continued feverishly as the other nurses arrived on the tier. Emma Jenson and Kylie Madden were both new to the centre and had seen nothing like the head injuries Brice had sustained. The three nurses all stepped into their set tasks, with blood pressure, pulse, injuries noted and treated as best they could.

The entire jail was put into lockdown. Every spare staff member moved from wing to wing and each inmate was checked and locked in their cells. A command post was immediately created to control every movement and radio call. The top tier of B 3/4 was locked off as a crime scene, and each inmate housed there was relocated to any spare cell until finally, every inmate was secured.

A quiet calm descended over the entire jail, which was unnerving as the place was never that still or subdued. But the tension was evident in every radio call and conversation, with fear showing through each action.

Joanne Cawbey was a fresh faced casual correctional officer. She had taken the job to earn some more cash after her husband had run off

with a woman he had met online. Cawbey had two young kids and never took a handout from anyone. She thought a casual job at the jail might suit her.

She became highly upset when she saw Brice, as her idea when she joined the job was to do little more than turn keys and go home. She was instructed by Martin Shaw to 'start a time log now and don't miss anything'.

Cawbey did that and noted everything down in her contemporaneous notebook. Treatment, times, injuries, pulse, and every other thing that came from the nurses went in her book. She kept writing everything down so she didn't have to look at the officer lying on the tier.

Carmel Jackson was in the control room, and was under the pump, but she shared with the ambulance operator every detail the staff on the ground had given her.

The ambulance was called, and the operator was told that the situation was critical. 'Bathurst Correctional centre, this is an emergency. Officer has been assaulted. Yes, the patient is still breathing. The patient was not conscious when he was found. No, he is not conscious now.'

The ambulance arrived in less than four minutes and entered through the old sandstone gateway. Gates to the square were opened and the paramedics were rushed to B wing, straight to Steven Brice. As soon as they hit the tier, they took over the treatment of the stricken officer. A quick hand over detailed all the nurses knew and had recorded.

The paramedics aimed to take the patient into their care and head to the hospital, but his condition was grave at best. They tried to stabilise Brice as best they could before removing him on a stretcher. The staff carried the officer on the stretcher down the two flights of stairs and onto the square that held all four wings.

The nurses and the paramedics assisted with loading Brice into the ambulance and he was taken to the hospital under full lights and sirens. Cawbey went in the ambulance to keep the record going. She knew

nothing of Brice except that he had helped her get key access on her first day at the centre. He was polite and she felt he must be a nice guy. But the trip to the hospital was eventful for her. Brice stopped breathing and had to be resuscitated as the ambulance headed along Mitre Street.

A second ambulance screeched to a halt behind the first van so the other two paramedics could try to give any assistance. Paddles and cords were all over Brice and they hit him three separate times with a shock from the defibrillator to restart his heart. After the third power up of the paddles, Brice's reading showed a heartbeat. His breathing was laboured, and paramedics performed a tracheotomy right there in the ambulance. Brice had so much blood in his throat that the only way to clear it was to cut a hole in his larynx. As the paramedic pierced the skin and cartilage, blood sprayed onto Cawbey's uniform and onto the ambulance floor.

The entire incident was still being noted point by point by Cawbey, but as the blood spurted from Brice's throat, she finally buckled. She vomited and sprayed it all over the ambulance floor. The paramedic closest to Cawbey threw her a vomit bag and continued to work on Brice.

As he began to breathe again, the ambulance headed for the Bathurst Hospital emergency room at full speed with lights ablaze.

Brice stopped breathing again as he was wheeled into the trauma room. The full routine with the paddles and power boost was repeated. Once again, Brice's heart restarted.

Doctor Damien Galbraith took control of the trauma room. Galbraith specialised in neurosurgery and his immediate response was to get into surgery to assess the damage and relieve the pressure he thought would be severely stressing the Brice's brain.

'Troops, we need to prepare Mr Brice to go straight to surgery. Alert all my team to get prepped now for a long haul. This man will be put

under as soon as we can get him upstairs.’

The two head nurses made radio calls for the trauma team to attend the surgical unit immediately.

The last Cawbey saw of Brice, he was being pushed into the sterile operating room. Her log ran over nine pages and was a fully detailed synopsis of the moment by moment treatment of Steven Brice. She was relieved soon after and returned to the jail to write up a detailed report. At the completion of that report, Cawbey left the centre and went home. She did not sleep all night and couldn't get the image of Brice's beaten body out of her mind. She looked at her kids that night and knew she would never do another shift at the jail. The next day she resigned and handed all her equipment back into the stores officers and never returned to the jail again.

Back at the jail, the radio was alight with yelling of instructions as the bosses tried to wrestle back control of the areas they oversaw. The Jail Governor was a man named Clarence Drews. He was a manager who hated inmates and was only treading water, waiting for his retirement. He had been sent to Bathurst to finish his career.

