

New Beginnings

Miranda had never felt so low. The weather was overcast, although it was late spring almost summer in Balmain. She was left sitting in an old wheelbarrow, naked, and someone had removed her hair and her arms. It was a far cry from her 'heyday' as a mannequin in the George Street shop windows of Farmer & Co. Now she was displayed in a wheelbarrow at the junk yard attached to a trendy Balmain eatery called the 'Tin Shed'. Miranda was mortified. She was also extremely embarrassed by her predicament, all the more so because she couldn't do anything about it.

Miranda was momentarily startled by the sound of raised voices nearby. A couple of men were arguing at a nearby table, and although most of what they were saying was unintelligible to her, she was able to pick out a common theme. They were arguing about an island. Miranda's thoughts focussed on the pleasant prospect of living on an island. Then she wouldn't mind being naked. Soon one of them came over to the wheelbarrow and looked her over, while the other one was momentarily absent from their table. She didn't much like the way he looked at her, although the interest appeared to be 'business-like', and when the other man came back he said he was buying her for him as a birthday present. If she was surprised she

certainly didn't show it, however the other man was surprised and showed it.

Miranda's pleasant prospect looked as if it may become a reality, as when her potential purchaser announced that he was buying her as a birthday present, he qualified it by saying it was to keep his mate 'Bluey' company on the island. Miranda had very dim memories of an island, although it seemed a world away. Bluey came over and looked her up and down. Miranda felt open and exposed to his close scrutiny, although she thought he had a kind face and gentle eyes. He smiled and Miranda smiled back.

Turning to his mate, Bluey said: "Dave, Dave, Dave, what about the arms and hair?" Dave assured him that these could be sourced without too much trouble.

"OK," he said, and gently picked Miranda up in his arms and carried her to the kerb, where he leant her against the Toyota while he unlocked the door, and then placed her sitting, on the front passenger seat. Miranda had almost swooned with the attention and careful handling, and sat on the front seat looking steadfastly forward to her future.

Later that day Miranda had her arms back and an auburn hairpiece with a fringe over her forehead, a mid scalp parting, and a cascade at the back to the nape of her neck. Miranda thought she looked fetching, although she was still naked. She was amused at the response at the Mannequin

Spare Part warehouse, when as soon as the manager saw her, he put his left foot forward, and with his left limp wrist waving from left to right announced in a lisp, “oh I know HER, she, is Miranda.”

Miranda was then taken to a house in Leichhardt, where the man went inside and a few moments later emerged with a young lady, and Miranda overheard the question: “Can you help me buy my new girl some clothes?” The young lady took one look and broke into laughter, saying: “Dad, what are you doing?”

Miranda was used to wearing high fashion, and despite being liberated from the Tin Shed, she momentarily balked when they pulled up at a second hand clothing shop called ‘Vinnies’. Miranda rationalised this choice again as being a great deal better than being naked, armless and hairless in a wheelbarrow, and she was pleasantly surprised when they picked out some light, short summer dresses. She had overheard that the island was in the tropics, so this choice seemed appropriate, although she did not feel either the cold or warmth. She was carried inside the young lady’s house, dressed, and sat on the lounge.

Time passed very quickly for Miranda, for after all she had spent long days and nights sitting in the display windows of Farmer & Co., in fact she had no way of telling time, except for the occasional indication from the passing of the seasons, and the way she was dressed, and the way the

people were dressed passing and looking in the display windows. She was aware though when the man was preparing to leave, as he kissed the young lady goodbye, and again, gently picked Miranda up and carried her outside, placing her on the front seat while the young lady held the door open.

Soon they were on the open road. Occasionally, when the road was divided, other cars passed them on the inside, and Miranda was aware of some strange looks by the passing motorists. A couple of motorists actually looked at her casually, and then quickly looked back again in a classic Hollywood 'double-take'. Miranda knew she had this effect on men particularly, however some of the reaction could have been put down to the feigned indifference she had for their interest or reaction.

They stopped at a Motel. Miranda could have kept going, as she was keen to reach their destination, however she had no say in the matter. The man was now behaving with indifference to her, and did not carry her inside, but rather left her sitting on the front seat of the Toyota. This would not have normally worried Miranda, however this was not a display window at Farmer & Co., and other patrons of the motel were looking at her through the windows, and pointing and laughing. If Miranda could have laughed she would have later, as some late arrivals at the motel were startled by seeing a lone attractive woman sitting in the dark in the front seat of a Toyota, until they came closer, as

if to help. However, Miranda was not a girlfriend or spurned wife who was banished to the car by a cantankerous husband, rather, she was a formerly celebrated mannequin and she continued to steadfastly look forward to her future.

Days passed, apparently, as they had stopped overnight on three occasions, however Miranda now noticed a distinct change in the travelling conditions. The roads were no longer smooth, and the Toyota was bouncing over ruts and corrugations, dips and switchbacks, such that her hair had slipped forward over her eyes. The man laughed, and stopping the Toyota, adjusted her hair. It was the first time in days the man had shown any attention to Miranda, and as time did not mean anything to Miranda, she accepted the attention gratefully. On nightfall, the Toyota stopped at a roadhouse with a cloud of red dust rolling in behind and momentarily engulfing them and the group of men standing around their trucks. The men greeted each other, and one of them asked Bluey wasn't it his 50th birthday today? Bluey nodded, and pointing to Miranda, announced that she was his birthday present from Dave.

“Miranda is from Sydney,” he said. The men gathered around and ogled Miranda, laughingly enquiring whether she had all the bits. Miranda was used to being ogled; however these rough men were a breed to which she was totally unaccustomed.

The birthday party took place in the Roadside Cafe, which was licensed, and the hostess found a birthday hat for Miranda. Photographs were taken of the party group. Miranda was the only feminine influence that party evening, which really did not make any impact on the behaviour of the men. Perhaps that was the behaviour expected by the men's womenfolk, however Miranda was mortified, again, and it was not to be the last time her sensibilities would be challenged in the rough world she was entering.