

It was a great relief to see Carl carrying Harley to my house like a hero returning from a war. I played the nurse, rushing up to Carl, taking Harley from him. Within the hour, I had Harley warmed up and in bed. If he had been out there for another twenty minutes, there would've been no hope. The authorities would've been searching for a cold, pale lifeless body lost in the deep depths of the sea.

I look down at Harley, fast asleep, recovering from his near miss. So innocent. So much to learn. 'He really is just a little boy', I murmur, not aware of the fact that anyone could be listening.

Closing the door behind me, I step out of Harley's room, my thoughts directing me where to walk. I find myself in our vast, up-market sun room. The moon glistens through glass panel, its light dancing upon the floor. A deadly silence sweeps across the room. My head automatically turns towards the photo desk, next to the sofa. There's me holding Helen. She has left. In another photo there's Maddie, dressed for a party. She is going to leave. And well, the little boy with the fishing rod in the silver framed black and white photo. He's gone. Gone for good. I instantly reach for the photo as if my touch will bring him back. Of course it won't. But maybe Harley can.

A fierce battle ignites in my head, both sides equally willing to decimate its opponent.

*'We should take Harley in. He's not getting the care he needs.'*

*'No, Skip'll be against and you know you can't change his opinion.'*

*'I persuaded him to employ Carl! Look how that turned out!'*

*'But this is something different – taking a Matt into our care. Skip hates the name. He'll go insane at the mere suggestion.'*

*'The only way to prove it is to ask.'*

Before the other side could argue, I shut it off by walking directly into the lounge room.

'Skip', I call. When he doesn't hear me over the monotone drone of the TV I repeat 'Skip!'.

Skip looks around at me in surprise, expecting some urgent message.

'Ah, Joy. How's the little fella doing?' he asks.

'Absolutely fine, all tucked up. I expect he'll be better in a few days.'

'That's good, love. Carl, you know, did an excellent job, directing me where to go. If it weren't for him, Harley might not have lived to see another day.'

'Bit different for a Matt isn't it?' Skip's face tenses up considerably at the mention of the name. 'These two boys are different. Much different, Skip. And I don't think they are getting the full value of life'.

'What are you suggesting, Joy?' Skip's face is tense, his eyes glassily staring at the screen but obviously listening intently to me.

'Well, Skip... I think we should take Harley in. Give him a better----'

'Joy, no! You know it was a burden to even employ a Matt! Now you're asking me to take the other one into my care! How could you possibly suggest that, how could you suggest that we look after the name that tore apart our family?' Skip glares at me, his message expressed in his face, rather than his words.

'But Skip, look how hard Carl works on the boat. He's basically saved us our house. And Harley works so well with us. You know yourself that you have said good things about both the boys!'

'To take on a Matt would be an insult to Graham's memory', Skip growls. 'How could we look after the name that killed our son Joy?! Joy are you listening? It killed our son! Why would you ask me---'

'Skip!' I yell with all the strength I can muster, cutting him off. My voice lowers to a deadly tone. 'To not take Harley in would make us as bad as Dessie. Dessie wanted revenge on you. It's like you're getting revenge on him now!' My voice is rising in anger. 'This boy is needing love and care and we have to give it to him. Don't you see, Skip?! We have to take him in!' My rant ends only to be replaced by silence.

After what seems like hours, Skip replies, 'I could never be like one of them. I never will be. I wouldn't be able to live with myself. And ... and now I see ... that we should look after Harley as if ... as if he was our own'.

A tear rolls down my cheek. 'Thankyou', I say, stepping out of the room, relief and hope coursing through my veins.

Written by Julia Hill