Drews didn't like dramas, so he gave the staff pretty much whatever they wanted. Drews had been around in the 1970s when inmates at Bathurst set the jail on fire. He was there pulling inmates out as the jail burned. That day never left Drews' mind and was the catalyst for his hatred of crims. He refused to call them inmates or clients as senior management wanted him to. He always just said, 'You weren't there and didn't see what I saw. So, fuck up.' He left no one guessing how he felt about anything.

After the jail was locked down and Brice had been removed, Drews called a meeting for every staff member in the jail.

'Bricey was seriously assaulted by inmate Walker earlier today. He is in surgery, but it doesn't look great. His head was beaten and stomped terribly and the doctors aren't sure he will recover, so I want you all to

prepare yourselves,' Drews said.

'We are unsure why Bricey went up there by himself. Mr Scott told him that Walker had a change in his classification and the inmate would take the alteration badly. Mr Scott told Bricey that Walker was an asshole and was violent. But I guess Bricey just did it as he usually did; you all know he thought he could talk anyone around. As soon as I know more, I will tell you all, but I'm expecting the worst, as he's stopped breathing twice already.'

Drews departed the jail and went straight to the hospital, where he walked into the emergency department and spoke to the staff who were milling around, hoping for news. Nothing was new, Bricey was in surgery. The doctors were hoping to relieve the pressure on his brain. But they explained there was a genuine possibility he could die whilst in surgery.

Suzie Wright and Bridget Taylor were two of Brice's best mates at work, as the three of them had worked together for over twenty years. After the jail was sorted out, the two volunteered to go to Brice's place to pick up his wife. Multiple calls had been made to the home and mobile number, but the phone hadn't answered. She hadn't been told, and the bosses thought it was best they went and supported her. They arrived at the house in Eglinton with the intentions of explaining and assisting Mrs Jessica Brice.

Taylor was always a positive person who just wanted to see the best in anyone, but she struggled with Jess. For Bricey's sake, she tried to tolerate her. She never had the heart to tell Bricey the reason behind her divorce. Jess had been having an affair with her ex-husband. Taylor had received a letter in the mailbox that was hand-delivered and printed off a computer. The letter detailed her husband's affair and included photos and dates. Taylor didn't make an issue of it; she just took the kids to her mum's and went back home to tell her husband and confront him. He couldn't deny it, so he just left. She wondered if

she had told Bricey about it before he hooked up with Jess if it could have changed his mind. But she hated fights and cared too much for Bricey to tell him about it.

Taylor quietly spoke to Wright, 'Shit Suzie, what are we gonna tell her?'

Wright looked up at the driveway as they pulled up and gasped aloud. 'Oh god, I cannot believe this. He's here again.'

Taylor looked at her quizzically and said, 'What are you on about?'

They silently exited the car and walked straight to the front door. All they could both hear was Jess Brice having a very loud sex session. Screaming and moaning could be heard from the front door, even though the bedrooms were at the rear of the house.

Wright walked towards the rear of the home and looked through the window, only to see Mrs Brice atop Troy Austin in the king bed in the main bedroom.

Wright couldn't believe what she was seeing. 'This asshole, he's here rooting her while Bricey's dying in hospital. I hate this slut so much. Knock on the door for god's sake.'

Taylor knocked on the front door and after a minute, Jess Brice, dressed only in a t-shirt and orange panties, answered the door. She was her usual charming self. 'What the fuck are you two bitches doing here? I'm on night shift. I am trying to sleep, ya know.'

Taylor, on the verge of crying, blurted out, 'Bricey, he's been bashed really badly. He's in surgery, he's critical. You need to come with us now.'

But Jess snapped back, 'I need a shower first. I've been asleep. Where is he? What area? I will head up after lunch.'

Wright, who could never hide her hatred of Jess, replied, 'Listen slut, you need to go now. He's not going to make it. He's stopped breathing and is in surgery right now. Go and wash ya dirty box and get your fat, sloppy ass in the car.'

Jess calmly said, 'Get fucked, ya old mole. At least I can get a root, unlike you, ya old dried up bitch.'

Taylor tried to break the drama up and added, 'For fuck's sake, can you two get over it? Bricey's dying and we need to get there now.'

Just as Jess turned to walk towards the bathroom, Austin walked through the door as though nothing had happened. 'Hi Bridget, flick us a text next time ya want a bit hey. Like the new hair colour too.'

Wright snapped at her, 'Don't even tell me you went there. What is wrong with you?'

Taylor was embarrassed but could think of no defence except to say, 'So what? I have been divorced for four years and I want a bit sometimes.'

Back at the jail, the inmates were locked away, accounted for, and settled down. The police arrived and introduced themselves to Governor Drews. He gave them a rundown of the general facts of the incident and asked them what they needed.

The team of five officers placed their weapons in the gun safe and proceeded into the jail. They interviewed witnesses and tried to piece together the moments before the assault.

They sent Detective Senior Constable Graeme Ernst to the control room to view the video footage to give them a timeline on the incident. Ernst introduced himself to Correctional Officer Henry Love, who cued the relevant footage. Ernst reviewed the camera footage which showed Brice standing outside Walker's cell the entire time with the paperwork and at no point had Brice entered inside the cell. The footage was very damning, and so graphic that Love had to stop watching it. The attack just seemed to go on and on and the response seemed to take forever. It only took one minute and ten seconds from when the first punch was thrown until Walker was tackled to the ground and in cuffs, but the damage done to the correctional officer appeared to be immense.

Ernst was convinced the incident was of the gravest kind, and after obtaining copies of all the footage, he returned to the reception room area to speak to the now secured Walker.

Ernst was a no-nonsense officer who never socialised with other cops.

He took his job seriously and had plans to move up the leadership ladder. His diligence and his doggedness made him an excellent detective.

He was six feet, six inches, and as fit as he could be. He prided himself on taking great care of his body. Investigating crimes and finding the key moments were the two things that Ernst excelled at. His approach was always the same, to find the start point and attach everything he could prove to that original incident.

His review of the footage showed that Walker was highly aggressive and initiated the assault on Steven Brice and at no point did the cameras show any action from Brice that warranted the attack.

Walker was placed in segregation pending removal to Goulburn and a spot in Supermax. But at this point, he was sitting in the front reception cell alone. Walker was cuffed with both wrists and ankles restrained by the heavy metal shackles. An additional set of flexi cuffs had been laced through the ankle cuffs. This set held Walker on the cold metal seat with no access to anything he could remove potential evidence with. He was given access to nothing until the police had photographed and finally finished all their tests on him.

The normal protocol took place with all of Walker's clothes seized and his body examined and photographed. Swabs were taken from Walker's body and were recorded and placed in brown paper bags after all labelling and clarifications were finished. Walker was moved to the audio-visual interview room where Ernst's offsiders set up visual and sound recording equipment.

Ernst wondered if an experienced crim like Walker would even talk to him, but all he could do was ask. 'For a true and honest account of this interview, recordings, both video and sound, are being taken. Do you understand, Mr Walker?'

Walker replied, 'Yeah.'

Ernst got straight to the bones of the matter, as was his usual practice. 'Mr Walker, my name is Detective Senior Constable Graeme Ernst. I

am investigating the circumstances of an alleged assault on correctional officer Steven Brice today at Bathurst Correctional Centre. Do you wish to be interviewed about your knowledge of this matter? But please be aware that anything you say can and will be used in evidence against you. You do have the right to engage a lawyer before speaking to me.'

Walker hated police as much as he hated prison officers, and his mouth was always his worst enemy. 'I don't need a lawyer. Sure, I will tell you the truth, unlike these dogs here. That screw tried to bash me. He is a queer cunt and he tried to push me around as he wanted me to suck him off. He's known for trying it on the young boys. He's a pedo, the dog. All I did was I put my hands up to say "fuck off" and he grabbed me and tried to push me into my cell. Then, after he punched me in the face twice, I defended myself. I got nothing else to say.'

Ernst asked Walker if he wanted to add anything else, but Walker replied, 'I said all I'm gonna say. Plus, these dogs haven't even got me my lunch yet and I'm fuckin starving. I ain't saying anymore till I see my solicitor.'

Ernst was satisfied, as the evidence seemed overwhelmingly against Walker. It showed an unprovoked attack, and his statement was so ridiculous that Ernst felt the police could run a compelling case against him. They all spoke openly of their belief that they would be able to keep Walker locked up for many years because of it.

The team was hoping to speak to Brice, but he was in a critical condition and the interview would have to wait until he came around. So just after 9pm that night, Ernst and his team left the jail with reams of evidence, confident in their ability to prosecute Walker.

Steven Brice was in surgery for six hours. His vital signs were borderline, and the nursing staff never left him for a moment. When he finally came out of surgery and back to the Intensive Care Unit, he was hooked up to multiple machines to keep him alive. His head was

beaten beyond recognition, and tubes were coming from every part of Brice's body. The doctors had removed a piece of his skull to let the brain swell and try to save his life.

Dr Damien Galbraith had performed the surgery and called into ICU to check Brice's condition and speak to the patient's wife. Galbraith was a small man, always in scrubs and constantly on the move. His toned build was due to a hectic lifestyle and a love of riding bicycles, which usually encompassed ten kilometres a day. But he also loved his calling as a surgeon, and he enjoyed that challenge immensely. He was one of three children; his two sisters were both addicted to methamphetamines, and he had no other family left after his mother passed earlier in the year.

Galbraith walked to Brice's cubicle and spoke to the lady seated there. 'Mrs Brice, I am Dr Galbraith, but you can call me Damien. Look, it isn't good and he may pass away as he was still bleeding inside his brain when we got in there. The injuries looked like a car accident and currently he is doing nothing on his own. We can only hope that the surgery has relieved some of the pressure. It is as dire as it gets, but I'm giving him a chance of surviving if he can just make it through the night.'

Bridget Taylor looked up at Galbraith with a somewhat shocked look on her face. 'I'm sorry Doctor, I am not Steve's wife; I am just a close friend. I am unsure where she is, but I am sure she will visit him shortly. I am happy to pass that news along to her.'

Galbraith looked bemused but said, 'No it's okay. I will try to track her down.'

After reading all the charts and speaking to the critical care nurse, Galbraith went to the kiosk to grab his favourite drink, a sparkling water.

As Galbraith waited to be served, he overheard a phone call and realised that the short auburn headed lady in front of him was Brice's wife. He waited until she ended her call and introduced himself.

'Excuse me, are you Mrs Brice? I am the surgeon who operated

on Steven. Can we sit and speak for a moment?’ Galbraith motioned towards a seat near the waiting room. ‘Mrs Brice, the news is dire. Steven was gravely injured, and he may not make it through the night. We did all we could, so now it is a waiting game.’

Jess replied, ‘So it’s pointless me being here then?’

Galbraith was shocked by the response. ‘No, it’s probably good. He may be able to hear you. We aren’t sure, but it can’t hurt.’

But in her typical fashion, her response stunned an already shocked surgeon. ‘Oh fuck me. Ya just said he’s dead, now he can hear me. I’m going home as I have work tonight. Text me if he dies and I will come back.’

Galbraith just stood and looked at her as she walked towards the exit. He turned to the nurse who had been collaborating with him in the surgery and said, ‘Did you see that bitch? She never even came in. What a total bitch. Sorry for swearing Angie, but that is disgusting.’

Brice’s condition was unchanged for the next three days as the ventilator did all the breathing for him. Then his normal functions slowly returned with the pressure removed from his brain. There were some positive signs seen by the staff when his hand moved, then he started breathing on his own, allowing the ventilator to be removed.

Gradually, slight improvements were made each day. The correctional centre staff never left him alone, organising three shifts, just like at the jail. Prison officers came and went, but none left until the next pair were there for support. Two staff sat by his bedside night after night, day after day. They brought whatever they needed to make it through their shift, with an abundance of food and coffee freely available for all. Everyone took their turn at supporting Brice, with an informal rotating roster emailed daily to each staff member.

Jess, on the other hand, did not visit Brice once. She was seen out at the club and at several parties with various sexual partners visiting the Brices’ home. She seemed to enjoy life without her husband around.

Detective Senior Sergeant Troy Austin was a regular visitor, as were Brad Scott, Farnell Kenter and Dominic Jilick. The latter three all worked alongside Brice in the jail.

Jess also had the hide to take time off, utilising carer's leave as she explained it. Drews approved this immediately, but she used those two weeks to travel to Bali with a young guy she had met online. Jess used Brice's credit card to pay for the trip and this was the last straw for all at the jail, as she took hundreds of photos and uploaded them to her social media.

Brice woke up just short of nine days after the assault by Walker. He was back in ICU following another surgery, this time to replace the piece of skull that Dr Galbraith had removed that first day. He just unexpectedly opened his eyes to see two guys sitting to his left.

Brice's long-time friend and original classmate Dan stood up and excitedly said, 'Brother, are ya okay mate? We thought you were trying to rack up some more workers' comp mate. Are ya okay brother?'

Brice's other good mate, Tim, was also happy to see him wake up and added the usual banter to Brice, 'C'mon soft cock. You owe me \$50. I told you Parramatta would beat your shitty Bulldogs. Can I just take ya key card and get it now or what?'

The statement brought a roar of laughter from the two boys. The intensive care nurses came in and checked Brice, then they spoke glowingly of how well he had done. They all introduced themselves, praising his determination and strength.

Brice was in a zone he didn't understand, and his head felt like he had the world's worst hangover. He remembered nothing at all about what had happened until the boys filled him in.

Tim slowly explained, 'That crim Walker jumped you on the landing. He stabbed, then bashed you. When we got there, you were out of it. He nearly killed you. The prick is in Goulburn now. He said he will plead not guilty as he reckons your head needed some panel beating.'

The group of two had grown to around ten, and all of them had a major laugh. Doctor Galbraith came down and gave Brice a good check over. He was incredibly surprised at Brice's recovery, yet full of praise for his strength, and told him, 'Steve, you are a tough bugger. We had you on the short list mate. But you shocked us all. You have any pain or need anything, just press that red button. Well done mate, I mean that. Top effort.'

Everyone except for Tim and Dan left the room. They both looked happy to see Brice awake, but they had a look on their faces that told him something was wrong. Brice stared at them and gestured with his hand to ask what was wrong. Dan looked at Tim and nervously they started to fill Brice in on what he had missed.

'Jess had you served with an AVO whilst you were unconscious to stay away from your home. She told the solicitor that you had domestic violence issues and that she was scared to be in the same home as you.'

He thought of how low it was to have it all served on him while he was in ICU close to death, but it was what it was. She hadn't even visited him once.

Tim explained the Bali trip and showed him the photos. 'Mate, do you want us to stop her access to your money?' asked Tim, and Brice just gently nodded.

Dan got the phone out of his top pocket and logged into Brice's internet banking site. Brice saw all the transactions that he had paid for, even the cost of the internet dating sites she was on. Dan transferred all the money from Brice's account into his own bank account until he could get Brice a new bank account and stopped all debits Jess had set up.

As the weeks went by, visitors never seemed to stop. So many faces and the support gave Brice a real feeling of strength. He began having physiotherapy and could almost get up unaided in that first week.

Brice wanted to go home and see his horses. He desperately wanted

to get out of the hospital. He regained clarity in his mind, but he knew that an extended stay in the local rehabilitation facility would be his next stop. That came around fast for him and everyday Brice pushed as hard as he could. Walking and balance were his two biggest hurdles, but he took every session as a challenge and gave it all he could. The simplest tasks, even just standing unaided, were a struggle. But Brice worked away at these daily to get back some degree of normality. He worked harder in each session and even added hand weights to his slow walks around the hospital to make his progress faster.

The eighteen weeks of hospital and rehabilitation dragged on and sometimes they were so repetitive that Brice questioned his efforts and even his capabilities, but the culmination of this was that Brice thought he was strong enough to go home.

‘How do you feel today sook?’ asked Tim.

Brice was ready to leave rehab, but knew the incident had altered his appearance drastically and he was very embarrassed by his misshapen head and face.

‘Look bad,’ he said to Tim.

Then the normal reply from Tim, ‘Don’t worry, you look worse than you think. Your head looks like a fuckin’ melon. And it’s ugly as shit. Not that the bashing changed it that much.’

Dan chimed in. ‘Mate do you need anything at all? We can get you anything you want!’

But Brice was okay with everything and simply replied, ‘Nah.’

Brice finally got the clearance to go home, though home was now a one-bedroom flat in West Bathurst, fitted out with second-hand furniture donated by other staff. When Brice, Tim, and Dan arrived at the unit, the paint was peeling from the gutters and the unit looked very much the bachelor’s unit that it was.

The furniture looked okay, thought Brice. ‘Nice’ was all he could get out when he walked in, but Dan wasn’t so content with it at all.

‘It’s a shit-hole mate, but we will get you sorted out and when you are back on your feet, we will get you somewhere nice. Okay?’

Brice knew he had a long way to go to. But he also knew he was not ‘Bricey’ anymore. His life was destroyed, and he felt like a broken man, facing a messy divorce, an AVO to address, and his wife sleeping with everyone in town. Next would be a departmental health inquiry to assess if he kept his job. At least, that is what Brice thought would be coming his way.

That first night alone was daunting, and he heard every bump in the night. The bed was comfortable, and the television was a welcome distraction. But it was the hardest thing to let himself go off to sleep. He wondered if he would wake up, especially after almost half a year in hospital with nurses, monitors and staff sitting around him 24 hours a day.

Finally, around 2 a.m. he drifted off and slept until 11 a.m. He woke feeling groggy but somehow re-energized. Tea and toast were his first tasks, followed by a warm shower and a sit in the armchair at the front of his unit.

Brice slowly started to walk as he tried to regain his strength. He walked to the end of his street and back to start with, and he did this for the next three days. Next, he walked to the corner shop every day, then eventually, after four weeks, he was able to walk to the jail and back. It was hard, but he did it and he continued to push himself until his pedometer regularly showed him racking up five kilometres each day. He walked rain, hail, or shine. He joined the local gym and walked down to the training establishment in Piper Street each day and did whatever program was running.

The divorce and AVO matter had to be dealt with, so Brice left it in the hands of his solicitor. His instructions were simple. He wanted his home returned and was happy to give her an acceptable amount of money to get it back.

His solicitor, Kenny Hammond, was a friend from his youth, the two men having known each other since school. Brice made his instructions quite simple for Kenny. 'I will give her cash if she removes the AVO and fucks off, no deals or court days. I pay, she leaves.'

Hammond went about his task and spoke to Jess' legal representative, then within a few days she had her solicitor reply with the answer Brice knew would come. 'Sure, but I want \$50,000. If I get that, I will be gone this weekend.'

The legal paperwork was rushed through by Hammond and Co., and as good as her word, Jess walked out as she said she would that Saturday. She also dropped the AVO which meant that Brice could finally go home and try to get back to his old life.

That Saturday was almost like a working bee. Staff from the jail all appeared throughout the day and Brice felt it was almost like a planned attack on his beloved home. Mowing, spraying, vacuuming, mopping, washing, and cooking seemed to be ongoing the entire day.

Tim and Dan cooked on the barbecue most of the day as the multitude of workers appeared to do their bits. So many of the ladies arrived to either clean the home or drop Brice off home-cooked meals. He wondered if he would ever get through them all, but he felt a real sense of being cared for and was very thankful to every person who assisted him that weekend.

Finally, all the help departed, and it really affected Brice. He sat quietly in the barn and cried as he had too many emotions swirling around in his head. Although he was feeling sad over the entire situation, he was incredibly pleased to have gotten his home back and was content plodding around working with his horses. They had always been his outlet and best company, and he spent endless hours washing, brushing, and spoiling them. It gave him a reason to keep working to regain his strength. He just loved their personalities, so to wake up each day, look out the window and see them gave him a genuine feeling of being home and safe.

The financial part of the divorce settled within a week and he just had to wait for the official part of the divorce to be accepted and rubber-stamped to make it final and binding. It meant that he was alone, but he was in his home and knew that it would give him a chance to restart his life.

The matter that Brice had completely forgotten about then reared its ugly head. Brice was so detached from his old life that to hear on the other end of the phone call the name 'Tyron Walker' was a slap in the face. Brice felt a genuine shiver as he hung up. The legal matter involving the attempted murder of him by Tyron Walker was now before the court. Walker refused to accept any blame until the video was shown to him. Walker told his legal aid solicitor to work out a deal, but the prosecution initially refused, as they had charged Walker with attempted murder. The legal team felt that the evidence was overwhelming, as did the police.

After receiving that call from the prosecutor, Brice could think of nothing except the snippets that he remembered. He could see in his mind's eye Walker lunging at him, but the rest was a blur. The boys had filled him in on all the details, but looking in the mirror, it wasn't hard to imagine what he had been through.

Just as it was with Jess, Brice wanted the Walker matter over. He never wanted to face court and be questioned. So, after discussing the possibilities with the prosecuting members, Brice directed them to offer Walker a deal of ten years. No reduction, no special conditions. But the agreement meant that Walker did not do any of the sentence until he completed his murder term.

The team said they would table the offer. The call came the next day, that Walker had accepted the deal, and this allowed Brice to rest that evening, safe knowing that at the end of his current lagging, he would do another ten years for him. Brice was content with his decision because Walker would do it all in segregation or maximum supervision.

It was early November when the Corrective Service people called and said that they were seeking Brice's assistance. They needed a doctor to assess him and see if he could return to work. Health Quest was often used to get staff retired who had reached a physical point where they could not perform their duties to an acceptable standard. But this didn't faze Brice, as he knew he had worked hard to attain a level of physical strength that would allow him to get back to his job.

'Could you be here on Thursday at 1pm, Mr Brice?' asked the receptionist from Health Quest.

Brice replied, 'Yes. Not a problem.'

Brice readied himself for the interview and drove to Sydney to face the panel of review. The drive was good, with a stop off at Brice's favourite bakery at Wentworth Falls to pick up a breaky pie and a chai latte.

He made his way to the corrective services head office and attended the third floor. The staff were very polite, and they showed him into a small waiting room to see Dr Giovanni Tashburn. The physical examination was not difficult and within twenty minutes, Brice was told that he would be given a clearance to resume his pre-injury duties.

It was two weeks later when the life as he had come to know it changed.

Brice woke early, showered, and shaved. He pressed his uniform and got himself some lunch and a water bottle. He slung his transparent plastic bag over his shoulder and walked out the door of his home to his old Ford Trader and made his way to the jail and back to work.

At 8 a.m, 22 November, 2014, Steven Brice pressed the buzzer at the main gate and identified himself. The gate officer scanned him inside on the computer system and he made his way back into the centre.

He was welcomed back with plenty of handshakes and backslaps, with a few hugs and kisses from the ladies who were there. Senior Superintendent Peter Burdick called the morning parade that day. Staff were called individually off the roster and a rundown of the previous

day's incidents were explained. They gave a warm welcome to Brice with a round of applause.

Burdick called Brice over after parade and said, 'Okay, Bricey. Mate, you are in G block today. You okay with that mate?' Brice nodded and Burdick took that for a 'Yes'.

Work was easy for Brice to slide back into. The staff had been extremely helpful, but crims are crims and Bricey knew crims well. Twenty-one years is a long time to work at the one job, but Brice always enjoyed it. As the next six months slid by, he put the last year behind him. Work was good, life was slowly returning to normal, and it was just another day that Friday.

Brice fed his horses, filled their waterers, and made up their dinners for that night. He went inside, made tea and toast, ironed his uniform, sorted lunch, and headed off to work. Once again, he was in the education area, G block.

That's when Robert Wilson-Anderson approached him. Brice knew little of the inmate at all, except that he was a loudmouth. What he didn't know until that big mouth spoke was that he was Tyron Walker's cousin.

Wilson-Anderson almost shouted at Brice, 'Hey chief, how's ya head? Old unc' got over you, hey. Don't fuck with the mob bra. They fuck you white cunts up. Look boys, it's the Down syndrome screw... Smile ya fuckin' spastic, go on. Ya can't smile, can ya, coz ya got pumped, ya fat fuck.'

The other inmates on the education block broke out in laughter and began to mill around Brice and his casual officer partner. Brice was always calm, but he knew two on twelve was never going to go well. So, he just pressed his duress alarm and the response squad staff took Wilson-Anderson away. Brice was rattled and struggled to finish the day. He rang in sick the next three days.

The next few months went by with no issues. Brice walked into work on a normal day and saw he had been moved from his usual post and

was now to work in B Wing. He felt his anxiety levels rise, as he hadn't set foot in B Wing since the day Walker bashed him.

Brice knew he had to face it at some point, so he went by the book and did all he was expected to. The day went well enough, but by lock-in Brice had the overwhelming feeling of being trapped. He emailed the roster clerk just as he was about to head to the gatehouse to cease his shift and requested to work on the night shift for a while.

That night, Brice spent the entire evening listening to his favourite 80s music in the stables while his horses wandered in and out with him sitting on his old lounge chair. They seemed to enjoy his company as much as he liked theirs. At 10 p.m., he called each horse into the stables. They stood quietly and had their rugs applied and their stable doors closed. After four cups of black tea that night, he hugged each of his horses, gave them a biscuit of lucerne, and headed to the shower.

The next morning, the rostering staff rang and left a message. Greg Johnson, the roster clerk, spoke quickly, as was his way. 'Got your email, and the boss said no worries Bricey, you have seven nights starting tomorrow night at 10.30 p.m. I will put you in the gate if you are happy with that?'

Brice turned up at 10 p.m. and went to the position at the gate. After a tea and some toast to help him wake up, Brice went into the armoury. This room was completely secure and held all sorts of gear, such as handguns, gas, handcuffs, rifles, ammunition, and ankle cuffs.

Brice felt detached from his work as he handled the Glocks and the revolvers and the rifles. He was calm and going through the normal routine when, like a bolt from the blue, it came to him. Wilson-Anderson was just out of custody and he usually kicked around Bourke. He loved stealing cars and bashing women, but his favourite pastime was methamphetamine. He loved the stuff, especially when it was washed down with half a dozen long necks of whatever beer was on special. Brice smirked as he said to himself, 'Bourke, hey'.

After Brice had completed his set of night shifts, he went and visited an old friend from his days in the trotting industry. Kevin Hall was a hobby trainer who had retired from his job on the railways and spent his time evenly divided between rebuilding old cars and making home brew.

‘Hey ya old bugger, how’s things?’ said Brice as the two men warmly shook hands. They spent the next two hours chatting and remembering horses and some of their best wins.

‘Kev, I was wondering if I could borrow a car for a couple of days. I’ve gotta get my ute serviced and I can’t get a loan car for three days.’

Hall said, ‘No worries, take the old Falcon there. It’s just back on the road and goes like a gem.’ So after chatting a while longer, Brice organised to pick the car up on Wednesday morning.

After dropping off his Ford Trader to the dealer, Brice took a taxi to Kevin Hall’s home and picked up the white Falcon sedan. That morning, just after 11 a.m. in the borrowed car, a white Ford Falcon of 1995 vintage, Brice began his drive to Bourke. He drove through Orange, Stuart Town, then Wellington and Dubbo. He stopped and filled up with petrol and gas in Nyngan.

The sun had dropped, and the stars were out, and it was a lovely night in the cooler winter air. Brice drove carefully towards Bourke, always aware of the varied array of wildlife that patrolled the Mitchell Highway at night. Emus, camels, kangaroos, wallabies, wombats were all known to be around, and night seemed to bring them out. But Brice took his time and all the while wondering what he was really going to do when he arrived. His only other stop was in a secluded driveway near the levee, where he removed the number plates and screwed on a set he had found in a wrecking yard in Penrith. Brice changed the plates as he knew security cameras would record most vehicles around town.

Bourke was a town that had once upon a time been a business hub, due to its location on the river. The Darling River had been so busy at its peak, with paddle steamers running products to destinations up and

down the river. But with the decline of the river's use, Bourke slid back to being a small town with a few basic industries.

With the growth of the drug trade, Bourke became a town riddled with crime. Theft, robbery, and assault became quite common, and the crime rate escalated to record proportions. A high number of police moved to the area to address the climb in crime. Domestic violence was one of the most reported crimes in town. Bourke then produced an extremely high number of inmates, filling both the courts and jails across the state. It produced many criminals, just like Robert Wilson-Anderson.

At 6.30 p.m. that night, Brice rolled into town. He wore a baseball style cap, black round neck t-shirt, black jeans, and a grey jacket. He was unsure of what he was going to do, but he thought that if he watched and waited, an opportunity would present itself.

The sun had long since gone down and left the town in relative darkness with no moon to speak of. It took Brice half an hour to track down Wilson-Anderson in Mitchell Street. Wilson-Anderson was not wearing a shirt or shoes but was yelling abuse at a woman who was standing across the other side of the street. He was standing outside the drive-thru bottle shop, throwing back long necks. Brice sat low in the car and watched Wilson-Anderson for the next hour and a half. Then finally, after finishing his last long neck, Wilson-Anderson walked away.

Brice drove slowly without the headlights on and stayed about two hundred metres behind Wilson-Anderson. It was around 10.30 p.m., and Wilson-Anderson was walking more side to side than straight. As he approached a vacant area and wobbled in the direction of Monomeeth Street, Brice edged closer to him. At that point, Wilson-Anderson turned to see the Falcon but tripped and fell onto the now dirt road. Brice drove straight over the prone man, slowly reversed and ran over him again, then edged forward, running over Wilson-Anderson one final time. Then he steadily drove from the scene into Becker Street, crossed the Brewarrina Road, moved past the high school, turned on

his headlights and headed towards Nyngan.

Brice arrived home around 7 a.m. The car was in pristine condition after being pressure washed in Orange for half an hour. Brice filled the fuel tank to the brim and dropped the car back to his mate and said, 'Kev, thanks.'

Brice spoke little, if at all, since the accident, but no one minded. It wasn't that he couldn't, he just chose not to. He much preferred to watch and listen. Everyone thought that his lack of speech was from his assault, but it had nothing to do with it. Brice had changed in so many ways, and not speaking gave him a clever way of manoeuvring out of most situations.

Early that morning, an elderly gent who walked three kilometres every day came upon the body of Wilson-Anderson. The Bourke police were notified a man was lying on the road near Becker Street. They took it to be a drunk, but sent a car to investigate. They found Wilson-Anderson deceased on the road, and the usual perimeter was set up and crime scene officers were called. That took days to get sorted out. One story doing the rounds was that an ex-girlfriend's new bloke bashed him, or the other story was that a drunk driver who lived locally must have run him over sneaking home from the RSL club.

News bulletins did the norm around NSW country areas for the next few days, but no witnesses came to fruition. The detectives worked long hours and took tyre tracks and established little except the car had four assorted brands of rubber on it during the accident. They did ascertain that the car intended to run Wilson-Anderson down. That was deduced from the multiple marks on the dirt that showed the reverse patterns, but apart from that, little came of the matter.

Nothing panned out over the next few months and the investigation sat on a shelf, gathering dust from then on. They put it down to an accident. His family wanted answers but, in the end, no leads the

police uncovered took the case anywhere.

After five months, they had to call it quits for the time being and addressed newer cases. The local police all had people who they suspected, with the most serious name attached to the case that of a local named 'Chisel'. It was a known fact that Chisel and the victim were once close friends, but after Wilson-Anderson got Chisel's girlfriend pregnant whilst the latter was locked up, the closeness between the two men ended. To top off the issue, Wilson-Anderson had bashed the girl and then been locked up when Chisel was released. Chisel swore to anyone who would listen that he would 'get' Wilson-Anderson.

The local police strongly suspected he was the killer, but there was no proof. Detectives from Dubbo put many man hours into this theory and even spoke to Chisel about pleading to manslaughter at one point. But he refused all deals and spent the next two years dodging police at every turn.

Brice was a little surprised how easy killing Wilson-Anderson had been. No one seemed to know anything about him being there, and better still, nobody seemed to care. Brice felt as though he had only saved more women being bashed, local people being robbed and eventually somebody being murdered by Wilson-Anderson. But he felt comfortable with the entire situation and no guilt or fear crept into his mind.

He wondered why, but it just didn't worry him at all. He had done a 'good deed' as he saw it. Brice thought of what he had done, but the feelings he expected to beset him just never appeared. He wondered if he was now without a filter or a soul. But whatever he felt, he knew that this had now started, and nothing would stop him from continuing down this path now.

Names flowed through Brice's head. All those rapists, murderers, and child molesters he had met and had to deal with. He was wondering if he could do it again, and the answer was a resounding, 'Yes.' This had now become a full-blown passion, and it was driving Brice. Revenge?

Maybe! Was it a Chopper Reid-like campaign to rid the world of ‘human filth’ or was his mind so damaged that he couldn’t stop now? He wondered why, but only for a while. There had to be more he could do to these predators. The ease of the murder felt so unreal to Brice and all he felt was positive about his actions.